



## PIRACY UPDATE – August 2009

Indian Ocean / Gulf of Aden, Asia and Nigeria

In July 2009 the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reported that the number of reported piracy attacks world wide in the first six months of 2009 had more than doubled to 240 as compared with the first six months of 2008 (114 attacks). By May 2009 there had been more attacks in the Gulf of Aden (GOA)/Indian Ocean than during the whole of 2008.

We are still being asked by members what advice is available for ships transiting the Gulf of Aden or Indian Ocean and the following is an update on the current situation, explaining where members can access information and pass this on to their masters.

### Indian Ocean / Gulf of Aden

Even though the headlines in the international press have in the main gone away the incidents of piracy and hi jacking in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean have continued. The average number of attacks per month since the beginning of 2009 may have decreased from the high numbers seen in December 2008 and this may be as a result of the increased naval activity and the fact that owners and masters are now far more prepared, however by mid 2009 there were still approximately 150 reported incidents and 32 ships hi jacked at this time. Acts of piracy in Somalia are yielding at least US\$30m a year of profit to the pirates. The threat continues to be real and owners must take the appropriate measures.

### Maritime Security Centre (Horn of Africa) – MSC (HOA)

All members, owners and managers should be aware of the advice contained in the MSC (HOA) web site and be continually monitoring the information that is given. It is the 'one stop shop' for piracy advice and information, particularly for ships transiting the Gulf of Aden and Indian Oceans. You have to register (with a security check) to gain access. The updated information contained should be relayed to the ships masters on a daily basis by the company security officer (CSO) for those ships transiting the area. The general advice given is applicable to all ships passing through piracy areas such as West Africa and South East Asia.

The MSC (HOA) website [www.mschoa.eu](http://www.mschoa.eu) gives details of:

- Weather
- Piracy alerts
- How to report an incident
- Current advice
- General advice to masters
  - attack profiles and lessons learnt
  - International Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC)
  - Best Management Practices (also available from the club web site)
  - planning including general, voyage and defensive measures
  - advice if attacked/boarded
- Updates on the IRTC/convoy protocol
- Transit guidance inside and outside the GOA
- MSC (HOA) briefs

### Red Sea

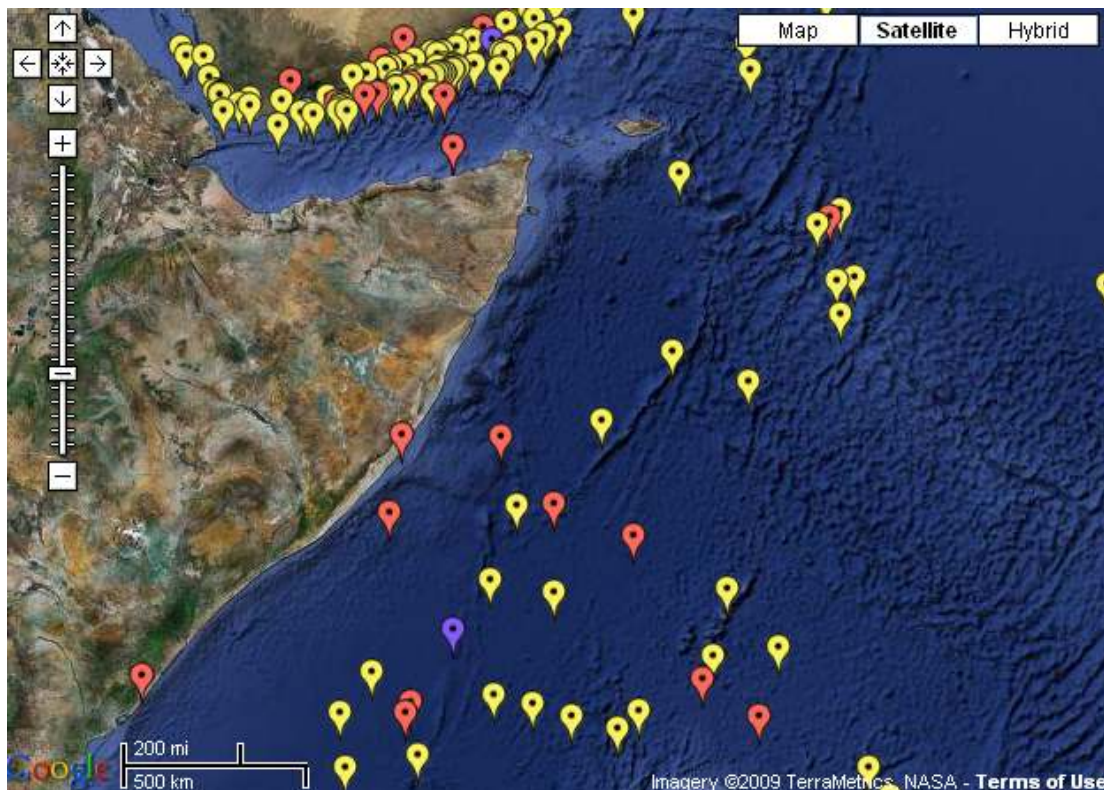
Ships transiting the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb (BAM) should remain on their guard. Traffic density can be significant with a mix of local fishermen from Yemen and Eritrea, various local merchant vessels including dhows and skiffs transporting livestock and general cargo and smugglers between Africa and Arabia. Recent disputes between Yemen and Eritrea over the territorial waters around the islands in the southern Red Sea mean that both nations maintain a security presence on a number of the islands and may react should merchant ships approach too close to the islands.

