



Welcome

Welcome to another edition of the Seacurus Monthly Bulletin. This time around we look at some new potential piracy and security threat areas, and assess how the shipping industry is looking to safeguard vessels in the Gulf of Guinea.

With a new take on an old problem, we look at the much vaunted first private navy for 200 years breaking into the market, and also at the heart rending decisions which families and governments are taking when seafarers are held hostage.

As the crew of the "MV Leopard" enters their second year of captivity, there is a storm brewing in Denmark. The government wants the media to remain silent on the issue, while a growing band of activists are demanding to be heard. Just what is the right approach when it comes to the media?

Last month saw the UK make a significant investment in Somalia, around the same time the oil majors have looked to invest too – is there any parallel between the two?



Captain Thomas Brown
Managing Director –
Seacurus Limited

Also inside we explore the efforts to ensure that the European Union is joining its security dots.

We hope you find the Seacurus Monthly of interest, and please feel free to forward to colleagues.

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Security Forecast - where should we be looking for the next security threats to shipping?

As 2013 rumbles along, what are seen as being the key maritime security threats for the year?

According to a research paper from "Strategic Insight", their forecasts for the year are presented as two types of risks; these are seen as direct and indirect threats. Firstly, there are the direct threats, typically piracy, terrorist attacks, and robberies and thefts where maritime assets are directly targeted. Surprises will continue to happen, but analysts believe that the changes will lie more on the side of likelihood than consequence – so increased negative events, but with the same level of effect.

For example, while the frequency of pirate attacks off Somalia has dropped, the consequences are largely the same. The key question is whether the Somali pirates are truly struggling to adapt to a new business model after the effects of BMP, including armed guards, and better patrolling by coalition warships has left them wanting. If they are learning to adapt there will be surprises ahead – and given that they are billed as being some of the most wily, cunning foes around, the chances are high that they will be changing their modus operandi sometime soon.



Secondly, there are the indirect threats. These are typically onshore events that spill over into the maritime domain, such as civil wars, insurgencies, rapid political changes, or environmental factors. The outcomes might be the chance of getting caught in crossfires, port closures, increased refugee flows, or increased insurance and security costs for operating in particular areas that might be subject to war risk premiums or require additional measures to ensure business continuity.

In these cases, recent history might be a poor guide to what will happen next time as the political unrest across Africa is unprecedented and 2013 is likely to see a period of readjustment as nations, their ports and waterways have to operate commercially in a potential political and social maelstrom.

Among the likely threats to maritime security analysts foresee issues in the following problem areas:

- **Nigeria:** Domestic Insecurity and Piracy in the Bight of Benin: An increase in Gulf of Guinea piracy is understood to be likely in the next three months. With an increase in the capabilities of pirate groups off the Gulf of Guinea and limited security in the West African seas, piracy risks are likely to grow. Due to the very limited capabilities of regional navies including the major player, the Nigerian Navy, and, unlike the seas off Somalia, the lack of an international maritime presence, tankers are vulnerable to oil theft. The recent redeployment of some Joint Task Force units away from the Niger Delta is a likely contributing factor to the increase of attacks and kidnappings targeting offshore supply vessels in December.
- **Somali piracy in 2013:** The multi-million dollar question is what will happen next? Some want to believe the threat of Somali pirates has subsided, but the root causes remain. While some high profile pirates may have decided to renounce piracy, there are many more waiting to step into their shoes. The money is still good, and Somalia is still a place where alternatives are hard to find. Speaking recently Russian Rear Admiral Vasily Lyashok has said that at least five well organized pirate groups are currently operational off the Somali coast. In a radio interview he stressed the organizational level of these groups.

Lyashok said they “have satellite communications, shore bases, depots, arsenals, training facilities for their pirates, and a single leader.” He underlined the fact that today’s pirate groups are a “well organized, well-armed, and well equipped foe” boasting considerable infrastructure and logistics support in the Gulf of Aden region. He also said that pirate groups have proved themselves an agile, flexible enemy, capable of quickly modifying their tactics. This hints at an increase of attacks sometime soon.

- **South East Asia:** There has been a steady rise in the number of attacks around South East Asia, whether in the renowned piracy hotspot of the Malacca Straits, or in ports ranging from Bangladesh over to Indonesia. Piracy in the region is a serious problem, and while it was eclipsed for a while by the new Somali iteration, it is firmly back on the maritime security radar and is likely to pose further problems into 2013.

New potential problem areas: As threat areas are assessed it is seen that Yemen, North Africa and Syria all could throw up potentially serious threats to maritime trade. Lawlessness, desperation and instability are the key drivers of maritime crime, and so it will be interesting to see how these threats eventually manifest themselves. Interestingly modern maritime piracy has always been considered a “tropical disease”, as it is 99.9% confined between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. The potential shift northwards could cause many problems as the response mechanisms are unprepared to deal with a new tide of maritime criminality.

New GoG Security Guidelines – an up-tick in piracy activity in the CoG prompts a need for new specialized BMP



New interim guidelines against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea have been developed by BIMCO, ICS, INTERCARGO and INTERTANKO, supported by NATO Shipping Centre.

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea region is an established and growing criminal activity and is of increasing concern to the maritime sector. With recent attacks becoming more widespread and violent; the shipping industry has now identified an urgent need to issue guidelines following the model which has been so successful with the BMP4 off Somalia.

Security problems in the Gulf of Guinea region differ in many ways from those of Somalia based piracy, but there are certain lessons which can be transferred across, such as the importance of risk assessment, what constitutes a typical pirate attack and the significance of movement reporting.

The new guidelines aim to bridge the gap between the advice currently found in BMP4 and the prevailing situation in the Gulf of Guinea region and should be read in conjunction with BMP4 and will make reference to BMP4 where relevant.

