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Contact Details

Shiptalk Limited
Design Works
William Street
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE10 0JP

Tel: +44 (0)191 4690877
Fax: +44 (0)191 4697940

Email: enquiries@shiptalk.com
Website: www.shiptalk.com

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Shiptalk Security Guides

Surviving A Piracy Attack What You Need To Know!

Steven Jones

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Author: Steven Jones

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- Check the underwriter's loss and claims payment record ☒
- Check the terms of the cover as they can vary widely in the market ☒
- Check the identity of the K&R response company ☒
- Question what maritime experience the response company has ☒
- Work through a single specialist broker to obtain expert advice and preserve confidentiality ☒
- Tailor the structure to maximise the risk transfer and minimise your premium spend ☒

Remember the scope of cover will be reflected by the premium spend!

To access expert advice on how to protect your vessel crew and charter call/email:

Capt. Thomas Brown
+44 191 4690859
tbrown@seacurus.com



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Foreword

Piracy, more especially the hijacking of ships and the taking of crews for ransom, has reached unprecedented levels in and around the waters of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden.

This Guide has been developed to provide guidance and advice to be followed before, during and after attack, and in the event of kidnapping of personnel.

The aim of this advice is to remind shipboard personnel of their duties and best practices in the face of the piracy threat. Any guidance should be implemented in parallel with that contained in the Ship Security Plan (SSP), the guidance issued by the Company Security Officer (CSO) and of advice issued by Flag, port and coastal States, local law enforcement or armed forces in the vicinity.

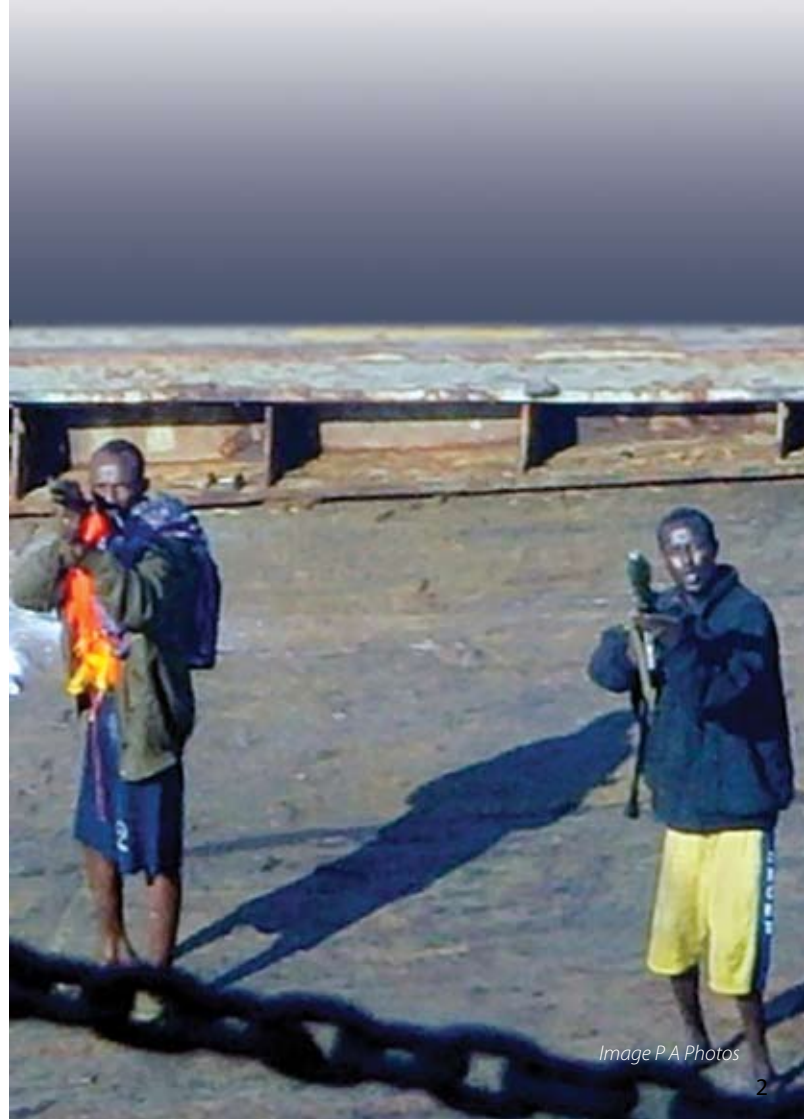


Image P A Photos

Before

Problem Area

Piracy and maritime crime occur in many regions, but this guide is aimed specifically for those transiting and trading within the “Horn Of Africa” region.

The waters off Somalia and Gulf of Aden have become a hunting ground for pirate gangs looking to board vessels.

This is not simply a coastal zone problem, nor is it limited to territorial waters - vessels are being attacked far out to sea, and so measures should be taken even when hundreds of miles off the coast.

Some attacks are launched from shore bases, but as the targets have moved offshore, so too have the pirates. They now often use mother ships to launch attacks, with these vessels heading far out to sea, launching smaller boats to attack and hijack passing ships.

The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) maintains its advice that vessels not making scheduled calls to ports in Somalia should keep as far away as possible from the Somali coast, ~~ideally in excess of 250 nautical miles offshore.~~

Warnings are continually being issued and updated regarding danger areas, and these reports should be monitored. ~~The IMB, The International Maritime Organization (IMO), The Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and most P&I Associations issue advisories.~~

Company Security Officers (CSO) should ensure awareness of the prevailing advice, and that any relevant information is forwarded to the Ship Security Officer (SSO).



The Pirate Modus Operandi

Pirates attack vessels in "Skiffs"; these are usually small boats with powerful outboard motors, often carrying 6 pirates or more. Attacks may involve multiple skiffs approaching from different courses.

