



MAST MARITIME INSIGHTS

Recent Resurgence in Somali Piracy – Should the Shipping Industry be Worried?

By G R Northwood



The recent spate of attacks in the Indian Ocean is perhaps an indication that the “investors” behind Somali piracy think that the Somali pirate business model “risk / reward” ratio maybe tipping in their favour.

The attacks on the *Hellas Aphrodite* and the *Stolt Sagaland* in early November which occurred several hundred miles off the Somali coast were no mean undertaking for the Somalis. The attacks involved a hijacked Iranian Dhow apparently identified as the “*Issamohahmdi*” acting as the mother vessel for several skiffs, personnel and weaponry. Mounting a “Pirate Action Group” (PAG) of this size and complexity is not a cheap undertaking.

Following the attacks the UKMTO has increased the risk state, which we believe is the right call. We believe so because it is unlikely that the investors behind the PAG would have gone for it had they not felt they had a reasonable chance of success. Which means that they believe that if they can bring a captured commercial vessel and crew back to an anchorage off the west coast of Somalia, they will be able to hold it securely at anchor while a ransom payment is negotiated and delivered.

For a hijacked vessel to be held by the pirates off the coast of Somalia while the ransom negotiation is ongoing, there has to be a “permissive environment” onshore. One in which the pirates will have access to logistics to feed and water the crew and the pirate teams on the vessel, be able to prevent other groups taking over or stealing the capture, and above all, no

Mounting a “Pirate Action Group” (PAG) of this size and complexity is not a cheap undertaking.

local or national Somali government interference. If it is judged by the investors that the above conditions cannot be met, it’s no cigar.

Our advice for vessels transiting the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden is to follow BMP. The latest version being BMP MS 2025. It is an excellent guide to keeping a vessel safe wherever there is a security risk. For complete safety, and peace of mind, we would advise taking an armed security team. Right now, *Stolt Sagaland* would be enjoying a Somali beach view had she not had one. Second to an armed team is a well-protected citadel and a crew that is drilled in retreating to it in the event of an attack.

Meanwhile, now is not the time to be complacent. Yes, the odds that it will be your vessel that is attacked are extremely low. But as many can attest from the relatively recent past, the cost of getting it wrong can be very high indeed, both commercially and in seafarers lives.



 1 St Andrew's Hill, London, EC4V 5BY

 operations@mast-security.co.uk

 +44 (0) 2079 380 921

 www.mast-security.com

