August 09, 2011

Piracy’s Emerging Market: The Gulf of Guinea

- By David Rider, Neptune Maritime Security

Despite the best efforts of the world’s navies and EU NAVFOR in particular, piracy in the Indian Ocean/Gulf of Aden and Red Sea areas shows no sign of abating. Quite the contrary, according to a recent report released by the International Maritime Bureau’s Piracy Reporting Centre in July this year. Of the incidents reported, over sixty per cent were conducted by pirate gangs operating off the coast of Somalia and Arabian Sea. Indeed, the attacks were becoming more violent and pirates were taking much greater risks, the IMB stated.

The success of Somali pirates has not gone unnoticed by criminals in other parts of the African continent.

Since May this year, there have been increasing reports of pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) and off the coast of West Africa. The incidents prompted the International Maritime Bureau’s Piracy Reporting Centre to issue a specific warning in June, citing eight attacks off Cotonou, Benin. Since then, the number of attacks has increased significantly, although it’s virtually impossible to accurately gauge the amount of pirate activity due to insufficient reporting from the region. One security analyst told Reuters that, "In Nigeria it is estimated that approximately 60 percent of pirate attacks go unreported”.

The Gulf of Guinea is regarded as an important, emerging trade hub, spanning a dozen countries from the tip of Northwest Africa to Angola in the South. It is a valuable source of oil, and pirates in the region are currently targeting diesel and oil tankers in particular.

According to a Reuters report*, the Gulf of Guinea produces more than 3 million barrels of oil a day, equivalent to 4% of the global total. This oil is ultimately destined for Europe and the USA, while some sources suggest that the USA will be receiving up to 25% of its oil supplies from the region by 2015*.

With so much potentially at stake it is perhaps remarkable that little is being done on the international stage to combat piracy in the region. Local coastal defences are seen as weak, while the coastline itself is craggy and offers a variety of hiding places for potential attackers. Although thus far, only 27 or so attacks on vessels in the area have been reported by the IMB, the actual number incidents may be far higher, thanks primarily to the definition of 'piracy'.

Somali pirates operate a ‘blue ocean’ form of piracy, attacking vessels in international waters, which in turn means their crimes are legally recognised as “acts of piracy”. The attacks in the Gulf of Guinea and off the coast of Nigeria occur in national or coastal waters, and therefore do not legally qualify as “acts of piracy”. Semantics aside, if armed men board your vessel and threaten your crew and cargo, it is hard to not call it an act of piracy. However, the law is the law.

At its most basic, piracy off the coast of Somalia can be seen as having a clear root in economics and the inevitable outcome of a failed nation state dating back 20 years. Piracy or, more correctly, criminal attacks upon vessels in the Gulf of Guinea region is simply that: maritime banditry in an area insufficiently protected by the world’s navies. Intelligence sources on the ground are now seemingly acknowledging that the attacks in West Africa are very different in tone to their Somali counterparts. A report carried by the Associated Press quoted Bergen Risk Solutions, a Norway-based consultancy:

file:///C:/Users/Peter Flianigan/Documents/Fund/Media for blog/Pirate daily.htm
Our investigations indicate that the organised group responsible is based in Nigeria and has high-level patronage in that country,” it said, with prominent Nigerians having often been accused of involvement in the lucrative black market for oil and fuel. This cargo, Bergen suggests, has been sold as “several West African ports, possibly including Abidjan in Cote d’Ivoire and Port Gentil in Gabon.”

What the experts cannot say with any certainty, however, is why there has been such a surge in attacks in recent months. For instance, the international community has not seen a significant proportionate fall in such incidents in Nigeria. With no international naval presence at the ready, it falls upon local agencies, such as the Benin Navy, to provide assistance. It has further been suggested that a number of shipping companies won’t even call them in, for fear of increasing their insurance premiums.

A report on businessday.co.za suggested that, ‘insurance items due to piracy have doubled the costs of transporting goods past the Horn of Africa,’ and there is no reason to believe that West Africa and the GoG should be any different in terms of insurance risk.

In response to the recent spate of activity, Bloomberg* carried a report on August 5, stating that The Joint War Committee, which represents Lloyd’s of London underwriters and other insurers, extended a war-risk zone for Nigeria, Africa’s largest oil producer, and included waters off neighbouring Benin and listed the areas as higher-risk for shipping. The Nigerian risk zone now extends to 200 nautical miles (230 miles) offshore.

While the entire region is experiencing significant mineral wealth, it falls upon governments to ensure that this wealth is redistributed amongst the population or, to quote Reuters, “…the temptation to take a slice of the goods passing under their noses on the way to the richer world may prove irresistible for some.”

It would seem clear that the world’s governments, and particularly those countries whose energy usage relies upon imports from the area, could make a significant difference to piracy in this region. At present, the area to police is significantly smaller than that in the Gulf of Aden/Indian Ocean, which EU NAVFOR vessels regularly patrol, but the level of violence being used by pirates in their attacks in the GoG region is causing deep concern amongst international bodies such as the IMB. A concerted effort by the world’s navies, in league with countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon and Benin could nip the problem in the bud, long before it escalates to proportions rivaling Somalia and the Gulf of Aden.

On August 5th, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) announced that plans had been tabled for maritime administrations in Togo, Republic of Benin and Nigeria to meet with relevant stakeholders to deliberate on ways of enhancing maritime safety in the region*. A spokesperson for Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) Lami Tumaka, stated that the Regional Maritime Awareness Capability Centre (RMAC) is equipped with the Automatic Identification System (AIS), Radar and video cameras.

The spokesperson said that the AIS identifies all vessels with the AIS transponders onboard, while those without the AIS are tracked with Radar while video cameras provide live pictures of all vessels along the Nigerian coastal waters. While the statement may reassure some ship owners, it is also true that many vessels turn their AIS transponders off to reduce the threat of attack from pirates in the Indian Ocean*, and there is no reason to expect vessels in fear of attack by bandits in the GoG will behave differently.

An immediate solution to the problems being experienced by seafarers in the area would not appear to be on the horizon. This, however, is a work in progress. In the meantime, the job of securing cargoes, crews and corporate reputations will likely fall upon the private security provider, meaning insurance discounts and a significant sense of relief in both boardrooms and bridges.

- By David Rider, Neptune Maritime Security

About Neptune Maritime Security:

Founded by decorated, former members of Her Majesty’s elite Special Boat Service (SBS) and supported by a team of international maritime legal experts, Neptune Maritime Security offers the kind of capabilities only the world’s most elite commercial maritime security specialist can provide. With over 30 years of experience in the field of amphibious counter-terrorism, Neptune Maritime Security’s team of highly trained, highly motivated specialists are supremely qualified in the area that concerns shipping companies most: safeguarding crew, cargo and corporate reputations For further details, please visit www.neptunemaritimesecurity.com

Sources:
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August 08, 2011

The withdrawal by rebel forces from Somalia’s capital may offer residents of the war-torn country some respite from a famine that threatens almost half its 7.5 million people.

Al-Shabaab, which has pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda, quit Mogadishu on Aug. 6 following a series of military defeats, according to Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, prime minister of the Western-backed transitional federal government. The militant group confirmed the pull-back.

The withdrawal “shows the death of al-Shabaab as we know it,” Bronwyn Bruton, a Somalia researcher and former fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said in a phone interview from Washington Aug. 6. “They’ve been beaten down militarily and now have no ideological cohesion. They are short of cash, they don’t have the ability to launch a large-scale offensive any longer.”

Somalia’s two-decade-long civil war has compounded the effects of a drought in the Horn of Africa that the United Nations says is the worst in 60 years. A cessation of hostilities in Mogadishu will make it easier and cheaper to ship aid to the port city, which has seen an influx of about 100,000 people seeking food, water and shelter over the past two months, according to the UN.

Al-Shabaab has banned the World Food Programme and other aid agencies from working in areas under its control, causing the mass migration of people into the capital and refugee camps in neighboring countries. Its forces still control most of southern and central Somalia.

‘Bad Record’

The withdrawal “is a glimmer of hope,” Ben Rawlence, Human Rights Watch’s team leader in the Horn of Africa, said in a telephone interview from London on Aug. 6. “At a minimum it should mean more people can get assistance. Al-Shabaab clearly has very bad record on human rights on areas under its control.”

Somalia hasn’t had a functioning central government since the 1991 ouster of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre. President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed’s administration, backed by African Union peacekeepers, has been fighting to oust al-Shabaab from Mogadishu for the past four years. African Union forces captured three strategic locations to protect aid workers last week, helping sway the balance of power in the capital.

Al-Shabaab’s withdrawal won’t bring an end to Somalia’s woes, with the famine expected to last until at least the end of the year and the militia showing no signs of laying down arms.

‘Tactical’ Decision

Al-Shabaab spokesman Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage told Mogadishu-based broadcaster Holy Quran Radio on Aug. 6 that the militia regards its withdrawal as a “tactical” move and it plans to win control of other government-controlled territory.

The UN Refugee Agency plans to fly to Mogadishu today to deliver its first shipment of emergency supplies in five years. The aid includes sleeping mats, plastic sheeting for shelter and jerrycans for water to Mogadishu.

The latest developments in Mogadishu are a “step in the right direction,” Augustine Mahiga, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s envoy to Somalia, said in an e-mailed statement on Aug. 6. “Real security risks, including from terrorist attacks, remain and must not be underestimated.”

Al-Shabaab may regroup and launch a new assault on the capital or redeploy its troops to other regions where they face less of a threat of being surrounded and destroyed, said Pierre Beaudet, a professor of international development at the University of Ottawa.