Where do they apply? Pirates in the Gulf of Guinea are flexible in their operations so it is difficult to predict a precise area of falling victim to piracy. As of 28 March 2012 the London Market's Joint War Committee defines the following 'Listed Areas for Hull War, Piracy, Terrorism and Related Perils' for the Gulf of Guinea:

- **The territorial waters of Benin and Nigeria, plus**
- **Nigerian Exclusive Economic Zone north of latitude 3° N, plus**
- **Beninese Exclusive Economic Zones north of latitude 3° N**

However, recent incidents suggest that the area is liable to change. For the purpose of this interim guidance the area off the coasts of Nigeria, Togo or Benin can be regarded as an area in which the counter-piracy management practices should be considered.

A major important element of the guidance is that of "Risk Assessment", and that means identifying suitable measures of prevention, mitigation and recovery in case of piracy. In its most basic terms, this is a form of "who, what, where, when, how" – as the threats to the vessel are assessed and the means to counter them applied.

The guidance splits pirate activity within the Gulf of Guinea into the following categories:

- **Armed Robbery** – In general this is opportunistic, is becoming increasingly violent, and occurs where vessels are approaching, drifting or anchored off ports. There have been instances across the Gulf of Guinea Region e.g. off Lagos, in Port Harcourt, Bonny River, Cotonou and Lome. For the most part the intention is to take valuables from the safe, IT equipment, and personal effects.
- **Cargo theft** – This predominantly occurs in the STS transfer areas off Cotonou, Lagos, and Lome, and is almost exclusively related to product and chemical tankers. Vessels are hijacked for several days and cargo is transferred to a smaller vessel. These incidents tend to be well-organized potentially involving a criminal element with commercial interests ashore. Recent cargo thefts have demonstrated that pirates often have a maritime know-how allowing them to disable communications, operate the cargo system etc.
- **Kidnapping** – generally associated with the offshore oil industry and the political instability of the Niger Delta area. There are several instances of offshore supply vessels and occasionally other ship types being attacked. Robbery is often the prime objective but occasional kidnapping of crew members can occur.

While the core essence of pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea region often share similar characteristics to those off Somalia there are some key differences. The risk of falling victim of a pirate attack is particularly high when the ship is at anchor or is drifting off a port e.g. close to pilot station. Another vulnerable situation is when conducting STS operations and the two ships are adrift and moored alongside each other.

The Gulf of Guinea is not subject to an established policing mechanism by international navies, however there is a seeming growth on the availability of armed escort vessels, the Nigerian military are known to offer licenses to certain companies to employ government police and military personnel on board their escort vessels. However the advice stresses that local or Government forces should only be used if they are legitimate, understood and trusted.

One of the more successful elements of the fight against piracy over on the Indian Ocean has been the positive role of Master's in planning their routes and security regime. Given the modus operandi of the pirates operating in the Gulf of Guinea region the Master should plan avoid waiting and slow steaming.

When meeting STS vessels the Masters should consider offering several alternative rendezvous points and advice rendezvous points at the last minute. If waiting, the vessel should keep well off the coast (up to 200nm). Where practicable, a prolonged stay at anchorage is to be avoided.

The ship protection measures described in BMP4 also apply in the Gulf of Guinea. When STS operations are expected to be conducted, extra attention should be paid to the use of physical protection measures. Although barbed wire can potentially make it very difficult to complete an STS operation, other protection measures should be considered to protect the ship from attack in these cases. During STS operations or when adrift, equipment such as fenders, anchor chains and hawse pipes can potentially provide a vulnerable point of access for attackers, and entry should be physically blocked.

Pirates detect and target vessels by sight and by the use of AIS. Therefore limit the use of lighting at night and reduce the power or turn off AIS. Unfortunately, this has a major drawback in that it may reduce the likelihood of an intervention by 'friendly forces' if attacked. Consequently, AIS must be switched on immediately if the ship is boarded.

In the event of a pirate attack in the Gulf of Guinea, the guidance provides the best way of alerting the local authorities and the guidance is strongly not to engage in a fight with the pirates.

For full details and access to a soft copy of the guidance see <http://goo.gl/tqssh>

Learning Curve – piracy is an evolving threat which insurers must understand.

There has been much talk of the ever evolving nature of piracy and so it is true that the insurance business which has grown up around it has to change too.

Without properly reflecting the risks which seafarers and vessels face then policies and cover will become irrelevant or redundant – which doesn't help anyone.

Piracy is often termed a "short-tail" risk, with the length of time between the assumption of a risk and the payment of claims in respect of that risk is short, anywhere between one and 30 days, it quickly became apparent that the risk itself was ever evolving.

Therefore, over time as the Somali piracy threat has expanded policies have been adjusted to take into account influences that include the increasing level of ransom demanded by pirates, the protective measures taken by the insured and factors linked to the geographic area.

Policies have had to mature to take into account the safety of the ransom itself following incidents of theft in transit and there have been many developments over the course of the Somali piracy problem. It has been important to learn lessons and to analyse the many and varied risks involved.

Risks can only be effectively managed when they are understood, and it has been interesting to see that assureds have been encouraged to use risk-mitigation techniques such as razor wire, dummies, water spray systems, citadels and private security guards as our knowledge of what works has increased.



Despite the learning curve across shipping, the pirates have still been able to make themselves felt – and the effects have most keenly been felt by the seafarers who have fallen into their hands. Hostages have been forced to endure longer periods of time in captivity. Compared with 68 days in 2008, the average time that vessels are held is now 323 days.

