

Counter Piracy – Follow Best Management Practices (BMP)

Background

Although there was a substantial decrease in piracy activity in the Gulf of Aden during 2009, piracy in the Somali Basin/Indian Ocean reached record levels during the same period. Both areas must still be regarded as areas with an extreme risk of piracy. It is clear that the pirates have both the ability and willingness to operate at an ever-increasing distance from the coastline of Somalia, and statistics show that the attacks in the second half of 2009 covered a significantly larger area than those which took place in the first half of the same year. Statistics also show that the merchant vessels' own defensive measures play a major role in defeating the pirates. The total number of attacks has increased; the number of successful attacks has been reduced. In addition, it has also become clear that most of the successfully hijacked vessels were not registered with MSCHOA¹ and that they did not report their movements to UKMTO² or were using the Best Management Practise.



The purpose of this Circular is to highlight the trends, the importance of registering with MSCHOA and the importance of the vessel's own protective measures and training. The Circular also provides information on some recent initiatives implemented by MSCHOA.

Gulf of Aden (GoA)

There was a total of 72 attacks in the GoA in the period March 2009 to December 2009, but only 20% of these resulted in success for the pirates. In approximately half of the unsuccessful attacks it was the merchant ships' own defensive measures that defeated the pirates. The pirates' success ratio has shown a steady decline to below 20% since its peak in late 2008 of 50%, demonstrating the effectiveness of the combination of merchant vessels' own measures and military intervention.³

The Somali Basin/Indian Ocean

During the period March 2009 to December 2009 there were a total of 85 attacks in the Somali Basin. Just under a third resulted in the vessel being hijacked. In approximately 55% of the cases it was the merchant vessels' own defensive measures that defeated the pirates. The pirates' success ratio has shown a decline from a peak of almost 60% in late 2008 to an average of approximately 30% in late 2009. Due to a smaller naval presence in this area, there has only been one instance of decisive intervention from naval forces in this area. It is impossible for the naval forces currently in the area to police such a vast area of sea, which highlights the need for merchant vessels, their owners and crew, to properly plan and prepare for any possible attack.

¹ MSCHOA manages the Group transit system. All ship owners and operators are requested to register vessels going through the Gulf of Aden (IRTC) on the MSCHOA website (or by email to MSCHOA).

² UKMTO Dubai manages the merchant shipping in the region based on voluntary reporting scheme. Movements through the region should be reported to UKMTO Dubai, and UKMTO Dubai should be the first to contact if piracy attacks are encountered during the voyage.

³ A military decisive intervention is based on information about imminent piracy attacks received from the vessels transiting the GoA. The nearest naval vessel will seek to provide assistance by any means within a certain response time. Presently, the average response time is 15-20 minutes. Naval forces managed by decisive intervention to prevent an attack becoming a successful hijack in just fewer than 30% of the cases.

For more information please contact Loss Prevention Manager Terje R. Paulsen, email terje.paulsen@gard.no or Loss Prevention Executive Marius Schønberg, email marius.schonberg@gard.no

The information is provided for general information purposes only. Whilst we have taken every care to ensure the accuracy and quality of the information provided at the time of original publication, Gard AS can accept no responsibility in respect of any loss or damage of any kind whatsoever which may arise

Masters' Anti-piracy briefing package

Selected vessels passing Suez Canal southbound will as of 20 January 2010 receive a "Masters Anti-Piracy Briefing Package"⁴ from Suez Canal Authority/EUNAVFOR. Vessels offered this package will be selected based on the following criteria: Speed (less than 15 kts), freeboard (less than 7mts) and the degree of awareness and preparedness to face any threat of piracy. The assessment is done by the first pilot embarking in Port Said, and the second Pilot embarking in Ismailia will bring the package onboard for the Master. Also, there is a possibility for the Master to ask for such a briefing, although the criteria for selection are not met.

The Anti-piracy Chart (Q6099)

The anti-piracy chart has been developed by MSCHOA for use on board the vessels as a guidance to training and preparations before entering the GoA. Not following the Best Management Practices and the reporting procedures will reduce your own and others' ability to prevent and resist an attack. The MSCHOA has therefore included an overview of the whole BMP in the anti-piracy chart. The chart is distributed to chart handlers worldwide, and is now available as a "List of Admiralty chart". The chart is very useful as a complete checklist when entering a high risk piracy area.⁵

Recommendations

Any voyage through the GoA and western parts of Indian Ocean should be considered as potentially exposing the vessel to piracy attacks. All owners and operators are strongly recommended to adhere to the BMPs, which are supported by all major industry groups and by the ITF and EU NAVFOR. In the Indian Ocean, any vessel is fair game, regardless of size and speed, and owners should not rely on being able to seek protection from or receive a rapid response from naval forces in these waters, simply due to the sheer size of the sea area. The most important measures one can take is registering your voyage with MSCHOA, reporting your positions to UKMTO Dubai and operating in accordance with the BMPs. Any warnings of potential threats issued by MSCHOA, UKMTO Dubai or IMB should be adhered to, allowing the Masters more dynamic voyage planning.⁶

The BMPs are the industry's shared best practices. These measures will ensure the crew has the best preparation and training for dealing with an attack and will enhance any vessel's defensive abilities in the event of an attack. It is essential that companies commit themselves to establishing solid security policies with the BMPs as a basis for their company's risk assessment and adapted as appropriate to specific vessels.

The High Risk Area is dynamic and requires constant attention. The Indian Ocean is not necessarily safe east of any specific longitude – instead prepare and plan accordingly, remain vigilant throughout, follow the BMPs and pay attention to the warnings issued. Keep up your guard in the Gulf of Aden – it does not take many successful hijackings before activity increases again. Even with Naval Forces present – the Gulf of Aden is not a piracy-free area.

⁴ Masters Anti-piracy briefing package contains (1) the "Counter-piracy – advice and check list for Masters" booklet, (2) a DVD that contains the BMP, (3) a folder "How to survive a piracy attack" and a Questionnaire. This information is available on www.mschoa.org as well.

⁵ See also Gard's Loss Prevention Circular no 07-08: "Master's brief before entering a high risk piracy area".

⁶ A report of suspicious events or attacks generates warnings to all vessels inside the reporting area. These warnings provide early notice to other vessels in the area to avoid that area, or if this is not possible, to properly prepare for a possible attack.

For more information please contact Loss Prevention Manager Terje R. Paulsen, email terje.paulsen@gard.no or Loss Prevention Executive Marius Schønberg, email marius.schonberg@gard.no

The information is provided for general information purposes only. Whilst we have taken every care to ensure the accuracy and quality of the information provided at the time of original publication, Gard AS can accept no responsibility in respect of any loss or damage of any kind whatsoever which may arise