‘Angry People’

Al-Shabaab is “not just a small group of people with a mandate from al-Qaeda,” he said in a telephone interview from Montreal. “It’s much broader. There are a lot of young, angry people within it. They have legitimacy in the eyes of many people. They can remain having a presence in Mogadishu and do exactly what they were doing before: hit-and-run tactics.”

Joseph Lake, a New York-based analyst at the Economist Intelligence Unit, sees a decline in support for al-Shabaab as a result of the famine and signs of a rift among its leaders that may be compounded by the loss of its foothold in Mogadishu.

“Al-Shabaab’s unity against a divided transition federal government has been one of its biggest advantages,” he said in an e-mailed response to questions. “If this is starting to crack, it could represent a turning point in this bitterly sad conflict.”

The government says that now it has secured control of Mogadishu, it intends to step up efforts to eradicate al-Shabaab from the rest of the country.
Sri Lankan held hostage by Somali Pirates to return home

ON BOARD THE NIVOSE, -, AT SEA: A file picture taken on May 3, 2009 shows French soldiers guard suspected Somali pirates on board the French warship “Le Nivose”, after their capture, as part of EUs Atalante anti-piracy naval mission. AFP PHOTO / PIERRE VERDY

By Asif Fuard

COLOMBO, August 1 (HNS) - The Sri Lankan crew member who was part of the UAE oil tanker which was hijacked and later released by Somali Pirates last month, is expected to return home.

The oil tanker MV Jubba which is owned by Shajah based J ubba General Trading Company has said that once the vessel reaches the UAE the Sri Lankan crew member will be sent back to Sri Lanka until he is recalled.

An official from the Sri Lankan Ministry of External Affairs said that currently their consulates in Dubai and Abu Dhabi are coordinating with the company to ensure that the Sri Lankan crew member is safe.

The MV Jubba and its 17-man crew which consist of nationals from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Sudan, Myanmar, Kenya and Somalia was captured on July 16 while carrying 3,500 tonnes of oil products from Umm Al Quwain port.

The European Union’s anti-piracy body announced on July 18 that the tanker was pirated in the northern Indian Ocean while en-route from the UAE to the port of Berbera in the breakaway state of Somaliland.

Nearly two weeks after being held hostage, the Somali Pirates released the tanker and the crew without any concessions or ransom payments.

Currently the Sri Lankan Ministry of External Affairs is coordinating with another Dubai based shipping company which is trying to seek the release of a Sri Lankan crew member who has been held hostage by Somali Pirates since December.

Last month, the UN Security Council warned that the threat posed by Somali pirates were rapidly increasing in the Indian Ocean region and that the attacks on vessels were becoming more extreme.

For the first six months of this year, around 266 cases of piracy have been recorded and nearly sixty percent of the said cases involve Somali pirates.

Text
July 27, 2011

Obama Lets the Pirates Off

by Stephen L. Carter of The Daily Beast

One unacknowledged consequence of the Libya war? With the U.S. Navy occupied, Somali piracy is bigger business than ever. Stephen L. Carter on why Obama’s plan to cut the Pentagon’s budget may prove shortsighted.Jul 22, 2011 3:28 PM EDT

Is the Libyan war claiming casualties as far away as the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, and the Gulf of Aden? That is the implication of this week’s report from the International Maritime Organization, which says attacks on shipping by Somali pirates in those waters hit a record in the first half of 2011. Requests to NATO for more ships to patrol sea lanes have been denied. Why? The Western navies are too busy in Libya.

Two years ago, amid a great burst of media attention, the U.S. and the EU committed ships and aircraft to battle the pirates. In April 2009, President Obama drew widespread and justified praise when he ordered a military operation that resulted in the rescue of a hostage sea captain and the killing of three Somali pirates with three bullets. The president promised to “halt the rise of piracy” in the region. French President Nicolas Sarkozy made a similar vow the previous year, after his nation’s special forces freed a pair of hostages.

Since then, the world’s attention has moved on. Although the piracy problem largely dropped off television screens, it is growing worse. Not only are the rates of attack rising, but so are the ransoms. Indeed, piracy is one of the world’s fastest-growing businesses. A recent report from the consulting firm GeoPolitics calculates that the average ransom for a hijacked ship, which ran about $150,000 as recently as 2005, now exceeds $5 million, meaning that pirates are earning well over $200 million a year. The income of a Somali pirate, says the report, can easily exceed 100 times what he could earn from legitimate work in his country.

The most powerful pirate group, known as the Somali Marines, is so sophisticated, says GlobalSecurity.org, that it “has a military structure, with a fleet admiral, admiral, vice admiral and a head of financial operations.” The gang carries out more than 80 percent of the hijackings in the region, and evidently pioneered the “mothership” attack model, using a large boat to get small, fast skiffs into deep water. (The Somali Marines who are pirates should not be
Stephen L. Carter is the William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law at Yale, where he has taught since 1982. His seven nonfiction books include \textit{God's}

The annual costs of piracy to world shipping, including damage and delay, are difficult to measure, but most experts agree that the figure is in the vicinity of$10 billion; some say more. The Geopolicty report estimates annual losses in the$13 billion to$15 billion range by 2014. And unless the pirates are defeated, the cost is likely to keep rising. The practice is so lucrative, and so weakly policed, that there is little incentive for the pirates to stop.

Despite all the promises, there is, at the moment, little the West can do. Its forces are overextended. A traditional and often overlooked function of the military is to keep the sea lanes open. In recent decades, this responsibility has fallen largely on the United States Navy, the dominant power in the world.

This is one reason that President Obama’s plan to save money by greatly reducing the size of the Pentagon’s budget may prove shortsighted. Defense spending should not be off-limits when the entire country is struggling. But the$400 billion in cuts announced so far, combined with an additional$400 billion to$500 billion that the administration is said to be seeking, is far too high. The dividend from ending the Iraq War and drawing down forces in Afghanistan cannot explain the entire reduction. Much of the money is going to come from procurement, already strained under the Bush administration, which in effect cashed in modernization programs to get war funding.

"... Unless the pirates are defeated, the cost is likely to keep rising. The practice is so lucrative, and so weakly policed, that there is little incentive for the pirates to stop."

Cutting the Navy will have particularly far-reaching effects. It is the Navy that polices the sea lanes: for example, battling pirates. The naval surface fleet is built around the carrier strike group, consisting of an aircraft carrier and its escort ships. By maintaining a large number of these CSGs, as they are known, the United States is able to do what no other nation can: Project power, on short notice, anywhere in the world.

With the expected retirement of the USS Enterprise next year, however, the U.S. will have only 10 active-duty aircraft carriers, one less than the 11 mandated by federal law, and the smallest number since early in the Second World War. This is not entirely the fault of the administration; Congress has required that 11 carriers be maintained but has not provided the funds to support them.

In 2015, the first of the new Ford-class carriers is scheduled to enter service; the next is due in 2020. But these will likely replace, not augment, the carriers now in service. Moreover, because of maintenance and refitting requirements, the practical number of carriers deployable at any moment will be, most likely, six—an awfully small number to guard an awful lot of ocean. At the moment, only five American carriers are out of port. One of them, the Ronald Reagan, is reportedly in the Arabian Sea, but it is not there to battle pirates. It is supporting Operation Enduring Freedom—that is, the Afghan War.

Budgetary constraints have placed the Navy under increasing stress. According to Jane’s Defense Weekly, the Navy is cannibalizing its own ships in order to meet inspection requirements—that is, taking equipment from ship A (in active service) to bring ship B (also in active service) up to standard. Other reports say that as many as 20 percent of America’s naval vessels are failing combat-readiness inspections. Half of the Navy’s air fleet is in disrepair. One cause is said to be shrinking naval manpower: It is difficult to do the same amount of maintenance on a ship with a smaller crew.

Maybe Muammar Gaddafi will fall soon, and the West will have ships to spare to battle the Somali Marines and the other gangs. But we should bear in mind that what the pirates are doing is neither new nor unusual. All through history, wars have been fought for control of the sea lanes. The goal of America’s first naval war, against the Barbary States of northern Africa during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, was precisely to protect shipping. Even if the Somali pirates are defeated, new maritime threats will arise.

Like it or not, for more than six decades the world has looked to the U.S. to keep the sea lanes open, a task, as Navy Secretary James Forrestal put it 1947, “more or less inherited from Britain” following World War II. Keeping the sea lanes open keeps world trade flowing. The job is indispensable, and nobody else can do it. In a perfect world, an international flotilla might patrol the seas, but the world is not perfect, and only the U.S. is in a position to take on the responsibility. It may even be, in a moral sense, our duty as the only superpower.

Thus a stark choice is upon us: We can spend what is necessary to defend the seas, or we can leave them undefended.

"..."
Prosecutors: Piracy includes failed attempts to rob ships at sea under international law

NORFOLK, Va. — Federal prosecutors say the conviction of five Somali pirates should be upheld because the definition of piracy under international law includes failed attempts.

The Somali men were sentenced to life in prison in March for attacking the USS Nicholas off the coast of Africa. At the time of their 2010 conviction, they were the first pirates successfully prosecuted in the United States in nearly 200 years.

Defense attorneys contend the men didn’t commit piracy under U.S. law because they didn’t board or rob the frigate. They have appealed their convictions, and the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals’ ruling on the issue could affect other piracy cases.

Documents filed by prosecutors on Friday say an attack on a ship can qualify as piracy even if it isn’t successfully robbed.