At end-September 2012, 13 ships and 211 crew members were held by Somali pirates. Meanwhile, average ransom payments across all vessel types have increased steadily over the past three years, from a base of \$1.8m in 2008, with the average ransom in 2012 year to date standing at \$3.5m.

The range in ransoms paid remains wide and in some cases, demands against tankers and large bulk carriers have exceeded \$25m. According to industry data half of all the 40,000 journeys made a year through Somali waters are now insured against piracy.

It is positive that so many have managed to transfer the risk, but the threat of piracy is not restricted to the Indian Ocean. The Gulf of Guinea has proved to be a growing threat area, especially for shipping operations in the Niger Delta where Nigerian law prohibits the use of third-party armed guards on board.

Since 2010 there has been a rise in attacks across the Gulf of Guinea, including incidents off Niger, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Togo. Attacks here are typically much more violent than those in the Indian Ocean; the pirates tend to be better armed and better informed, researching and targeting specific ships.

Attacks have traditionally targeted vessel cargo, as the black market for petroleum products offers a quick — as little as a two-day turnaround — and relatively easy way to profit. Although most incidents involve cargo theft, there has been an increase in incidents of crew being taken on shore and held to ransom.

Perhaps one of the biggest concerns surrounding West African piracy is that of under-reporting. The lack of incidents reported in the Gulf of Guinea continues to skew official estimates, but there can be no doubt that piracy is increasing in terms of volume, reach and violence throughout the region.

In continuing to learn the lessons of piracy, the worst possible mistake would be to think that the threat has gone away – it is merely evolving, and the solutions to the many problems it poses have to evolve too.

Euro Sceptics - European think tank questions whether current preventative measures can provide a longer term solution to piracy.

The European Economic and Social Committee (ESSC) recently called for the European Union to get tough on piracy and join the dots on the means to do so. ESSC slammed the EU for what it sees is a "piecemeal approach" to solving the problem of piracy.

A new report calls on EU institutions and member states to adopt a holistic strategy which contains an appropriate mix of the tools to end piracy. According to ESSC Employer Group Vice President Dr Bredima the three key elements which can make this happen are "trade and development aid, military presence, reconstruction and capacity building".

ESSC is a consultative body for the EU and wants to see a large scale efforts within Europe to pressure policymakers to act in build civil society in failed states such as Somalia or in countries suffering from piracy.

At the moment it appears there are dangerous gaps in legislation surrounding anti-piracy measures and it must be made clear where responsibility ultimately lies. The report claims that EU member states' anti-piracy legislation needs updating as piracy has disappeared as a criminal offence in some countries, so a clearer legal framework should be created regarding jurisdictions responsible for prosecuting pirates.

European transport commissioner Siim Kallas has echoed the ESSC stance and called for rules to be harmonised and the EU needs to settle on its responsibility to regulate effectively.

The report states that piracy is an intolerable situation and is one which is hitting European consumers and taxpayers hard. However, it was recognised that despite the headlines there is some apathy and disinterest within the general civil society, which is another major concern.

The Somali piracy epidemic may have begun as a problem for maritime trade but over time it has become a commercial trade problem, and that is something which appears to now be too much to bear. When piracy begins to hit the purses of EU States, then it seems to be time for real action – it is perhaps a shame that the number of seafarers suffering wasn't ever used as a similarly telling barometer.

It seems the calls for the EU to wake up to the problems of piracy, and the root causes are growing louder and more compelling, and with a shortfall in naval resources for the relevant threat areas there needs to be more pressure on policymakers to look widely at not just the problems but the joined up solutions.

Perhaps reflecting the need for change the European Commission commissioner Maria Damanaki has stated that the new EU security strategy for global maritime will look beyond piracy to cover a far wider agenda. According to Damanaki the EU External Action Service, which has the leadership on piracy issues is now co-championing the drafting and implementation of a new EU Security Strategy for the global maritime domain, and integrated maritime surveillance will be used to provide real-time situational awareness of all activities at sea and could become the building block of a security strategy for the global maritime industry.

The new European security strategy will, it is hoped, impact on safety and security, border control, fisheries control, marine environment observations, trade as well as general law enforcement and defence.

While there are signs of progress, the EESC believes that ransoms must be tolerated because simply banning them will place lives at risk. However, the EESC believes that the EU can play a role tracing pirates' cashflows when ransoms are paid. They have called for a blacklist of money-laundering companies and the jurisdiction where this practice occurs.

Of the other anti-piracy measures which are currently being used the EESC has welcomed the UN's decision to extend EUNAVFORs mandate for Operation Atalanta until 2014, and has called for it to include West Africa too. There is general support too for the use of armed guards. The EESC report states: "Member states are prompted to allow the use of qualified private armed guards for the protection of vulnerable ships in line with the relevant guidance of the International Maritime Organization."

Game-Changer - has the latest CEP missed the boat?



The announcement earlier this month that a British company, Typhon, is creating what is termed; “a private navy” to protect commercial clients from piracy off the Horn of Africa and beyond caused a small sensation in much of the world’s media.

The company’s CEO Anthony Sharp, was all over the TV and radio, as well as being featured across the broadsheets. Sharp claimed that the effort, using real or-hoped-for assets—motherships, helicopters and small boats—was “the first of its kind for probably 200 years and will protect private shipowners assets at sea.”

While the media hoo-haw has been interesting to observe, there have been an increasing number of experts which have emerged to question the role of a private navy, and whether Typhon’s much vaunted business model can actually deliver security.

The question on the lips of many is whether going back to a 200-year-old model truly is a “game-changer” in the already highly-competitive counter-piracy market – or whether it may look better on velum than it does in reality.

Perhaps surprisingly given love of free enterprise and all things commercial, the US has been the source of much of the criticism. Perhaps all this talk of historical naval power has them uncomfortably recounting when the Royal Navy ruled the waves.