Once within range they begin to lay down volleys of suppressing fire from automatic weapons and/or Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG) in an attempt to board and hijack vessels. The fire from the pirates is intended to scare and intimidate the crew into slowing, or allowing them the freedom to board.

While the fire from such weaponry can be terrifying it seldom creates too much damage to the vessel. Ships are surprisingly robust in the face of such firepower. However, reports are emerging of some pirate gangs using "Man-portable air-defence systems" (MANPADS). These are basically shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles (SAMs).

If the attack is successful and the vessel hijacked, the pirates usually sail towards the Somali coast and thereafter demand a ransom for the release of the vessel and crew.

According to the IMB, all vessels transiting the area are advised to take additional precautionary measures and maintain strict 24 hours radar and anti piracy watch using all available means.

Watch keeping crews should look out for small suspicious boats converging on the vessel. Early sighting and accurate assessment of the situation, will allow the Master to hopefully increase the vessel's speed and manoeuvre to escape a piracy attack, allowing more time to request assistance from the various military vessels in the area.



Image Reuters

Who are they*

The exact identity of the groups involved may differ, but their tactics and their desired end results remain the same. The gangs are from different regions of Somalia, and have an allegiance to local “War Lords”, who in turn have organised criminal links beyond the region.

Several distinct Somali-based pirate groups have previously been identified:

- **The Somali Marines**, are a powerful and well-organised pirate group with a distinct military structure, consisting of, a fleet admiral, admiral, vice admiral and a head of financial operations. Operating around Haradheere (400km north of Mogadishu), this group has the capability to operate further offshore than the other groups and is most closely linked to attacks on larger vessels including vessel hijackings and ransom demands.
- **The National Volunteer Coast Guard (NVCG)** has been said to specialise in intercepting small boats and fishing vessels around Kismaayo, but their attacks have moved onto larger targets.
- **The Marka Group**, generally less organised but using fishing boats with larger operating ranges. (South of Mogadishu to Kismayo)
- **The Puntland Group**, had nominally served Somalia's Transitional Federal Government, but their involvement broke down in 2007. The Puntland group operates from a small village near Bossaso, and is thought of as being made up of more traditional Somali fishermen.

- **Ocean Salvation Corps**, a group of Somali nationalists who reportedly think of themselves not as pirates, but “Eco Warriors”, who act to “protect the country's shores”.
- **Al-Shabaab** - The group was previously the hard-line militant “youth” movement within the Islamic Courts Union, and is today described as an extremist splinter group. Conflicting reports exist, but many believe they occasionally engage in piracy to fund terror attacks.

The fact that we are facing piracy as a form of “business” means that we can perhaps anticipate some of the reactions of those pirates onboard the vessels. The crew and the vessel essentially become “assets” being traded – as such so long as the crew do not act in a manner to exacerbate the situation, the hijack is likely to be resolved peacefully in time.

Other less co-ordinated groups exist, but the above list is considered as the major gangs operating currently.

**Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF HOA) briefing*

Stay Off The Coast and Travel At Full Speed

According to IMB advice vessels in the Horn of Africa area are advised to stay as far off the coast as possible, and to maintain as high a speed as practical and safe.

The CSO should brief the SSO as to the route and tactics to be employed during the transit.

The key is to “plan a wise transit”, and certainly to avoid “cutting the corners” around Somalia.

Masters who have taken the decision to reduce their steaming distance have all too often regretted this decision once attacked by pirates.

~~Maritime Security Patrol Area (MSPA)~~

In response to the escalation in attacks on merchant shipping a Maritime Security Patrol Area (MSPA) has been established in the Gulf of Aden.

This is to create a “safe passage” area in which the navy can conduct operations to better protect vessels transiting the region. A force of coalition navy warships patrol the area, with aircraft covering the airspace above.

~~For information on the current co-ordinates of the suggested~~
~~corridor through the Gulf of Aden: The US Maritime Liaison~~
~~Office (MARLO) in Bahrain may be contacted at Duty phone:~~
~~+973 3940 1395.~~
~~Duty email: **marlo.bahrain@me.navy.mil**~~

Despite this patrol capability the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has reminded Masters using the MSPA, that they are not relieved of their security obligations and should continue to maintain a strict 24 hour look out using all available means to get an early warning of any approaching threat.

Transit Corridor

~~A revised UKMT0 Transit Corridor is now in effect. Coordinates~~
~~are:~~

12 00N 45E	14 30N 53E
11 55N 45E	14 25N 53E
11 53N 45E	14 23N 53E
11 48N 45E	14 18N 53E

Convoys

In addition to the MSPA, in October 2008 The European Union (EU) commenced military led convoys of merchant vessels across the Gulf of Aden through its "Naval Co-ordination Cell" (NAVCO).

In addition the cell also provides cover for World Food Programme (WFP) vessels entering Somalia, and fishery protection in the region.

Initially using French Navy vessels and Spanish reconnaissance aircraft the unit offers "slots of close support" to merchant vessels wishing to use their assistance.

Provision of such "slots" is likely to increase as further naval resources are brought to the area, and as demand increases from shipping companies.

