

CHAPTER 91

STANDARDS, FLAGS AND COLOURS

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This chapter has been diversity and inclusion impact assessed by the sponsor in accordance with Departmental policy. No direct discrimination or adverse impact was identified. This chapter is due for review at the next routine amendment exercise.

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CHAPTER 91

STANDARDS, FLAGS AND COLOURS

DEFINITIONS:

Foreign Sovereign – See [Chapter 94](#)

Flag Officer, Officers of Flag rank, Commonwealth – See Explanation of Terms on [page xx](#) |

Notes:

1. *Illustrations of the majority of the Standards, Flags and Colours referred to in this Chapter are to be found in BR 20, “Flags of All Nations” (www.)* |

2. *Whenever HM Ships or establishments have queries concerning flags or the conduct of flag ceremonial, these should be referred to the Yeoman of the Admiralty (YOTA), NAVY SSM-AW SEA CPO.* |

SECTION I - STANDARDS AND DISTINGUISHING FLAGS

J.9101. The Sovereign and the Lord High Admiral

1.

a. **Royal Standard.** The Royal Standard, being the personal flag of the Sovereign, is to be hoisted on board HM ships and on official buildings and enclosures only when The Sovereign is present. It is to be hauled down at the moment of departure. The only exception to this rule is that the Royal Standard is to be flown if available at parades in honour of the birthday of The Sovereign. The Royal Standard is never hoisted when The Sovereign is passing in procession.

b. (Navy Only). **The Flag of the Lord High Admiral.** The flag of the Lord High Admiral is to be hoisted, on occasions when the Lord High Admiral, His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, is present with any body of Royal Naval or Royal Marines forces, afloat or ashore, and on such other maritime occasions as The Lord High Admiral may command. If doubt should arise whether the flag of the Lord High Admiral is to be flown on a particular occasion, the senior officer present is to seek the guidance of the Admiralty Board. When the Sovereign and Lord High Admiral are embarked simultaneously in the same ship or establishment, the Royal Standard is to be flown but not the flag of the Lord High Admiral.

2. (Navy Only). Whenever The Sovereign and/or HRH the Duke of Edinburgh and members of the Royal Family embark on any of HM ships, the Royal Standard is to be hoisted at the main.

J.9102. Personal Standards

1. When, in the absence of The Sovereign, a Member of the Royal Family is present, the Member's personal standard is to be hoisted (at the main, when on board one of HM ships) and is to be treated with the same respect and saluted in the same manner as the flags denoting the presence of The Sovereign. When 2 or more Members of the Royal Family are present, one standard only – that of the senior Member present – is to be hoisted.

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2. The Standard that is provided for 'other Members of the Royal Family' is to be flown similarly for any Member who does not possess a personal standard.
3. If circumstances arise in which the Standards referred to in 1 and 2 above are not available, the White Ensign, Union Flag or RAF Ensign is to be hoisted and treated in a similar manner. (For informal visits, see [Chapter 93](#).)

9103. Standards of Foreign Heads of State

1. When a foreign Head of State goes on board any of HM ships, the Standard of the Head of State is to be hoisted at the main. If the Royal Standard, or the Standard of any other Member of the Royal Family is being flown, the Standard of the foreign Head of State is to be hoisted side by side with the existing Standard.

9104. Admiralty Board/Navy Board

1. The Admiralty Board flag may be flown when 2 or more of the Admiralty Board members including the Secretary of State for Defence or one of Her Majesty's Ministers meet in their official capacity (see also Para 9110 [sub para 3](#)).
2. The Navy Board flag may be flown when 2 or more of the Navy Board members meet in their official capacity (see also Para 9110 [sub para 3](#)).

9105. Naval Boards of Commonwealth Navies

1. When Commonwealth Naval Boards go on board any of HM ships the flags of the respective boards are to be flown.

9106. Flag Officers and Commodores

1. **Admirals' Flags.** Admirals of the Fleet, former First Sea Lords and Admirals who are or have been Chief of Defence Staff are to fly the Union Flag at the main when embarked in one of HM Ships or visiting one of HM establishments. The incumbent First Sea Lord is to fly the flag of an Admiral. The flag of an Admiral is to be flown at the main whilst other Flag Officers are to fly their flags at the fore. The flag of an Admiral is to take precedence over the flags of Admirals who are former First Sea Lords and former Admirals who have been Chief of Defence Staff when embarked at the same time unless otherwise directed.
2. **Commodores' Broad Pennants.** Commodores are to fly their broad pennant at the fore. Commodores RNR on the Active List are to fly their broad pennant in the ship or establishment to which they are affiliated.
3. **Authority to Fly Flags.** Only those officers of Flag or Commodores rank who are in command may fly the distinguishing flag or broad pennant appropriate to their rank and appointment. Officers of Flag rank (and Commodores) who are not in command, such as those who hold senior staff appointments, are not authorised to fly a distinguishing flag or broad pennant afloat or ashore (see also [Para 9107](#) regarding honorary officers).
4. When a foreign or commonwealth officer of Flag or Commodore rank, entitled to fly a flag or broad pennant, embarks in one of HM ships, in command of a multinational force, they may fly their flag or broad pennant as in [Para 9106 sub para 1](#) and [sub para 2](#), in the same manner as their equivalent RN rank. The Commissioning Pennant should not be displaced.

5. **Distinguishing Flags Ashore.** Officers entitled to fly a distinguishing flag or broad pennant afloat are also to fly the same ashore at their headquarters or other designated location. See also [Chapter 3](#) for rules concerning hoisting, altering, shifting and striking flags and broad pennants, together with the following references:

Para 9110	Flags and pennants displaced	
Para 9111	Flags half-masted	
Para 9148	Flags to be flown on shore	
Section III	Flags in boats, aircraft and cars	

9107. Honorary Officers in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines

1. Foreign Heads of State and distinguished persons holding commissions as honorary officers in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines are listed in the Navy List. Honorary officers, when visiting ships or establishments in Naval or Royal Marines uniform, may fly the distinguishing flag of their rank should they desire so to do. Such flags are to receive the same courtesies as are awarded to the distinguishing flags of equivalent rank Royal Naval or Royal Marines officers on the Active List.

2. The Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom

a. When the holder of the appointment of Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom is an Honorary or retired officer, a warrant is issued which allows the holder to fly, as the Lord High Admiral's representative, a specially-designed flag (Burgee). This can be flown from any vessel owned by the holder of the warrant and registered in the United Kingdom for the duration of their tenure in this appointment. Use of the Burgee is restricted to the term of appointment as Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom.

b. Additionally, when the incumbent of the appointment is an Honorary or retired officer, the Burgee of the Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom is to be hoisted on occasions when the incumbent is present with any body of Royal Naval or Royal Marines forces, afloat or ashore, and on such other maritime occasions as The Sovereign may command. If doubt should arise whether the Burgee of the Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom is to be flown on a particular occasion, the senior officer present is to seek the guidance of the Admiralty Board. When the Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom embarks in a ship, the flag or broad pennant of any Flag Officer or Commodore which may be flying in the ship, or the masthead Ensign, is to take precedence over the Burgee of the Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom which is to be flown from another mast or in an inferior position as the case may require.

c. Should the office be conferred upon a serving Flag Officer, the existing rules (as described in QRRN 9106.3) would apply - ie the Flag Officer's command flag needs to take precedence and the Burgee will not be flown. In effect, the Burgee of the Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom would be held in abeyance. If the office is conferred upon a serving officer of Flag rank, but not entitled to fly a command flag, they would be entitled to fly the Burgee of the Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom in accordance with the regulations set out above for Honorary or retired officers.

d. The entitlement of an incumbent to fly the Burgee of the Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom ceases on that individual's relinquishment of the appointment.

9108. Senior Officer's Pennant

1. When two or more of HM ships are present in a port or roadstead, the starboard pennant may be hoisted at the starboard outer yardarm of the senior officer's ship as a distinguishing flag, in addition to the masthead pennant, provided that the ship is not already flying any other distinguishing flag or broad pennant (see also [Para 9116](#)).
2. When HM ships are in company with warships of other allied nations the starboard pennant is to be flown by the senior British officer present in the manner described above, in addition to any flag or broad pennant.
3. See also [Para 9116](#) for squadron command pennant.

9109. Masthead Pennant

1. All HM ships in commission commanded by a Naval officer, or Royal Marines officer appointed in command, and not flying a flag or broad pennant, are to fly at the main a white masthead pennant. In a fleet establishment commissioned as one of HM ships and similarly commanded, the masthead pennant is to be flown at the head of the flagstaff.

9110. Flags and Pennants Displaced

1. **By the Royal Standard.** When The Sovereign and/or HRH Duke of Edinburgh embarks in a ship the flag or broad pennant of any Flag Officer or Commodore which may be flying in the ship is to be hauled down and the Royal Standard and the Union Flag are to be hoisted as in [Para J.9101](#). When the Royal Standard only is hoisted any other flag or broad pennant is to be shifted to another mast or to an inferior position or to another ship as the case may require, or in accordance with The Sovereign's pleasure. The masthead pennant is always to be hauled down when the Royal Standard is hoisted.
2. **By a Personal Standard.** A personal standard or flag used to indicate the presence on board of any other member of the Royal Family or of any foreign Sovereign, President or royal personage, is always to be flown at the main, any other flag or broad pennant being shifted to another mast or to an inferior position or to another ship as requisite.
3. **By the Admiralty/Navy Board Flag.** When the Admiralty or Navy Board flag is hoisted in a ship the flag or broad pennant of any Flag Officer or Commodore which may be flying in the ship is to be shifted to another mast or to an inferior position or to another ship as the case may require. The masthead pennant is to be hauled down whenever the Admiralty or Navy Board flag is hoisted.
4. **By an Admiral's flag or Commodore's Broad Pennant.**
 - a. When the distinguishing flag of an Admiral or the broad pennant of a Commodore is hoisted in a ship or establishment commissioned as one of HM ships, the masthead pennant is to be hauled down. (See [Para 9109](#)).

b. When the distinguishing flag of an Admiral senior in rank is hoisted in a ship or establishment commissioned as one of HM ships, any flag or broad pennant already flying is to be hauled down. This includes those establishments where a broad pennant is flown to denote a Commodore in command.

5. **Other Authorities.** The distinguishing flags of the authorities referred to in 9105 and 9112 are not to displace at the masthead any Flag Officer's flag, Commodore's broad pennant or masthead pennant. Such distinguishing flags should be hoisted at another mast; when this is not possible they should be hoisted side by side with the existing flag or pennant.