Anyway, according to LCDR Claude Berube on the United States Navy Reserve (USNR) blog, the creation of a “private” navy is neither really new nor much needed.

Sharp’s comments, Berube believes to be “incorrect,” as several other companies, “have either attempted to provide this type of private security or have actually conducted operations.” Indeed, the Convoy Escort Programme which has been debated for what seems like years is still understood to be in the investment gathering stages.

Indeed, even the notorious Blackwater have dipped their toes into the “private navy” market - they offered a decades-old NOAA ship, the “M/V McArthur”, RHIBs and an embarked helicopter with the

intent to protect ships from pirates." Berube notes that the ship "arrived in the Red Sea without clients; absent business, the ship left the region and the industry."

As to whether such a service can truly become a game changer, the jury appears to be out – it is not clear to some that the commercial model will stack up, let alone the operational one. Running a private navy is an expensive business, and there have been concerns about the possible high costs potential clients face as they likely spend precious (read: costly) hours getting into position to participate in Typhon convoys, which may or may not be there when individual vessels first approach a high-risk area, or stay with them until they leave it.

Also will ship owners, operators, insurance companies and their factotums band together, and remain united, to make this structurally-complex alternative a real one over time? The one unifying aspect of the struggle against piracy so far, is that there has been no one size fits all solution, so it is perhaps hard to see how the entire industry can be corralled into seeing this approach as the answer.

Assuming that sufficient investors are found, and that the ships are delivered and the clients brought into the scheme, then the problems are still not over.

There are questions of how the "privateers" will operate alongside international navies, and of how they intend to disrupt the pirates. As discussed previously Somali pirates are deft operators, and they are excellent at assessing problems and developing the tactics which can penetrate them. In the cold hard piracy business the pirates are always looking to stay ahead of the security solutions. While the pirates have struggled in the face of armed guards and the navies, some believe there are inherent weaknesses in the private escort business which are yet to be fully explored.

- What happens, for instance, if a merchant vessel simply decides to follow their convoy without paying? The freedom of the seas would perhaps suggest that cunning shipowners may prefer to seek the pretence of protection, rather than pay for the real thing.
- What if Somali skiffs descend en masse and draw out the private guard RIBs, only to sneak up on merchant vessels undetected. If the pirates get onboard would the escort guards then fire on the hijacked vessel?
- What if the escort guards detect a suspicious vessel, and race out to intercept it only to find that the non-piratic Indian fishermen onboard perceive themselves to be under threat and begin firing their own warning shots?

This is barely scratching the surface of the potential for problems, it appears there are a whole lot of things which can go wrong, and if the whole armed guards onboard issue was complex, this opens new, many and varied cans of worms.

UK Aid - will fund the new Puntland prison project

Last month saw a high profile UK Foreign and Commonwealth office event in which the UK proudly announced that it is to give £2.2m to support international efforts to crack down on piracy off the coast of Somalia.

Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt said attacks in the region were falling but the position was “fragile and reversible”. The money will go to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime’s counter piracy programme and will be used to improve prison infrastructure and tackle corruption in the Somali penal system.

The decision to support the push against piracy has seemingly been taken because of the successes in pushing successful hijackings down – according to the FCO, this has not occurred by chance. It is the culmination of years of hard work from governments, international organisations and industry. However they are keen to ensure that it is by no means a case of “mission accomplished”.

According to Burt, “Progress is fragile and reversible - 108 hostages remain in pirate hands, often subjected to terrible conditions with no knowledge of when, or even if, they will be released. So we must stay the course; take the opportunity to press home our advantage and make the waters off the coast of Somalia safe once again.”

The funding will be used to finish a new prison in Garowe, Puntland, to hold convicted pirates in facilities that meet international standards as well as supporting a project to tackle corruption in the Somali penal system. It will also be used to develop Somali coastguard capability.

In possibly completely unrelated news, it is also interesting to note that Somalia is earmarked for some serious oil and gas exploitation in the coming years.

At a recent event in Abu Dhabi key oil and gas figures gathered to discuss plans for the “55th African State”. Guests such as Mohammed Al Hamli, the UAE Minister of Energy, and Tony Hayward, the former BP chief executive, met in the luxurious Yas Viceroy hotel with Hussein Abdi Dualeh, the oil minister of Somaliland.

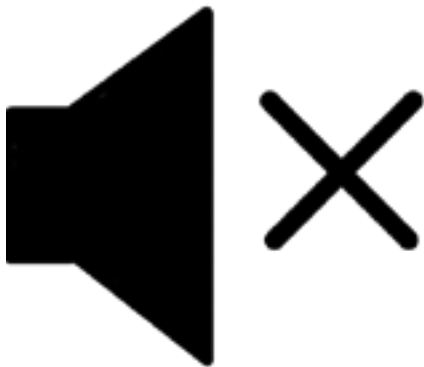
According to Dualeh it seems that the seeds are being sown to create a Somali national oil company, to drive a sovereign wealth fund to make sure the wealth gets developed in a sustainable way and not squandered.

This new entity will look to award exploration licences and it also hopes that hydrocarbons can ease its path to statehood, and perhaps too lots more high profile government level investment.

Beyond exploration, he hopes to transform the port of Berbera - a three-berth harbour that today exports sheep and frankincense - into an international fuel shipping hub, taking advantage of its deepwater geology and proximity to the Asian maritime transit route. A road and railway are also planned between Somaliland and Ethiopia, with a pipeline for Ethiopian hydrocarbons under discussion. Hopes are high for international companies such as DP World that could invest millions of dollars to transform Berbera into a world-class commercial port.

