



NSC Weekly Piracy Update

Overview

At 0535Z 27 Dec 2012, a merchant vessel near the Strait of Hormuz (2617N; 05643E) reported an approach by two skiffs. First skiff approached to within 500 metres; possible weapons sighted. Vessel's armed security team fired flares and skiff moved away. Second skiff then approached to within 200m. Second skiff reportedly broke away after vessel's armed security team fired warning shots. Vessel is safe.

At 1030Z 27 Dec 2012, a merchant vessel reported an approach by two skiffs off the Omani coast. Skiffs accelerated towards ship and followed, but broke off after a flare was fired. The vessel is safe.

Also on 27 Dec 2012, BNS Louise Marie disrupted a suspect skiff with three men aboard 400 nm off the Somali coast. Following confiscation of equipment, the men were subsequently landed on the Somali coast.

At 1721Z 30 Dec 2012, a merchant vessel reported suspicious activity by two skiffs in the Gulf of Aden. The skiffs broke off after a flare was fired. The vessel is safe.

On 01 Jan 2013, a merchant vessel reported an incident involving four skiffs at 0218N 04602E that occurred at 1130Z. The vessel is safe and the incident is being investigated further.

In the light of these incidents, areas of concern have been posted to our Piracy Attack Group (PAG) map in the Gulfs of Oman and Aden and off the Somali coast. The PAG map is available at <http://www.shipping.nato.int> and is updated regularly.

Merchant vessels are advised to remain vigilant throughout the HRA and ensure that Self Protection Measures are in place as Pirate Attack Groups (PAGs) may be operating in the area. Although sea states in some parts of the HRA have become more marginal with the onset of the Northeast monsoon, small boats are still be able to operate.

Any areas of concern will be posted to our PAG map which is available on During the past few months there have been continued reports concerning suspicious activity in the HRA. 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.

Counter Piracy Guidance

Continued threat The threat of piracy against merchant shipping continues throughout the entire HRA. Despite the deterioration in conditions associated with the Northeast monsoon, sea states remain conducive to piracy operations. 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. However, are able to act far off the coast of Somalia and are likely in search of vessels of opportunity, such as those who are not employing BMP4 recommended Ship Protection Measures.

Need for continued vigilance and use of BMP. Merchant vessels are advised to remain vigilant throughout the HRA and ensure that 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 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.

Registration and reporting Per Section 5 of BMP4, early registration with MSCHOA before entering the HRA and initial and regular reporting to UKMTO are highly recommended to ensure military authorities are aware of a vessel's passage and vulnerabilities.

Reporting of incidents 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. Masters should provide as much accurate information as possible. This will ensure the incident can be fully assessed and 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, to the NSC (NATO Shipping Centre) at info@shipping.nato.int and to the Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) at postmaster@mschoa.org. This information will be used by Counter Piracy forces to combat piracy activity.

Pirate tactics Recently, PAGs have made "soft-approaches" on merchant ships transiting the HRA. A skiff will often approach a vessel in order to probe the reactivity of an embarked security team (if present). If no response, the pirates may proceed with an attack, sometimes accompanied by a second skiff. This practice is likely more economical as they would avoid needless expenditure of resources, such as ammunition, and personal risk without a significant probability of success.

Other activity There have been a number of incidents 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. 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.

Sailing vessels Sailing yachts should avoid transiting the HRA. 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.