Points of contact are:

Capt. Andres BREIJO-CLAUR

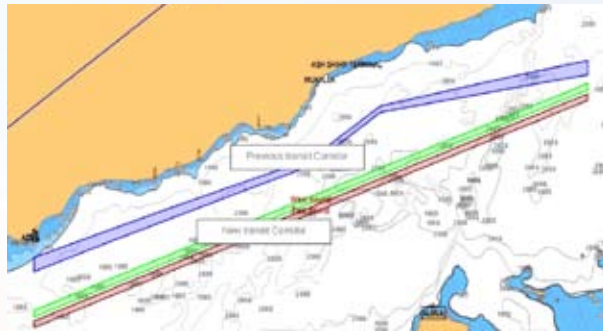
andres.breijo-claur@consilium.europa.eu

Cdr. Guillaume FONTARENSKY

guillaume.fontarensky@consilium.europa.eu

Lt-Cdr. Vassilis DEMETRIOU

vassilis.demetriou@consilium.europa.eu



The corridor includes separate eastbound and westbound transit lanes. Each lane will be 5 nm wide and will be separated by a 2 nm buffer zone. The eastbound lane will begin at 045 East between 11 48 North and 11 53 North. The lane will be orientated along a straight line course of 072 degrees and terminate at 053 degrees East between 14 18 North and 14 23 North. The westbound lane will begin at 053 degrees East between 14 25 North and 14 30 North. The lane will be orientated along a course of 252 and terminate at 045 degrees East between 11 55 North and 12 00 North.

The Transit Corridor is not marked or defined by visual navigational means, nor is it intended to be a dedicated traffic separation scheme but in order for warship patrols to be effective, vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden are strongly recommended to adhere to these guidelines regarding use of the Transit Corridor.

The corridors are subject to ongoing assessment and change - so checking for the latest information is always advised.

Image Reuters

Merchant Vessel Voluntary Reporting Scheme

The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) in Dubai operates this reporting scheme. The UKMTO works closely with coalition forces and is available to provide support across the entire maritime industry including shipping of all flag registries and ownership.

The voluntary reporting scheme covers the Red Sea, Indian Ocean North of 5°S as well as the Arabian Gulf. Ships may report to the MTO team on passing the following reference points

- Suez - for ships entering or leaving the region via the Red Sea
- 5°S - for ships entering or leaving the region via the Indian Ocean (East)
- 78°E - for ships entering or leaving the region via the Indian Ocean (South)

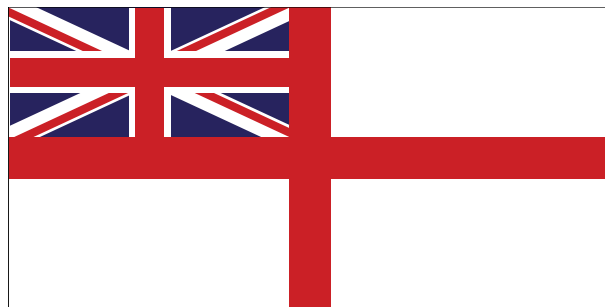
The initial report should contain the following:

- Ship Name
- Call Sign
- Flag
- International Maritime Organization Number
- Maritime Mobile Service Identify
- Inmarsat telephone number including satellite prefix
- Email address, Telex and Fax number
- Ship Management Company
- Type of Ship
- Current position and speed
- Itinerary in the region with route way points and destination port(s)

Ships should continue to report their noon positions and speed, actual departure times and estimated arrival times at ports and destination when outbound from the defined area using UTC. The preferred method of communication is email to **ukmtodubai@eim.ae**.

When sending such emails, you should also copy to **IMBKL@icc-ccs.org**, and **pao@hoa.centcom.mil** with the above information to alert the Administration and military authorities in the immediate vicinity that the ship is transiting the affected region.

The UKMTO may also be reached by Phone: +971-50-552-3215 or +971-50-552-6007; Fax: +971-4-306-5710 and Telex: (51) 210473.



Vigilance

Stay Alert

Identifying suspicious craft at the earliest possible moment is key. Such detection should trigger a response that demonstrates to attackers that they have been spotted.

Early indication of a pirate attack will enable the Master to contact the Coalition Navies, the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre and respond appropriately to prevent boarding.

It is vital that all on board understand the threat posed, and are able to recognise an attack at the earliest possible stage, and know what response is expected of them.

The ships that have successfully evaded pirates have spotted them early and have had a ready response. Be alert and know what to do, then you have a chance!

Watch keeping

Visual

An effective watch must be kept, and the look out should be briefed on what to expect - and of the importance of spotting pirate skiffs early.

Attackers will come in fast, in very small craft - as such, particularly in heavy seas, they may be hard to spot. Though the small pirate skiffs rarely operate in conditions above sea state 5.

The fact that these are small targets, and are often hard to see does not preclude the bridge team from taking all measures to ensure they are seen and identified.

Additional watches on the stern or covering radar “blind spots” should be considered.

Radar

In addition to the visual watchkeeping it is important to use all available means of detection.

Again, pirate skiffs may be also hard to spot by radar, but it imperative that every effort is made to detect their presence.

If targets are spotted, moving at high-speed converging with the vessel then it seems that an attack may be imminent, and appropriate action should be taken.

The earliest possible detection is so important to prevent hi-jack. A prompt and active response can prevent attack, and can certainly limit the pirates’ chances of successful boarding.

The OOW should be briefed to watch for small, fast targets - and the radar set-up may take the need to observe such targets into account.

Image Reuters/Joseph Okanga

Access Control

All access should be controlled and limited, and watchkeepers on the wheelhouse, engine control room and deck should be fully briefed as to the risk of attack and the response expected of them, and also of their fellow personnel.

Decks should be monitored regularly and additional watchkeeping arrangements should be made as appropriate.

Deck watches should ensure their rounds demonstrate an active and alert presence around the vessel. Watchkeepers should ensure they are in contact with the OOW, and should report in at regular intervals.

Watchkeepers should

- Make rounds
- Keep moving
- Create a highly visible presence
- Conduct frequent but irregular patrol patterns around the vessel
- Have a checklist to follow
- Be briefed as to what they are looking for and what to do if they detect suspicious activity

These attacks are taking place against moving vessels - as such gangways, hull openings, etc are most likely to be closed and stowed, however it is important to ensure easy access is prevented.