Rather simplistically Dualeh believes that it isn't politics or security which will win out for Somalia, it will be geology. He believes that "If the geology is good, all bets are off." Quite whether the pirates will remain immune to the lure of all this oil traffic will be another issue in which the bets will perhaps be off.

Media Silence - does it help or hinder the crew's release?



The crew of the Danish ship "Leopard" including two Danes and four Filipinos – have now spent nearly two years in the hands of Somali pirates. Yet there is pressure building to try and secure their release. Campaigners are growing angry at the perceived media silence which has surrounded the case.

With the second anniversary of their capture having passed the plight of the seafarers has been conspicuously absent from the Danish media, with the exception of tabloid Ekstra Bladet that started a campaign this summer entitled, "Will Søren and Eddy be left to rot in Somalia?"

The campaign, which refers to the names of the two Danish seamen, Søren Lyngbjørn and Eddy Lopez, was designed to draw attention to the two men's plight, and their fears that they will be left to die in captivity. There are concerns as to why so many in the media have chosen to remain silent about their captivity.

On January 12, 2010, the MV Leopard was hijacked by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean. The ship's two Danish and four Filipino crew members were soon transferred to land and held across unknown locations in Somalia.

Slowly the weight of activism is driving a campaign to bring the focus onto the ship's owners, as supporters seek to highlight the highlife seemingly being lived by the company's majority shareholder while his employees languish in Somalia.

It seems that there is actually more to it than a simple decision by the national media to stop caring. It seems that while campaigners have pressed the likes of the Copenhagen Post to cover the story, the Danish Foreign Ministry has been requesting that they should not report on the matter, based on the argument that coverage of the men's captivity could spoil negotiations to free them.

Other Danish media outlets have followed the ministry's recommendation. A TV news channel reportedly recently cancelled a story on their popular evening news talk show 'Go' Aften Danmark' about the MV Leopard hostages. The Programme editor said the decision was based on concerns that the story would backfire.

A spokesperson said, "We decided not to run it after I listened to the arguments that the increased attention it would get from a show like ours may end up making the situation in Africa worse," Schröder said.

However it seems that two years is long enough to know that an approach is not working. According to another Danish journalist silence has not helped Eddy or Søren, "if it had they would have come home a long time ago."

The situation echoes that of the UK couple the Chandlers, they were subject to a "super injunction" when family members took out legal action to stop the media reporting on the kidnapping. It has been strongly suggested that this was on the advice of the UK government.

So does silence work, or does attention fuel the hijackers ransom demands? The pirates want coverage, they want to drive the price up and they want a national clamour to pay up and get the seafarers home. So in some ways it seems that in creating a media storm, it can play into the hands of the pirates. However, to view things in that cold detached vacuum would be to ignore the plight of the families left to suffer in uncertainty and fear. Silence is often filled by rumour, guesses and even lies – so when the owners, government and media all seemingly conspire in silence, then it can make things incredibly hard for the families, friends and colleagues to know that behind the scenes the right efforts are being made to free the crew.

In the case of the Chandlers, the family had faith and took what must have been a dreadfully hard decision to accept the government guidance to silence the media. In Denmark it seems that things are less certain, and some have seen the attempts by the Foreign Ministry to suppress media coverage of the plight of the hostages as undemocratic.

Whatever the best options in managing the media, it seems that the only facts are that two years of inhuman captivity in Somalia is too long – and something, somewhere, somehow is not seemingly working and it could well be time for a fresh new approach.

Monthly Roundup

Innovative Approach

The UK Ministry of Defence is looking for ways to strengthen the security of maritime operations so that it can be more effective at combating illegal activities such as gun-running, people-smuggling and piracy. Maritime Constabulary Operations and Maritime Security Operations already use the full spectrum of tools available to the Royal Navy but some hostile activity can be difficult to detect in busy and congested waters where it is hard to identify and stop the few illegal operations out of the vast number of legitimate civilian activities. More effective tools are now needed to strengthen the UK's response and reduce the risks to trade and shipping.

<http://goo.gl/IKCKC>

Language Barrier

Somali pirates are hiring interpreters to overcome the English language barrier so as to communicate with their hostages and negotiate with respective governments to arrive at a ransom amount for the release of captives. This was revealed by five Indian sailors, who were held hostage on-board the merchant vessel 'Iceberg I' for about three years, before their release last month. It is believed that by using interpreters the Somalis can speed up negotiations and churn their hoard of vessels held more easily.

<http://goo.gl/7O1KR>

Piracy Increase

An increase in Gulf of Guinea piracy is understood to be likely in the next three months. With an increase in the capabilities of pirate groups off the Gulf of Guinea and limited security in the West African seas, piracy risks are likely to grow. Due to the very limited capabilities of regional navies including the major player, the Nigerian Navy, and, unlike the seas off Somalia, the lack of an international maritime presence, tankers are vulnerable to oil theft. The recent redeployment of some Joint Task Force units away from the Niger Delta is a likely contributing factor to the increase of attacks and kidnappings targeting offshore supply vessels in December.

<http://goo.gl/7i2Ld>



Guarded Response

Footage has been released showing armed Iranian guards protecting an Oil Tanker. The video shows a clash with Somali pirates as group of 15 Somalis tried to hijack the Iranian Oil tanker. It seems the pirates had no idea 6 heavily armed Iranian Security Guards were on Board until the bullets began to fly. The result of the video is hard to corroborate, but the online source suggests that the incident resulted in the death of six Somali pirates death, while nice were arrested, and there were no reported casualties amongst the Iranian security guards or ship's crew. The incident highlights once more that pirates are still operating, and that armed guards are an effective deterrent.