At the narrowest part of the BAM and near the Hanish Islands, to the north of the Straits, there are fishing-grounds near or even in the middle of the traffic separation scheme (TSS). This may result in merchant ships thinking they are under attack. Add to this the normal large international merchant shipping traffic masters should be fully prepared for transiting this area with a full bridge team.

Further details of the fishing vessel situation in the Bab-el-Mandab and within the GOA is also found on the MSC (HOA) web site.

If the ship is transiting though or near the GOA it should have registered its transit with MSCHOA and the necessary anti- piracy protective measures should have been activated.

*GOA / Indian Ocean Piracy activity map – August 2009*



## Naval presence

After a slow start at the beginning of the year administrations and authorities were finally galvanised into positive action. The EU formed a naval force under designation EU NAVFOR which is the main coordinating authority operating the MSC(HOA) for the Gulf of Aden areas and this has been effective. The EU mandate for this naval force was recently extended to operate until 12/2010. This naval force has been joined by a number of other states including China, Japan, India, Russia, Ukraine and NATO forces working with EUNAVFOR. However these naval forces are not sufficient to cover the whole sea area from the western Gulf of Aden to the east parts of the Indian Ocean and as far south as Madagascar.

The northern Somali region of Puntland has been nominated according to a recent announcement to be the new centre of Somali anti piracy operations under the assistance of the UN. A new Somali navy was apparently set up in June 2009, when it was reported that 500 marines will be trained. It remains to be seen if this will ever become an effective force.



## Recommended Best Management Practices (BMP)

Industry bodies including the International Group of P&I clubs and EUNAVFOR have produced an anti piracy guide / advice called Best Management Practices. A copy of the latest version this can be downloaded from the Standard Club [www.standard-club.com](http://www.standard-club.com) or the EUNAVFOR web site. All companies should be aware of its general advice and have this advice implemented in their anti piracy planning.

The discretion of the master is always paramount when adopting appropriate measures to avoid, deter or delay piracy attacks. The BMP guide is provided for ship owners and operators, masters and their crews. Some of the advice contained may not be applicable for every ship due its type, speed profile and construction and therefore a risk analysis assessment is recommended to determine which measures should be taken up for each ship.

Included in the BMP is advice for In Transit operations.

The information is contained has proved to be effective in most circumstances.

## Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC)

EUNAVFOR recommends that merchant ships conduct their passage within the IRTC. Westbound vessels should steam in the northern portion of the corridor, and eastbound vessels to the southern part. Ships should avoid entering Yemen Territorial Waters while on transit, as it is for legal reasons more difficult for EUNAVFOR and associated forces to be able to protect vessels that are attacked inside Yemeni territorial waters. A number of vessels have been attacked close to the Yemen coast.

A UK Hydrographic Office has issued a chart of the GOA area as an Anti-Piracy Planning Chart as part of an EUNAVFOR initiative. The chart numbered Q6099 covers the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea with a larger scale inset showing the IRTC. The chart has the transit corridors marked, reporting boundaries and contact telephone numbers. The UKHO web site link where a PDF version of Chart Q6099 is available is:

<http://www.ukho.gov.uk/Media/News/Pages/AntiPiracyChart.aspx>

## Weather

The onset of the South West Monsoon between May and the beginning of September has probably caused the recent decrease in pirate activity outside of the Gulf of Aden / Indian Ocean. (The wind effects are less in the Gulf of Aden (GOA) area). The persistent wind and wave heights off the east coast of Somalia can hamper pirates boarding ships under way. However, the pirates extensively use mother ships which allow them to roam further offshore.