Lock and Check

When transitting areas of high risk, it is vital that all access to the accommodation is secured - though this should always be balanced against the requirements for safe movement of personnel in the event of an emergency.

Ship's personnel keeping a watch on deck should know how to access the accommodation in the event of an attack when the pirates have boarded the vessel. This access should then be closed and secured immediately.

Cabin doors, portholes, windows, lockers and hatches should all be secured, and there should be no obvious means of access for the boarders.

Ensure it is possible to lock the accommodation, and that attackers cannot easily gain entry. Every second counts, and if you can keep the pirates at bay for long enough there is a chance that the military can come to your assistance.



Security Duties

Many vessels today operate with comparatively low crew numbers - this can severely restrict the ability of the crew to maintain increased watch patterns over any sustained period.

The CSO, Master and SSO should have been in discussion prior to entering the area and plans should have been drawn up to make best use of the finite manning resources for security purposes.

It may be that any other work has to stop over the period of the passage, or that each department is utilised for patrolling and watchkeeping.

Traditional thinking has usually had increased patrolling at night in pirate areas - however, this may not be the most productive approach in this area, with Somali pirates known to prefer day light raids.

While large freeboard, high-speed vessels can perhaps be more confident of avoiding attack, low freeboard slow moving craft are particularly vulnerable and transit in this area poses an extremely high risk of attack.

The fact that small crew size may limit security is perhaps a reason for some companies to revisit their assessment on what constitutes "safe manning", and may prompt the need for additional personnel for particular voyages.

Everyone onboard should be confident and knowledgeable about their security role, and the duties they are to undertake.

Defensive Equipment

Numerous vessels now carry an array of defensive equipment. While these can be useful, and in some cases have effectively deterred attackers - it is important to ensure that personnel operating such equipment are properly trained and equipped.

Examples of defensive equipment include:

- LRAD
- Water Cannon
- Pepper Sprays
- Smoke Bombs

There are documented instances of all these working to deter attackers in the region.

Certain defensive equipment may require a member of the crew for effective operation, this could place the individual literally in the line of fire.

Normal Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as hard-hat, goggles, gloves and a boiler suit, is not likely to be sufficient for such operations.

Crew should ideally be equipped with proper PPE to ensure they are as protected from gunfire and shrapnel as far as possible. Equipment suppliers should be able to provide the right advice and equipment, such as body armour, helmets, etc as required.

Illumination

It is important to use all security tools and assets at our disposal as we attempt to repel boarders, and lighting is traditionally an important part of any security regime.

However, the Somali attacks run contrary to those in other pirate hotspots. Most attacks off Somalia have occurred during daylight hours, thereby reducing the effect of lights dazzling and distracting attackers.

However it remains important to have searchlight capabilities - and they should be ready to use at all times, and certainly should still be used as appropriate after dark.

Keep Water Hoses Pressurised

Fire hoses have proven to be an excellent deterrent in repelling boarders - and should be kept under pressure and readily available during the pirate area transit.

While it is often the case that hoses are flaked out and nozzles are attached to the bulwarks, it is important that the crew retain some flexibility and freedom to easily move them to other areas in order to best repel attackers.



Image Reuters

Creating a Citadel

As an advanced form of access control and to create layers of security, there should be a “citadel plan” devised for the ship.

This will be a plan to physically seal with barriers the essential core of the ship. This must include the wheelhouse/s, the ECR and engine room, and key communication equipment.

Such a process can protect the core infrastructure of the vessel in the event that pirates are able to board successfully.

The key to this approach is to gain time in order for military assets in the vicinity to respond to your distress calls.

Keeping the attackers off the ship is the first phase, but once they board it is important they are kept out of the accommodation for as long as possible. This tactic has been successful, and can force the pirates to leave the vessel frustrated.



Image P A Photos

Training and Exercises

If your vessel is due to transit this area you are well advised to train for the passage to ensure proper and effective action if the vessel experiences an attack.

Exercises and training could include drills to:

- Respond to attackers
- Call for assistance, and practice ongoing communications
- Withdraw personnel into a citadel
- Deal with pirates once on board
- Practice measures to manage a hostage situation

The Master should brief all personnel as to the dangers posed by the transit, and of the measures to be implemented to mitigate the risks posed.

All personnel should ensure they understand their duties, and of the means of fulfilling them.

Radio Communication

The pirates will most likely be monitoring VHF communications, so it is important to express caution in any VHF dialogue while defending the vessel, so as to not give the attackers any useful information.

However it is important for the vessel being attacked to transmit a radio message and depending on the severity or the stage of attack this would most likely take the form of a **MAYDAY** transmission.

It would be hoped there might be naval support in the vicinity and such a call could trigger a swift response to help deter the attack. Also it is a chance to transmit the necessary information any naval responders would need, such as identity, location and nature of emergency.

Even with the significant level of military in the region whether the response gets to the vessel in time will depend on the good training, equipment and good fortune of the ship being attacked.



IMO Guidance for the use of radio signals by ships under attack or threat of attack from pirates or armed robbers

"Piracy/armed robbery attack" is a category of distress message for all classes of DSC equipment. INMARSAT has added a piracy message to the INMARSAT-C menu for the GMDSS.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has issued the following guidance for the use of radio signals by ships under attack or threat of attack from pirates or armed robbers:-

There are two distinct phases to an attack by pirates or armed robbers, either:

- i) the pirates are detected by shipboard personnel prior to boarding of the ship; or
- ii) the pirates board unnoticed, taking hostages and making threats of violence/death to the ship's crew. At this stage, they normally order the ship not to make any radio transmission and reinforce this with further threats of violence.

