

IN 1308 – Oceans Beyond Piracy Annual Report: The state of maritime piracy 2015 - assessing the economic and human cost

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Members will wish to note that the Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) Annual Report on the state of maritime piracy was presented by OBP at a meeting held at the UK Chamber of Shipping in London on Tuesday 3 May 2016.

Full details can be found at the OBP website and an executive summary is available below.

State of Maritime Piracy (2015)

1. Main topics

- Changing counter-piracy measures and recent incidents off the Horn of Africa.
- Evolving piracy and armed robbery trends in the Gulf of Guinea.
- The effects of Southeast Asian efforts on piracy and robbery against ships.

2. Headlines

- Currently 41 seafarers still in captivity in the Western Indian Ocean region.
- 23 people killed in piracy attacks in Gulf of Guinea.
- Total cost of piracy in excess of \$2 billion.

3. Key messages

Actions by **International Maritime Organization** (IMO) members has contained piracy, however the vulnerability of world markets to piracy activity remains and the IMO continues to promote interagency effectiveness in tackling the issues.

INTERTANKO reminded those present that there are around 1.3 million seafarers at sea. Ship owners have responsibility for not exposing them to harm and must carefully consider the risks.

Following the experience in the Indian Ocean, there is a concern that a new norm of armed presence on merchant ships, with their crews' involvement in armed guarding, has become the accepted state for merchant shipping.

However in light of the warnings by **Commander Maritime Forces** (CMF) and other bodies, the threat of piracy will remain for the short term at least.

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4. Somali piracy

Convicted pirates stated lack of opportunity and poor economic prospects as reason for going into piracy – poverty, lack of education seen as the main drivers by the IMO.

Main deterrence to pirate activity is naval presence and armed guards onboard vessels. However in the Indian Ocean naval presence decreased by 15% – also smaller vessels vs. frigates are now being used.

NATO has withdrawn from operations in the region therefore there are fewer seaborne assets to respond to incidents. Add to this a 30% reduction in use of private maritime security company (PMSC) armed teams. This sharp decline in armed guards is a result of the reduction in size of High Risk Area (HRA). The HRA reduction by industry was based on careful consideration of naval advice. However, while HRA has been reduced there is concern that this has been perceived by vessel operators as a lessening of risk in the HRA itself and consequently the use of the Mozambique Channel for shipping has increased also.

CMF assesses that intent of Somali pirates remains – they have been suppressed but convicted pirates about to leave prison have stated an intention to go back to piracy on their release. One major concern is the reduction in registrations in the voluntary reporting area and CMF believe that this needs to be improved. The **Maritime Security Centre** – Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) are keen to support vessel operators and owners – more details can be [found at their website](#).

An additional dynamic for the Western Indian Ocean is now posed by the situation in Yemen (see report by Reuters 2016-05-04 15:08:22 on 'CMF: Al Qaeda in Yemen Poses Risks to Shipping') and mixed migration issues. Resurgence of piracy is anticipated by CMF and therefore a lot of work is ongoing to develop regional maritime security and coastal law enforcement capacity.

In 2015 a strategic review was conducted by the **EU Council** and it recommended a further two-year extension for **OP ATALANTA**. International bodies involved have an aspiration to significantly improve local capacity before the next EU NAVFOR review.

5. Gulf of Guinea

Some very stark figures for 2015 – 44 kidnapped – 23 dead – mainly local Nigerians and inside Nigerian Territorial Waters.

The GoG attacks have become more violent and there were 54 reported incidents in 2015. Since January 2016 there has been a 30% increase in criminal activity in GoG.

Reasons for the change in pirate modus operandi (MO) is assessed as mainly due to low oil prices making cargo piracy less economically viable and kidnap and ransom being seen as better MO for criminals.

Total cost of piracy activity in GoG for 2015 was \$719million.

6. South East Asia

A steep decline in piracy attacks in SE Asia is credited to the improved political co-operation and new industry guidance released for the region.

Indonesian and Malaysian law enforcement co-operation has been developed but there are remain some regional political issues to overcome.

The main driver for criminal activity is based around the price of fuel which is currently too low to be worth the crime of cargo robbery. This is likely to change with fuel price increases. Many vessel masters are indebted by gambling so selling the fuel their vessels are carrying is an obvious temptation which leads to criminal activity. The recent incident involving the tug 'Henry' saw a new MO emerge – this was a kidnap and ransom at sea. The beheading of the Canadian national captured in this event when the ransom deadline passed showed a completely different level of violence and involvement by terrorist groups.

7. IMCA Guidance

[*Security measures and emergency response guidelines*](#) (IMCA HSS037 / M226) – contains advice and guidance on a range of security and emergency measures for both vessel and harbour office use.

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