MSCHOA currently continues to advise that vessels transiting the Indian Ocean / Somali basin should maintain a distance of more than 600 nautical miles from the Somali coastline and when routing north/south and consider keeping east of 60E Longitude until east of the Seychelles. MSCHOA even suggests that Masters give consideration to rerouting their vessels through the Somali Basin to take advantage of the protection offered by the SW Monsoon. Current weather reports of the area can be accessed from the MSC (HOA) web site. However, once the monsoon weather changes and the winds decrease then this allows the pirates the opportunity to operate easily at sea in the small skiffs that they use to attack.

The previous Standard piracy bulletin updates issued to members advised that vigilance was required at least 600 miles off the Somali coast. It was argued that the increase in naval units being deployed in the Gulf of Aden may force the mother ships to operate further afield and that the whole of the Indian Ocean itself could become the hunting ground of pirates. Masters should remain vigilant in all these Indian Ocean and GOA areas. Pirate attacks have also been noted to the north

of the Bar-el- Mandab and so ships should be well prepared before entering the southern part of the Red Sea when proceeding south and east from Suez.

Winds in excess of 20 knots and wave heights above 2m are considered sufficient to provide protection for all but the most vulnerable vessels, particularly where masters are taking full account of BMP. The weather to the east of 60E is more benign whilst the SW monsoon prevails. However masters should be aware that the SW Monsoon does not always blow consistently and lulls in the wind force may be experienced. Seek the advice from MSC (HOA) which monitors wind strength and wave height, MSC (HOA) & UKMTO Dubai can provide up to date meteorological advice upon request.

## **Management**

Members should, if not already doing so, be providing the necessary information, intelligence and support to their vessels transiting the high risk areas. This includes designating the Company Security Officer (CSO) with the task of keeping abreast of the latest news and developments, including sending out positions of the latest pirate attacks, positions of where pirate mother ships have been reported to operate, information as to the deployment of naval craft and general guidance.

## **Pirate Tactics**

A description of the differing pirate tactics being used can be found in the MSC (HOA) web site. This information should be made available to ship's masters.

## **Guidance to prevent an attack**

Previous advice in the Standard Safety bulletin in April 2009 is still valid. However, with the heightened awareness and increase of information, additional advice is available. Most of which is available through the MSC (HOA) web site.

There are a number of new initiatives to make ships more secure in transit and each member should enquire from security manufacturers of equipment which may be suitable for their particular vessel type.

Experience shows that by letting the pirates know the ship is well prepared and willing to take defensive measures can be a deterrent. A number of pirate attacks have been thwarted by showing a robust and positive response, by being alert and contacting the appropriate naval forces in time.

The pirates do not want to have to over exert and a vessel that increases speed and takes evasive robust manoeuvring actions will not be presenting an 'easy' target.

## **Security personnel**

The use of security personnel may be considered useful. Even though unarmed they can provide;

- increased training and alertness
- added personnel for watch keeping
- increased confidence onboard
- specialist equipment
- useful intelligence
- advice for provision of a citadel
- useful advice and support when under attack

## Essential Contact Information

The MSC (HOA) gives clear advice on when and who should be contacted and advice for vessels in transit. In addition a number of state naval units can be contacted by companies flying their own flag and make arrangements for assisting during the transit directly.

- UKMTO: [ukmto@eim.ae](mailto:ukmto@eim.ae), +971 50 552 3215
- MARLO (us Maritime Liaison Office – Bahrain): [marlo.bahrain@me.navy.mil](mailto:marlo.bahrain@me.navy.mil), +973 3940 1395
- NATO Shipping Center: [info@shipping.nato.int](mailto:info@shipping.nato.int); +44 1923 9566574
- MSCHOA: [postmaster@mschoa.org](mailto:postmaster@mschoa.org), +44(0)1923 958545
- IMB PRC [piracy@icc-ccs.org](mailto:piracy@icc-ccs.org), +60 3 2078 5763
- IMB [Live Piracy Map](#)

