

Type:	Threat	Version:	1.0	Classification:	Restricted
Created:	20241206			Status:	Live
Title	AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – 06/12/2024				



## AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – POST-MONSOON SOMALI PIRACY THREAT

**Source:**

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**A. Executive Summary**

- After four years without a piracy event, Somali piracy re-emerged in November 2023 and is expected to persist.
- Pirates ransomed a bulk carrier for more than US \$4m in 2024.
- After hijacking dhows, pirates have been able to launch attacks at distances of up to 800NM from Somalia. Security policies, influenced by the ‘Shipping industry’ associations’ removal of the HRA, should be re-assessed.
- The risk is voyage-, and vessel-specific. For those at heightened threat, established risk mitigation measures work.

**B. Situation**

Somali piracy re-emerged in November 2023 after an interval of four years. Since November 2023, EU NAVFOR Operation ATALANTA has recorded 43 piracy-related cases in the Somali Basin and Gulf of Aden. Pirates have boarded four merchant vessels, of which two were hijacked and one successfully ransomed for more than US \$4 million.

DATE	NAME	Flag	Vessel	Summary	Distance offshore Somalia	PAST embarked ?
14 Dec 23	RUEN	Malta	Bulk carrier	Hijacked, released on 15 March 2024, 93 days after the hijacking. Damaged during release.	597NM	No
04 Jan 24	LILA NORFOLK	Liberia	Bulk carrier	Boarded	436NM	No
12 Mar 24	ABDULLAH	Bangladesh	Bulk carrier	Hijacked and ransomed. Released on 14 April 2024, 34 days after the hijacking.	447NM	No
23 May 24	BASILISK	Liberia	General cargo ship	Boarded, the Master was shot.	374NM	No

*Merchant vessels boarded by Somali pirates in the last 12 months*

**C. Analysis**

The re-emergence arose from political disputes ashore, in the semi-autonomous state of Puntland. Initially beginning with the hijacking of Iranian fishing dhows, disenfranchised Somali sub-clans attempted to ransom the dhows to access revenue they would have been entitled to had they been in power. However, groups have since utilised dhows as ‘motherships’ from which they have launched attacks on merchant vessels. EU NAVFOR Operation ATALANTA has recorded 23 piracy-related cases involving merchant vessels.

With the end of the Monsoon in November/December, and an improvement of sea state, there is expected to be a revival of pirate activity. Utilising hijacked dhows, in the last 12 months, the pirates have proven capable of operating at distances of up to 800NM from Somalia. EU NAVFOR Operation ATALANTA is presently monitoring an allegedly hijacked Chinese fishing vessel in territorial waters. The vessel is under the control of alleged pirates, who are armed with AK-47-style weapons and machine guns.

In April 2021, the Lloyd’s Joint War Committee reduced the Indian Ocean listed area up to approximately 400NM offshore Somalia, and in January 2023 some ‘Shipping industry’ associations removed the Indian Ocean High Risk Area designation in its entirety. Best

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Management Practice (BMP) and Private Armed Security Team (PAST) adoption gradually reduced, and shipping became more vulnerable to a resurgence of piracy.

Due to the size of the Indian Ocean, merchant vessels cannot solely rely on military intervention. Naval assets can be several hours away from a vessel under distress. None of the four merchant vessels boarded in the last 12 months carried a PAST. BMP was also not fully implemented. Vessels carrying PAST have been approached but have successfully deterred/stopped pirates. Six suspected pirates are in custody awaiting trial in the Seychelles. EU NAVFOR Operation ATALANTA recovered the suspected pirates after a PAST destroyed their skiff during an exchange of fire in May 2024.

**D. Mitigation**

- Ship Security Assessments: Merchant shipping transiting the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean is advised to carry out Ship Security Assessments tailored to the threat of piracy, and to implement recommended and proportionate ship protection measures before sailing.
- Voyage Risk Assessments: Merchant shipping is advised to carry out voyage- and vessel-specific risk assessments in advance of transits.
- Live monitoring: Intelligence providers can link merchant vessels from many companies, and can link into military organisations to provide real-time awareness of ongoing dhow hijackings and small boat activities, enabling shipping to respond with route adjustments and enhancing crew preparedness.
- Private Armed Security Teams: Proportionate embarkation of a PAST can enable merchant shipping to optimise voyage plans, saving time and fuel.

**E. Contact Information**

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