9111. Flags Half-Masted

1. On the death, otherwise than in battle (see [Chapter 3](#)), of a Flag Officer or Commodore whose flag or broad pennant is flying in one of HM ships or naval establishments, their flag or broad pennant is to be half-masted and kept at half-mast until sunset on the day of the funeral, when it is to be hoisted close up and finally struck, but if the funeral is to take place at a distance from the place where the flag or broad pennant is flying, it is to be kept at half-mast until sunset on the day on which the body is removed from that place.

2. A flag or broad pennant which has been struck in accordance with Para 0325 [sub para 5](#) may be temporarily re-hoisted for the purpose of Clause 1.

3. Masthead pennants are not to be half-masted.

4. Instructions on half-masting colours are given in [Para J.9139](#).

9112. Distinguishing Flags of Commonwealth Heads of State, Governors-General and other National or International Authorities

1. Notwithstanding the following instructions, local advice should be sought and local regulations confirmed before these flags are hoisted in HM ships.

2. The distinguishing flags of Commonwealth Heads of State, Governors-General, Governors and other officers administering a government, of the Chief of the Defence Staff, Commanders in Chief of Joint Commands and other Joint Commanders, of General and Air Officers Commanding and of officers of HM Diplomatic Service may be hoisted as follows:

a. When being saluted by HM ships (see [Chapter 94](#)).

b. Within the limits of their governments, commands, commissions or jurisdictions as the case may be:

(1) At the bow of a boat in which embarked for the purpose of paying official visits or on other official occasions; if the boat belongs to one of HM ships a White Ensign is also to be worn. If the boat belongs to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary an RFA Ensign is to be worn.

(2) Subject to the senior officer's approval, in one of HM ships or RFAs when embarked on the public service.

(3) With the sanction of the owner or Master, in British registered ships and boats, other than those of The Sovereign, when embarked for the purpose of paying official visits or for passage on the public service.

(4) These regulations shall be deemed a sufficient warrant to the Master under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 (MSA 95) for so doing. The permission to hoist such masthead flags indicative of the presence on board of any of these authorities in no way affects the character or status of the merchant ship in time of peace or in time of war, whether The Sovereign is belligerent or neutral.

3. When instructions are received for the embarkation of one of the authorities referred to in Clauses 1 and 2 for passage on the public service, the senior officer present is, in the absence of special instructions from superior authority, to issue the necessary instructions for the hoisting of the proper distinguishing flag, provided that, after consultation with and requisition from the authority about to be embarked, the senior officer present considers it for the benefit of the service about to be performed that such a flag should be hoisted within the authorized limits. Should the senior officer present consider it undesirable in the circumstances that the flag should be hoisted, the senior officer present is to inform the authority of their reasons and at once report the same for the information of the Ministry of Defence.

4. When an ambassador is embarked, or when a governor, as defined in [Chapter 94](#), is embarked for passage on the public service outside the limits of their government, etc, special instructions will be issued about the distinguishing flag to be flown. In the absence of such instructions the senior officer present is to use their discretion in consultation with the authority about to embark.

5. The distinguishing flag of consular authorities is not to be hoisted in ships, except when they are being saluted. It may be flown in boats as in Clause 2b(1).

9113. Joint Commanders

1. In joint operations, should the officer commanding, appointed in a joint capacity and being of one star rank or above, be embarked in one of HM ships or RFAs, the appropriate Unified Commander joint service distinguishing flag or pennant should be hoisted at the fore to denote the presence of the headquarters. Such a flag is not to displace a maritime commander's flag or broad pennant, if both are embarked in the same ship, or the masthead pennant of the ship, but is to be flown superior to existing flags to indicate that the joint commander is in overall command of maritime forces.

9114. Commodore Royal Fleet Auxiliary

1. The Commodore, Royal Fleet Auxiliary flies his blue broad pennant in a similar manner to the broad pennant of a Commodore RN or RNR.

9115. Alternative Positions for Hoisting of Flags and Ensigns

1. In ships with masts and superstructures that do not allow the hoisting of flags and ensigns at the customary or authorized positions, such flags may be hoisted at another mast or, if necessary, at the yardarm.

2. In some cases where a position is available the airflow would be inadequate during normal wind conditions; in others, radio hazards may preclude the use of an otherwise suitable position.

3. The blocks provided for such purposes will be indicated in the drawing of the ship's aerial and VS rig. Such positions will be additional to those required for signal flags, and no change is to be made without proper authority.

4. The following alternative positions (which are listed in order of preference) should be used:

a. Standards, distinguishing flags, broad and masthead pennants and ensigns to denote the presence of a distinguished personage on board, as a proper distinguishing flag, during gun salutes, or for display during dress ship:

(1) Where the customary or authorized position is the main masthead:

(a) Fore masthead.

(b) Main yardarm (port or starboard as appropriate) as high as possible.

(c) Fore yardarm (port or starboard as appropriate) as high as possible.

(2) Where the customary or authorized position is the fore masthead:

(a) Main masthead (but see Para 9108 [sub para 2](#) and [Para 9116](#)).

(b) Fore yardarm (port or starboard as appropriate) as high as possible.

(c) Main yardarm (port or starboard as appropriate) as high as possible (but see Para 9107 2 and 3).

b. White Ensign at sea, when a staff on the after superstructure, a mainmast gaff or spur or other centre-line position is not available.

(1) Main yardarm (port or starboard as appropriate).

(2) Fore yardarm (port or starboard as appropriate).

c. Dressing-lines. When suitable centre-line positions cannot be provided aloft for dressing lines blocks these should be sited at port or starboard yardarms as high as possible. In two-masted ships the blocks should be sited so that the fore-to-main is, if possible, horizontal; if this is not possible, the foremast block should be the higher.

9116. Squadron Command Pennant

1. The squadron command pennant is to be worn by Captain H and Squadron Commanders in command of MCM (MCM1, MCM2, COMUKMCMFOR), Patrol Boat and Fishery Protections squadrons, when embarked in a vessel of their squadron to indicate their presence onboard. The pennant should be worn at the starboard yardarm and at the foremast in a two masted ship.

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The pennant will not displace the masthead pennant and will not be displaced by a distinguishing flag or broad pennant of a Flag Office or Commodore. If a Squadron Commander, is also the senior officer present, when it would be appropriate to fly the starboard pennant in accordance with [Para 9108](#), the squadron command pennant should be shifted to the starboard inner yardarm or other suitable location. (see also [Para 9115](#)) The squadron command pennant is not to be worn in boats, on motor cars or hoisted ashore.

9117. Queen's Harbour Master

1. The Queen's Harbour Masters of HM Naval Bases and other ports, when so appointed, are to fly the distinguishing flag of this appointment at their place of duty. This flag is also to be flown in boats whenever a Queen's Harbour Master, or any other officer acting with their authority, is afloat on duty in their official capacity (see also [Para 9176](#)).

9118. NATO Flag

1. The NATO flag is to be flown at the yardarm in HM ships and RFAs that are part of formed NATO squadrons or Standing Naval Forces (see also [Para 9148 5 sub para a](#)).

9119. North Sea Fishery Pennant

1. This pennant is to be flown in HM ships engaged on fishery protection duties in the UK EEZ. It is also flown in fishery protection vessels of other government departments, and fishery protection vessels of other nations' maritime forces.

9120. Paying Off Pennant

1. HM ships are only to fly this pennant when leaving harbour for the final passage to their paying off port, and again on entering harbour for the final time before paying off. It is customary for a paying off pennant to be approximately the same length as the ship in which it is flown.

9121. United Nations Flag

1. HM ships and RFAs may, from time to time, be called upon to operate under the auspices of the United Nations. In these circumstances they may be required to fly the UN flag at a yardarm, but should only do so when ordered by MODUK, Fleet Commander or PJHQ.

9122. Suit of Colours

1. It is deemed inappropriate to use a suit of colours – see [Para 9132 sub para 1](#) as a table covering or as a masking of boxes, barriers or intervening space between floor and ground level on a dais or platform. The use of any of the suit of colours for a table covering could be considered as an insult to the national flags of the United Kingdom, their use as a table covering for award ceremonies or Splicing the Mainbrace is not authorised. The use of any of the suit of colours to cover a statue, monument or plaque for an unveiling ceremony is not common practice and is discouraged.

2. The suit of colours should never be flown in a dilapidated or damaged condition or when soiled. To do so is to show disrespect for the nations they represent.

9123. Surface Flotilla Efficiency Flag

1. On receipt of the annual award signal to a Capital Ship, Destroyer, Frigate, HM Unit, MM and PP the Surface Flotilla Efficiency Flag is to be flown on the following occasions:

- a. Entering and leaving harbour.
- b. Whilst alongside UK and foreign ports.
- c. Whilst conducting a Replenishment at Sea.
- d. Whilst in company with other units.

2. The flag is to be struck on release of the next winners signal.

9124–9130. Unallocated

SECTION II - COLOURS

9131. Queen's Colour and White Ensign

1. The Queen's Colour is to be paraded on board HM ships of the Fleet and on shore on the following occasions:
 - a. By a guard of honour mounted for Her Majesty the Queen, His Royal Highness the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, or for any other member of the Royal Family.
 - b. By a guard of honour mounted for a Commonwealth or foreign Head of State. (See also [Chapter 92](#)–Chapter 94).
 - c. At parades to celebrate the birthday of The Sovereign.
 - d. On such important ceremonial occasions in the United Kingdom, Crown Dependencies and United Kingdom Overseas Territories as may be ordered by or on behalf of the Defence Council; or in Commonwealth countries on occasions of important ceremonial when the Governor-General, Governor or Head of State is present, as may be directed, and after consultation with the authorities of the country concerned.
2. The Queen's Colour is not to be paraded on occasions other than those listed above; nor is it to be paraded in any country of which Her Majesty The Queen is not the Head of State, nor in any territory which is not a part of Her Majesty's realms.
3. The Queen's Colour is to be lowered only to Her Majesty the Queen, His Royal Highness the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, other members of the Royal Family, as Her Majesty pleases, Commonwealth or foreign Heads of State, designated members of the reigning families of Commonwealth or foreign indigenous monarchies, Governors-General, Governors and Lieutenant Governors, as defined in [Chapter 92](#)–Chapter 94, or special Royal Commissioners acting on behalf of the Sovereign, within their jurisdiction.
4. The Queen's Colour when carried uncased is to be received at all times with highest respect with arms presented, officers and warrant officers, together with senior ratings/NCOs in charge of formed units, saluting and band playing the National Anthem.
5. In the countries of the Commonwealth other than the United Kingdom on occasions at which the parading of the Queen's Colour is not authorized, the White Ensign may be carried by naval and Royal Marines landing parties at important ceremonial reviews or international maritime displays on shore at the discretion of the Flag Officer or senior officer present.
6. In foreign countries recognized by Her Majesty's Government the White Ensign may be carried by Naval and Royal Marines detachments on important ceremonial occasions:
 - a. When the Head of State or their representative is present; or
 - b. When the omission of the White Ensign might cause misunderstanding or offence. On these occasions Commanding Officers, in consultation with the senior officer present, may adapt the rules in BR 1834, Royal Navy Ceremonial and Drill to suit local conditions or ceremonial.