Pirates Detected Prior to Boarding of the Ship

Providing the ship has not been ordered by the pirates to maintain radio silence, contact should immediately be made with ships in the vicinity and shore authorities by sending a piracy/armed robbery attack message through INMARSAT or on an available DSC or other distress and safety frequency.

Pirates Board Unnoticed

When a ship is ordered by pirates/armed robbers not to make any form of transmission informing shore authorities of the attack, and complying with the provisions of the paragraph above may result in physical violence/death to the crew, any such order should be complied with as the pirates may carry equipment capable of detecting all radio signals, including satellite communications.

Issuing a MAYDAY

Regulations require that a qualified officer is in position to operate communications equipment. However if the attack has injured or killed members of the deck department it may fall onto others to issue a distress call.

All personnel should therefore be familiar with the equipment and of the response necessary.

The basic steps to send a distress call are:

Tune your VHF to Channel 16.

1. **M**AYDAY. State three times.
2. **I**dentify of vessel. Repeat vessel name three times.
3. **P**osition by latitude and longitude, or in any terms that will assist a responding station in locating the vessel in distress. Include any information, such as, vessel course, speed, and destination.
4. **D**istress. Explain what the distress is, eg piracy attack.
5. **A**ssistance desired.
6. **N**umber of persons aboard.
7. **I**nformation (any extra detail to aid responders).
Number of attackers, types of boats, direction of attack, etc
8. **O**ver

MSC/Circ.805

Ship Security Alert System (SSAS)

In addition to the use of the VHF, there may also be a need to operate the Ship Security Alert System (SSAS).

While this will send a covert signal to a designated contact, it may not be the best option in the earliest stages of an attack - as it will not deter pirates, and will not necessarily be the quickest way to inform those in the immediate vicinity of the vessel that there has been an attack.

Therefore an agreed usage policy should be laid down within the Ship Security Plan (SSP).

The SSO/Master and the CSO should agree what constitutes a reason for activation prior to entry into the dangerous area. The response will then follow this agreed SSP policy.

Responsible personnel should ensure they are fully familiar with the means of activation, as occasions have occurred when the SSAS has not been properly activated and no alert has been sent. Exercises are recommended, so that personnel who may deal with the SSAS are competent, and can trigger an alert.

The response to alerts from these systems can sometimes be rather unpredictable and unknown, and for this reason sometimes a more traditional **MAYDAY** call may be the quickest way to raise the alarm. It will certainly demonstrate to pirates that the vessel is aware of the attack, and that a response is being initiated.

The use of the SSAS may therefore act as an additional tool to raise the alarm to the company and the Flag State.

During Initial Attack

Evasive Action

Just as when a collision risk occurs, this is no time for small, subtle alterations of course and/or speed.

Masters should consider "riding off" attackers craft by using heavy wheel movements as they approach. The effect of the bow wave and wash may deter attackers and make it difficult for them to attach poles or grappling irons to the ship.

Increased speed and evasive manoeuvring have prevented attacks. Though according to the characteristics of the individual vessel these may be more or less successful than others, the implications of such evasive actions for a tug and tow at 8kts are obviously not the same case as a container ship at 24kts.

Avoid making a lee for the pirate skiff. If possible try and get the wind and sea well fwd of the beam on the weather side, also try and keep the pirates on the weather side if possible.

All shipboard personnel should be warned to expect violent manoeuvres, and should know of the means to protect themselves from slips, trips and falls owing to any sudden manoeuvres taken by the vessel.

Alterations of course can be an important part of the evasive manoeuvres, but the implications of any alterations on the speed should be remembered. Turning can slow the vessel down, and may make it easier for the pirates to get closer to the vessel.

Pressure Zones

When under attack it is important for a vessel to employ evasive manoeuvres. However, it is also important to consider the hydrostatic effect and the role that interaction can play in ensuring pirate skiffs are unable to come alongside.

These hydrostatic elements move around a “pivot point”. When making headway, as we would want to do if under attack, the forces experienced at a steady fwd speed ensure the pivot point lies approximately 1 quarter of the ship's length from forward.

When a ship is making headway a positive pressure area builds up forward of the pivot point, while aft of the pivot point the flow of water down the ship's side creates a low pressure area.

The positive pressure wave extends out from the ship, and can act as a barrier to small craft trying to move closer to the vessel. However, further astern the low-pressure region acts as a “suction” zone and affords some scope for small hostile craft to get close enough to attempt a boarding.

The higher the speed of the vessel the greater the pressure exerted.

Defensive Interaction

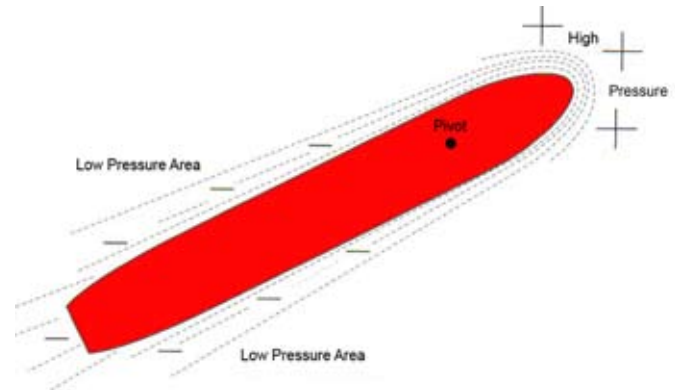
Interaction is in normal operations a detrimental effect, however when used to help repel boarders it is an important defensive tool.

The development of positive pressure zones around the bow make it extremely difficult for pirate skiffs to manoeuvre closer to the vessel when attacking forward.

The positive bow pressure pushes the smaller vessel away.

Though this effect will be short lived, as once past the pivot point - the smaller vessel will begin to be sucked inwards toward the target vessel.

It is important to note therefore that any defensive equipment is best situated astern of the pivot, in the areas where small craft are most likely to be able to get close to their target.