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Story by Associated Press: Published July 25

Text
July 24, 2011

COUNTER-PIRACY UPDATES


PROTECTING AND MONITORING LIFE, BIODIVERSITY AND THE ECOSYSTEM IN SOMALIA AND ITS SEAS SINCE 1986 - ECOTERRA Intl.

ECOTERRA Intl. and ECOP-marine serve concerning the counter-piracy issues as advocacy groups in their capacity as human rights, marine and maritime monitors as well as in co-operation with numerous other organizations, groups and individuals as information clearing-house. In difficult cases we have successfully served as mediators.

DECLARE INTERDEPENDENCE

STATUS-SUMMARY:

Today, 23. July 2011 at 20h30 UTC, at least 35 larger plus 18 smaller foreign vessels plus one stranded barge are kept in Somali hands against the will of their owners, while at least 610 hostages or captives - including a South-African yachting couple as well as a Danish yacht-family with three children and two friends - suffer to be released.

But even EU NAVFOR, who mostly only counts high-value, often British insured vessels, admitted now that many dozens of vessels were sea-jacked despite their multi-million Euro efforts to protect shipping.

Having come under pressure, EU NAVFOR’s operation ATALANTA felt now compelled to publish their updated piracy facts for those vessels, which EU NAVFOR admits had not been protected from pirates and were abducted. EU NAVFOR also admitted in February 2011 for the first time that actually a larger number of vessels and crews is held hostage than those listed on their file.

Since EU NAVFOR’s inception at the end of 2008 the piracy off Somalia started in earnest and it has now completely escalated. Only knowledgeable analysts recognized the link.

Please see the situation map of the PIRACY COASTS OF SOMALIA (2011) and the CPU-ARCHIVE ECOTERRA members can also request the Somali Marine & Coastal Monitor for background info.

- see also HELD HOSTAGE BY PIRATES OFF SOMALIA

and don’t forget that SOMALI PIRACY IS CUT-THROAT CAPITALISM

WHAT THE NAVIES OFF SOMALIA NEVER SEE:


What Foreign Soldiers in Somalia and even their Officers Never Seem to Realize:

The Scramble For Somalia

PEACE KEEPERS OR BIOLOGICAL WARFARE AGENTS?

SG Ban Ki-Moon (UN) and President Ram Baran Yadav (Nepal) should resign and take the responsibility for 4,500 Haitians having been killed by a Cholera strain introduced by unchecked, so-called UN Peace-Keepers from Nepal into Haiti.
LATEST:

STILL ALMOST 600 SEAFARERS ARE HELD HOSTAGE IN SOMALIA!

ECOTERRA Intl. has been the first group to clearly and publicly state that the piracy phenomenon off the Somali coasts can only become an issue of the past again, if tangible and sustainable, appropriate and holistic development for the coastal communities kicks in. Solutions to piracy have to tackle the root causes: Abhorrent poverty, environmental degradation, injustice, outside interference. While still billions are spent for the navies, for the general militarization or for mercenaries or conferences, still no real and financially substantial help is coming forward to pacify and develop the coastal areas of Somalia.

Updates on known cases of piracy - pls see also below this latest news in the status section.

DANGEROUS AND UNWISE GAMES

Puntland Security Forces Attack Fuel-laden Tanker off Bargaal (ecop-marine)

Pirates on MT JUBBA XX were attacked from the land and sea by security forces from Puntland, which endangered the safety of the tanker fully laden with petroleum products.

A business vessel had been recruited by force by the Puntland forces and the chief-engineer coerced to steam the vessel after the MV JUBBA XX which had been hijacked. The captain had refused to hand the vessel over

Heavy machine guns were installed and the group sailed after the tanker.

Attacks were then launched from land on the camp of the pirate-gang and from the sea.

Luckily nothing dramatic happened to the tanker or the crew so far, our marine observers report, but unfortunately the vessel is still under pirate control, left the area of Bargaal and was commandeered to Garacad further south on the Somali Indian Ocean coast.

Puntland President Farole requested the navies to assist in the ongoing pursuit of the se-jacked tanker.

Local elders and businessmen related to the cargo owners were so far not able to solve the stand-off peacefully and it can not be ruled out that another clash again would also pose a serious threat to the environment, if the tanker would be damaged.

The skirmish, however, caused that MV DOVER lifted her anchors and steamed out at sea, taking with her the Danish hostages, whose situation is surrounded by contradicting stories.

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The maritime articles below are cleared or commented. If you don’t find a specific article, it most likely was not worth to be republished here, but if you feel we have overlooked an important publication, please mail it to us.

What you always wanted to know about piracy, but never dared to ask:

SEARCH THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE INTERNET PORTAL ON PIRACY

Pirate Attacks Pick Up Again

22.07.2011: 1029 UTC: Posn: 12.56N-048:30E, Gulf of Aden. (NATO confirmed this attack)

Armed pirates in one skiff fired upon a general cargo Ship underway. Master took evasive manoeuvres and managed to evade the the attack. Warship in the vicinity approached the vessel and managed to stop and board the skiff.


Six armed pirates in a skiff chased a contain vessel underway. Master raised the alarm, took evasive manoeuvres and contacted the coalition forces. The vessel manage to evade the attempts.(source: IMB)

Vessel FBlue escaped pirate attack (MaritimeBulletin)

On 21 July 2011 11:18 UTC, the F Blue was attacked by a PAG while underway in position 13 29 0 N, 042 36 0 E, 29nm SW of Jazirat al Hanish al Kabir, Island, Yemen in the Southern Red Sea. The Fblue was attacked and fired on with RPG’s by 6 to 8 pirates in a white skiff with red zig-zag marks on the side. The vessel undertook anti-piracy measures and was able to escape the attack and continue on her voyage to Jebel Ali. No crew were reported injured in the attack. General cargo F Blue IMO 9065900, dwt 9370, built 1994, flag Marshall Islands, owner NAF Shipping Greece. Source: Maritime Assistance Center (MAC) Securewest International

Iranian Navy Thwarts Repeated Attacks on Cargo Ships in Bab-el-Mandeb (FNA)

The Iranian Navy fleet foiled several pirate attacks on a cargo ship and an oil tanker with timely action in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait.

According to a statement issued by the Navy’s Public Relations office, Iran’s 15th fleet of warships saved Dandle cargo ship from an attack by 7 Somali pirate speedboats at around 16:00 hours local time on Wednesday.

The statement added that one and a half hours later, Dandle came under a second attack by 16 other speedboats near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, but the attack was foiled when the Iranian naval forces started a heavy arm clash with the pirates as a result of which a pirate was gunned down.

In another development, the Iranian Navy fleet thwarted a pirate attack on Abadeh oil tanker with timely action on Thursday, the statement continued.

The Iranian warships initiated timely action after the tanker was attacked by 7 pirate boats.

The Iranian Navy has been conducting anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden since November 2008, when Somali raiders hijacked the Iranian-chartered cargo ship, MV Delight, off the coast of Yemen.

According to UN Security Council resolutions, different countries can send their warships to the Gulf of Aden and coastal waters of Somalia against the pirates and even with prior notice to Somali government enter the territorial waters of that country in pursuit of Somali sea pirates.

The Gulf of Aden - which links the Indian Ocean with the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea - is an important energy corridor, particularly because Persian Gulf oil is shipped to the West via the Suez Canal.

Anti-Piracy Effort Takes Aim at Pirate Bigshots (VOA)

A multinational effort against Somali pirates has resulted in a task force aimed at taking down the organizers, financiers, and negotiators behind the piracy
business.

A U.S. State Department official told VOA Thursday The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia believes there are only a handful of individuals in charge of the criminal enterprise, compared to the large number of young men who are on the seas actually hijacking ships. The official said The Contact Group hopes that they will be able to identify and detain the leaders, and therefore reduce the number of future attacks. They are planning to do this by tracing the path of ransom money after it is paid, information they will try to gather from captured pirates.

The new working group was established at a meeting of The Contact Group in New York last week. Representatives from more than 70 countries, including the United States, explored ways to prevent the raids, which it says are threatening commerce and humanitarian aid deliveries in one of the world’s busiest shipping corridors.

Despite international naval patrols, Somali pirates continue to terrorize shipping in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Seas. The pirates have hijacked dozens of ships and collected hundreds of millions of dollars in ransom over the past few years.

**British Royal Navy could get tougher on piracy** *(BritishForcesNews)*

The Royal Navy of the UK could get tough new powers to deal with pirates off the coast of Somalia. Currently, Royal Navy ships can take suspected criminals on board - but the crew has no powers to detain them for trial. Nor is the Navy allowed to fire on the pirates unless it’s in self-defence. They can only target their vessels after the pirates have been let go.

It’s reported that Foreign Secretary William Hague, is “anxious” to change things, to make it more risky to be a pirate off Somalia.

**Legal notice to Dubai owners of hijacked ship** By Asmaa Ali Zain *(KhaleejTimes)*

A Dubai-based firm that owns a ship hijacked by Somali pirates has been served a legal notice by a UK-based human rights lawyer.

The Jebel Ali-based company, Azal Shipping and Cargo, that owns MV 1 Iceberg was served the notice on July 20 by the Ansar Burney Trust International, an international human rights organisation, after the company failed to respond to pleas from the relatives of the crew members to help secure their release by paying $3.5 million as ransom to the Somali pirates. MV 1 Iceberg was heading for Jebel Ali Port when it was hijacked by Somali pirates on March 29, 2010, near the Gulf of Aden.