7. In the United Kingdom the White Ensign may be carried in parades to mark the granting of the freedom of a borough or city to a ship or shore establishment and in consequent ceremonies in recognition of that freedom. For all other occasions (other than as in Clause 8), the White Ensign is to be carried only as may be authorized by or on behalf of the Defence Council.

8. Within the boundaries of Naval establishments, the White Ensign may be carried at parades which are specifically for the purpose of rehearsals or training for the occasions mentioned above.

9. Details of ceremonial procedure are given in BR 1834, *Royal Navy Ceremonial and Drill*. See also Para 9101 [sub para 2](#) on the Royal Standard and 9148.4 for use of the White Ensign at a saluting base or when 'beating retreat'.

10. Regulations concerning the presentation, custody, parading and laying up of Queen's and Regimental Colours of the Royal Marines are contained in Queen's Regulations for the Army, and detailed instructions are to be found in the Royal Marines Drill Instructions (BR 2118). Commanding Officers may also seek advice and guidance from the Commandant General Royal Marines and the corps Heraldic Committee.

9132. Wearing of Colours by Ships in Commission

1. A suit of colours worn by HM ships in commission comprises the White Ensign, Jack (Union Flag) and a White Masthead Pennant. These flags are the formal acknowledgement of the British national character, sovereignty and status of the ship in which they are flown. All HM ships in commission are to wear colours as laid down in the following Clauses. In the special case of ships undergoing contractors sea trials see [Para 9142](#).

2. Peacetime

a. The White Ensign is to be worn as follows:

(1) During the hours laid down in [Para 9136](#), on all occasions.

(2) Outside the hours laid down in [Para 9136](#), whenever one of HM ships takes up their berth or gets under way, the Ensign is to be flown.

(3) Outside the hours laid down in [Para 9136](#), when one of HM ships or a foreign warship is under way (except when carrying out a cold move) between sunrise and five minutes to morning colours and between evening colours and sunset, all ships in their vicinity which are not under way (except those in dry dock) are to hoist their Ensign. The Ensign is to remain hoisted until the ship underway is either alongside or clear of port, or until five minutes to morning colours which ever is the soonest, when Ensigns flying in accordance with this rule are to be hauled down in ships not under way; such ships are to hoist their Ensigns after evening colours if a ship is then under way as above before sunset.

(4) Continuously day and night, by any of HM ships which is under way flying a Royal Standard or escorting a vessel which is flying a Royal Standard, or flying or escorting a foreign Royal Standard of a Commonwealth or foreign indigenous monarchy or a presidential standard of a Commonwealth or foreign republic state (see also [Para 9134](#)).

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(5) As directed, when ships are dressed ([Para 9140](#)).

b. The Union Flag is to be worn as a Jack as at a(4) and (5) and, during the hours laid down in [Para 9136](#), by ships in harbour, at anchor, secured to a buoy or alongside, but not when in dock or conducting a “cold move”.

3. **Wartime.**

a. **Battle Ensigns.** In time of war, and at any other time when HM ships are on active service in armed conflict, colours are to be worn as for peacetime in Clause 2 above. Furthermore, the White Ensign is to be worn continuously by day and by night when underway. When in action, two battle Ensigns are to be displayed in the most conspicuous position without interfering with operational requirements or signalling equipment.

b. **Ensigns Shot Away.** Should an Ensign be shot away or otherwise damaged beyond recognition, a replacement is to be hoisted immediately by any means available.

c. **Auxiliaries.** These instructions are also to be followed by Commanding Officers of Royal Fleet Auxiliaries when in operational support and in the company of fighting units.

4. **Ships Not in Commission.** Ships not in commission are not to wear colours except as prescribed in [Para 9142](#).

5. **Ships Out of Routine.** Ships undergoing maintenance, modernisation, conversion, refit or extended docking in one of HM Naval Bases or contractor’s yards may, subject to the approval of the local Naval Base Commander, request to go out of routine and, as such, be exempt from the requirement to wear the Jack. Such ships are to indicate their special condition by flying the Port Flag (vertical red and white stripes) at the port outer yardarm by day and night. A White Masthead pennant is still to be worn. Ships out of routine are to exchange marks of respect with passing warships in accordance with [Para 9224](#). Ships Out of Routine are to ensure that they continue to carry out colours and sunset ceremonies on a daily basis when out of routine in accordance with [Para 9132 sub para 2](#).

6. **Ships on Dormant (Dead Ship) Leave.** Subject to the approval of the local Naval Base Commander, ships of MCM, Patrol Boat and Fishery Protection Squadrons which are wholly unmanned on dormant (dead ship) leave and berthed within one of HM Naval Bases, may additionally be exempt from the requirement to fly Ensigns for the duration of the period that they are out of routine (see [Para 9132 sub para 5](#) above). However, they must continue to fly a white masthead pennant by day and night to indicate that they are in commission. Such ships are to indicate their special condition by flying Flag One inferior to the Port Flag required under [Para 9132 sub para 5](#) above. This relaxation does not apply to ships which, although on dormant leave, are still manned by ship-keepers. If a wholly unmanned ship is berthed outboard of the manned ship, this will exempt the manned ship from the requirement to exchange marks of respect with other ships in accordance with [Para 9224](#).

7. **Ships under Dockyard Control.** Ships that have their care and protection wholly undertaken by dockyard authorities, may, subject to the approval of both the local Naval Base Commander and the Yeoman of the Admiralty, request to go out of routine (dockyard control), and, as such will be exempt from the requirement to fly the Jack and Ensign, however they must continue to fly a white masthead pennant by day and night to indicate that they are still in commission. Such ships are to indicate this authorisation by flying Flag Two inferior to the Port Flag required under Para 9132 [sub para 5](#) above.

9133. Manner of Wearing Colours

1. In harbour and when under way in pilotage waters the White Ensign is to be worn at the ensign staff. At sea it is normally to be worn, in a one-masted ship, on a staff in a suitable position on the after superstructure, and in a two-masted ship at a small gaff on the mainmast. On ceremonial occasions at sea the Ensign may be worn at the Ensign staff at the discretion of the Commanding Officer, or as ordered by the senior officer of the Squadron, who is to ensure uniformity. See [Para 9115](#) on alternative positions for the sea Ensign when a staff or gaff is not available.

2. The Union Flag, is to be flown at the jack staff and is to be of smaller dimensions than the Ensign – see BR 67 Chapter 11 for relative sizes for different classes-of ship.

3. Ensign Variations. There are many derivatives of the Ensigns of Her Majesty's fleet in use within the United Kingdom and overseas, and which Commanding Officers may encounter from time to time. These are described further in [Para 9153–Para 9154](#).

9134. Commonwealth and United Kingdom Overseas Territories and their Associated Vessels of War

1. **Commonwealth Flags.** Each Commonwealth nation has a unique range of flags, Ensigns and Standards, together with ceremonial procedures involving their use. However, in general, Commonwealth custom and practice derives from Royal Navy tradition, albeit sometimes modified to suit local requirements. In cases where doubt exists, and if YOTA or local Naval, or British diplomatic authorities are unable to offer suitable advice, flag ceremonial should continue or be conducted in accordance with these regulations.

2. **Commonwealth Vessels of War.** Warships and public service vessels of each maritime nation within the Commonwealth are provided with a unique suit of colours. However, changes in style or design are occasionally made and Commanding Officers expecting to encounter Commonwealth warships, or proceeding through waters adjacent to Commonwealth countries, should ensure that they hold up to date details of Commonwealth flags and Ensigns before deployment (BR 20).

3. **United Kingdom Overseas Territories.** There are 13 United Kingdom Overseas Territories in addition to the 3 Crown Dependencies. None of these have indigenous Naval forces, although some have auxiliary or cadet units. In these territories and dependencies, Royal Navy custom and practice should be followed unless specific instructions to the contrary are issued by either Fleet Commander or local authorities.

4. **Commonwealth and United Kingdom Overseas Territories Public Service Vessels.** Civilian manned public service vessels fulfil similar roles throughout the Commonwealth as they do in the United Kingdom, and generally wear the Naval, Government or Civil Ensign of the country concerned as their colours.

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In the United Kingdom Overseas Territories such vessels normally wear the Blue Ensign defaced with the badge of the territory, although in some cases a Red Ensign (defaced or otherwise) may be used. No formal ceremonial is required in respect of such vessels, however Commanding Officers should extend appropriate courtesies as they see fit in prevailing circumstances. Further information on British overseas Ensigns is given in [Para 9153](#) below.

9135. Army and Royal Air Force Ensigns

1. Army

a. **HMAVs.** HMAVs when in commission wear the Blue Ensign defaced with the Army badge in gold which denotes they are commanded by a commissioned officer. HMAVs wear the Union Flag as their Jack.

b. **Other Army Vessels.** All other Army vessels, manned by mixed crews of Army and civilian personnel, are authorised to wear the Blue Ensign defaced with the RLC crossed swords device. Army vessels follow similar custom and practice to Naval vessels in ceremonial and use of flags.

2. Royal Air Force

a. **HMAFVs and RAFMCs.** There are no vessels currently in commission in the service of the Royal Air Force. However the Royal Air Force Ensign remains a maritime Ensign in every particular and would wear the Union Flag as their Jack.

b. **RAFSA.** Of the several derivatives of the Royal Air Force Ensign, only the Ensign of the Royal Air Force Sailing Association (RAFSA) is designated for use afloat as national colours by authorised craft.