Hostage Situation

There comes a point when further resistance is not just futile, but could also mean increased risk of injury to personnel, and may carry with it retribution by pirates.

The Master/Command Team should ensure that they are able to issue orders to personnel to desist from further attempts to repel the attackers, who will most likely now be on board.

This sees the attack move into a new phase – and the response of shipboard personnel must also adapt to best ensure their own safety.

The aggression and adrenaline fuelled actions of the ship's crew during the attack/defence phase may now have to be tempered as there is a risk that in close proximity to attackers who have taken over the vessel the situation could escalate.

The Master and Senior Officers should explore ways of calming their personnel and relaxing the atmosphere once it is clear that the vessel has been taken, and there is nothing further they can do to defend it.

Image P A Photos

Pre-Planning

Prior to transit of the affected area it is advisable to prepare an area of the ship where crew are likely to be gathered and contained.

This is most likely to be a communal area of the vessel - the bar/saloon/TV room, as there will be space to keep all persons in confinement.

Ensuring such an area is equipped with blankets, medical supplies, food and water- may mean that personnel can gain ready access to the necessary items.

Having an area designated and prepared for the hostage phase can make life safer and more comfortable if the worst does happen.

How To Survive The Hostage Ordeal

Initial Response

After the attack has occurred it is important for all personnel to regain composure, and to try and remain calm.

Adrenaline will be pumping, hearts racing, and many will be experiencing genuine terror. It is vital to try and calm down. The sooner you can regain your composure the better off you will be immediately and in the long run.

Right from the start, you should try to observe and remember as much as possible in order to help you plan your response, to predict the pirate's next moves, or give information to aid your rescue.

Observe the pirates.

- How many are there?
- Are they armed? If so, with what?
- Are they in good physical condition?
- What do they look and/or sound like?
- How old are they?
- Do they seem well prepared?
- What are their emotional states?

Observe the vessel movements.

- Where are you being taken? Visualise the route the pirates take. Make note of turns, stops, and variations in speed. Try to gauge the amount of time between points.
- Where are you being held? Is it possible to see any landmarks from the vessel, or are you able to obtain a GPS position?

Observe yourself.

- Are you injured or wounded?
- How are you bound or otherwise incapacitated? How much freedom of movement do you have?
- Check on other crew and reassure each other if possible

Time to Reflect

The pirates have taken the crew and vessel in order to obtain ransom money - to this end the crew are worth more alive than dead. This is an important distinction, and so the captives should ensure they do nothing to provoke a violent response from the pirates.

It is important to keep a survival attitude.

Be positive. Remember, the vast majority of pirate captives survive - the odds are with you. However, you should prepare yourself for a long captivity. Some hostages have been held for months, but it is vital to keep a positive attitude, and to simply take one day at a time.

Once the ship is taken, personnel become part of a “business” transaction - it may be difficult but hostages should try to relax and remember that many different people will be working tirelessly to safeguard their release.

Put captors at ease. Most pirate gangs rotate the personnel they put onboard the vessel - after the “boarding” gang have shifted off, the vessel will most likely be placed in the control of a “holding” gang.

Once again it is vital to **remain calm**. Co-operate (within reason) with your captor. Don't make threats or become violent, and attempts to escape may be futile, and prompt a harsh response. **Keep your dignity.** It is generally psychologically harder for a person to kill, or otherwise harm a captive if they remain “human” in the captor's eyes. Do not grovel, beg, or become hysterical. Do not challenge your abductor, but do show you are worthy of respect.

Relationship Management

Once the vessel has been taken and the negotiations with owners have begun it can be a long boring time on the vessel, as all parties sit and await progress.

It is important to use this time to establish a rapport with the pirates. If you can build some sort of bond with your captors, they will generally be more hesitant to resort to violence. Disarming gestures - such as smiling, eye contact and slow considered movements will help to calm the situation.

Even though many of the pirates may not speak your language it is important not to threaten or insult the abductors. Whatever their first language, most people recognise English swear words - so it is better to keep any "violent" words to yourself.

Try to communicate with your fellow crew. If you are held with your colleagues, talk to them as much as is safely possible. If you look out for each other and have others to talk to, your captivity will be easier to handle.

Depending on the situation, your communication may have to be covert, and if you're held for a long time you may develop codes and signals.

There are rumours of a form of unofficial "Pirate Code" which many of the pirate groups appear to adhere to. As such they are seemingly unlikely to harm the crew, nor are they likely to attack any women amongst the captives.

Such good intentions however can be quickly dropped when tension escalates - so captives should be aware of any changes in atmosphere during the hostage situation.

Translation

Reports from kidnapped crews have uncovered some difficulties in language between the pirates and their hostages. As such these key words may be useful.

General Conversation

English

Daughter
Friend
Go
Good
Happy
How are you
Hurry
Joke
Mistake/Wrong
Night
Now
Open
Easy
Hello
Help
Listen, Hear
Look
Please
Sit
Smile
Son
Soon

Somali

Gebertaada/Inaantaada
Saxiib
Bax
Fiican
Faraxsan
Sidee tahay
Deg-deg
Kaftan
Khaldan/khaldan
Cawo
Iminka
Furan/Furid
Hawl yar
Haye
Caawin
Maqal shelf
Fiiri
Baryo/Fadlan
Fadhi/Fariisasho
Dhoolo ka qosol
Inankage
Ciyoon

Speak
Stop
Understand, know
Yes

Hadal
La istaajiyo/la joojiyo
Garasho/Fahmid
Haa / Hee

While some phrases may seem overly friendly, it can be important for those held to enter into as amicable a relationship as possible with their captors. This can keep all parties from over reacting, and can guard against violence, while ensuring a reasonable standard of care towards those being held.

