

Piracy Crisis in the Indian Ocean

World Maritime Day 2011



Piracy



The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations agency responsible for safety of life at sea, has a pivotal role in orchestrating the response of the international community to the scourge of piracy, which is the theme of IMO World Maritime Day 2011.

In co-operation with the shipping industry, IMO was instrumental in bringing the seriousness of the crisis to the attention of the UN Security Council. However, the piracy crisis in the Indian Ocean has continued to spiral out of control.

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and its member national shipowners' associations greatly appreciate the efforts of IMO Member States and military navies to protect merchant ships and their crews from Somali pirates. But the purpose of this brochure is to highlight the fact that governments still need to do more.

Orchest



Piracy Crisis in the Indian Ocean

Since the crisis off the coast of Somalia began to escalate in 2008, more than 3,000 seafarers have so far been kidnapped and held for ransom, enduring months of captivity in appalling conditions.

The financial cost to the shipping industry has rapidly escalated with ransom payments rising - in one case reportedly approaching US\$ 10 million for a single ship and its crew. Because of the very high financial stakes, serious violence against hostages is thought to be increasing, as disturbingly shown in 2011 by the murder of captives at sea.

Frustratingly, governments in those nations with the largest military navies in the region appear to show little willingness to increase resources to the extent that would be necessary to have a decisive impact on the problem. The fact that almost no ships currently transit via the central Indian Ocean shows the degree to which control has been ceded to the pirates.

At a time when both financial and military resources are extremely stretched, many governments appear to be tolerating the current level of piracy. Moreover, the dramatic political developments in the Middle East, and the recent famine in Somalia, have further diverted the attention of policy makers from the urgent need to address the piracy crisis.

This seemingly rather complacent assessment of the severity of the crisis has possibly been encouraged by the fact that relatively few OECD nationals have so far been taken hostage, or been amongst those 60 seafarers understood to have lost their lives. Yet the whole international community is dependent on international shipping which transports about 90% of global trade.



Orchestrating the Response



Experience has demonstrated that strict adherence to Best Management Practices remains the single most effective means of passive defence for ships operating in the high risk area. ICS continues to urge all companies and ships to comply with the guidance in BMP 4 to the fullest extent possible, with particular emphasis on registration with the military prior to every passage.

A copy of BMP 4 can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.marisec.org/piracybmp.htm> and printed copies are available from national shipowners' associations that belong to ICS.



Armed Guards

One important development in 2011 is the increasing use of private armed guards by shipping companies, many having concluded that arming ships is a necessary alternative to avoiding the Indian Ocean completely.

The consensus view among most ICS national associations remains that, in normal circumstances, private armed guards are a clear second best to military personnel on board. However, ICS has had to acknowledge that the decision to engage armed guards, whether military or private, is a decision to be made by the ship operator after due consideration of all the risks.

Following this lead, IMO has now started to develop much needed guidance for flag States and industry on the use of private armed security personnel on board ships in high risk areas. But problems remain with respect to many nations still refusing to allow the use of armed guards, or to embark or disembark them from their ports.

However, private armed guards do not represent a long term solution. Rather, their use actually signals a failure on the part of the international community to ensure the security of maritime trade on which the whole world depends. The use of private guards does not mean that military forces are no longer required. They are needed more than ever and should be greatly increased in number.

The industry has recently proposed that the United Nations should agree to the use of UN armed guards on board merchant ships, particularly those carrying food aid, which would free up military vessels to protect other merchant ships.

Governments Must Do More

It remains of great concern that little real progress is being made towards developing any radical new strategy that will deliver immediate results.

It is recognised that the long term solution will have to be found within Somalia itself, supported by practical measures such as the establishment of a local coast guard. But the industry seems to be faced with the utter frustration of an increasing number of attacks for the foreseeable future.



The international community depends on ships to transport trade and keep the world economy moving, and the eradication of piracy is the responsibility of governments, as stipulated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. However, in the face of governments' seeming impotence, the shipping industry will be forced to look at all possible options, including alternative routes, which could have a very dramatic effect on transport costs and delivery times.

Piracy is already estimated to cost the global economy US \$12 billion a year. If increasing numbers of ships decide to divert around the Cape of Good Hope, this will almost certainly have a major impact on inventories and costs throughout the whole supply chain. It could also greatly damage the economies of Africa and the Middle East at this politically delicate time.

However, the principal concern of the shipping industry is humanitarian. It is simply unacceptable that seafarers have been killed, while thousands more have been held captive for months at a time.

Counter-piracy efforts have also been discredited by the lack of appropriate domestic legislation in many nations, including any offence of 'intent to commit piracy'. This has led to a continuation of the absurd situation whereby pirates who are captured by navies are often released back to Somalia.

EU and NATO forces, working closely with a diverse range of other nations, represent a hitherto unprecedented level of co-operation between the world's military navies. In particular, the operation to protect traffic in the Gulf of Aden has been a great success.

But the pirates have evolved their tactics and have now expanded their operations throughout most of the north west Indian Ocean, an enormous sea area of about two and a half million square miles. Ships have been attacked off the coast of India and as far south as Mozambique.

Navies claim that such a large area can only be policed effectively with about 100 warships equipped with helicopters. Yet at any given time there are presently only around 30 warships in the region on counter-piracy duties, with only a proportion of these actually being available to protect merchant ships and their crews on any given day.

Industry Best Management Practices

As a response to the crisis - in co-operation with the military, IMO and the UN Contact Group on Piracy - the international shipping industry has developed Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the Coast of Somalia. An updated fourth version (BMP 4) was published in August 2011.




 www.SAVEOURSEAFARERS.COM

More than 600 seafarers are currently held hostage at sea, some by violent groups of Somali pirates, subjected to physical and psychological abuse for months at a time. They are held to ransom for millions of dollars.

Merchant ships are being attacked daily and run a gauntlet of gunfire and rocket-propelled grenade attacks.

Apart from the human cost, piracy is disrupting the supply chains and costing the global economy \$12 billion a year.

The seafarers have sailed right across the Indian Ocean - through which half the world's oil supply flows. A hijacked tanker with 2 million barrels of oil represents 20% of daily oil imports to the USA.

We all rely on freedom of the seas for the safe delivery of 80% of our food, fuel, raw materials and manufactured goods. This freedom is threatened.

Even when caught and held, 80% of pirates are released to attack again. Why? Because the world's politicians aren't taking the severity of the crisis.

You can help stop this and take an human hostage and stop making the freedom of the seas. Visit www.SaveOurSeafarers.com - you'll find letters to email to your government demanding action.

2,000 Somali pirates are hijacking the world's economy


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Save Our Seafarers Campaign

www.saveourseafarers.com


This industry wide campaign, embracing international shipping organisations and seafarers' unions, seeks to raise awareness of the human and economic cost of piracy and increase the political will to tackle the problem.

It asks governments to take a firmer stance on piracy by prioritising six key actions:

1. Reducing the effectiveness of the easily-identifiable motherships.
2. Authorising naval forces to hold pirates and deliver them for prosecution and punishment.
3. Fully criminalising all acts of piracy and intent to commit piracy under national laws, in accordance with their mandatory duty to co-operate to suppress piracy under international conventions.
4. Increasing naval assets available in this area.
5. Providing greater protection and support for seafarers.
6. Tracing and criminalising the organisers and financiers behind the criminal networks.

BMP4
Best Management Practices for Protection against Somalia Based Piracy

Produced and supported by:



ICS is the principal international trade association for shipowners. ICS represents all sectors and trades and over 80% of the world's merchant tonnage with member national shipowners' associations in 36 countries.

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