9136. Colours - Hoisting and Hauling Down

1. **Daily Routine.** HM ships, when lying in home ports and roads, are to hoist their colours at 0800 from 15th February to 31st October, inclusive, and at 0900 from 1st November to 14th February inclusive, but when abroad, at 0800 or 0900 as the Commander in Chief shall direct; and they shall be worn if the weather permits or unless the senior officer present sees objection thereto or directs otherwise, throughout the day until sunset, when they are to be hauled down. (See [Chapter 94](#)) The ceremony of Evening Colours is to be carried out at sunset, or at 2100 local time when sunset falls after that time (see also BR 1834). Riding lights are to be switched on at sunset and off at sunrise.

2. **In the Presence of The Sovereign.** Whenever The Sovereign is onboard any of HM ships with her Standard flying, colours in all of HM ships present are to be hoisted and hauled down at the same time as the colours in the ship bearing the Royal Standard.

3. **Training Establishments.** In shore training establishments, whenever trainees under instruction conduct the ceremonies of Morning and Evening Colours, special arrangements may be authorised by the Commodore or Commanding Officer of the establishment to accommodate the particular requirements of daily training routines.

9137. Embarked Royal Marines Units

1. The flag of the Commando Brigade or any other Royal Marines or Commando unit may be flown throughout the period that the unit is embarked in one of HM ships or RFAs. Details of all Royal Marines regular forces and reserve unit flags and badges may be obtained from the Headquarters Royal Marines. If the correct unit flag is not available the Corps Flag itself may be flown in its place.

9138. Lowering Flags

1. HM ships are never on any account to lower their flags to any other ships whatsoever, unless such other ships shall first lower their flags in salute to HM ships.

2. By custom, and as an act of courtesy, merchant ships lower their colours to warships. HM ships are to be punctilious in returning such salute, but are to be careful to avoid any suggestion of awaiting this mark of respect. Commanding Officers are to be conscious of the reduced manning of merchant ships, and be aware that crew members may not readily be available without warning to lower their ensigns in salute.

3. Nevertheless any flagrant or repeated cases of disregard of this practice, particularly by British registered merchant ships, are to be reported to MODUK NAVY (for DNO) and the Fleet Commander by the Commanding Officer or senior officer present.

4. Royal Fleet Auxiliaries are to be punctilious in lowering their colours to Commonwealth or foreign ships of war which they encounter. Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, and warships undergoing Contractors sea trials, flying the Government Service Ensign, are not required to lower their colours to warships of the Royal Navy of which they form an intrinsic part.

5. See *also* 9155, Hoisting national colours by merchant ships and private vessels, [Para 9156](#) Proper colours for merchant ships, and [Para 9157](#) Wearing of improper colours.

J.9139. Half-Masting Colours

1. **Half-Masting by Day Procedure.** (*Navy only.*) When colours are ordered to be half-masted throughout the day, the Ensign and Jack are to be hoisted close up when colours are conducted in the morning and immediately lowered to half-mast. At sunset they are to be hoisted close up prior to being hauled down.

2. **Funerals on Shore.** (*Navy only.*) When colours are ordered to be half-masted for a funeral on shore they are to be lowered at the time the funeral procession is due to leave the place where the body has been lying, and re-hoisted when sufficient time has elapsed for the interment. See *also* [Para 9111](#), Flags half-masted, and [Chapter 92](#)–[Chapter 95](#).

3. **Bodies Sent Out of Ship.** (*Navy only.*) When a body is sent out of a ship, colours are to be half-masted when the body is removed from where it has been lying on board and re-hoisted when sufficient time has elapsed for the interment; but when removed to await interment, colours are not to be half-masted, but the boat conveying it is to wear a boat's ensign at half-mast.

4. **Funerals at Sea.** (*Navy only.*) For a funeral at sea, colours are to be half-masted when the body is removed from where it has been lying and re-hoisted when the funeral service is ended.

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5. Instructions on the half-masting of ships' colours, Union Flags or Ensigns will be issued by the MOD to PJHQ, principal independent RN, RM, Army and RAF commanders and to the UK National Military Representatives at International Defence Organizations. Recipients of these instructions are to make arrangements to disseminate the information by the quickest means available to subordinate headquarters and units and to British elements of organizations within their areas.

Implementation of these instructions overseas may be subject to variation at the discretion of Service Commanders abroad who should liaise with their local UK political representative so as to ensure a common policy applicable to local circumstances. The following are a guide to procedures until confirmation has been promulgated by the MOD:

- a. On the death of The Sovereign. All flags are flown at half-mast from the announcement of the death of The Sovereign up to the end of the day of the funeral, with the exception of Proclamation Day, when they are hoisted to the top of the flagpole from 11 am (local time) to sunset.
- b. On the death of a Member of the Royal Family. All flags are flown at half-mast, subject to the Sovereign's wishes, from the day of death up to the end of the day of the funeral.
- c. On the death of a foreign sovereign, head of state or other distinguished foreign or Commonwealth national (as promulgated by the MOD). All flags are flown at half-mast on the day of the funeral.
- d. On the death, when holding office, of a Defence Minister, the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chief of the Naval, Army or Air Staff of the Defence Board or the Permanent Under Secretary of State. All flags are flown at half-mast on the day of death and all day on the day of the funeral.
- e. On the death of a serving military officer or other rank. Flags to be flown at half-mast on the day of death, the day of repatriation and on the day of the funeral until after the burial when the flag will be full masted to denote the end of military mourning. It is anticipated that usually action would be limited to the unit and the immediate superior formation of the deceased.

6. Ships' colours, Union Flags and Ensigns may, at the discretion of the senior officer in consultation with the local political representative be half-masted as a matter of courtesy to conform to local national mourning.

7. Where the Union Flag or Ensign is flown in company with the national flag or flags of any other country or countries (including Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) it is to be half masted as a matter of courtesy whenever the other national flag is half-masted.

8. In foreign ports, HM ships and vessels should conform when warships of the country concerned half-mast their colours on the death of one of their nationals other than the sovereign or head of state. If a foreign ship is in a British port on such an occasion, HM ships and vessels in company should half-mast their colours on the day of the funeral only unless the Defence Council issues special orders.

9. HM ships and vessels approaching or leaving an anchorage or port where any other HM ships or vessels are flying a foreign Ensign or national flag at half-mast, or have their colours at half-mast, are to conform while in sight of the ships in port. Harbour Ensigns are to be half masted immediately on hoisting when shifting from the sea Ensign to the harbour Ensign.

10. (*Navy only.*) When it is directed that 'flags' are to be half-masted, this is to be construed to mean the Ensign and Jack.

11. Flags flown at half-mast are to be flown with the top of the flag positioned two thirds of the way up the mast/halyard, but not less than one flag breadth from the top, should the flag be sufficiently low to be in contact with the ground/deck then consideration should be given to reducing the size of the flag.

12. Flags cannot be flown at half-mast on poles that are more than 45° from the vertical, a mourning cravat can be used instead, this is fitted to the top of the spike or pole and allowed to hang. A typical cravat is a length of black silk or cotton material 50-100mm in width and twice the length of the flag, it should be tied in a small bow so that the two ends are of equal length. The same applies to unit Colours, standards and Guidons that are carried during a period of mourning when the correct term is draping of Colours.

13. Flags that are flown permanently at any location are not to be flown at half-mast during the hours of darkness.

14. When flags are to be at half-mast from morning colours until sunset flags are to be first hauled fully up and allowed to remain in that position for a short period before being lowered as [Para 11](#) above. When flags that are flying at half mast are to be lowered they are first to be hoisted fully up prior to lowering at sunset/the end of the day

15. All flags that are on the same stand of poles should be at half-mast or should be removed for the duration that other flags are at half-mast. Flags of foreign nations should not be flown unless their country is also observing mourning.

16. United Kingdom national flags when flown abroad should also be at half-mast. If the flag is flown on the same stand as the host nations flag, then the host nations flag should not be flown unless that nation is also observing national mourning. Where a British national flag is flown alongside a number of other nations' flags such as outside a multinational Headquarters, it is considered inappropriate to remove all other flags in order to fly the United Kingdom national flag at half-mast. In these circumstances the United Kingdom National flag should not be flown for the duration of mourning. In case of doubt, the British Embassy, consulate or High Commission should be consulted.

9140. Dressing Ship

1. **National Occasions.** From Colours to Sunset (or Evening Colours if earlier) ships in port or at ceremonial anchorages are to dress overall on the following occasions:

- a. Her Majesty's official birthday (date published annually by signal from YOTA).

Her Majesty's birthday (21st April).

His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh's birthday (10th June).

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (14th November)

Accession Day (6th February).

Coronation Day (2nd June).

Commonwealth Day (second Monday in March).

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Note. *When anniversaries fall on a Sunday, Good Friday or other occasion of Divine Service, ships also dress on the following day with masthead flags only, while the salute is being fired (see also [Chapter 94](#)).*

- b. Between such times as may be ordered by the senior officer present:
 - (1) When in the presence of a Royal Standard or the flag or standard of a Commonwealth or foreign Head of State.
 - (2) On certain Commonwealth and foreign ceremonial occasions when in the presence of ships, or in the waters, of the countries concerned. Ships visiting Commonwealth or foreign ports should seek guidance on national anniversaries and festivals from the British Defence Adviser or Naval Attaché, or local authorities in the countries concerned.

2. **Dressing with Masthead Ensigns.** On the occasions for dressing ship overall, prescribed in Para 9140 [sub para 1](#) above, HM ships are to dress with masthead flags only (by flying Ensigns of the appropriate size at each available masthead together with the customary Ensign and Jack) in the following circumstances:

- Underway in the vicinity of a port or anchorage.
- Underway escorting a Royal Standard
- When operations, weather or maintenance render dressing overall inexpedient or dangerous
- Undergoing refit or in dry dock for other purposes
- Proceeding to sea less than one hour after Morning Colours
- Berthing or anchoring after 1600 local
- Not fitted with dressing lines
- Out of routine and flying the port flag (see Para 9132 [sub para 5](#))

3. **Ships Flying Distinguishing Flags or Pennants.** On occasions when HM ships are dressed in honour of a British ceremonial occasion or personage, ships flying the flag or broad pennant of a Flag Officer or Commodore or other distinguishing flag are to hoist the White Ensign only at those masts at which there is no distinguishing flag. Other ships are to hoist the White Ensign at each mast.

