

War risks claims environment as at November 2017

Yemen

The Bab-el-Mandeb Strait as well as the entrances to the port of Mokha off Yemen's southwest coast continue to be areas of significant threat to the high volume of commercial shipping that transits the Red Sea. On 15 June, Houthi rebels fired a missile at a United Arab Emirates ship carrying medical supplies as it was departing Mokha. Although only one crewmember was injured and the damage sustained to the ship's hull was not significant, this is the third reported incident involving the firing of missiles at civilian shipping by the rebels in the last 12 months.

As a result of this heightened threat, the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), an international coalition of 31 nations promoting security in the region, announced in June that it would be increasing its naval presence in the western Gulf of Aden. However, the class's crisis management consultants, NYA International, have advised that, while the CMF's elevated naval presence should result in quicker response times to incidents and perpetrators being apprehended, the attacks are unlikely to cease until the security situation within Yemen stabilises. The managers continue to recommend that members exercise extreme caution when transiting this sector of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Philippines

The last six months has seen a significant decline in the number of hijackings by the ISIS affiliated Islamist terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf. There have been no confirmed reports of kidnappings since 23 March. This has primarily been due to enhanced naval cooperation between the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia in the Sulu and Celebes seas. Another contributing factor has been the conflict between Abu Sayyaf and other local Islamist groups over the city of Marawi in Western Mindanao which has reduced manpower available for marine hijacking activity.

However, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reported in October that intelligence received from the Philippines has revealed that Abu Sayyaf is planning to resume kidnappings in the Sulu sea, in particular against South Korean ships and nationals. As reported by the managers in November 2016, the Korean master of a heavylift ship was kidnapped by Abu Sayyaf in October 2016. He was released three months later. Whilst there have been no confirmed reports of any ransom being paid, the intelligence suggests that Abu Sayyaf view the kidnapping of Korean nationals as an effective way in which to fund and pursue their wider terrorist agenda.

Gulf of Aden

The first half of 2017 saw a rise in piracy incidents off the coast of Somalia for the first time since 2013. At least five commercial vessels have been hijacked so far this year. According to NYA International, several factors have contributed to the recent spike in Somali piracy, in particular continued political instability along the Somali coast as well as the redeployment of NATO vessels away from the region to other political hotspots. The managers continue to recommend that members exercise extreme caution when trading near Somali waters and comply with the latest version of the Best Management Practices for Protection against Somalia Based Piracy and other related guidance.

West Africa

Piracy off West Africa, in particular Nigeria, continues to be of significant concern. Despite a decrease in worldwide pirate activity compared to the same period last year, the IMB has reported a spike in activity off Nigeria during September and October 2017. Due to the current rainy season and rough seas, these recent incidents have largely been concentrated near coastal areas and in anchorages. Piracy in Nigeria tends to be extremely violent with firearms used in 90% of cases and NYA International continues to maintain their highest 'Severe' threat level rating for the region.

SWRM claims activity

There have been no notified claims on the facility since inception in February 2015.