The trust, owned by Pakistani human rights lawyer Ansar Burney, has vowed to fight the case in a UN court if the company does not own up to the 23 crew members who have been aboard the hijacked ship for the past 15 months.

Currently, the ship is being held off the coast of Somalia. It was said to be carrying mechanical instruments and consisted of a 24-member crew comprising citizens of Pakistan, India, Yemen, Ghana, Sudan and the Philippines. Reportedly, a crew member named Wagdi Akram committed suicide on October 27, 2010 by jumping into the sea. The other crew members are said to be suffering from serious mental and physical problems after being kept alive on a meagre ration of food in a 5X5-foot cabin.

Burney said he has taken the legal action after family members of the crew got in touch with him.

Speaking to Khaleej Times from London on Thursday, Burney said legal action could be withdrawn if the company cooperated.

“We have been requesting the owner to provide us details of the ship and, in particular, details of any attempt at negotiations with the pirates,” said Burney who is also the former federal minister for human rights in Pakistan.

The company has also stopped paying the salaries to the families of the crew of whom six are Indian nationals. The notice asks the company to provide as much information as possible pertaining to the vessel, particularly details of any efforts at negotiations, the pirates’ demands and any settlements reached or likely to be reached.

Burney, who is expected to be in Dubai next week, said that his firm will also request assistance from the Dubai government if the company fails to cooperate. He also urged upon Pakistan, India, the NATO, the US, the UAE, Europe, the Arab and Middle Eastern countries and the United Nations to take stern action against Somali pirates.

“We are against ransom since the money is used in terrorist activities,” he said.

“When an aircraft is hijacked, immediate action to release the flight is taken. Then, why not in this case?”

A spokesperson for Azal Shipping declined to comment on the legal notice.

**Somalia’s Sea Wolves** By Alex Perry *(TIMEspecial)*

I have arranged to meet our pirate, somewhat incongruously, in the desert. I board a 1960s prop airplane that smells of goat and is piloted by four portly Russians. After a series of short hops across Somalia’s northern wastes, we touch down on a red-dirt strip outside the town of Galcayo. The government in the capital, Mogadishu, doesn’t control even half that city, let alone the hinterland, and the day before we arrive, seven people die in a gunfight in Galcayo. So at the airport, I hire eight men with AK-47s at $15 a day each, then drive across town to the high-walled aid-group compound where I’m staying. I am here to talk to a pirate king called Mohamed Noor, better known to his shipmates as Farayere, or Fingers. I want to ask Fingers why, when Somalia’s pirates face an international armada at sea, when some 1,000 pirates have been arrested and scores more have died, piracy is still rocketing. Fingers arrives alone. He is skinny and sun-creased for his 32 years. We introduce ourselves, tea is poured, and Fingers indicates I should start. How do you organize a pirate attack? I ask. There are no fixed pirate crews, Fingers replies. Instead, a few investors pool the money to hire two skiffs with fast outboards, employ five to 10 young men with guns — whoever shows up — and buy them enough food, water and fuel for a month. The investors then send their pirates out with orders not to return until they have captured a ship. That’s it. Hundreds of pirates never return at all, says Fingers. Some drown at sea. Many more run out of food, water or fuel and die, starved and parched, adrift on the ocean. (See pictures of two dramatic hostage rescues.)

“One time there was this group I knew that ran out of food and a guy died — and the other guys ate him,” Fingers says, speaking in Somali through an interpreter.

“They ate their friend?” I ask.

Fingers laughs. “It’s not a crime if you’re about to die,” he explains.

Fingers says he has invested in scores of pirate crews. I want to know about the ships he has captured and ransomed himself. In five years, he says, there have been two. The first earned him a split of $75,000, the second $280,000. Of that $355,000, he invested $50,000 in a money-lending business in Nairobi, the capital of neighboring Kenya. That still leaves more than $300,000, a sizable haul anywhere but a fortune in Somalia, the world’s most failed state, a place that has been at war with itself for 20 years and where annual incomes are normally measured in the hundreds of dollars. Yet when I examine Fingers, I see no signs of wealth. He is squatting on the floor and is dressed like any East African deckhand: cheap thongs, a thin shirt and an old kikoi.

“Fingers,” I ask, “where did all the money go?”
Andrew Mwangura, an independent Mombasa-based piracy speculates dampen the ransom business, killed 76 people in a bomb attack on fuel again, they ran to the wheelhouse and punch the captain. ‘If you want your lives, cooperate or we will kill you all,’ they say. ‘We are not scared of anything. We know we can die any minute, but we’ll kill you all first.’”
The pirates sailed for Haradheere, a pirate base a day’s drive from Galcayo. There a group of town elders boarded the ship, denounced the crew for stealing Somali fish and told the captain he had three choices: “Cooperate and use your ship to hijack a tanker. Pay us $6 million. Or we’ll behead you and sink your boat.” The captain chose to hijack a tanker.

Which is how the Golden Wave became a pirate mother ship. For the next six months, using Amere and his crewmates as human shields, the pirates roamed the Indian Ocean. First to fall, on Oct. 24, was a Singapore-flagged, 5,076-ton liquid-natural-gas tanker, the York, boarded at anchor off Mombasa. The Golden Wave then moved to the Seychelles, where, after attempting 17 ambushes in 21 days — all of which failed — the pirates captured a German cargo vessel, the Beluga Nomination, on Jan. 22. The hijack turned violent when the Seychelles coast guard opened fire: one pirate and two crewmen were killed.

Two days later, the pirates hijacked an Indian fishing boat. Then they boarded a Pakistani fishing boat and stole its radio, laptops and fuel. Finally, running low on fuel again, they ambushed a third boat. By this time, Amere said, he was a member of the pirate crew. For the next six months, using Amere and his crewmates as human shields, the pirates roamed the Indian Ocean.

In early February, the pirates returned to Haradheere. Amere sat celebratory drinking, dancing, gunfire and chewing of khat (a stimulant), one pirate took pity on the Kenyan crew. Amere says the pirate gave him a satellite phone and enough fuel for a day, and at 4 a.m. the Golden Wave slipped out of Haradheere. Once at sea, the crew picked up an escort from a Finnish warship, and they finally returned home to Mombasa on Feb. 17, six months after they set out.

The Golden Wave, a 300-ton, 85-m trawler fishing for tuna, crab, lobster and prawns off Kenya’s northern coast. Just after dawn on Sept. 9, Amere saw two skiffs skid across the horizon. He fished some binoculars. “I can see five or six guys, and they have weapons,” he says. “Two RPGs, two heavy machine guns, six AK-47s. They start firing. They signal us to stop. The captain tries to escape, but the pirates put a ladder over the side, climb aboard, run to the wheelhouse and punch the captain. ‘If you want your lives, cooperate or we will kill you all,’ they say. ‘We are not scared of anything. We know we can die any minute, but we’ll kill you all first.’” The pirates sailed for Haradheere, a pirate base a day’s drive from Galcayo. There a group of town elders boarded the ship, denounced the crew for stealing Somali fish and told the captain he had three choices: “Cooperate and use your ship to hijack a tanker. Pay us $6 million. Or we’ll behead you and sink your boat.” The captain chose to hijack a tanker.

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The pirates’ ability to act seemingly with impunity illustrates an uncomfortable realization now dawning on the navies of the world: that even in the 21st century, when warships can fire cruise missiles through a window in downtown Tripoli, controlling piracy is beyond them. Peter Hinchliffe, secretary general of the International Chamber of Shipping and the International Shipping Federation, says that while the warships created a small secure corridor through the Gulf of Aden, “no one asked, If we do this, what will the pirates do? And, of course, they simply moved elsewhere.”

Even if the world’s navies agree on a plan — Hinchliffe suggests targeting mother ships — it’s not certain that military muscle alone can end piracy. When the international armada began arresting pirates, Kenya initially volunteered to imprison them, then balked when it realized how many there would be: 1,007 by May 2011, according to the U.N. Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC). In an attempt to meet the size of the problem, the UNODC has rehabilitated a jail in Hargeysa, Somalia, that can hold 460 inmates. Small numbers of pirates are also working their way through the justice systems of 20 countries from the U.S. to Japan. But piracy is potentially limitless. While the UNODC reckons there are currently some 2,500 Somali pirates, the number of unemployed Somali men available to replace any who are detained runs to hundreds of thousands.

The biggest single obstacle to ending piracy is that it pays so well. Not so long ago, a few hundred thousand dollars would free a ship. Today a tanker goes for $5 million to $10 million. Hinchliffe estimates total ransoms paid in 2010 at anywhere from $75 million to $238 million and the return for a pirate investor at around 10,000%. With no other way of freeing sailors, shipowners or their insurers continue to pay. Says Alan Cole, a Nairobi-based piracy specialist at the UNODC: “The shipowners say, ‘There’s no way we can get people back apart from paying ransoms.’ And the governments say, ‘If you keep paying ransoms, there is no way we’re going to be able to stop this.’”

One recent development might put a spanner in this flourishing industry: consistent reports that al-Shabab is now taxing pirates and funding its own hijackings.