4. **Commonwealth or Foreign Occasions.** When HM ships are dressed in honour of a Commonwealth or foreign occasion or personage, the Naval Ensign of the country concerned is to be hoisted as detailed below. However, should the country or territory not possess a Naval Ensign, or should the Naval Ensign not be available, the next available flag taken from the following order of preference should be hoisted.

Naval Ensign – Government Ensign – Civil Ensign – State Flag – Civil (National) Flag

Not all countries possess a full range of such flags and in several cases a single flag is used for all purposes. Where none of these flags are available, or where doubt exists, or where there is concern that flying the incorrect flag may cause offence, the White Ensign should be flown instead. In every case local advice should be sought and local custom followed wherever possible.

HM Ship	Position of courtesy flag
Single-masted ship flying a Royal Standard or other distinguishing flag or pennant	Side by side with the Standard, flag or pennant
Other single-masted ships	The other country's Naval Ensign (or, in its absence, the other flags in order of preference outlined above)
Multi-masted ships flying a Royal Standard	At the fore
Multi-masted ships flying a distinguishing flag	At the main (with distinguishing flag or broad pennant at the fore)
Other multi-masted ships	At the main, with White Ensign at other masts

5. In the event of a UK and foreign national occasion coinciding, HM Ships and RFAs are to dress with the White Ensign at the masthead. However, should this situation occur in a port or ceremonial anchorage of the commonwealth or foreign nation celebrating, then guidance should be sought from the local British Consul and if necessary the appropriate foreign Ensign should be used (Para 9140 [sub para 4](#)).

6. Dressing Ship whilst Half-Masting

a. **United Kingdom Bereavement.** If an occasion for dressing ship falls on a day when colours are to be half-masted (i.e. on a day of national bereavement in the United Kingdom such as the funeral of a national VIP), only the Ensign and Jack are to be half-masted. Masthead ensigns are to remain close up and salutes should not be fired.

b. Commonwealth or Foreign Bereavement Recognised by Her Majesty's Government. If an occasion for dressing ship falls on a day when colours are to be half-masted for a Commonwealth or foreign bereavement which is formally recognised by Her Majesty's government (for example the death of a foreign Head of State), the procedure laid down in 9140.6a above should be followed.

c. **Commonwealth or Foreign Bereavement Not Recognised by Her Majesty's Government.** An occasion for dressing ship may fall on a day when warships of Commonwealth or foreign nations, which are either in company with or lying in the same port as HM Ships, half-mast colours for a national bereavement which is not formally recognised by Her Majesty's government. In this event, HM ships may still be dressed and salutes fired as usual. However, Commanding Officers are to be sensitive to the presence of warships of the bereaved nation. The senior British officer present must explain in advance to the Commanding Officers of the ships of the bereaved nation the reason for dressing ship and firing salutes, taking full account of local sensitivities and taking advice from superior authority if necessary. Should the senior officer present consider that unnecessary offence may be caused, he may modify instructions locally, if necessary, by ordering ships to dress with masthead Ensigns alone and for salutes not to be fired.

7. **In Shore Establishments.** On occasions when HM ships are dressed overall shore establishments commissioned as HM ships are to dress with masthead Ensigns only, unless particular arrangements have been made and approved by the Chief of Naval Staff/First Sea Lord, for the rigging of short dressing lines to the Ensign mast. When an establishment is dressed overall or with masthead Ensigns (see Para 9148 [sub para 1](#)) the additional White Ensign is to be flown at the starboard yardarm.

9141. Dressing Ship by Commonwealth Navies

1. Royal Navy custom and practice is generally followed throughout the Commonwealth, however local differences may exist; Commanding Officers are to be mindful of this and ensure RN compliance wherever possible and appropriate, especially in those countries of which The Sovereign is also the Head of State.

9142. Launching Ceremonies, Contractors Sea Trials and Commissioning Ceremonies

1. Launching.

a. **Ships Designated for the Royal Navy.** On each occasion of launching a ship for the Royal Navy at which there is a naming ceremony, the White Ensign is to be hoisted at the Ensign staff, the Union Flag at the Jackstaff, and the flag of the Lord High Admiral at the mainmast or suitable temporary mast erected for the purpose. These flags are to be struck once the ship has been secured alongside the fitting out berth. No other flags are to be flown. These flags should not be flown again until final acceptance of the ship from the shipbuilder. If a commissioning ceremony is to be conducted prior to the ship's final acceptance by the Royal Navy, the White Ensign and the Union Flag are to be hoisted during the commissioning ceremony and hauled down at sunset, or earlier if the ship is required to move from the berth. They are not to be hoisted again before the final acceptance of the ship from the ship builder.

b. **Small Craft and Boats.** In the case of launching small craft and boats and when full ceremony is conducted, the general practice in Clause 1 .a. above may also be followed. If this is inexpedient the White Ensign alone may be worn. If no ceremony is conducted no flags are to be flown.

c. **Ships Designated for Commonwealth Navies.** Subject to any instructions issued by the governments concerned, the foregoing procedure should be followed at launches in the United Kingdom of ships built for Commonwealth navies, with those countries' Ensigns, Jacks and Navy Board Flags (or national flags) being substituted where appropriate.

2. **Contractors Sea Trials.** During contractors sea trials, and before a ship is accepted into the Royal Navy, she is to wear the Government Service Ensign (a Blue Ensign defaced with a horizontal yellow Admiralty anchor), as her proper colours. If a Jack is worn, it is to be a small blue flag defaced with a horizontal yellow Admiralty anchor, with a Union Flag described in a canton at the upper corner next to the staff. No masthead pennant is to be flown. During this period there is no requirement for the ship to dip the Ensign to HM ships; however, the Ensign should be dipped in the customary manner to Commonwealth or foreign warships encountered at sea. When in the vicinity of commissioned warships and establishments, wherever possible the raising and lowering of colours should conform to the Senior Officer's movements.

3. **Acceptance and Commissioning.** Whenever a new ship is finally accepted into the Royal Navy, the Government Service Ensign and Jack are to be struck and the White Ensign and Union Flag are to be hoisted at the moment of commissioning, when the masthead pennant is broken out. If this occurs at night, after Sunset or Evening Colours, as appropriate, the Ensign and Jack are to be hoisted while the masthead pennant is broken out and then immediately hauled down, leaving the masthead pennant alone flying.

4. **Delayed Commissioning Ceremonies.** Notwithstanding Para 9142 [sub para 3](#) above, it is often the case that for programming reasons the ceremony of commissioning takes place some time after the formal act of acceptance and actual commissioning of a new ship. On such occasions there is no effect on the flags flown or colours worn by the ship before the ceremony, as the ship will already be entitled to wear a full suit of colours. Although the White Ensign and Union Flag may be hoisted at an appropriate point during this ceremony, the masthead pennant should remain flying throughout.

9143. Courts-Martial - Ceremonial

1. On the day on which a court-martial is to sit, the Union Flag is to be hoisted at the peak or at the yardarm as appropriate and a gun is to be fired when colours are hoisted, or at the time the signal is made if the court is ordered to sit immediately.

2. The Union Flag is to be dipped between each separate court.

3. Should the court sit for more than one day, the Union Flag is to be hoisted and a gun fired each day when colours are hoisted—or at any time previously that the court may resume its sitting. The Union Flag is to be hauled down when the court adjourns for the day.

4. Where local conditions dictate that that the firing of a gun be inappropriate it may be omitted with the permission of the local senior officer.

9144. Flags Hoisted when Saluting British and Commonwealth Authorities

1. The distinguishing flags referred to in [Para 9112](#) are to be hoisted at the fore, if necessary alongside any other flag or broad pennant already hoisted, when saluting the authorities mentioned. The flag should be broken at the first gun of the salute and kept flying until its completion.

2. When saluting non-naval authorities of other Commonwealth countries for whom no special distinguishing flags are authorized, the national flag of the Commonwealth country should be hoisted, except when there is an appropriate Ensign, as in the following cases:

a. The Australian Blue Ensign for Australian consular officers and the Australian Red Ensign for Australian diplomatic authorities.

b. The New Zealand Flag for New Zealand consular officers and the New Zealand Red Ensign for diplomatic and other authorities.

3. If the proper flag is not carried and cannot be obtained, when saluting any of the authorities mentioned in Clauses 1 and 2 the Blue Ensign should be used for saluting consular officers and the Red Ensign for other authorities. Should neither Red nor Blue Ensigns be available, a White Ensign may be hoisted instead.

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4. Except when a standard or distinguishing flag is flying to denote the presence on board the saluting ship of the person or authority being saluted, no special flag is to be hoisted on the occasion of salutes:

- a. To members of the British Royal Family ([Chapter 92](#)–Chapter 94).
- b. On British anniversaries ([Chapter 92](#)–Chapter 94).
- c. To Flag Officers and Naval or Royal Marines authorities of any Commonwealth country.
- d. To authorities of the United Kingdom for whom no special distinguishing flag is authorized.
- e. On customary occasions to Commonwealth countries ([Chapter 92](#)–Chapter 94).

5. When HM ships fire salutes in honour of national anniversaries of other Commonwealth countries ([Chapter 94](#)), the national flag or Red Ensign (see Clause 2) of the Commonwealth country concerned should be hoisted at the main unless ships are already dressed in accordance with Para 9140 [sub para 4](#).

9145. Flags Hoisted when Saluting Foreign Authorities.,

1. The appropriate foreign Naval Ensign is to be hoisted. If the country has no Naval Ensign, or such Ensign is unavailable, the next flag in order of preference from the list below should be flown in its place (see *also* Para 9140 [sub para 4](#) above).

Naval Ensign – Government Ensign – Civil Ensign – State Flag – Civil (National) Flag

Not all countries possess a full range of such flags and in several cases a single flag is used for all purposes. Where none of these flags are available, or where doubt exists, or where there is concern that offence may be caused by the flying of the incorrect flag, the White Ensign should be flown instead. In every case the advice of the local Defence Adviser or Naval Attaché, or other British consular or diplomatic officials, should be sought.

- a. At the main, when saluting another nation or a foreign Royal personage, President of a Republic or Head of State ([Chapter 94](#)).
- b. At the fore, when saluting a foreign Flag Officer or returning the salute of a foreign Flag Officer or warship, and when saluting any foreign naval, military, air or civil authority.
- c. At the main, when firing a salute in honour of a foreign national anniversary ([Chapter 92](#)–Chapter 94), unless ships are already dressed in accordance with Para 9140 [sub para 4](#).

