

ATALANTA

**UPDATE ON THE PIRACY THREAT OFF THE  
COAST OF SOMALIA**

18 MARCH  
2024

**Ships sailing off the Somalian coasts, in the Somali basin are urged to maintain a heightened state of vigilance in light of the recent escalation in piracy threats. It is strongly recommended that all vessels adhere to the Best Management Practices Version 5 (BMP5), paying a special attention to the drill of security measures before sailing off Somali coasts.**

**Situation:** Since the end of November 2023, multiple incidents involving piracy and hijacking have taken place in the Somali basin. Recently, there has been a notable surge in reported events that could potentially escalate into piracy attacks off the Somali coast. Additionally, the conclusion of the monsoon period could further facilitate piracy activities in the region.

- Three merchant vessels have been assaulted, one of which are still under pirate control (M/V Abdullah IMO 9745598, captured on the 12 March). Additionally, several vessels have reported suspicious approaches.
- Up to 18 dhows have been hijacked. A number of them have been released, but up to seven may still be in the hands of their captors.
- ATALANTA's has identified several possible pirate camps on the Somali Coasts situated between Xaafuun and the village of Garacad, with a hot spot north of Eyl, where the M/V Ruen has been at anchorage for several weeks.
- It is estimated that four pirate action groups (PAGs) at least could be sailing off the Somali coast.

**Pirates' modus operandi.** The typical pirate strategy involves the seizure and hijacking of a dhow, which is subsequently utilized as their mother ship. They then dissimulate in with usual traffic and deploy skiffs from the mother ship to attack vessels navigating as far as 600 nautical miles or more, off the East Somali coast. The possibility of Attacks in the Gulf of Aden (GOA) cannot be dismissed. If the targeted vessel cannot repel the attack, pirates may opt to board the ship. After a vessel is seized, it is taken to the Somali coast and held there while ransom negotiations are ongoing. However, after its capture, the hijacked M/V Ruen (liberated by the Indian Navy on the 16 March) left its anchorage to move off the Somali coast several times for unknown reason (assessment is to produce fresh water).

**Threat evaluation.** ATALANTA assesses the threat as Moderate (where an attack is a realistic possibility) off the Somali coasts. However, considering the occurrence of previous significant attacks on merchant vessels within 12 days after reports of dhow hijackings, and the recent reports of multiple skiffs, each carrying armed individuals with the intent to capture dhows to facilitate attacks on larger vessels, as reported to ATALANTA on March 13th (Alert 039/2024), this threat evaluation may undergo re-evaluation in the coming days.

**Registration and reporting.** It is crucial that vessels operating in the Western Indian Ocean, particularly those within 700 NM of the Somali coast adhere to the BMP5 recommendations. Any incidents should be promptly reported to MSCHOA and the UKMTO. Additionally, it is also worth highlighting that MSCHOA-registered ships receive near real-time information on security incidents in their vicinity.