“All the guys who have been arrested recently came out of Kismayo,” says a Nairobi-based piracy expert. (Kismayo is a southern Somali port under al-Shabab’s control.) Anyone paying ransom to a group allied with al-Qaeda — especially one that became an international terrorist group in its own right when it killed 76 people in a bomb attack last year in Kampala, Uganda — would be liable for prosecution in the West. But while al-Shabab’s involvement may dampen the ransom business, it will not end it. Many northern Somali pirates have no relationship with al-Shabab. The nightmare scenarios are bleak. Hinchliffe speculates about an environmental disaster involving a hijacked oil tanker. Cole warns of the possibility of a humanitarian catastrophe on a pirated cruise ship. Andrew Mwangara, an independent Mombasa-based piracy monitor, sketches out a scenario in which terrorists use hijacked ships to block the Gulf of Aden.
at its narrowest point, the 30-km Bab-el-Mandeb.

**Pirate Heaven**
There is a bay on the northern shore of Madagascar in whose thick forests, legend has it, lie the ruins of Libertalia. Some 300 years ago, the Indian Ocean was a favorite for European brigands who made their living on the high seas. But as Captain Charles Johnson recounts in his 1724 *General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, piracy wasn’t all rum and yo-ho-ho. Johnson portrays Libertalia’s founders — James Misson, a former French navy officer, and Signor Caraccioli, a lapsed Italian priest who sailed with him — as revolutionaries. Caraccioli was something of a radical, and he convinced Misson and his crew “that every Man was born free, and had as much Right to what would support him as to the Air he respired ... The vast Difference betwixt Man and the one whoallowing in Luxury, and the other in the most pinching Necessity, was owing only to Avarice and Ambition on the one Hand, and a pusillanimous Subjection on the other.” Caraccioli persuaded the men to use robbery to punish the wealthy and buy their freedom. With their takings, they built a utopia on Madagascar in which a rotating leadership replaced kings and captains, religion had no hierarchy and private wealth was banned. Misson’s crewmen, Caraccioli declared, “were no Pyrates, but Men who were resolved to assert that Liberty which God and Nature gave them [and] were Barriers against the Rich and Powerful.”

Libertalia is most likely a myth. Its ruins have never been found, Misson himself may not have existed, and Charles Johnson is a pseudonym, perhaps Daniel Defoe’s. But the legend contains elements of truth. In the 17th century, a band of English dissidents did establish a settlement in Ranter’s Bay, on Madagascar, where they rejected organized religion and lived off piracy. Libertalia’s founding ideals would also have been familiar to any 17th century rebel. *(See a brief history of pirates.)*

**Libertalia holds**
lessons for those trying to end piracy today. To Misson’s men, piracy was a means to an end — fighting oppression and building a future of fairness and prosperity. Likewise, Somali pirates will often claim, as Fingers does, to be former fishermen who first attacked Asian fishing trawlers that were devastating Somali fish stocks. If that was once true, it isn’t now: kidnapped crewmen report that many pirates can’t swim, let alone sail, while the recovery in fish stocks engendered by piracy’s deterrent effect has not been accompanied by a revival in the Somali fishing industry. Nevertheless, the notion that the world has dealt Somalia a cruel hand and that piracy will never be fixed unless some genuine Somali grievances are addressed is widely supported. “The only real solution is on land,” says Graham Westgarth, chairman of the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners, a trade body. It wouldn’t take utopia. A more modest vision — a little less lawlessness, a little more development — has brought Omar Mohamoud Omarisuuri, a one-time IT teacher in Birmingham, in the U.K., back to the land of his birth. “The root cause of piracy is lack of strong authority onshore,” says Omar. Despairing of a functioning national government, he and a selection of clan leaders have formed a regional one in a new state they have founded in central Somalia, Galmudug, at whose core is a new police force of 400 men. Omar hopes they will be the foundation of a state-level normalization that will lead eventually to legitimate businesses and legal jobs. Their initiative finds strong support from Somalis, even those linked to piracy. Adar Abdirahman, 40, is mother of Abduwali Abukhadhir Muse, who was sentenced to 33 years in jail in New York City in February for piracy. Adar says her son was just 15 — “a child soldier” — when he became a pirate and 16 when he was arrested by a U.S. Special Operations team. “If you’re going to tackle piracy, do it properly,” she says, “not by arresting children but attacking the root cause: a failed state with no government, schools or jobs.”

It’s a brave project. But standing in its way, I can’t help but feel, is Fingers. When I ask him if he’s happy, he replies, “I am. I don’t depend on anyone. When I want a woman, I give her money and she becomes my mistress. When I need a ship, I go out and take one. No one can stop me. The sea is as big as Somalia. No one can control Somalia. And no one controls the sea.” Ending piracy will require building a better Somalia for tomorrow. Trouble is, Fingers and thousands like him are already living their Libertalia today.

**PIRACY: HOW DO I AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM?**

By Brian Short (Marinesec)

This is perhaps the question I am asked most often to speak at people at conferences and seminars. There is of course no one answer but a whole series of steps and guidelines that you can follow to reduce the risk to your vessels and crews. But why do you need to take any precautions at all when most of the European countries have a naval presence [EUNAVFOR] in the Indian Ocean?

Well as it was recently publicly stated, operating EUNAFOR as a police force is like trying to police the whole of Europe with a limited number of police cars all travelling at 15 miles an hour! There are also independent naval forces from countries such as Russia, India and China, who all contribute in varying degrees to the overall security. India has perhaps been the most proactive and aggressive in pursuing pirates along its coast, to the point where the pirates have taken note and taken retribution on Indian nationals it has captured. The combined naval forces have been successful in patrolling the IRTC and some of the navies are proactive across the Indian Ocean, but they cannot be everywhere. In short, if you want a bigger naval presence in the region then you must lobby your government to invest more naval resources to the region, but we all know how slow governments are to react. So, for the most part it is your own preparations that are going to be your best defence in the short term, and you can regard help from any other quarter as a bonus.

The first and possibly the most important step in defending your vessel is to raise awareness of the problem with senior management. This is because without their support you will not have the corporate, moral or financial backing to protect your vessels. I frequently meet middle managers who want to engage with the problem but who do not have the full support of senior management to implement the changes needed. This usually dramatically changes after the company has lost a ship but then is a little too late!

The next step in the chain is to make sure your company security officer and those under him are all aware of the directions contained in the BMP3 guidelines document produced by the UKMTO. [an updated version is due for release at some point soon] It is a free downloadable document [http://www.msc.org/bmp3/Pages/BestManagementPractises.aspx] or you can buy hard copies from suppliers. The BMP stands for best management practice but I prefer to refer to it as Bare Minimum Practice, because after BMP3 every further layer of defence you put in place will lessen your chances of being attacked, boarded and losing your vessel.

Third in my ‘to do’ list is to have a security survey done of your vessels and a review of the ship security plan. The survey will show up where your vessel is weakest and how you can harden it against attack. There have been plenty of attempted piracy attacks thwarted by a ship that looks like it is well defended and with a hard profile. There are a wide range of passive or non-lethal devices on the market that can be fitted to vessels to help protect them against boarding, acoustic hails and water cannon being amongst them. It is well known in the security industry that some of these devices are useful and others are a complete waste of time and money. It would be wrong of me [and litigious!] to discuss the merits or otherwise of individual devices in this public arena but I am happy to share my views in private. Whatever equipment you are considering I would suggest taking advice before spending money on products that do not always deliver what they promise. However, in broad general terms most devices do add some value to the defensive layer and the more layers the better. Prior to entering a high risk area the reviewed security plan should be implemented, the crew briefed and extra watch keepers posted. The BMP3 reporting procedures should also be implemented and the ship routed through the IRTC if possible or in company with other shipping. If you have employed a private security team [armed or not armed] they should be now be assisting the captain, briefing and drilling the crew and providing extra lookouts. Having the crew fully briefed will help reassure them so they can get on with their work and in the event of an attack help give them confidence in the drills and procedures in place.

However, for the moment let’s assume you do not have a security team on board and you are defending the vessel alone. In the event of an attack, often the
modus operandi of the pirates is to open fire on the vessel to try and intimidate the captain into stopping the ship and be boarded. This is a very stressful and relatively dangerous time for the crew, as the pirates invariably aim for the large bridge area for maximum shock effect, without regard to injury or damage. The AK-47 assault rifles and rocket propelled grenades they use are usually old and not very accurate, but accurate enough to hit a bridge wing or wheelhouse superstructure. This is further complicated if your company policy/ship security plan calls for the bridge team to remain on the bridge and aggressively manoeuvre the ship to try and avoid being boarded or operate other defensive measures such as fire hoses etc. Just as in any other dangerous work situation you would provide safety equipment, my advice is to provide the bridge crew with some body armour and helmets. This will not only help protect them if a bullet or RPG enters the bridge area, but will also give them the confidence to continue manoeuvring and resisting the attack, which might just be the difference in being boarded. Some recent attacks have seen crew members injured by flying glass and shrapnel during this phase of an attack, which could have been avoided by the wearing of protective equipment. This is also a good time to mention having a good first aid kit on the bridge to deal with any injuries. It is no good just grabbing the first aid kit from the mess room that might have a triangular bandage, two band aids and a bottle of painkillers, you need large absorbent pad style bandages that will help with coagulation and stop bleeding if anyone is unfortunate enough to be injured. As with all modern workplaces, IMO requires your crew to have basic first aid training and access to further trained staff on board. However, in the situation we are discussing your crew might find themselves dealing with gunshot and serious trauma injuries, so good preparation, kit and training are essential for preserving life in these kinds of circumstances. It would be a great pity to successfully defend your vessel but lose a crew member to blood loss or other treatable injury. This does offer another reason for having a security team on board as any reputable company will provide personnel with extensive first aid training and first hand experience.