<http://goo.gl/OT4s5>

Specific Threat

The British government warned on Sunday of a "specific threat" to foreigners in Somalia's breakaway enclave of Somaliland and urged its nationals to leave the country immediately. Britain's Foreign Office gave no details of the threat in the Horn of Africa state, but highlighted in a statement the ongoing danger of "kidnapping for financial or political gain, motivated by criminality or terrorism". "We are now aware of a specific threat to Westerners in Somaliland, and urge any British nationals who remain there against our advice to leave immediately," the statement said. Ireland has issued the same alert to its citizens.

<http://goo.gl/fMrGe>

British Shame

The Times of London says a secret section of a United Nations report has linked British citizens with Somali piracy. The newspaper says that a 2012 report drawn up by the UN's Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea carried a secret annex naming a British businessman of Somali origin as one of the key organisers of a pirate kidnapping in 2009. The Times quotes the annex as saying that the businessman is responsible for "co-organising hijackings and abductions" and was directly involved in the abduction of Paul and Rachel Chandler, a British couple held captive for 13 months before a ransom was paid in 2010.

<http://goo.gl/mnf7K>

Notorious BIG Mouth

Notorious former pirate leader Mohamed Abdi Hassan, also known as Afweyne, is reportedly set to lead an anti-piracy campaign in regions with pirate strongholds, UN-funded Radio Bar-Kulan has reported. One of Somalia's most notorious pirate leaders, known as "Big Mouth", claimed to be retiring after years of terrorising the Indian Ocean, generating millions of dollars in ransoms from seized ships, but will now encourage pirates to denounce piracy. Some believe this Damascene reinvention is down to the fact that the US may be seeking to take him into custody, and so leading a band of "anti-pirates" could be a useful diversionary tactic.

<http://goo.gl/PgO5s>

Years of Captivity

Radio 4 features a captivating and compelling interview with seafarers who speak first hand of the dreadful experience of being held hostage by Somali pirates. Matthew Bannister talks to Gul Bacha and Ali Mohammad, two seamen from Pakistan's Swat Valley who were held hostage for nearly three years by Somali pirates. They were beaten and tortured before they were released in a 12 day gun fight. To truly understand the cold hard truth of the despicable act of piracy, one only has to hear the of the pain suffered by seafarers - their voices may sound to be cracking and weak, but their brave resolve isn't, and such interviews are part of a vital healing process.

<http://goo.gl/YJCwa>

Tech War

In April 2009, when "MV Africa Star" was attacked by nine pirates, the ship's crew used coils of barbed wire to prevent pirates from climbing the ship. A hijack was avoided using non-lethal anti-piracy method, a technique used to protect ships in piracy affected areas. Anti-piracy technology has come a long way since then, with several powerful non-lethal weapons introduced on ships to prevent piracy attacks. Ships now plying in high piracy affected areas carry Armed Guards along with a series of non-lethal weaponry to thwart any kind of piracy attempt. This article is an interesting list of the non-lethal anti-piracy weapons that are used or can be used to fight piracy at high seas.

<http://goo.gl/zrmoF>

US View

Andrew Shapiro, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Political and Military Affairs has been speaking on the success in the counterpiracy effort. According to Shapiro this success rests on, "prosecuting pirates when we capture them, keeping the military escorts through the internationally recognized transit area, as well as continuing to encourage industry to allow the use of private armed security teams. We think that our focus on targeting pirate financiers and facilitators, or focus on prosecuting those who are captured, as well as allowing industry to use these private security teams, is really making a difference."

<http://goo.gl/38VKn>

Laws Evolve

The decision by the US Supreme Court endorsed a broad view of what now constitutes the crime of piracy – a move that will make it significantly easier to prosecute and convict suspected Somali pirates. Federal prosecutors countered that the definition of piracy had broadened since Congress passed the piracy statute in 1819. Under international law, they said, piracy includes a wider range of hostile acts. A federal judge agreed, and that ruling was upheld by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va, but there have been questions as to whether US judges have the power to define elements of a federal crime based on their view of modern international law.

<http://goo.gl/Bdwyj>

Business Booming

The pirate business is booming off the coast of Nigeria. There were 27 attacks in Nigerian waters last year, compared to 10 the year before, according to the International Maritime Bureau. Numbers like that make West African waters among the most dangerous in the world, second only to the coast of Somalia, which recorded nearly 70 attacks last year. Attacks in West Africa's waters are very different from those off of Somalia, but this is not to say piracy is safer in West Africa, where ships are usually boarded at gunpoint. Two people were killed in attacks last year and despite pirate targeting cargoes, crews can end up getting hurt.

<http://goo.gl/1FtGH>

Tanker Hijacked

Gunmen seized a Nigerian-owned, Panama-flagged tanker with 16 Nigerian crew off Ivory Coast's port of Abidjan as it prepared to unload 5,000 tonnes of fuel, port officials said. Attacks on shipping are increasing in the Gulf of Guinea - second only to the waters around Somalia for piracy. But this incident was only the second of its kind in Ivorian waters. The tanker, named the "ITRI" and owned by Lagos-based Brila Energy, Serge Constant of Koda Maritime, an Ivorian firm that was managing its stopover in Ivory Coast, said there has been no contact with it since and the onboard tracking system has been disabled.

<http://goo.gl/ZGdma>

Security Hub

Sri Lanka's southern port of Galle has become a hub in the fight against Somali pirates who threaten international merchant shipping, a report has said. An increasing number of vessels are embarking and disembarking armed guards used for onboard protection as they sail past Galle, and this has opened up opportunities for companies providing supplies and services to shipping from Galle, located close to the main East-West shipping route across the Indian Ocean. Former members of the island's armed forces can also make use of their combat experience against Tamil Tiger separatists to work as private security guards on merchant ships during this business boom.

