The Bahamas Maritime Authority

Version No. 2.1

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United States Coast Guard QUALSHIP 21 & E-Zero Program

1. Purpose

1.1. This Technical Alert is issued by the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) to provide information on the United States Coast Guard (USCG) QUALSHIP 21 and E-Zero programs.

2. Introduction

2.1. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) efforts to eliminate substandard shipping have focused on improving methods to identify poor-quality ships and recognising and rewarding higher-quality ships at Port State Control (PSC) inspections. Therefore, on 01 January 2001, the USCG implemented the QUALSHIP 21 initiative to identify high-quality ships and provide incentives to encourage quality operations.

2.2. The USCG introduced the E-Zero designation on 01 July 2017 for ships enrolled in the QUALSHIP 21 program that meet strict additional environmental requirements. E-zero is an initiative that focuses on compliance with international environmental conventions and United States ballast water regulations. The E-zero designation is intended to provide a higher level of recognition within the existing QUALSHIP 21 program.

3. QUALSHIP 21 and The Bahamas

3.1. The Bahamas had only one detention in the USA in 2025 from 591 inspections – this is the best ever annual PSC performance in the USA for The Bahamas and the BMA thanks all Companies and their Masters, Officers and crews for their part in this outstanding achievement.

3.2. As a result, the 3-year rolling average for 2023-2025 reduced to **0.55%.** Accordingly, **The Bahamas has regained Qualship 21 status for 2026-27**.

3.3. Details on the incentives for QUALSHIP 21 ships and new incentives for QUALSHIP 21/E-Zero ships, eligibility, enrolment, and renewal requirements are available on the USCG website at:

https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Prevention-Policy-CG-5P/Inspections-Compliance-CG-5PC-/Commercial-Vessel-Compliance/Foreign-Offshore-Compliance-Division/Port-State-Control/QS21/.

3.4. Applications for Qualship 21 and E-Zero designation for qualified ships can be made after 01 July 2026 using this form[1].

4. Ongoing PSC monitoring

4.1. The BMA actively monitors all PSC inspections and places great importance on maintaining a low rate of detentions in both the USA and elsewhere.

4.2. Owners and Managers of Bahamas registered ships are therefore urged to ensure that any ships calling at ports in the USA are fully prepared for the possibility of a PSC inspection by the USCG.

4.3. All lifesaving appliances, firefighting equipment and essential equipment should be tested before arrival, be in full working order and ready for immediate use and the crew adequately trained for and familiar with their duties. Please also refer to Marine Notice 93 – Port State Control Inspections and Information Notice 14 - Port State Control Recurring Deficiencies.

4.4. Every Bahamian ship intended to call a port in the United States is required to complete the PSC Checklist to report to BMA on preparedness for a potential PSC inspection and highlighting any areas where a non-compliant condition may have been identified. The checklist is available as an on-line facility accessible via the link below:

FORM060 Checklist[2]

i. The checklist shall be submitted not less than 48 hours prior to ETA to allow the BMA and the Company[3] to review any reported non-compliant conditions and apply necessary mitigating measures to prevent PSC targeting.

ii. Failure to submit PSC Checklist prior to arrival at US ports may be considered as an ISM non-conformity and may lead to additional audits of the ship and/or the Company.

[1] https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Portals/9/DCO%20Documents/5p/CG-5PC/CG-CVC/CVC2/psc/safety/qualship/QS21_Ez_App2026.xlsx
[2] https://www.bahamasmaritime.com/f_psc060/
[3] The 'Company' is the entity responsible for the operation and management of the ship in accordance with the ISM Code (SOLAS Chapter IX), as applied under the Merchant Shipping Act, 2021. Where the ISM Code is not applicable, the Company is the entity recorded as responsible for the operation of the ship in accordance with regulation 5(3)(d) of the Merchant Shipping (Registration) Regulations, 2026.

iii. In the event of consecutive United States port calls on the same voyage, FORM060 need only be submitted before the first US port. Nonetheless an update must be submitted if the condition of the ship changes during this time.

iv. Ships making regular US port calls may submit the online checklist monthly.

v. Ships subject to USCG Certificate of Compliance examinations (i.e. passenger ships, tank ships, chemical tankers, and liquefied gas carriers) are not required to submit FORM060 unless specifically requested by the BMA.

4.5. If the Company has any concerns about the material condition of the vessel, it may engage a Bahamas Approved Nautical Inspector[4] to conduct a special inspection prior to visiting the USA. All attendance costs are for the Company's account.

4.6. The BMA may require the attendance of an inspector for any ship that has had a PSC detention in the previous 24 months, or any ship which is considered to be at high risk of detention, before calling at US ports.

5. Validity

5.1. This Technical Alert is valid until 31 December 2026.

6. Revisions

V1.0 – first issue
V1.1 – correction of erroneous year "25" to "26" in headers and footers
V2.0 – updated to confirm 2025 figures and requalification for Qualship 21 in section 3
V2.1 – Addition of paragraph 3.4 with link to new Q21/E-Zero application form; definition of "Company" added as footnote

[4] https://www.bahamasmaritime.com/inspectors/