Masters are reminded that all attempted attacks or suspicious craft should be reported to a coalition warship and the 24-hour IMB Piracy Reporting Centre helpline: [imbsecurity@icc-ccs.org](mailto:imbsecurity@icc-ccs.org)

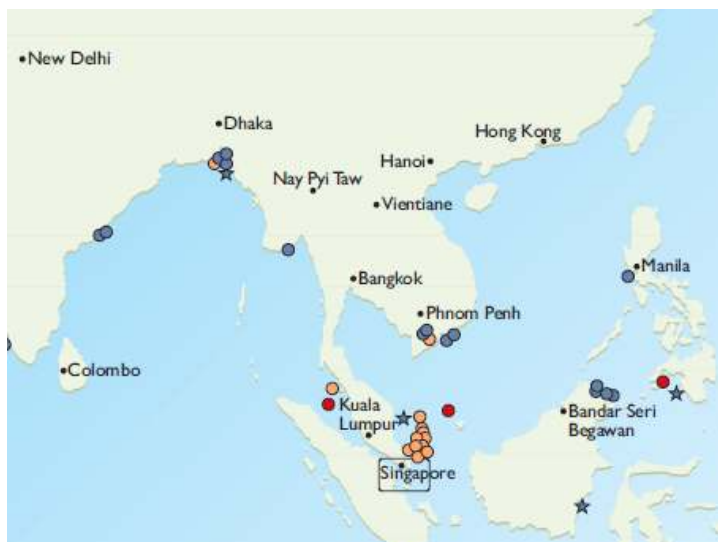
## South East Asia

South East Asia still remains an area where significant piracy attacks occur, although not in the scale and number being experienced in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Oceans.

According to the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia - ReCAAP – ( [www.recaap.org](http://www.recaap.org) ) in the first 6 months of 2009 there were 43 reported incidents of piracy in the Asia region. Of these reported incidents eight were considered significant, seven of which occurred in the South China Sea and one in the Malacca Straits.

It is recommended that the information contained in the half yearly reported be passed on to masters by the company CSO for those ships trading in these areas. The report breaks down the areas where attacks took place and these cover an area from Bangladesh and India to the west and Vietnam and the South China seas to the east. Certain anchorages, for example Chittagong (Bangladesh), Sandakan (Sabah) and Vietnam are showing significant number of incidents. The majority of incidents occur whilst the ship is at anchor within this region although an increase in the number of vessels being boarded whilst underway was seen this year as compared with previous years.

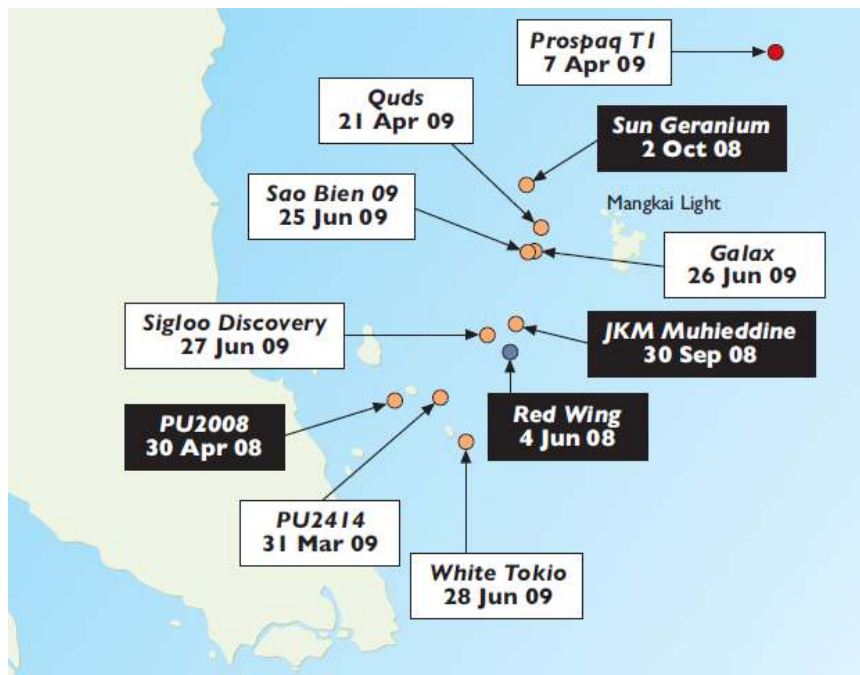
### Attacks South East Asia Jan – June 2009





Within the report there are detailed profiles of selected incidents or attacks. These include incidents on various ship sizes and types, including LPG, container, chemical tankers, bulk and general cargo. As with all piracy attacks slow moving, low freeboard vessels, particularly tug and tows are susceptible to attack. Masters should use the guidance available in the MSC(HOA) web site for knowledge in preventing a piracy attack. Masters should at all times be vigilant when trading in these areas and the company CSO should ensure that masters are kept updated with current information.