If all your preparations have failed and boarding looks imminent or has happened, then it is time to consider your last stand. If the ship is boarded then the crew needs to have gone into lock down and secured themselves in the prepared citadel or hard room. A few words on citadels as this is very much flavour of the month in terms of anti-piracy measures, as it appears to have a statistically high success rate. However, as with all statistics they need to be seen in context and with all risk factors considered. For instance, having been boarded and got safely to the citadel, there have been examples of pirate trying any means to get at the crew, including setting fires and using RPG rockets to try and blow doors open. All seafarers know the serious danger of a fire on board a ship and if the fire suppression systems cannot cope [and I hope I am proven wrong] then we could one day be facing a humanitarian or ecological disaster. So, my advice on citadels is that they should be the last measure in your security plan and not the first and should certainly not be totally relied on as a standalone measure. The citing and fitting out of a citadel is also very important if it is to be successful in saving your vessel and crew. Some ships designate an entirely inappropriate space as a citadel and fail to fit it out with the basic provisions needed, such as water etc. One attack last year saw the crew successfully retreat to the citadel but also saw them have to come out to surrender to the pirates after a lengthy confinement. This was partly because provisions were running low, conditions were getting bad below deck and because of their location naval ships could not reach them in time.

If following any attack you are lucky enough or more precisely prepared enough to survive an attack, then any evidence that can be gathered such as locations, descriptions of mother ships, tactics used or photographs etc. should be collated and passed back to UKMTO for dissemination to other vessels. By passing on and updating intelligence you might save another vessel or perhaps more importantly the information might just save you or a sister ship if the practice of sharing information becomes standard.

Of course any article on avoiding piracy cannot avoid mentioning the use of armed security teams. In simple terms it is still the only defence with a 100% success record for repelling attacks. I will not go into the arguments for and against as they are ethical, corporate, financial and well documented elsewhere. However, I will remind you of the approximately 700 seafarers currently held by pirates. Each of those seafarers would have preferred the security offered by the use of a properly trained security team as opposed to the six months they will be held in captivity in appalling conditions. The pirates have become more violent in recent times to put pressure on ship owners to pay ransom demands. Their treatment of captured seafarers has included beatings, torture, mock and actual executions to further their own ends. They have also resorted to psychological measures, such as telephoning families of those captured to put pressure on the parent company. Despite it being my core business, I do guard against employing just anyone for such an important role The reason for this is the wildly different standards of armed guards available to the unwary end user. At one end of the scale you can employ an African tribesman at $10 a day, but experience shows that at the first sign of trouble he will throw his weapon overboard and don a set of crew overalls. In the middle of the range there are a lot of operators, some of whom base their employment and selection criteria on cost, never a good thing when looking at trusting someone with a weapon. How then as an end user do you find a reputable company that satisfies your needs but can also demonstrate ethical standards? Well this year has seen the emergence of an organisation called the Security Association for the Maritime Industry [SAMI]. This organisation aims to promote high standards and an ethical approach to maritime security, giving clients confidence in the company it is employing to guard its vessels. The purpose of this article is not just to promote SAMI but since it has set high standards for its membership it would be wrong not to bring this to your attention as a beacon to those seeking excellence and assurances. There are other ways of carrying out due diligence on prospective security companies, including asking to see their rules of engagement, asking if they are signatories to the Swiss government ICOC document and viewing their insurance policies. But before employing a private security company you do need to have some understanding of the quality of personnel going onto your vessel before you and you crew can enjoy peace of mind and of course security. So whether you choose armed guards or non armed personnel as riders to train your crew, make sure they meet the high standards set by SAMI. So, to do nothing is to invite disaster and the possibility of losing a ship. Costs escalate when a ship is taken and as well as the human cost there are numerous other costs associated with recovering your vessel that extend well above and beyond any ransom figure paid. For example, if your vessel is held for six months without care or maintenance then the cost of re commissioning the vessel for sea also has to be factored in, along with loss of cargo. Of course you will have all manner of insurances in place but negotiating liability between them can be a time consuming business involving expensive lawyers. The most cost effective and best option for all concerned [except the pirates of course] is to avoid losing a ship in the first place! So, whatever means you decide on to protect your vessels and crew, please do not just do nothing and hope for the best. Carrying a lucky rabbit’s foot, crossing your fingers, hanging a horse shoe on the bridge and even fervent prayers have all proved woefully inadequate in deterring pirates!

Text

July 21, 2011

Somalia Famine Partly To Blame On War And Corruption: Analysts
MOGADISHU, Somalia — Somali soldiers beat back desperate families with gun butts Thursday as they fought for food supplies in front of a weeping diplomat, a day after the U.N. declared parts of the country were suffering from the worst famine in a generation.

“I will knock on every door I can to help you,” the African Union envoy to Somalia, Jerry Rawlings, told the gathered families in the capital of Mogadishu.

Somalia’s 20-year-old civil war is partly to blame for turning the drought in the Horn of Africa into a famine. Analysts warned that aid agencies could be airlifting emergency supplies to the failed state 20 years from now unless the U.N.-backed government improves.

“Corruption is a major part of the problem in Somalia,” said Rashid Abdi, a Somalia analyst at the International Crisis Group. “This drought did not come out of nowhere, but the (Somali) government did not do anything to prepare for it. Instead they spent all their time fighting each other.”

The U.N. has appealed for $300 million to over the next two months and aid agencies warn it will take at least $1 billion to provide emergency food, medicine and shelter for 11 million people in East Africa until the end of the year. Pictures of skeletal children and grief-stricken mothers stare out from Western newspapers in mute appeal.

The suffering is real. The U.N. believes tens of thousands have already died in the inaccessible interior, held by al-Qaida linked Islamist rebels who denied many aid agencies access for two years. The thorny scrub around the overflowing refugee camps in Kenya is littered with tiny corpses abandoned by mothers to weak to even dig their children a grave.

But Somalis will continue to suffer unless the international backers who support the Somali government also demand that it does a better job, said Abdirazak Fartaag, who headed the government’s finance management unit until he fled the country after writing a report detailing tens of millions of dollars in missing donations from Arab nations.

“The Somalis are very grateful for what the international community is doing for them, but they need to be a bit more forceful in holding our politicians to account,” Fartaag said.

Currently, the government only holds half of the capital with the help of 9,000 African Union peacekeepers. The salaries of 10,000 Somali soldiers are paid by the U.S. and Italy, and the police are paid by the European Union.

**Accused Pirates Plead Not Guilty to Yacht Killings**

NORFOLK, Va. — Three Somali men pleaded innocent Wednesday to charges that they kidnapped and murdered four U.S. citizens in an alleged pirate attack on the yacht Quest.

Ahmed Muse Salad, also known as “Afmagalo,” 25; Abukar Osman Beyle, 20; and Shani Nurani Shiekh Abrar, 29, entered their pleas through an interpreter in U.S. District Court in Norfolk.

The Somalis entered their pleas to 26 counts related to the shooting, kidnapping and murdering of the two couples during their arraignment. Most of the charges carry the death penalty if convicted.

Eleven others have pleaded guilty to charges related to the attack on the Quest and have agreed to cooperate with federal prosecutors.

The four slain Americans were Jean and Scott Adam of California and Phyllis Macay and Bob Riggle of Seattle.

According to the indictment, a group of men armed with firearms and a rocket-propelled grenade boarded the Quest on Feb. 18 several hundred miles south of Oman and took the four Americans as hostages.

Beginning Feb. 20, the U.S. Navy and the FBI began negotiating with the pirates to try to secure the release of the hostages.

One defendant, Abrar, fired a shot over the head of Scott Adam and instructed Adam to tell the Navy that if the U.S. warship came any closer, the pirates would kill the hostages, according to the indictment.

As they sailed toward Somalia, the three defendants and their co-conspirators took turns standing armed guard over the hostages, according to the indictment.

Pirates operating off the coast of Somalia have hijacked vessels in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden, making tens of millions of dollars in ransoms by seizing ships, including oil tankers, and hostages.
Australian scientists have sought the help of the United States and Australian navies to plug a critical gap in their Argo ocean and climate monitoring program caused by Somali pirates operating in the western Indian Ocean. 14 July 2011

“We have not been able to seed about one quarter of the Indian Ocean since the increase in the piracy and that has implications for understanding a region of influence in Australian and south Asian weather and climate,” says CSIRO Wealth from Oceans Flagship scientist, Dr Ann Thresher.

Over 30 nations contribute to the multi-million dollar Argo project, in which 3,000 robotic instruments provide near real-time observations of conditions such as heat and salinity in the top 2,000 metres of the ocean.

Australia, through CSIRO and the Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS), ranks second among countries based on the number of profilers providing data, with more than 325 profilers reporting to international data centres from the Indian, Pacific and Southern Oceans and the Tasman Sea. At nearly two metres in length the drifting profilers, or ‘floats’, are programmed to drift at 1000m for 10 days, then fall to 2000m and sample as they ascend to the surface to upload their data to satellites.

Although the Argo project offers shipping and defence benefits, its primary objective is to monitor ocean heat and salinity patterns that drive the climate and monsoonal systems which bring rain to Australia.

Dr Thresher said the program is heavily reliant on commercial shipping and research and chartered vessels to deploy the instruments.

At nearly two metres in length the drifting profilers, or ‘floats’, are programmed to drift at 1000m for 10 days, then fall to 2000m and sample as they ascend to the surface to upload their data to satellites.

“With the region north of Mauritius being a no-go area for most vessels due to pirate activity, we have approached the US and Australian navies to assist us in deployments of around 20 profilers, including 10 provided by the United Kingdom Argo project.