Comfort

English

Drink
Food
Hot
Hungry
Kitchen
Lunch, Dinner
Mattress
Milk
More
Move
Over/End/Finish

Pillow
Potato

Somali

Cab, Cabbid, Cabbitaan/Sharaab
Cuno
Kulayl/Kulul
Baahana-hay or gaajo
Jiko
Qado
Jodari
Caano
Badan
Dhaqaajiiin
Dhamaad, dhammaad, dhammayn
Barkin
Batato

English

Radio
Rice
Salt
Sleep
Smoke
Tea
Thin
Thirsty
Tobacco
Toothbrush
Underwear
Bathroom/Toilet

Blanket
Breakfast
Clothes
Coffee
Cup, glass
Eat
Towel
Wash
Water

Somali

Raadiyo
Bariis
Cusbo
Hurdo
Qaac
Caleen-shaahi
Caato
Harraad/Oon
Tuubaako
Burashka ilkaha/Rumay
Dharka hoos laga xirta
Beytamay, beyto-mee,
beyto-raaxo, beytoraxa
Buste/Kubeerto
Quraac
Dhar
Kafe/Qaxho
Koob
Cun, cunid
Tuwaal
Dhaqid/Mayrid
Biyo

Health

Back (body)	Gadaal/Dhabar
Bad	Xun
Dentist	Takhtarka-ilkaha
Die	Dhimasha/dhimo
Doctor	Takhtar
Fever	Qandho/Xummad/ jirka oo kululaado
Head	Kurta
Headache	Madax-xanuun
Hospital	Isbitaal
Leg	Lug
Medicine	Dawo
Pain	Xanuun
Rest	Inta kale
Shoulder	Garab
Sick	Cudur/Jiro
Stand	Istaag
Stomach	Calool
Stop	Istaajin/joojin
Walk	Lugeen
Weak	Dhaciif

Seafarers are excellent at getting themselves understood across language and cultural barriers, and so the use of these words combined with the usual hand gestures and mime, should at least allow personnel to communicate to a limited degree with their captors.

Coping Mechanisms

Stay mentally active. Captivity can be a long and boring process. It's important to challenge your mind to remain sane, but also so you can think rationally about escape. Do mathematical problems, think of puzzles, try to recite songs. Do whatever you can to keep yourself and your fellow crew occupied and mentally sharp.

Keep track of time, and try to discern patterns. Keeping track of time can help you establish routines that will enable you to maintain your dignity and your sanity. If there are no clocks available, you will need to make a conscious effort to estimate times. If you can see sunlight, it will be fairly easy, but otherwise you can listen for changes in activity outside, make note of differences in your captor's awareness level, try to detect different food odours, or look for other clues.

Daydream. It may sound foolish, but thinking about what you'll do when you get back home and of the people there, can create a powerful will to get through the situation. It will help to pass the time, and to keep you more relaxed.

Reduce stress. In a hostage situation there are naturally heightened levels of stress/distress/anger and frustration. As hard as it may seem, it is important to try to minimise these feelings and to adopt as philosophical and relaxed a view of proceedings as is possible. Many hostages worry about their families back home and get frantic about contacting them - but personnel should be assured their employers will be in contact with their families and will be doing all possible to keep them informed and to minimise their distress. So relax, there is nothing you can do but ensure you stay alive!

Stay physically active. It can be difficult to remain in shape in captivity, especially if you're restrained, but it's important to do so. Being in good physical condition can help maintain a positive mental attitude during captivity. Exercise, even if it's just doing jumping jacks, push-ups, or even pushing your hands together or stretching.

For some the focus on making an escape gives them something positive to concentrate on. However, escape is a difficult thing to contemplate - as you are at sea, in territory known to the pirates and they are likely to have re-enforcements close at hand. Often it's safest to just wait to be freed or rescued.

The End Game

After perhaps weeks or months of inaction, it can be an uncertain and potentially dangerous time when the pirates decide to act.

On the positive side this can be due to the payment of their ransom demands and could be a phase prior to release. However it could be that a timeframe for payment has not been met, or a rescue attempt has been launched.

Watch out for warning signs, and think about what to do when it is time for action.

If release is imminent, then it is important to take time to re-focus on how to keep yourself, your fellow crew and vessel safe until clear of the pirates.

In the unlikely event the pirates have decided to kill hostages or to destroy the vessel you need to know as soon as possible so that you can plan your actions. If they suddenly stop feeding you, if they treat you more harshly (dehumanising you), if they suddenly seem desperate or frightened, it is important to be aware of the change of atmosphere and the dangers associated.

If you believe a rescue attempt has begun it is important, as always, to try and remain clear and calm. Keep in mind this is an extremely dangerous time in a hostage situation. Your captors may become desperate and attempt to use you as a shield, or they may simply decide to kill any hostages. Even if your captors are taken by surprise, you could be killed

by the actions of rescuers, who may use explosives and heavy firepower to re-take the vessel.

When a rescue attempt occurs, try to hide from your captors, if possible. Stay low, and protect your head with your hands, or try to get behind some kind of protective barrier (under a desk or table, or behind machinery for example). Don't make sudden movements when armed rescuers burst in.

Follow the rescuers' instructions carefully. Your rescuers will be on edge, and they will most likely shoot first and ask questions later. Obey all commands they give. If they tell everybody to lie down on the floor or put their hands on their heads, do it.



Image Reuters

When the vessel is freed

Assuming that a ransom is paid the vessel will most likely be released with minimal harm to hostages, vessel and cargo.

Once freed it is important to try and revert to as “normal” an operating condition as possible.

It may be very difficult for a traumatised, under fed, stressed crew to return to their duties, but this is a priority if the vessel is to escape the area and get to a safe haven.

