



## SOMALI PIRACY WARNING FOR YACHTS

(October 2013)

ISSUED BY INTERNATIONAL NAVAL COUNTER PIRACY FORCES

Dear Yachtsman,

The combined threat assessment of International Naval Counter Piracy Forces **is and remains that:**

**All sailing yachts under their own passage should remain out of the High Risk Area (HRA) or face the risk of being hijacked and held hostage for ransom.**

- The root cause of piracy has **NOT been eradicated**. This is due to limited progress establishing an effective law enforcement capacity within the towns and regions associated with piracy. The root causes of piracy are the focus of the longer term strategy which remains in its early stages.
- Extreme poverty and lack of employment prospects remain in coastal communities, contributing to a large numbers of disaffected youths looking for any opportunities. **The motive for piracy therefore remains.**
- As of September 2013 approximately US\$20 million in ransom has been paid to Somali pirates for the release of vessels and/or crews in the hands of pirates. Pirates are now cash rich but asset poor, and keen to **seize any vessel** which might provide a financial return.
- Members of the local maritime community, such as traders in dhows and fishermen in skiffs, **carry assault weapons** to protect themselves from attacks by both pirates and competitors. This prevalence of weapons manifests itself in shots being fired at merchant vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden and increases the risk posed to yachts transiting the area.
- Statistics show a decline in the number of successful attacks on Merchant Vessels. The reason for this decline is **NOT** due to a lack of intent on the pirate's part or a break in the piracy business model. This reduction is as a direct result of the employment of Private Armed Security Teams (PAST) and the full implementation of onboard defensive measures (Best Management Practice 4 - BMP4) by industry and the merchant shipping community.
- International Naval Counter Piracy Forces are **not deployed to the HRA to protect transiting sailing vessels**.
- Attacks have become more desperate. Pirates Action Groups (PAGs) have deployed from beaches in reckless, risk averse and hostile missions, and are actively **hunting 'soft' targets of opportunity**. Any perceived weakness will be identified and exploited.



Maritime Patrol & Reconnaissance Aircraft took this image of a pirate skiff in Summer 2013. In the second image the skiff has been deployed to look for target of opportunity. Highlighted in the red box is a 3.5 metre ladder used to board high sided Merchant Vessels, it is clearly visible.



Maritime Patrol & Reconnaissance Aircraft took this image in September 2013. Skiffs are stored in remote locations all along the Somali coast. They can be readied to go to sea at a moment's notice, and frequently deploy during the hours of darkness, using routine maritime activity to conceal their transit.

- **Yachts remain extremely vulnerable to attack**, as any crew member can be exploited as a valuable commodity both to organised pirate gangs and also to impromptu hijackings by armed members of the local maritime community trying to earn a 'quick buck'.
  - Seafarers that have been pirated and held hostage since 2008 have been subjected to torture, atrocities include being stripped naked and left in the ship's deep freeze and being suspended by their wrists from ships' masts. This **physical torture** does not take into account the **psychological stress** felt due to being held hostage alone and in a foreign country. This is felt not only by the **hostages themselves but also by their partners, family and wider community at home**.
  - In the last year hostage treatment has become **even more brutal** due to friction between pirates and Islamic factions over control of the hostages and a dwindling supply of the 'commodity' of hostages.
- This joint risk assessment for threats to sailing yachts in the High Risk Area (HRA) has been undertaken in conjunction with the Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), UK Maritime Trade Organisation (UKMTO), NATO Shipping Centre and US Maritime Liaison Office (MARLO).



The High Risk Area (HRA) extends South from the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz to the lines of Latitude (78°E) and Longitude (10°S). Attacks have taken place at the most extremities of the High Risk Area. This trend is likely to continue.



Maritime Patrol & Reconnaissance Aircraft took this image in September 2013. Skiffs are arranged on the beach prior to being put to sea as the Monsoon period comes to an end. Once the wave height reduces and the sea state improves, conditions necessary for operations become more conducive for piracy.