2. Courtesy Flags

- a. **Warships.** HM ships are never normally to hoist courtesy flags when entering, laying alongside or leaving Commonwealth or foreign ports.

If the absence of a courtesy flag is commented upon by Commonwealth or foreign officials in the port being visited, Commanding Officers are to ensure a full and polite explanation is given which makes it clear the use of courtesy flags is a merchant service practice only. If however, the local authorities are insistent upon a courtesy flag being flown before the programme for a goodwill visit is allowed to proceed, the Commanding Officer should act upon the advice of the British Defence Adviser or Naval Attaché or other local British consular or diplomatic officials as appropriate. In these special circumstances, Commanding Officers have the discretion to fly a courtesy flag if this will serve to prevent the incident escalating unnecessarily.

b. **Auxiliaries.** It is the custom amongst merchant ships entering a foreign port, and during their stay in that port, to fly the civil colours of that country at the fore masthead, and when leaving similarly to fly the civil colours of the country to which they are immediately bound. This practice is also followed by Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, but only when they are operating on their own and when not in company with HM ships, or the warships of an allied nation. RFAs in company with warships are to comply with Royal Navy procedure and are not to fly such flags unless otherwise directed. Particular care is to be taken by auxiliaries to avoid displaying any colours of a country which may be at enmity with the country that the ship is leaving.

c. **Foreign Warships.** The custom for foreign warships visiting the United Kingdom, if they wish to fly a courtesy flag, is to fly the flag that they would fly if they were in the service of the United Kingdom. Therefore, the correct courtesy flag for a warship should be the White Ensign. A Union Flag should never be used as a courtesy flag as it is a protected flag for use at sea by the Royal Navy only. Similarly, a Red Ensign is the correct courtesy flag for a Merchantman.

d. **Flags from Affiliated Organisations.** Any flags that are or have been presented by affiliated organisations are not to be flown by HM Ships unless specifically authorised by Navy Command Head Quarters; this includes flags from individual countries within the United Kingdom, County and Regional flags plus any government or commercial agencies or other National flags. HM ships are to fly their flags iaw [Para 9132](#) and [Para 9133](#).

e. **Flags Flown During Replenishment at Sea.** The tradition of flying flags during replenishment may continue to be practiced, a single flag as authorised by the commanding officer, may be flown from a suitable position between flag Romeo being hauled down until the completion of the replenishment when all lines are clear, flags are not to include any flag as stated in paragraph [Para 9145 2 sub para d](#).

9146. Commonwealth or Foreign Ships Engaged in United Kingdom Ceremonial

1. **During Salutes.** The White Ensign is the appropriate masthead flag to be hoisted by Commonwealth and foreign warships when salutes are exchanged with HM ships, forts or batteries, and when salutes to Flag Officers or personal salutes are fired.

2. **When Dressing Ship.** The White Ensign is also the appropriate masthead flag to be hoisted by Commonwealth or foreign warships when dressing ship to comply with United Kingdom ceremonial occasions. Naval Base Commanders and Commanding Officers should be aware that foreign authorities often assume the Union Flag is the flag to be hoisted on such occasions.

Should this occur, or should there be an expectation of this occurrence, the senior naval officer should take such steps as may be appropriate to advise Commonwealth or foreign warships of the correct procedure in advance, taking care not to cause embarrassment or offence. On such occasions the correct masthead flag to be flown by Commonwealth or foreign civilian manned government service vessels is the Blue Ensign, and the Red Ensign by Commonwealth or foreign merchant vessels.

3. **Misuse of the Union Flag.** Commonwealth or foreign warships or merchant vessels may fly a Union Flag when acting as the flagship of an Admiral of the Fleet. HM Canadian ships will fly the Union Flag within Canadian waters on certain Canadian national days or as directed by NDHQ Ottawa. Any other usage is improper. Naval Base Commanders, Flag Officers, senior officers afloat, Queen's Harbourmasters and Commanding Officers are to take such steps as they deem appropriate to minimise misuse of the Union Flag, and especially to prevent it being inverted, whilst at all times taking full account of diplomatic sensibilities and protocol.

9147. Condominium Territories

1. The flags of both governments exercising sovereignty should in all cases be flown during the firing of salutes by HM ships in the waters adjacent to condominium territories.

9148. Flags to be Flown on Shore

1. **Use of Ensigns Ashore.** At the time of their original introduction into service the Red, White and Blue Ensigns were intended for use at sea only and were never expected to be flown on shore. Formal acknowledgement of the proper use of Ensigns on shore was published by Admiralty Memorandum No 397 dated 9 September 1931, since when their use on land has become common practice. Nevertheless the maritime nature of an Ensign remains predominant and, where a conventional Ensign mast is fitted, the Ensign should always be hoisted at the gaff except for the additional masthead Ensign when establishments are dressed (see Para 9140 [sub para 7](#)).

a. **White Ensign in Naval Shore Locations.** The White Ensign should generally only be used on shore in the Naval environments listed below.

- Ministry of Defence Main Building
- Shore establishments commissioned as HM Ships
- HM Naval Bases
- Royal Marines establishments
- Headquarters of a Flag Officer or other senior Naval or Royal Marines officer
- Facilities occupied by Naval lodger units in other government or service establishments
- Naval encampments, temporary airfields and disaster relief stations
- Patrol headquarters and other detached units, which although not independently commissioned, are in fact organized units of the Royal Navy Armed Forces
- Careers offices

b. **White Ensign in Civil Locations with Naval Connections.** The locations listed are exceptionally authorised to display the White Ensign on appropriate occasions due to their traditional connections with the service. Notwithstanding the provisions of Para 9148 [sub para 2](#) below, if the White Ensign is seen flying at any unauthorised locations Commanding Officers should take appropriate steps in accordance with paragraph [Para 9157](#).

Admiralty Arch
 All Saints Church at Burnham Thorpe
 Headquarters of the Royal Yacht Squadron
 HMCS HAIDA at Toronto
 HMCS SACKVILLE at Halifax, Nova Scotia
 HMS BELFAST at London
 Royal Naval Benevolent Trust Home, Pembroke House
 St Andrew's Church, West Tarring
 St Anne's Church, Limehouse
 St Luke's Church at Charlton
 St Martin in the Fields Church, London
 St Mary's Church at Woolwich
 St Werburgh's Church, Hoo
 The Cenotaph
 The Church of St Mary Magdalene, Gillingham
 The Church of St Peter and St Paul, Gravesend
 The Citadel at Charleston, South Carolina (memorial to HMS SERAPH)
 Trinity House vessels when dressed (at foremast only)

2. **Naval Support Establishments not Commissioned as HM Ships.** Ministry of Defence (Navy) civilian support establishments and logistic supply depots are to fly the Union Flag, and may also fly any recognised unit or organisational flag. They are not to fly the White Ensign except when HM ships are dressed overall or when otherwise instructed. The Union Flag is to be flown at the masthead. When the Union Flag is flown together with the White Ensign the latter should be hoisted at the gaff, or a yardarm if a gaff is not fitted. If neither a gaff nor yardarm are fitted a separate mast is to be used. The Union Flag is never to be flown from a gaff. Flags displayed in these establishments are still to be treated with all due respect, they are to be hoisted at the time prescribed in paragraph [Para 9136](#) and hauled down at Evening Colours or sunset, or such fixed hour as may be appropriate to local conditions. From time to time, directives may be issued for other buildings used for Naval purposes to display the White Ensign for specific ceremonial reasons.

3. **Medical Units in Time of War.** In wartime, medical units and first aid stations are to fly the Union Flag at the masthead unless authorised to fly the White Ensign. The White Ensign should be flown at the gaff if one is fitted. The Geneva Convention (or Red Cross) flag is also to be flown in a prominent position as follows:-

At the gaff or a yardarm if the Union Flag is at the masthead
 At the masthead if the White Ensign is at the gaff
 At a separate flagpole from the Union Flag or White Ensign if a conventional Ensign mast is not fitted

4. **Beating Retreat and Ceremonial Parades.** The White Ensign may be hoisted at a suitable Ensign mast or flagpole during the ceremony of beating retreat, or at the saluting base during a ceremonial march past or review within the United Kingdom or overseas. See also [Para 9101](#) (use of Royal Standard) and [Para 9131](#) (carrying the White Ensign at parades).

5. **Organisational Flags, Special Unit Flags and Departmental Flags.** Such flags are always to be flown at an inferior position to the White Ensign and Union Flag.

a. **The Flag of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.** The NATO flag is to be flown at NATO headquarters and may be flown in establishments and buildings involved in NATO training, meetings or other formal activities. (see also [Para 9118](#)).

b. **Royal Marines Unit Flags.** Royal Marines unit flags may be flown in shore establishments in accordance with the customs and practice of the Corps.

c. **Departmental Flags.** Departmental or house flags of civilian manned support organisations may be flown together with, but subordinate to, the Union Flag or White Ensign in the establishment concerned, and are to be treated in a similar manner to military unit or regimental flags. Departmental and house flags are never to be flown from a gaff. They are never to be flown by HM Ships.

d. **Accreditation, Affiliation and Association Flags.** Flags of commercial accreditations, affiliations and associations such as 'Investors in People' may be flown by entitled establishments provided they are flown on a flagpole or staff, which is separate from the mainmast of the establishment. Such flags are not to be flown on the same mast as the White Ensign and are never to be flown by HM Ships.

J.9149. Unified Headquarters

1. The distinguishing flag of the Unified CinC or Commander is to be flown at the Masthead and the Union flag at the peak to denote the presence of a United Kingdom military force.

9150. Unallocated

J.9151. Joint Service Units and Establishments

1. **Joint Service Establishments.** The Joint Service Flag is to be flown at units and establishments providing they are:

a. Under the control of the relevant complementing authority.

b. Manned by members of more than one service for a joint purpose.

c. Under the direct functional control of either the Ministry of Defence or the headquarters of a unified Commander; and that there are no local circumstances that may make it undesirable for him or her to fly this flag. Other establishments which although manned by personnel from more than one Service, which are primarily single Service, are to fly the flag of that Service. Exceptions to the foregoing rules are staffs of the UK National military representatives to International Defence Organisations and UK Support Units, for whom the national flag is the appropriate flag to be flown alongside those of units of other countries.

