

This week a yacht and a Russian naval vessel had an encounter in international waters in the English Channel. The Russian vessel twice blasted 5 bursts on the horn before firing some small arms fire into the air. Although small arms fire would be a serious matter on the river, sound signals are appropriate and applicable.

Boat Sound Signals on the River

Sound signals used by a boat are mainly for safety purposes. The signals help clarify a vessel's intentions when manoeuvring.

1 blast means "I am going to Starboard" – Turning right.

2 blasts means "I am turning to Port" – Turning left.

3 blasts means "I am going astern" – Going backwards.

5 blasts means "I am unsure of your intentions" – Make your intentions clear.

See: The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea COLREGS
<https://www.rya.org.uk/water-safety/do-you-know-your-colregs/>