NSC Weekly Piracy Update

Overview

During the reporting period of 01 to 07 August 2012, there has been one report of suspicious activity (NSC Daily Piracy Update 06 Aug) in the High Risk Area.

Pirate activity can still take place during the South-West Monsoon. It should be noted that pirates are likely operating closer to shore to avoid severe conditions further out to sea. Pirate Attack Groups (PAGs) will likely continue to focus their efforts in the Northern Arabian Sea (NAS), Gulf of Oman (GOO) as well as in the Gulf of Aden (GOA), Southern Red Sea (SRS), and coastal waters.

Specific areas of suspected and known PAG locations can be found on our PAG map.

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

On 05 Aug 12 a merchant vessel reported a possible PAG in the vicinity of 13 21N 042 48E.

A number of reports concerning suspicious activity have been received during the past two weeks in the Southern Red Sea (SRS) and Bab-al-Mandeb (BAM). Due to weather conditions in the area, PAGs may move to operate in less-exposed or coastal areas such as the SRS, Gulf of Aden (GOA) or BAM.

Fishing activity is expected to continue and likely increase in this area during the Southwest monsoon season. Masters are reminded to remain vigilant in order distinguish between fishing vessels and potential pirates.

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

There have been no significant changes over the past week.

Counter Piracy Guidance Update

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, though are currently impeded by the South-West Monsoon. Somali pirates are in search of vessels of opportunity, such as those who are not readily employing BMP4 recommended Ship Protection Measures.

Both dhows and whalers are being used as motherships. In the northern SB and AS the preferred motherships are local dhows, whereas in the southern SB, 8-metre whalers are preferred. Information and photographs regarding known pirate motherships is available at http://www.shipping.nato.int/pages/motherships2.aspx. If you have any information regarding pirate motherships please e-mail info@shipping.nato.int.

There have been a number of incidents recently reported to Counter Piracy organisations in the High Risk Area involving small craft approaches to Merchant Vessels. Although these incidents may appear to be piracy related, the majority 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.

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

Somali pirates operating in this area are looking to pirate merchant ships, yet past activity has shown that pirates will also attack both large and small yachts passing their way. Larger yachts with more people onboard or a group of yachts could be seen as a valuable and easy target for the pirates. For more information, please read the Let your Yacht take the ferry document located in the "Important Messages" section on the NSC website main page.

It has been observed that some Masters are choosing to phone their Company Security Officer (CSO) first in the event of a piracy incident. One of the fundamental requirements of BMP4 states that UKMTO is the primary point of contact for merchant vessels during piracy incidents in the High Risk Area (HRA) which should avoid unnecessary delay and possible inaccurate or incomplete information reaching military commanders. CSOs should ensure their ships' security plan reinforces the BMP4 recommendation that UKMTO should be telephoned at +971 50 55 23215 in the event of any piracy activity. UKMTO will then make every effort to contact the CSO as a matter of priority with any information received, whilst ensuring the relevant information reaches the military commanders with the minimum of delay.

When navigating throughout the entire region of the HRA, masters are reminded of the need for continued adherence to Best Management Practices 4 (BMP4). As per Section 5 of BMP4, early registration with MSCHOA before entering the HRA and regular reporting to UKMTO are highly recommended. Masters are advised that the threat of piracy against merchant shipping is always present throughout the entire HRA, and are advised to ensure all necessary Self Protection Measures are implemented as recommended in BMP4. Prudent and timely implementation of all recommended actions and ship hardening measures in BMP4 can make the important difference of being approached, attacked, or pirated. NSC would like to remind masters that BMP4 highly recommends maintaining maximum vessel speed when transiting the High Risk Area (HRA) to prevent pirate boardings.

Masters are also reminded that a large number of fishing vessels operate in the Southern Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb 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 by mechanized or single hull boats with outboard motor carrying 4-5 crew using long lines. Masters are requested to ensure they distinguish between fishing vessels and potential pirates; fishermen may carry small arms.

As noted above, if an incident occurs, Masters are to report immediately to UKMTO via telephone +971 50 55 23215 and provide as much information as possible and as accurate regarding the incident. This will ensure the information is quickly provided to other ships in the area for their awareness and vigilance. If Masters are safely able to take pictures and/or video of the suspicious activity, please provide these via email to UKMTO at

ukmto@eim.ae, NSC (NATO Shipping Centre) at info@shipping.nato.int and Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) at postmaster@mschoa.org. This information will be used by Counter Piracy forces to combat piracy activity.

Weekly Pirated Vessels Update

NUMBER OF SHIPS: 7
(Does not include Dhow and Fishing Vessels)

COMBINED TOTAL NUMBER OF HOSTAGES: 177

Name	Flag	Date Pirated	Crew
1) ICEBERG 1	Panama	29-Mar-10	22
2) ALBEDO	Malaysia	25-Nov-10	15
3) ORNA	Panama	20-Dec-10	19
4) FREE GODDESS	Liberia	07-Feb-12	21
5) ROYAL GRACE	Panama	02-Mar-12	22
6) NAHAM 3	Oman	26-Mar-12	29
7) SMYRNI	Liberia	10-May-12	26
TOTAL:			**154**
HOSTAGES WITHOUT VESSEL			
Ex FV PRANTALAY		18-Apr-10	4
Ex MV LEOPARD		12-Jan-11	6
Ex MV ASPHALT		16-Apr-11	7
Ex MV Gemini		30-Apr-11	4
Ex FV Aride		29-Oct-11	2
TOTAL:			**23**