J.9152. Single Service Establishments

1. The rules regarding the flying of flags and where they are to be flown are contained in [Para 9148](#).

9153. The Blue Ensign

1. **Extent of Usage.** The Blue Ensign was reserved for government service vessels when the squadronal system was discontinued in 1864. Since then the use of both plain and defaced Blue Ensigns has developed significantly, and over one hundred defaced Blue Ensigns are in use today. Civilian manned vessels in government service, and in the service of certain organisations that were once publicly owned, are authorised to wear a Blue Ensign as their national colours. They are also entitled to wear a square version of the Ensign as a Jack, however the use of such Jacks is rare except within the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and new build ships prior to their acceptance within the Royal Navy. Ships wearing Blue Ensigns are to hoist additional Ensigns at the masthead on dress ship occasions in the manner described in 9140. The predominant organisations whose vessels are authorised to wear Blue Ensigns are detailed below.

2. **Blue Ensign – Undefaced.** The following vessels may fly an undefaced Blue Ensign

- a. Royal Research Ships (RRSs) belonging to the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). (Authorised in 1969).

- b. Merchant vessels whose masters hold a warrant from the Secretary of State for Defence in compliance with Clause 5 below.

- c. Yachts belonging to authorised members of privileged yacht clubs in the United Kingdom, Australia, Gibraltar and New Zealand and listed in the Navy List quinquennially. The register of members of United Kingdom clubs is maintained by the Royal Yachting Association, and of Commonwealth clubs by the Commander in Chief Naval Home Command, to whom queries should be directed if Commanding Officers are in doubt about the status of a particular yacht or yacht club.

3. **Blue Ensign – Defaced – United Kingdom.** The authorities and organisations listed at [Annex 91B](#) to this Section are privileged to use a distinct Blue Ensign defaced with their unique badge or seal. Most of them are within the public service, but some have been privatised since the Ensign was granted. In addition there are many defaced Blue Ensigns authorised for qualifying members of privileged yacht clubs within the United Kingdom and Crown Dependencies.

4. **Blue Ensign – Defaced – Commonwealth and United Kingdom Overseas Territories.** Blue Ensigns defaced with the appropriate seal or badge are authorised for use as land flags, and as Ensigns for government service vessels, in the territories listed at [Annex 91B](#). Defaced Blue Ensigns are also authorised for several yacht clubs in these territories especially in Australia.

BRd 2

5. **Blue Ensign – Undefaced – Use by British Registered Merchant Vessels.** Vessels registered on the British Registry of Shipping may wear a plain Blue Ensign providing the master or skipper is in possession of a warrant issued by the Director of Naval Reserves under the authority of the Secretary of State for Defence, and the additional conditions outlined below are fulfilled.

The Blue Ensign is to be struck if the officer to whom the warrant was issued relinquishes command, or if the ship or vessel passes into foreign ownership and ceases to be a British ship as defined by the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 (MSA 95).

a. **Merchant Vessels on Parts I or IV of the Register.** The master must be an officer of the rank of lieutenant RN/RNR or Captain RM/RMR or above in the Royal Fleet Reserve or the maritime forces of a United Kingdom Overseas Territory or Commonwealth country of which Her Majesty is Head of State, or an officer on the Active or Retired Lists of any branch of the maritime reserve forces of these countries or territories.

b. **Vessels on Part II of the Register.** This part of the Register is reserved for fishing vessels. The skipper must comply with the same criteria as for sub-Clause 5.a. above, however the crew must contain at least four members, each of whom fulfils at least one of the following criteria:-

Royal Naval or Royal Marines reservists or pensioners

Reservists or pensioners from a Commonwealth monarchy or United Kingdom Overseas Territory

Ex-ratings or Royal Marines who have completed twenty years service in the Reserves Members of the Royal Fleet Reserve

c. **Vessels on Part III of the Register.** This part of the Register is reserved for small vessels under 24 metres in length, used for recreational purposes only. Such vessels are to comply with Para 9153 2 [sub para c](#).

6. **Action on Sighting a Merchant Ship Wearing a Blue Ensign.** The Commanding Officer of one of HM ships on meeting a vessel wearing the Blue Ensign may send on board a commissioned officer to confirm that the criteria outlined above are being met in full. If it is found that the ship is wearing a Blue Ensign, without authority of a proper warrant, the ensign is to be seized, taken away and forfeited to The Sovereign and the circumstances reported to the Director Naval Reserves, acting on behalf of the Chief of Naval Staff/First Sea Lord, who maintains the list of persons authorised to hold such warrants. However, if it is found that, despite the warrant being sighted, the ship is failing to comply with the criteria in some other particular, the Ensign is not to be seized but the circumstances are to be reported to the the Director Naval Reserves (See also Para 9153 [sub para 5](#)).

9154. Red Ensign

1. The Red Ensign was reserved for use by the merchant marine and civilian shipping not authorised to wear other national colours, following the disestablishment of the squadronal system in 1864. Since then, the use of the Red Ensign has developed significantly and there are over thirty defaced versions of this ensign authorised for use today.

2. **Red Ensign – Undefaced.** The Red Ensign without any defacement or modification is the proper colours for all commercial ships and private vessels and craft listed on the British registry of shipping, or which would be placed on that register if they were to be registered. Civil vessels belonging to the Crown Dependency of Jersey and to certain United Kingdom Overseas Territories also wear this ensign as their proper colours.

3. **Red Ensign – Defaced – United Kingdom.** Each of the organisations listed at [Annex 91B](#) is privileged to use a distinct Red Ensign defaced with its unique badge or seal. All of these organisations are within the wider public sector. In addition, there are a number of defaced Red Ensigns authorised for qualifying members of privileged yacht clubs.

9155. Hoisting National Colours by Merchant Ships and Private Vessels

1. Under the provisions of MSA 95, vessels registered on the British registry of shipping, except fishing boats which are exempt, shall hoist the Red Ensign or other proper national colours as follows:-

- a. On a signal being made to the ship by one of HM ships, or by any other ship under the command of a commissioned naval officer.
- b. On entering or leaving any foreign port.
- c. In the case of ships of 50 or more tons gross tonnage and over 24 metres in length, on entering or leaving a British port.

2. Should a vessel which is registered on the British registry of shipping, or on the registry of shipping of a United Kingdom Overseas Territory, or an unregistered vessel which belongs to one of HM subjects, refuse to show her national colours to one of HM ships, the names of the vessel, of the master and of the qualified owners are to be ascertained. One or more affidavits of the facts are to be taken on the first occasion that offers, before a consular official or other competent authority, and subsequently transmitted to the Fleet Commander with a report of the occurrence.

9156. Proper Colours for Merchant Ships

1. The provisions of the Royal Proclamation of 1964 in respect of the wearing of proper colours by British merchant ships and other private vessels are enshrined in MSA 95 and are explained hereunder.

a. **Civil Ensign.** The Red Ensign without any defacement or modification whatsoever is the proper national Ensign for all British ships and craft except:-

- (1) HM ships and vessels, and other government department vessels entitled to wear different colours.
- (2) Other vessels authorised to wear different colours in pursuance of a warrant from the Secretary of State for Defence, or in pursuance of a warrant originally authorised under Admiralty jurisdiction.
- (3) Ships and craft registered in, or belonging to residents of, a Crown Dependency or United Kingdom Overseas Territory for which a defaced Red Ensign has been authorised by The Sovereign by Order in Council and endorsed under local shipping registry provisions.

b. **Civil Jack.** The wearing of civil Jacks is not obligatory and is not, therefore, subject to MSA 95. However, the Union Flag surrounded by a white border, commonly known as the merchant Jack or pilot Jack, and without any defacement or modification whatsoever, may be considered to be the proper national Jack for all British ships and craft. Nevertheless non-government vessels may fly instead an appropriate company or personal flag as a Jack, so long as it does not contravene the provisions of MSA 95 in relation to flags reserved for HM ships. In addition to HM ships, certain government department vessels in the United Kingdom and United Kingdom Overseas Territories are entitled to wear different national Jacks as part of their suit of colours.

9157. Wearing of Improper Colours

1. These provisions apply equally to acts committed outside United Kingdom waters as well as to acts committed within United Kingdom waters. The penalties on conviction are a fine or a term of imprisonment or both.

2. **Liability.** If any distinctive colours except the undefaced Red Ensign and merchant Jack, Union Flag, and any other colours authorised or confirmed by an Order in Council, or any colours usually worn by HM ships or resembling those of The Sovereign, including the masthead pennant usually worn by HM ships, or any pennant resembling that pennant, are hoisted on board any British ship or boat without a warrant from The Sovereign or the Secretary of State for Defence (or extant warrant from the Admiralty), then the master or skipper of the ship or boat, or the owner, together with every other person hoisting the colours shall be liable to prosecution under MSA 95.

3. **Misrepresentation.** If the master, skipper or owner of a ship which is not a British ship (as defined in MSA 95) does anything, or permits anything to be done, for the purpose of causing the ship to appear to be a British ship, or in the case of a British ship if an attempt is made to conceal the British nationality of the ship then, except as provided for in sub-Clauses a and b below, the ship shall be liable to forfeiture and the master, skipper, owner and any charterer thereof shall each be guilty of an offence unless:

a. The assumption or concealment of British nationality has been made for the purpose of escaping capture by an enemy or by a foreign ship of war in the exercise of some belligerent right;

b. The act of misrepresentation is within fourteen days of the date of assumption or termination of British registration by virtue of any provision of shipping registration regulations.

4. **General Response to the Use of Improper Colours.** If any colours are hoisted on board a ship in contravention of MSA 95 as outlined above, the ship may be boarded and her colours seized and taken away and forfeited to The Sovereign. Those persons entitled under the Act to board a vessel for this purpose are:

Any commissioned naval or military officer
Any officer of HM Customs and Excise
Any British consular officer

5. Response to the Use of Improper Colours by British and Commonwealth Vessels.

Notwithstanding the provisions in Para 9157 [sub para 2](#) above, in the case of a ship belonging to any of British or Commonwealth subject hoisting improper colours, including merchant vessels of the Commonwealth monarchies, the Commanding Officer is first to send a communication in writing to the master or skipper of such vessel, calling his or her attention to the requirements of MSA 95 in this regard, and is to allow a reasonable time to elapse from the delivery of such communication before proceeding to exercise the powers conferred upon him/her under the Act. If the incident takes place within the waters of another country Commanding Officers should, if they think it necessary, apply to superior authority for advice, In a foreign port, contact should be made with British Consular officials whilst at all times Commanding Officers must endeavour to avoid giving offence to local authorities.