“This level of international and military cooperation is tremendously important to us in building a sustainable operating ocean-borne system that is providing the data at the core of current weather and climate observations and prediction,” Dr Thresher said.

CSIRO is shipping one profiler to Florida for deployment by the US Navy, and is asking the Royal Australian Navy for help deploy another eight instruments in the area of highest risk.

A 20-metre South African yacht, Lady Amber, is under charter to CSIRO and has successfully deployed seven instruments near Mauritius in the Western Indian Ocean. Her working area, however, was severely restricted by pirate activity in this area and the positions of several profilers had to be changed to accommodate these restrictions. She will deploy another 15 instrument as she transits between Mauritius and Fremantle, where she will pick up another 39 floats for deployment northwest of the Australian North West Shelf – an area thankfully free of piracy.

The International Argo Steering Team is co-chaired by CSIRO oceanographer, Dr Susan Wijffels and Professor Dean Roemmich from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (US).

Dr Wijffels said Argo is now an essential climate and ocean-observing infrastructure and researchers are continuing to review its coverage to ensure gaps in the global network do not open us, such as in the western Indian Ocean. In the future Argo measurements might extend below 2,000 metres and reach into the ocean beneath the polar ice, where currently few measurements are routinely made.

This work is part of the Australian Climate Change Science Program, funded jointly by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO.

Read more media releases in our Media section.

Text
July 13, 2011

Eccoterra post

STATUS-SUMMARY:

Today, 12. July 2011, 23h50 UTC, at least 34 larger plus 17 smaller foreign vessels plus one stranded barge are kept in Somali hands against the will of their owners, while at least 573 hostages or captives - including a South-African yachting couple as well as a Danish yacht-family with three children and two friends - suffer to be released.

But even EU NAVFOR, who mostly only counts high-value, often British insured vessels, admitted now that many dozens of vessels were sea-jacked despite their multi-million Euro efforts to protect shipping.

Having come under pressure, EU NAVFOR’s operation ATALANTA felt now compelled to publish their updated piracy facts for those vessels, which EU NAVFOR admits had not been protected from pirates and were abducted. EU NAVFOR also admitted in February 2011 for the first time that actually a larger number of vessels and crews is held hostage than those listed on their file.
Since EU NAVFOR’s inception at the end of 2008 the piracy off Somalia started in earnest and it has now completely escalated. Only knowledgeable analysts recognized the link.

Text
July 11, 2011

**The Hidden Cost of Piracy**

London-Nairobi — The growth of piracy off the coast of Somalia from an occasional nuisance to shipping into a multi-million-dollar criminal enterprise has another, often deliberately overlooked cost: the worsening violence meted out to thousands of captured crew members.

“There definitely has been a change, and we don’t know why,” Pottengal Mukundan, Director of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), told a June meeting on the subject in London.

“It may be to do with the fact that there is now a different kind of people looking after the captives. These are just gangs of thugs; they have never been to sea and they have no empathy with the seafarers,” said Mukundan.

Statistics from 2010 (taken from The Human Cost of Somali Piracy, unless otherwise indicated) illustrate the scale of piracy’s expansion in the western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden:

- 4,000-plus seafarers attacked with firearms, including rocket propelled grenades
- 400 piracy attacks, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- 1,016 crew members taken hostage (up from a worldwide 188 in 2006 - IMB)
- Over 400 hostages were used as human shields
- Five months was the average duration of captivity
- US$111m paid in ransoms (UNODC report: The illicit financial flows linked to piracy off the coast of Somalia)

Until recently, Somali pirates were known for treating their captives well. But now, according to The Human Cost of Somali Piracy, a report published this month by Oceans Beyond Piracy, hostages are severely beaten, dragged underwater, have had wires tightened round their genitals, and have undergone elaborate mock executions.

“Both successful and unsuccessful attacks expose seafarers to dangerous experiences, with the potential for long-term physical and psychological trauma,” said the report.

Crew members who seek refuge in a “citadel”, or safe room, might spend several terrifying days locked in a confined space while attackers fire heavy weapons at the door, light fires under the ventilators, or even use welding equipment to try to break through the walls.

After the initial distress of being chased and shot at during an attack, hostages endure beatings, confinement and torture at the hands of their captors.

“We have found strong evidence that over a third of the seafarers that were held in 2010 were abused, and the trend is looking more ominous this year,” said Kaija Hurlburt, who wrote the report.

**Psychological pressure**

The seafarers themselves are not the only ones to suffer. To put more pressure on shipping companies to pay up quickly, pirates sometimes called families and threatened to kill them if ransom was not delivered soon. “There have been cases where the hostage has been forced to call his family, and is beaten while his family listens on the phone,” said Hurlburt, who added that both hostages and families are kept in the dark during negotiations. “It is clear that seafarers and their families suffer stress at every point along the way, from the moment their ship enters pirate-infested waters,” she said.

“The risks encountered in the course of their work would be unacceptable in most industries,” the report said.

With more than 3,000 seafarers taken hostage by Somali pirates since 2008 and hundreds currently in captivity, the situation was a “humanitarian crisis”, according to International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) spokesman Simon Bennett. “The crisis really has spiralled out of control.”

The pirates are also using new tactics such as turning hijacked boats into “motherships” from which to launch more attacks in which captive crew members are forced to take part.

No longer restrained by the size of their boats or their sailing capabilities, these pirates are limited only by the amount of fuel they can get. Somali pirates are now carrying out attacks over 1,000 nautical miles away from Somalia.

Shipping companies are often silent about what happens to hostage crews, said Andrew Palmer of Idarat Maritime, which advises shipowners and the burgeoning shipping insurance industry. Palmer told IRIN companies made their employees sign confidentiality agreements promising not to talk about their experiences at sea. Disclosure was not in the companies’ interests, he said, because of the risk of mutiny.

While some seafarers now refuse to sail in waters off Somalia, others feel they have no choice, “because their families, and in some cases entire villages, rely on their incomes,” Hurlburt said in her report.

The industry has been forced to respond to the crisis given what Bennett called “horrible frustration and despair” at the new developments in hostage treatment.
Somali pirate attacks have become increasingly violent in recent years.

The tanker is anchored 16 miles (26 kilometers) from the nearest port and is being kept in position by tug boats.

Pictures posted on the maritime force’s website show smoke billowing from the ship. The ship is carrying 141,000 metric tons of fuel oil.

The fire does not threaten the ship’s oil, said Maritime Technical International, a communications agency working on behalf of Central Mare.

Experts point to options for collective action. Navies could remotely disable hijacked vessels, said Bennett. Authorities could collect evidence following an attack for use in prosecuting pirates, according to the IMB. If enough evidence existed to support assault charges in addition to piracy, those charges could be made, said Miller.

And countries could pledge more resources towards taking pirates to court. Ninety percent of pirates captured by international navies were released because no jurisdiction was prepared to prosecute them, according to the UN Security Council. Kenya cancelled an agreement with the European Union to prosecute suspected pirates, worried about shouldering too much of the financial burden of detaining and trying the pirates.

Others think legal action is only part of the answer. “Prosecution of pirates cannot solve the problem,” said Andrew Mwangura, director of the East African Seafarers’ Assistance Programme. “We need to address the root cause of piracy and to come up with land-based anti-piracy measures.”

“We need to keep pushing this,” said O’Kennedy. “We need to make sure that the welfare of these sailors is at the forefront of people’s minds.”

O’Kennedy said he thinks about the 412 people being held today, and what they’re being subjected to in captivity. He wonders how Naja Johansen of Denmark, just 13 years old, is coping as a pirate hostage. She has been held for more than three months.

“It’s heartbreaking stuff,” he said.


[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations]

Text

July 10, 2011

**Somali Pirates Fire Rocket at Oil Tanker**

NAIROBI, Kenya—Somali pirates fired a rocket-propelled grenade at an oil tanker off the coast of Yemen, causing a fire that led the pirates to abandon their hijacking attempt, the shipping company said Thursday.

Central Mare Inc., the Greek company that manages the oil tanker Brillante Virtuoso, said that firefighting efforts would extinguish the pockets of smoke rising from the ship. The ship is carrying 141,000 metric tons of fuel oil.

The fire does not threaten the ship’s oil, said Maritime Technical International, a communications agency working on behalf of Central Mare.

Pirates attacked the ship 20 miles (30 kilometers) from the port of Aden on Wednesday, but as a result of the fire the pirates abandoned their efforts to overtake it.

A statement from the Combined Maritime Forces, a partnership between several navies to promote security in the waters of the Middle East, said the oil tanker was traveling from the Suez Canal through the Gulf of Aden.

The statement said that the US guided missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea responded to distress call sent by the oil tanker. When the rescue ship arrived, smoke was coming from the ship and the crew had abandoned ship.

“Shortly after the suspected attack, the (Brillante) Virtuoso reported a fire on board which was beyond their control and that their intention was to abandon ship,” the statement said. “The Philippine Sea found no evidence of pirates and concentrated their efforts on assisting crew members.”

Pictures posted on the maritime force’s website show smoke billowing from the tanker while crew members float in a life raft. There were 26 crew aboard the ship.

The tanker is anchored 16 miles (26 kilometers) from the nearest port and is being kept in position by tug boats.