<http://goo.gl/lqmhk>

Maersk View

The soon to be anointed new Maersk Tankers' head of global operations has called for more efficient ways of dealing with piracy. Mike Powell, due to take over the new role in the coming weeks, believes that efforts to ensure that pirates do not impact shipping operations is crucial. He believes that security risks need to be identified early and the fundamental problem of certain authorities colluding with pirates needs to be addressed at a high level. Powell does not believe that companies can place armed guards onboard and forget about the wider issues - especially not on tankers where he says, "We were always taught on tankers to keep cargoes and things that go bang separate."

<http://goo.gl/7L3FX>

Flag Shame

There are claims that the Panama flag State administration should be ashamed of its treatment of seafarers who have suffered from piracy. The ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) is now having to call on it to help the recently released crew of the Panama-flagged MV Iceberg 1 recover from their ordeal in the hands of Somali pirates. Panama should have been amongst the first to come to their succour. Its seeming lack of concern doesn't speak well of the country. Is Panama only after the money to be made from operating the world's largest ship register? ITF seafarers' section chairman Dave Heindel: 'It is unfortunate that the flag state has not discharged its duty of care'.

<http://goo.gl/BV1WD>

Somali Recognition

It has been reported that the US State Department has taken the decision to recognize the Somali government. Johnnie Carson, the U.S.'s top diplomat for Africa, said the recognition will take place today when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton meets with the Somali president. The recognition is the first step in extending financial support to the country, which is a partner in battling al-Qaida, the AP reports. Nationally, Somali is probably most synonymous with pirates and the Black Hawk down events which became the subject of a best-selling book by Mark Bowden and a 2001 movie produced by Jerry Bruckheimer and directed by Ridley Scott.

<http://goo.gl/v40aF>

Rules Released

It appears that a set of standardised rules for the use of force will soon be released, finally providing some clarity to the armed guards issue. According to the Security Association for the Maritime Industry (SAMI), the 100 Series rules for use of force will soon be published, providing an international framework for legal action and trial that offers all parties equal protection and scrutiny. Private armed security personnel who use lethal force currently have no legal structure to rely on if their conduct is called into question. Many have felt that this leaves them in a vulnerable position, especially as each security firm has its own rules for use of force.

<http://goo.gl/ddpzn>

IMB Report

In the past 7-days the following attacks were noted by the International Chamber of Commerce, Commercial Crimes Services. Balikpapan Anchorage, Indonesia, in which two robbers armed with long knives boarded an anchored bulk carrier. The Singapore Straits. where about six robbers in a speed boat approached and boarded a barge under tow, stole barge properties and later boarded the tug and took hostage the duty Bosun and held him face down at knife point. Also Ramsburg Terminal, Georgetown, Guyana, where two robbers armed with guns and long knives boarded a berthed LPG tanker from the offshore side and took the C/O and shore security guard as hostage.

<http://goo.gl/ZO5n2>

Hostage Release

Somali pirates have released three Syrian hostages after more than two years of captivity, the Somali government has confirmed. The three were the last of 21 surviving crew members to be freed from the ship "MV Orna" owned by a company in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The pirates hijacked the ship 400 nautical miles northeast of Seychelles in December, 2010. Somali Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon said, "As government officials we are happy to see the release of our Muslim brothers and it's my desire to thank all those, who helped freeing the hostages" before adding that he is hopeful the international community will assist in permanently eradicating piracy.

<http://goo.gl/tLeRF>

Failed Rescue

Somali witnesses said at least eight civilians were killed in a disastrous French operation to rescue a secret agent, but France's defence minister defended the decision to launch the raid. Sources in lawless Somalia suggested the reason Saturday's raid had failed was that the al-Qaeda-linked Shebab group holding the hostage had received advance warning. The United States meanwhile, confirmed that it had played a limited support role in the French mission. "Four civilians, including three from one family, are among the dead," resident Adan Derow said by telephone on Sunday. "They were all killed outside Bulomarer, where the French commandos landed before entering the city."

<http://goo.gl/3rnVX>

Media Silence

Hijacked ship and Danish and Filipino crew's captivity 'kept silent' by the media and Danish Foreign Ministry The crew of the Danish ship "MV Leopard" - two Danes and four Filipinos - have spent nearly two years in the hands of Somali pirates, but the media has chosen to remain silent about their captivity. On January 12, 2010, the MV Leopard was hijacked by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean. The ship's two Danish and four Filipino crew members were soon transferred ashore. As the second anniversary of their capture looms, the plight of the seamen has been conspicuously absent from the Danish media, and their are fears that they will be left to die in captivity.

<http://goo.gl/Aibgu>

Pirates Emboldened

The pirates of Somalia are getting even more bold and heavily-armed than ever. Earlier this week, twelve pirates were arrested after they attacked a merchant vessel with rocket propelled grenades. If contemporary piracy is going to emulate historical piracy, you can bet that today's pirates will be tomorrow's mercenaries for powers in the developed world. Get ready: The next time the U.S. decides to invade a country with a naval fleet, it will enlist the aid of Somali pirates to harass the enemy in coastal waters.

<http://goo.gl/IGbMy>

Floating Fears

Private maritime security companies are increasingly storing their weapons on “floating armouries” in international waters, to avoid arms smuggling laws when they dock in ports. The legal status of these armouries is unclear, and industry experts are concerned that the absence of regulation leaves the armouries vulnerable to attack from the pirates they are intended to guard against. Despite the dangers, many governments are continuing to ignore the problem. British security companies are not authorised to use them, although the government is considering whether to officially approve of the use of Sri Lankan armouries.