9158–9170. Unallocated

SECTION III - FLAGS IN BOATS, AIRCRAFT AND CARS

9171. Boats' Ensigns

1. **When Underway.** The White Ensign is to be worn by RN and RM boats and tenders (power and sail), unless operational circumstances dictate otherwise.
2. **When Alongside.** When attended by their crews (except in HM Naval Bases and alongside HM Ships and establishments) Ensigns are to be worn between morning colours and sunset. They are to be worn in all places between morning colours and sunset when ships are dressed overall and/or when the boat is flying in the bows one of the distinguishing flags referred to in [Para 9112](#).
3. **Half-Masting.** The ensign is to be worn at half-mast when a body is being conveyed in a boat in any waters and, where practicable, when ships' ensigns are at half-mast ([Para 9139](#).)
4. **Boats Under Sail.** MOD owned yachts wearing the White Ensign are not to fly any burgee. Yachts flying the Blue Ensign may fly the burgee of the Royal Naval Sailing Association but no other.
5. **Recreational Craft – Not Publicly Owned.** The proper colours for recreational craft being bought with non-public funds is the undefaced Red Ensign. However, if such craft are being used for official training purposes, the government service Blue Ensign is to be worn. In either case, particular care is to be taken to ensure that the customs and practice of the Services are followed.
6. **Hired Tenders to HM Ships.** Should any of HM Ships or RM units take on bareboat charter or temporary hire a locally owned boat for the purpose of training, transport or logistic support, the provisions in clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4 are to apply providing all the following are met in full:
 - a. The boat is under the command of a RN or RM person.
 - b. The boat is manned by UK service personnel
 - c. The boat is under the operational control of a RN or RM unit.
 - d. Agreement has been reached with the owners (or charterers) and the local authorities.
 - e. The boat is not registered on a foreign register of shipping.

J.9172. Flags in Vessels and Boats

1. *(Navy only).* **Admiralty Board Flag.** When two or more members of the Admiralty Board, acting as a board, are embarked in a boat, the Admiralty Board flag is to be flown in the bows. See [Table 92-1](#) for ceremonial.
2. **Chief of the Defence Staff.** The Chief of the Defence Staff is authorised, when embarked in a boat is to fly a distinguishing flag. This is of equal dark blue, red and light blue horizontal bands with the tri-Service emblem embroidered on both sides.

3. **Senior Officers.** Senior Officers who are also governors of territories and the lieutenant governors of Guernsey and Jersey, when embarked in boats, are to use the distinguishing flag appointed for governors, or for such lieutenant governors, viz, the Union Flag with the approved arms or badge of the territory emblazoned in the centre thereof on a white ground surrounded by a green garland instead of the general officer's flag.

4. **Officers in Command**

a. (Navy only). A Flag Officer or Commodore entitled to fly their flag or broad pennant in a ship or Naval establishment, and an officer holding an appointment in command of a ship in commission, including a fleet establishment commissioned as a ship, when proceeding on duty in a boat on occasion of ceremony or other official occasions, may fly in the bows the flag, broad pennant or masthead pennant applicable to their rank. See [Table 92-1](#) for ceremonial.

b. When joint operations are being carried out, should the officer commanding the RM, Army or RAF or components be embarked in a warship or transport, the appropriate distinguishing flag of the senior non Naval Officer of the equivalent rank of commodore or above may be hoisted at the fore to denote the presence of the headquarters. Such a flag is not to displace any flag officer's flag, broad pennant or masthead pennant, and is to be flown in an inferior position to it.

5. (*Navy only*). **The Union Flag.** The Union Flag is never to be displayed from any of the boats of the Royal Navy except to denote the presence of an Admiral of the Fleet, former First Sea Lords or Admirals who have served as Chiefs of Defence Staff.

6. (*Navy only*). The flag, broad pennant or masthead pennant is to be flown only between colours and sunset except as in [Para 9177](#). (See also [Para 9112 2 sub para b](#) on Other distinguishing flags flown in boats, [Para 9177](#), Officer of the Guard, and [Para 9178](#), Member of court-martial).

9173. **Spare**

9174. **Flag Discs to be Displayed**

1. The following discs, which are to measure approximately 25 centimeters in diameter, are established for use in boats by senior officers when the full ceremonial prescribed in [Chapter 94](#) is not required:

a. A red disc with a white St George's Cross painted thereon is to be displayed on formal occasions when members of the Admiralty Board or Officers who are entitled to fly a flag or broad pennant are proceeding on duty but when the full ceremonial prescribed is not required (See [Table 92-2](#)).

b. A blue disc with a white St George's Cross painted thereon is to be displayed on formal occasion when Officers of Flag rank and Commodores who are not entitled to fly a flag or a broad pennant, are proceeding on duty.

c. A white disc with five black crosses painted thereon may be used on informal occasions by the Officers referred to, when courtesy salutes only will be accorded.

BRd 2

d. A personal standard plate may be used in lieu of a white disc, by certain members of the Royal Family when embarked in a boat. Ceremonial appropriate to the white disc is to be accorded.

2. The red and blue discs are only to be displayed between colours and sunset.

9175. Chief of Staff

1. A Chief of Staff is to have painted on his/her boat the flag of the Flag Officer on whose staff he/she is serving. (See Para 9106 [sub para 4.](#))

9176. Queen's Harbour Master

1. A Queen's Harbour Master, or any officer acting directly under his/her authority, when afloat and in the execution of the duties pertaining to his/her office is to fly the flag of the Queen's Harbour Master in the bows of his/her boat (see also [Para 9117](#)).

9177. Officer of the Guard

1. The Officer of the Guard, proceeding on duty in a boat, is to fly a masthead pennant both by day and by night.

9178. Members of Courts-Martial

1. An Officer who is president or a member of a court-martial and is not otherwise entitled to fly a flag, broad pennant or masthead pennant, is to fly a masthead pennant in the bows of their boat between the hours of colours and sunset when proceeding to or from the court.

9179. General Officers and Brigadiers, Royal Marines

1. When afloat on occasions of ceremony or other official occasions, General Officers and Brigadiers of the Royal Marines may fly the flags appropriate to their ranks.

9180. Flags, Standards and Discs on Naval Aircraft

1. When practicable, distinguishing standards, flags or discs are to be displayed on Naval fixed wing communication aircraft when embarking/disembarking important personages and plates painted to the same design as standards, flags and discs are to be displayed on rotary wing communication aircraft as follows:

a. When Royal or distinguished persons (as described in [Para 9112 sub para 2](#)) entitled to fly personal standards or distinguishing flags travel in Naval aircraft, the appropriate standard or flag is to be flown.

b. When two or more members of the Admiralty Board acting as a board are embarked the Admiralty Board flag is to be flown.

c. When the Chief of Naval Staff and First Sea Lord is embarked, an Admirals Flag is to be flown.

d. The personal flag of Commanders-in-Chief of Joint Commands and of Joint Commanders may be flown on Naval aircraft within their commands.

e. The flag or broad pennant applicable to their rank is to be flown when an Officer entitled to fly their flag or broad pennant in a ship or establishment is embarked. The masthead pennant is not to be flown and red and white discs ([Para 9174](#)) are not to be displayed by naval aircraft.

f. On formal occasions, the presence on board an aircraft of an Officer of Flag rank or Commodore who is not entitled to fly a flag or broad pennant is to be indicated by the display of a blue disc as in [Para 9174 1 sub para b](#).

g. When a General Officer or Brigadier of the Royal Marines is embarked, the flag applicable to his rank is to be flown.

2. Standards, flags and discs are to be flown or displayed on fixed wing communication aircraft only when the aircraft is stationary.

3. Rotary wing communication aircraft may display a secure painted plate both on the ground and in flight.

4. Standards, flags, discs and plates are not to be flown or displayed by operational aircraft nor by other aircraft should it be considered inexpedient or hazardous to do so.

J.9181. Flags on Motor Cars

1. When Royal or distinguished persons entitled to fly personal standards or distinguishing flags travel in Service vehicles, the appropriate standard is to be flown.

2. Lists of the Service Officers entitled to fly car flags and descriptions of the appropriate flags are contained in [Annex 91A](#).

3. All distinguishing flags of Service Officers are to be flown from a forward position on the front bonnet of the car but only when the Officer who occupies the car is entitled to the flag.

4. Occasions on Which Car Flags are to be Flown.

a. Flags are to be flown:

(1) On official occasions only; only the senior Officer attending the function may authorise a departure from the normal practice.

(2) In areas where there is a need for the car or its occupant to be recognised, eg. because of the proximity of Service establishments, etc. On cross-country journeys flags are not normally to be flown but are to be hoisted at a short distance from the destination.

b. A car flag may be flown by an Officer wearing civilian clothes on duty, if the Officer considers it desirable.

c. An Officer is not to fly the flag of their superior Officer when acting as their representative but is to fly the flag if any to which he/she is entitled.

d. In foreign and Commonwealth countries, Officers may fly their car flags on those occasions when the British Ambassador or High Commissioner considers that it would be appropriate for them to do so. In certain countries the flying of car flags may be completely precluded by laws, customs or local conditions.

BRd 2

- e. A Defence Attaché or Adviser who is also accredited as a Single Service Attaché or Adviser may fly the car flag of their own Service when attending functions relating to that Service as opposed to those of a Defence character.
- f. Subject to these general rulings, commanders may limit the flying of flags when they consider the political or local circumstances in the area make it desirable to do so.

J.9182. Star Plates on Motor Cars

1. Star plates may be displayed on cars carrying senior Officers and Officers of equivalent rank in the other Services. The number of stars denoting rank are as follows:

Admiral of the Fleet/Field Marshal/Marshal of the Royal Air Force.....	Five Stars
Admiral/General/Air Chief Marshal.....	Four Stars
Vice-Admiral/Lieutenant-General/Air Marshal.....	Three Stars
Rear-Admiral/Major-General/Air Vice-Marshal.....	Two Stars
Commodore/Commodore RNR/Brigadier/Air Commodore/Matron in Chief QARNNS/Matron in Chief PMRAFNS.....	One Star

2. The plates are to be displayed only on journeys made on duty. The star plates are to be covered when the entitled Officer does not occupy the vehicle.

3. The star plates are royal blue for RN officers, red for Army and RM officers and air force blue for RAF officers. Officers in joint Service appointments are to display plates in the joint Service colours of vertical bands of dark blue, red and light blue.

9183–9199. Unallocated