The Master must make all attempts to navigate safely. There have been cases of vessels being released and then running into trouble, and in these busy shipping lanes there is a likelihood of collision for any ship not implementing their normal operational routines, regardless of the reasons underpinning any such failings.

It may be advisable for the vessel's command team to gather the crew and debrief them – explaining the need to concentrate on the task of getting the vessel safely to the next port.

It is important to instil a “team” ethic, a bond to ensure that all concentrate fully on the task of operating the vessel safely despite the distractions.

One way of ensuring personnel are able to fulfil their duties for a short period after the release of the vessel will be to ensure they are aware of any imminent relief at the next port. This can act as both an incentive and also allows the crew to focus on the prospect of a positive end to their ordeal.

After the Incident

Medical attention

Some injuries are obvious – but while cuts, wounds and physical illness can be readily identified and treated, it should be remembered that many of the ship's personnel might be suffering some degree of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

For this reason the company would be encouraged to ensure personnel receive both medical treatment and counselling after any hostage event or serious attack.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*

The symptoms of PTSD can start after a delay of weeks, or even months, and usually appear within 6 months of a traumatic event.

Many sufferers feel grief-stricken, depressed, anxious, guilty and angry after a traumatic experience. As well as these understandable emotional reactions, there are three main types of symptoms produced by such an experience:

1. Flashbacks & Nightmares

Sufferers find themselves re-living the event, again and again. This can happen both as a “flashback” in the day, and as nightmares when asleep. These can be so realistic that it feels as though they are living through the experience all over again. They may also feel the emotions and physical sensations of what happened - fear, sweating, smells, sounds, pain.

2. Avoidance & Numbing

It can be just too upsetting to re-live the experience over and over again. So sufferers may distract themselves absorbed in hobbies or by working very hard. Such people will avoid places and people that remind them of the trauma, and will try not to talk about it.

These sufferers may deal with the pain by trying to feel nothing at all - by becoming emotionally numb. They communicate less with other people.

3. Being “On Guard”

Sufferers may find themselves alert all the time, as if looking out for danger, and are unable to relax. This is called “hypervigilance”. They feel anxious and find it hard to sleep, and appear jumpy and irritable.

Other Symptoms

Emotional reactions to stress are often accompanied by:

- Muscular aches and pains
- Diarrhoea
- Irregular heartbeats
- Headaches
- Feelings of panic and fear
- Depression
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Using drugs (including painkillers)

**Source Royal College of Psychiatrists <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/>*

Treatments for PTSD usually include psychological and medical treatments. Employers should be encouraged to ensure they are able to provide an appropriate response and support mechanism for personnel who may suffer after a piracy incident.

Reporting And Analysis

A full report of any incident should be produced and forwarded to the CSO - this format may follow that prescribed within the vessel's Safety Management System.

It would be beneficial for the personnel to be interviewed and asked for their views on the incident and of the lessons that could be applied.

Such interviews could double as a debrief session, and personnel should be assessed for any physical or psychological problems.

In addition to any internal reports - it is vital that vessels report any suspicious activity and any attacks against them to the IMB.

There are a number of formal reporting systems and forms and the SSO/Master should be in possession of the correct means of reporting such incidents.

FORMAT FOR REPORTING TO IMO THROUGH MARITIME ADMINISTRATIONS OR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

MSC/Circ.623/Rev.3

Ship's name and IMO number

Type of ship

Flag

Gross tonnage

Date and time

Latitude Longitude

Name of the area

While sailing, at anchor or at berth?

Method of attack

Description/number of suspect craft

Number and brief description of pirates/robbers

What kind of weapons did the pirates/robbers carry?

Any other information (e.g. language spoken)

Injuries to crew and passengers

Damage to ship (Which part of the ship was attacked?)

Brief details of stolen property/cargo

Action taken by the master and crew

Was incident reported to the coastal authority and to whom?

Reporting State or international organisation

Action taken by the Coastal State

The Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO)

www.bimco.dk

Coalition Maritime Forces (CMF)

Tel: +973 1781 2951 or via VHF Channel 16

The International Maritime Bureau

Anti Piracy Helpline Numbers:

Tel.: +603 2031 0014

Fax: +603 2078 5769

E-mail: imbkl@icc-ccs.org

www.icc-ccs.org

The International Maritime Organisation www.imo.org

Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP)

Information Sharing Centre, Singapore: Tel: +65 6376 3091,

Fax: 6376 3066, www.recaap.org

US Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration www.marad.dot.gov

UK Royal Navy's Maritime Trade Organisation (UKMTO)

Merchant Vessel Voluntary Reporting Scheme, Dubai,

Tel: +971 50 552 3215 or +971 50 552 6007,

E-mail: ukmtodubai@eim.ae or

ukmtodubai@hotmail.com

UK Royal Navy's Gulf Mariners information:

www.royalnavy.mod.uk/server/show/nav.7073

US Navy Maritime Liaison Office (MARLO), Bahrain

Tel: +973 3940 1395, Email: marlo.bahrain@me.navy.mil

EU Naval Force (EU NAVFOR), The Maritime Security Centre (Horn of Africa), www.mschoa.org

About the Author

Having been attacked by pirates when serving as a deck officer, Steven Jones has long had an interest and involvement in maritime security issues. This led to his attendance at the IMO during the sessions leading to the adoption of the ISPS Code, and consequently Steven has advised numerous shipping companies on their security planning.



Having worked in marine fraud investigations and as a security specialist at a major protection and Indemnity association he then took his years of research, professional involvement and in-depth knowledge of the ISPS Code to produce the book, "Maritime Security", published by The Nautical Institute.

Steven currently provides security comment and assessment for a number of maritime organisations and publications, he is a regular speaker at numerous Conferences and has guest lectured on various University and college courses.

Notes