

Overview

During the period of 03 to 09 October, there were two piracy related incidents in the High Risk Area (HRA). At 0424 UTC on 09 Oct 2012, a merchant vessel reported an approach by one white-coloured skiff with 7-8 persons aboard at position 1318N-05717E (NSC 025/12). On the same day, at 0732 UTC, there was a further report of a skiff at 1314N-05720E with 6 persons and a ladder aboard.

Merchant vessels are advised to remain vigilant throughout the HRA and ensure that Self Protection Measures are in place, as it is a realistic possibility that Pirate Attack Groups (PAGs) are operating in the area.

The Southwest Monsoon season has just ended. Improving weather conditions will likely allow PAGs to operate further out from shore.

Please see the PAG map for all areas of concern. The PAG map is available on the NATO Shipping Centre website: <http://www.shipping.nato.int/>

Southern Red Sea (SRS)/Bab Al Mandeb (BAM)/Gulf of Aden (GOA)/Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC)

During the past few months there have been continued reports concerning suspicious activity in the SRS, BAM and GOA.

Fishing activity is expected to continue in this area. Fishermen may carry small arms. Masters are reminded to remain vigilant in order to distinguish between fishing vessels and potential pirates.

Arabian Sea (AS)/Greater Somali Basin (SB)/Gulf of Oman (GOO)/Mozambique Channel (MC)

As noted above, there were two incidents in the AS on 09 October 2012.

Counter Piracy Guidance Update

Masters are advised that the threat of piracy against merchant shipping is always present throughout the entire HRA and vessels are advised to ensure all necessary Self Protection Measures are implemented as recommended in BMP4. As per Section 5 of BMP4, early registration with MSCHOA before entering the HRA and regular reporting to UKMTO are highly recommended. Prudent and timely implementation of all recommended actions and ship hardening measures in BMP4 can make the critical difference of being approached, attacked, or pirated. NSC would like to remind masters that BMP4 highly recommends maintaining best possible vessel speed when transiting the HRA to deter pirate boardings.

Successful disruptions by naval forces over the past few months, in conjunction with masters' adherence and implementation of BMP4, have significantly reduced the pirates' ability to capture vessels. Somali pirates have shown the ability to act far off the coast of Somalia and in darkness. Somali pirates are in search of vessels of opportunity, such as those who are not employing BMP4 recommended Ship Protection Measures.

Both dhows and whalers can be used as motherships. In the northern SB and AS the preferred motherships are local dhows, whereas in the southern SB, eight-metre whalers are preferred,

weather permitting. Information and photographs regarding known pirate motherships are available at <http://www.shipping.nato.int/pages/motherships2.aspx>. If you have any information regarding pirate motherships please send it to us on info@shipping.nato.int.

There have been a number of incidents recently reported to Counter Piracy organisations in the HRA involving small craft approaches to merchant vessels. Although these incidents may appear to be piracy related, the majority actually are not and have been assessed as non-piracy related activity common to the pattern of life in the area. This can include fishing, small vessel trade, smuggling and other local traffic. A large number of fishing vessels operate in the SRS, the BAM and up to 50 nm off the west coast of India. Fishing vessels may approach a merchant ship in order to maximise fishing opportunities or to safeguard fishing nets. Fishing off India is generally carried out using long lines by mechanized or single-hull boats which typically have outboard motors and carry 4-6 crew members. Masters are requested to ensure they distinguish between fishing vessels and potential pirates; fishermen may carry small arms.

Please note that, if we assess an approach or incident to be piracy, we will issue relevant warnings and alerts, keeping the merchant shipping community fully informed at all times.

It has been observed that some Masters are choosing to phone their Company Security Officer (CSO) first in the event of a piracy incident. However, one of the fundamental requirements of BMP4 is that UKMTO is the primary point of contact for merchant vessels during piracy incidents in the HRA. This aims to avoid unnecessary delay and prevent inaccurate or incomplete information from reaching military commanders. CSOs should ensure their ships' security plans reinforce the BMP4 recommendation that UKMTO be immediately telephoned at +971 50 55 23215 in the event of any piracy activity. UKMTO will then make it a priority to contact the CSO with any information received whilst ensuring the relevant information reaches the military commanders with the minimum of delay.

Sailing yachts should avoid transiting the HRA. With the end of the Southwest Monsoon, the weather and sea states in the Indian Ocean and the Southern Red Sea will become more conducive to pirate activity. Past activity has shown that pirates will also attack both large and small yachts passing their way. Despite the fact that attacks on merchant vessels appear to have decreased, the possibility of attacks and the successful pirating of sailing vessels remains likely due to their vulnerability and the reduction of revenue sources from merchant vessels.