The area in the South China Sea to the west and south of the Mangkai Light, near the Anambas Islands is an area that has seen significant piracy attacks on commercial shipping. Navigating and transiting through these islands should be done with a heightened condition of security. (See map below). These attacks are taking place with groups of 5-10 armed pirates during the hours of darkness.



## Nigeria

In addition to below please also refer to previous Standard Club updates on the web site. These include Standard Safety bulletins on pirate activity and measures to thwart piracy in and off the Nigerian Coasts.

Nigeria is the area where most pirate attacks occur in West Africa, however low level opportunistic pirates and thieves operate in Ghana, Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Senegal.

Pirates operating off the Nigerian coast are now often operating under the guise of the armed insurrection group MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta), a group professing to want more autonomy and share of the oil wealth for the oil rich Niger delta area. The anchorages in and around Lagos, Bonny, Escravos, Wari and Port Harcourt are still prone to piracy from pirates with personnel gain in mind as well being part of a so called insurgency.

The difference with the Nigerian pirates is that they are often far more violent and threatening to the personnel onboard the vessel. The authorities are apparently unable or unwilling to take preventative measures against the pirates, who would appear to operate at will.

There have been a number of recent highly publicised attacks where ships and or crew have been hijacked and ransoms demanded. Ships have been attacked even when at, or after leaving, a terminal. There have been attacks off the Nigerian coast which have originated from mother ships and vessels have been fired upon using heavy and light machine guns.

It is widely acknowledged that the number of attacks in Nigeria (and West Africa) is not being fully reported however even within the last few months the following have been identified:

- reefer ship attacked and five crew members abducted
- two crew members injured when bulk carrier fired upon near Port Harcourt
- six crew members of a 8000dwt chemical tanker kidnapped 18 miles off port KoKo /Nigeria
- Lagos oil terminal attacked inside harbour entrance
- Tanker with 15 crew on charter to NNPC taken by MEND insurgents with 20,000 tons of petrol when the ship was being escorted by local military inbound to Warri
- reefer ship attacked and four crew kidnapped
- a 59,000 dwt bulk carrier attacked 20 miles off Port Harcourt at anchor
- dive support vessel attacked
- small 4000dwt products tanker attacked, master and chief engineer kidnapped
- offshore AHTS attacked and four crew kidnapped near the Bakassi peninsula

In addition to this, oil field personnel ashore and working in the delta region are kidnapped even when under armed guard, oil installations attacked on and offshore, flow stations bombed and pipelines blown up. Any ships navigating to and from Nigeria should be on a heightened security footing. It is noted that additional war risk premiums are required for vessels trading to Nigerian ports.

Vessels trading to Nigeria should stay well clear of the coast until a berth is nominated. Pilots should be approached in daylight hours and pilots arranged over a secure communication method – such as email and /or MOB/sat phone. The use of VHF should be restricted as the pirates and thieves also have access to VHF channels.

Vessels should not anchor when waiting for a berth and /or pilot for any length of time, particularly in the hours of darkness. Lagos anchorage is particularly notorious for being boarded by thieves and the authorities are apparently oblivious to the VHF calls for assistance.

Vessels calling at terminals, particularly offshore terminals should enquire from agents before arrival of the contact numbers of the local security forces. These numbers should be tested before arrival. Chartering departments should ensure that charterers' obligations with respect to security are fully recognised and met.





## Other Areas

The **IMB** - [piracy@icc-ccs.org](mailto:piracy@icc-ccs.org) – web site gives up-to-date information on piracy prone areas and warnings. These include a brief description of incidents in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malacca and Singapore Straits, Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, Brazil, South America and Caribbean.

For operators trading continually to certain piracy prone areas or where there is serious security issues specialised companies can be engaged to make full risk assessments of the security situation in those countries.