



NSC Weekly Update

Overview

During the reporting period of 16-22 January 2013 there were no piracy related incidents in the High Risk Area (HRA).

Merchant vessels are reminded to remain vigilant while transiting this area 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 season, small boats are still be able to operate.

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 season, 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, pirates 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: As 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 without 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 pirates avoid needless expenditures 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 the NATO Shipping Centre assesses 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 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 pirated merchant vessels.