<http://goo.gl/skcaH>

Jasmine Hit

On Jan 5, 2013, the “MSC Jasmine” was attacked by Somali pirates while enroute Salalah-Mombasa. The ship was hit from a pirate skiff Saturday off the coast of Somalia, about 3 ° north and 51 ° east, between Somalia and the Seychelles. Six pirates were aboard the skiff armed with small arms and a rocket launcher RPG type. The crew of the MSC Jasmine – a Cypriot container ship flying the Panamanian flag – took refuge in the citadel. And the team of private security guards on board went into action. Exchanges shot took place, no staff was injured aboard the ship. The ship managed to escape continuing its route to Mombasa.

<http://goo.gl/XqUap>

Foreign Pirates

Somali Defense Minister Abdihakim Mohamud Fiqi said pirates in his country are backed by foreign states which seek to undermine security and stability in the African country, and meantime said Iran can improve law and order along Somali coasts. Speaking to the press, Fiqi pointed to the possibility of the link between Somali pirates and Al-Qaeda terrorist network, and stated, “That is possible ... it is clear that these groups are funded by foreign parties and governments but they seem to be seeking to weaken the country’s security and stability in a bid to gain financial wealth by hijacking vessels which are passing through Somalia’s coastal waters.”

<http://goo.gl/HkAd4>

IMO Aims

Speaking at the opening of the IMO’s first meeting of the year, the Sub-Committee on Fire Protection, IMO Secretary-General Koji Sekimizu told delegates that it was his vision that halving lives lost at sea and eradicating pirate attacks, as well as ensuring the release of all hostages can, and should, be legitimate targets, for the Organization and for shipping in the years to come. Mr Sekimizu said that 2012 had been an encouraging year, having witnessed a sharp reduction in successful piracy incidents off the coast of Somalia and in the Indian Ocean. However, 12 ships and 159 people were, at the time of speaking, still in the hands of Somali pirates.

<http://goo.gl/2GJfa>

NATO Advice

The NATO Shipping Centre, has advised merchant vessels to remain vigilant in the gulfs of Oman and Aden and off the Somali coast, following a string of recent piracy incidents. On December 27, a vessel near the Strait of Hormuz was approached by two skiffs, and another vessel near the Omani coast was also approached by two skiffs. On the same day, the BNS 'Louise Marie' disrupted a suspected skiff off the Somali coast. On December 30, a vessel reported suspicious activity by two skiffs in the Gulf of Aden, and on January 1 a vessel reported an incident involving four skiffs. All vessels are safe.

<http://goo.gl/xvcgl>

Wicked Problem

Academics have been examining maritime security (MARSEC) through a unique concept of 'wicked problem(s)' to work out new potential solutions. While shipowners face one problem and seafarers another, politicians will focus on the human drama, regulatory issues (on the use of armed guards onboard merchant vessels) and potentially on the economic sustainability of naval fleets off Somalia. While the stakeholders argue piracy shifts based on the solutions applied at any given time. We are unlikely to fully eradicate piracy, but we can limit it by understanding the true nature of the problem and the nature of potential solutions that may be applied in a given area at a given time.

<http://goo.gl/tLlec>

Ransom Paid

South Korean firm Hyundai paid a ransom of \$190,000 (£118,000) to free six workers kidnapped last month, Nigerian police say. Bayelsa state police say they learned of the ransom after capturing members of the criminal gang believed responsible. Hyundai Heavy Industries has not commented on the reports. The BBC's Habiba Adamu, in Abuja, says it is rare for anyone to acknowledge ransoms paid to kidnapers in Nigeria. Gunmen kidnapped the four South Korean and two Nigerian workers after storming a passenger boat on 17 December, and they were released days later.

<http://goo.gl/3ueSp>

Uncoordinated Response

Piracy has been on the rise in South East Asia, and Indonesia's maritime security agencies are beset with coordination problems. The solution should be a merged institution supported by firm leadership and a strong legal mandate. The navy is over-stretched and under-resourced as the sole institution responsible for the security of Indonesia's six million square kilometres of maritime jurisdiction. The government has therefore established the Maritime Security Coordinating Board to coordinate the activities of no fewer than 12 national agencies, or "stakeholders" related to maritime security affairs, but some say this will add other problems.

<http://goo.gl/WmGgi>

Clock Ticking

The clock is ticking for Puntland, which was established almost 15 years ago by union of constituencies linked together by geographical proximity and kinship. The past is casting a long shadow on this region and there is a sense of déjà vu. It is almost a decade since a similar crisis engulfed the region. The government is relying on a controversial force known as the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) trained by South African mercenaries and equipped with money from the government of UAE, this force was intended to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia but are being increasingly sucked into the Puntland crisis.

<http://goo.gl/QRE73>

Owners Sued

The four Ghanaians who were recently released from the captivity by Somali pirates say they intend to sue the shipping company which owns the ship they were held hostage on. The four, Jewel Ahiable, Edward Kofi Asare, Francis Koomson Senior and Prince Agbo were aboard the MV Iceberg 1 vessel which was captured off the Somali coast in March 2010. Jewel Ahiable said no one from the company has contacted them since their release and the company owes them 3-years outstanding salaries. "Our rights are in coma because until we all departed from the land of Somalia, the owner of the ship has not even called to congratulate us."

<http://goo.gl/mxhCU>

Humanitarian Relief

The Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP) has welcomed the news of the release of the 22 crew members on the Iceberg 1 after 1,000 days in captivity in Somalia. They have since been re-united with their families. "We are greatly relieved to hear that they are safe after their terrible ordeal," said Mr Peter Swift, Chairman of MPHRP. "Now we hope that both public and private organisations will work to ensure that the released hostages, as well as their families, receive all the necessary support and assistance they will require both".

<http://goo.gl/ShDqd>