

Joint War Committee

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Increased Range of Somalia-Based Piracy

The recent amendments to the Listed Areas have extended the enhanced risk area eastwards to the edge of the established UKMTO reporting area. The decision was based on the Aegis synopsis which is attached together with maps of recent attacks which clearly highlight the problem - there are no practical limits on range given the use of mother ships.

Naval Support

There are three Combined Task Forces operating in the area as part of the Combined Maritime Forces under US 5th Fleet. The pool of vessels is a continuing dedicated presence but with differing tasks.

CTF 150 and CTF 152 conduct maritime security operations concentrating on counter-terrorist activity in the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, Arabian Gulf, Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, but also targeted at drug trafficking and people smuggling.

CTF 151 is mandated to provide counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and off the eastern coast of Somalia.

EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta CTF 465 has increased its force generation to its highest number of sea-borne and air assets combating piracy across the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, recently deploying 11 warships during the transition period between the South West and North East Monsoon.

NATO's Operation Ocean Shield has up to six ships available as a continuing presence under Standing Maritime Group 2.

BMP

With the increased scale and range of pirate operations across the Indian Ocean the importance and significance in implementing Best Management Practice(BMP3) has become more pronounced as passive defence measures become the only defence in many cases.

Circular JW2010/008 gave underwriters concerned direct access to EUNAVFOR information on specific seized ships and that facility should prove helpful in ascertaining operating procedures applied by individual vessels, specifically in relation to BMP.

Neil Roberts
Secretary

AEGIS INTELLIGENCE REPORT

16th December 2010

The capabilities of the Somali pirate gangs have continued to grow and develop since the upsurge in the summer of 2008. Hijacks remain at a broadly constant level despite international counter-piracy efforts and the widespread adoption of best management practice by vessel operators. Successful attacks are occurring at ever greater distances from the Somali coast. The use of previously captured commercial vessels as motherships has given the pirates even greater range and means that this trend is likely to continue.

- Over the course of 2010, 56 reported incidents – including 17 hijacks and 29 cases of vessels being fired upon – occurred either to the east of longitude 15° North or north of latitude 65° East, outside the current boundaries of the Indian Ocean Exclusion Zone. These include the 5 December 2010 seizure of the JAHAN MONI within 270 nautical miles of the Indian mainland, less than 70 nautical miles from the Maliku atoll (part of the Indian union territory of Lakshwadeep) and no more than 90 nautical miles from the Maldives.
- Of these, 11 hijacks (including six that were ultimately frustrated by the crew's retreat to a secure 'citadel') and 17 incidents of vessels being fired upon have occurred since the beginning of October.
- Aegis would recommend that the JWC list any waters anywhere in the world where this level of activity occurred. It indicates that there is a significant threat to commercial shipping and that the existing exclusion zones nearby are not sufficient to best protect commercial maritime assets.
- International naval forces have made notable efforts to deter and disrupt Somali piracy. However, while their mandates are in some cases wide, their resources are limited, particularly given the sheer quantity of ocean in which the Somali pirates operate; this means their energies are focused where they can have most effect – namely in a) protecting a restricted area (the Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor in the Gulf of Aden), b) protecting certain vessels (either individual food aid vessels, or several vessels at a time, through convoys), or c) interdicting close inshore. Therefore given current multinational naval force dispositions, it is unlikely that they can secure the waters north of latitude 15° North or east of longitude 65° East.