Somali pirate attacks have become increasingly violent in recent years. Ransoms paid to pirates to release the ships now average nearly $5 million.
Follow the Money from Somali Pirates to Al Qaeda

July, 2011

Galahahn has a very interesting post on the subject of a story by Reuters that a low-profile UN report verifies the link between Somali pirates and, you guessed it, Al Qaeda. Go check it out. Well worth the read. I will elaborate here on some things that have been bandied about from time to time.

In that Reuters story, some revealing words from the UN Special Envoy to Somalia:

John Steed, the principal military adviser to the U.N. special envoy to Somalia and head of the envoy’s counter-piracy unit, said links between armed pirate gangs and Somalia’s al Qaeda-affiliated rebels were gradually firming.

“The payment of ransoms just like any other funding activity, illegal or otherwise, is technically in breach of the Somalia sanctions regime if it makes the security situation in Somalia worse,” said Steed.

“Especially if it is ending up in the hands of terrorists or militia leaders — and we believe it is, some directly, some more indirectly,” said Steed, a retired military officer.

To any who doubt that this money-making venture has grown exponentially of late, the next paragraph should erase that doubt.

Ransom demands have risen steadily in recent years. According to one study, the average ransom stood at $5.4 million in 2010, up from $150,000 in 2005, helping Somali pirates rake in nearly $240 million last year.

Certainly, the discussion of where the money is going is pertinent. However, the most salient remark from Galrahn’s post is his assertion that “Piracy just took a strange turn, and it would be nice to hear from someone whose title begins with “Admiral” or whose name is Ray Mabus.” While I might disagree with the word “just” in the first part of the sentence, the second assertion surely is true. Certainly this had to be an eventuality that we were planning for. If not, then serious examination of our Navy’s uniformed and civilian leadership is in order.

As far back as August, 2009, the issue of such a link was discussed, along with the true intent of the Somali pirates. Comments there, and at USNI’s Piracy Conference in the fall of 2010 were at times dismissive of the link between the pirates and Al Shabaab, even though connections between Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda had been trumpeted by both organizations more than a year earlier, and Al Shabaab control of the coastal villages was also well known.

Our hesitation in making the logical connection between a very-high-payoff, low risk venture and those who seek funding sources for their operations (and would not hesitate to coerce the unwilling into cooperation) always struck me as extremely naive. To discount the likelihood of the eventual link between Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab, and the Somali pirates to refuse to understand the nature of our enemies, the ways in which international criminal enterprises work, and the lengths to which the United States and other nations should be willing to go in dealing with the pirates themselves and those who pull the strings ashore in Somalia and elsewhere. I remarked in August of 2009 that,

The old phrase “you’re known by the company you keep” is pertinent here. Al-Shabaab, and by proxy, Al-Qaeda, have major influence here. If the situation didn’t start out that way, it has certainly evolved there. Natural enough, to this point there has been immense profit to be gained with very little risk.

Indeed, according to the UN, there is proof that precisely the above has come to pass. It should be a surprise to nobody, but likely will be a big surprise to many. All I can prescribe for those folks is viewing The Godfather, Part II over and over again. It was simply a matter of time until Al Qaeda tapped into the revenue stream of Somali piracy. And it has likely been occurring for far longer than we can offer “proof” of.

Back to Galrahn’s point. What say you, Navy Leadership? State Department? Why are we finding out from Reuters? Let us hear from you on the subject, and what the intent is to deal with it.


War on Terror Spreading to Somalia

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Somali citizen captured in April was interrogated aboard a U.S. warship for two months and is now in New York to face terrorism charges.

The case against Ahmed Abdulkadir Warsame shows the Obama administration is sticking by its plan to use civilian courts to prosecute terrorists, a strategy that was successful for years under President George W. Bush but which has drawn fire from Republicans since Democrat Barack Obama became President.
The case also offers a glimpse at how the U.S. plans to interrogate detainees now that Obama has closed the CIA’s network of secret prisons.

The military captured Warsame on April 19, and then put him aboard a Navy warship, where he was interrogated at sea by intelligence officials, senior administration officials said Tuesday. Under interrogation, Warsame gave up what officials called important intelligence about al-Qaida in Yemen and its relationship with al-Shabab militants in Somalia. The two groups have been known to have ties, but the extent of that relationship has remained unclear.

After the interrogation was complete, the FBI stepped in and began to interrogate Warsame from scratch, in a way that could be used in court. After the FBI informed Warsame of his rights under U.S. law not to incriminate himself, to remain silent and to have an attorney, he opted to keep talking for days, helping the government build its case.

One of the unanswered questions of the Obama administration’s counterterrorism strategy has been what it would do if it captured an important terrorist. Obama does not want to send more people to Navy’s Guantanamo Bay prison used by the Bush administration, and the CIA’s so-called “black sites” are closed.

The unusual case against Warsame was foreshadowed in congressional testimony late last month when Obama’s choice to become commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command, Navy Vice Adm. William H. McRaven, told senators that the U.S. could hold suspected terrorists on naval ships until prosecutors file charges against them. McRaven did not say exactly how long such detentions could last.

The senior officials who spoke to reporters Tuesday said there are no other detainees in custody aboard ships. They all spoke on condition of anonymity because the case is continuing.

The normally routine machinations of criminal prosecution have become political issues since Obama took office promising to end harsh interrogation tactics and close Guantanamo Bay. Congress has blocked the administration from transferring any detainees out of Guantanamo Bay for trial in the U.S., and some in Congress are also questioning whether all new terrorism cases should be handled by military commissions. Most recently, Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Senate’s top Republican, said two men arrested by the FBI on terrorism charges should be prosecuted at Guantanamo Bay.

That has rankled many at the Justice Department and FBI. Congress has designated the FBI as the nation’s lead domestic counterterrorism agency. But some lawmakers contend the FBI’s reliance on the U.S. system of informing prisoners they do not have to incriminate themselves and are entitled to an attorney, makes the bureau incapable of handling terrorism cases.

Warsame is not believed to be a senior member of either organization, but court documents unsealed Tuesday said he was a fighter for and al-Shabab and helped train others in the organization in 2009, then helped support and train al-Qaida in Yemen until 2011. That makes him a potentially valuable intelligence asset, since he had unique access in both groups.

Senior administration officials said the intelligence interrogations were conducted by the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group, a team of people from the military, intelligence agencies and Justice Department. Because those sessions were conducted before Warsame was read his rights, the intelligence can be used to underpin military strikes or CIA actions but are not admissible in court.

That is why the FBI restarted the interrogations from the beginning.

Warsame pleaded not guilty at his arraignment Tuesday. His lawyer, Priya Chaudhry, did not immediately return a phone message for comment. Warsame’s next court appearance was scheduled for Sept. 8.

Court documents unsealed Tuesday show that the Justice Department plans to use a laptop computer, handwriting analysis, USB drives and a memory card as evidence against Warsame at trial.

Text
July 05, 2011

The world’s forgotten crisis

Somali Refugee Crisis Is Killing Children: U.N.

First Posted: 07/ 5/11 09:49 AM ET Updated: 07/ 5/11 09:49 AM ET

React
Important
Fascinating
Typical
Scary
GENEVA (AP) — Throngs of Somali children are dying because of the harrowing journey with their families to reach refugee camps in neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia, the U.N. refugee agency said Tuesday.

Some of the children don’t survive the exhausting trek and aid workers are learning of those deaths from families who tell their stories once they arrive at one of the overcrowded border camps that now host more than 382,000 people, agency officials said.

But agency officials said many of the children arrive so hungry and frail that even the emergency care and therapeutic feeding that they immediately receive isn’t enough to revive them. The officials say they do not yet know exactly how many children are dying, but the crisis is taking on unimaginable proportions.

“It’s so extreme,” agency spokeswoman Melissa Fleming said. “Our people are saying they’ve never seen anything like it.”

Fleming said 54,000 people fled Somalia in June — triple the number in May — and the refugee families include an unknown number of children under age 5 who are dying from hunger and exhaustion.

More than 135,000 Somalis so far have fled the unending violence in their country in a fast-escalating crisis that is being compounded by one of the worst droughts to hit East Africa in decades, Fleming said.

Her agency estimates a quarter of Somalia’s 7.5 million population is now uprooted in their own country or living as a refugee abroad. In Dadaab camp in Kenya, for example, 1,400 refugees a day are pouring in.

Some 9 million people need humanitarian assistance in the drought-hit countries of the Horn of Africa, which is experiencing one of the worst droughts since the early 1950s, according to the U.N.’s humanitarian aid coordination office.

Child malnutrition rates have reached emergency levels of 15 percent in some areas, said the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Since I was a kid, I dreamt of riding away on a pirate ship in search of treasure. This obsession with all things pirate lead me to make a documentary film telling the true untold story of the Somali piracy crisis, called Stolen Seas (coming soon). More here: http://on.fb.me/SS_FILM. During the three year long insane process of making this film, I’ve gathered a huge amount of information and knowledge about not only Somali piracy, but piracy in general. The Pirate Daily’s aim is to collect, explore, dissect and share all aspects of the piracy phenomena. Somali piracy is a serious tragedy, and yet the pop culture that surrounds piracy in general presents a unique view into the constructs of our society. With The Pirate Daily, I hope to better inform the discussion about piracy, as well as connect with others obsessed with piracy in all its forms. Find us on Facebook here: http://on.fb.me/T_DP

Stuff I like
typicalugandan:

An aerial view of people and boats on a Lake Edward beach, Uganda

by...

andrew bannecker

Heartman via woodcum

- Pirate Day @ Hot Topic in Hollywood

Pirate Day was a BLAST you guys!! So many awesome fans there,...

People I follow