

# SEA CRIME – KNOW YOUR ENEMY



by **Rory Lamrock**  
Intelligence Analyst with AKE Limited

Mention 'piracy' these days and most people will think of Somalis in fast skiffs, brandishing AK47s as they attempt to capture ships to hold for ransom. But the realities of global maritime security demand a different term to reflect the range of risks that crews and vessels face around the world: sea crime.

Different parts of the world suffer from very different forms of sea crime, with the techniques, types of attack and ultimate objective of attackers varying from region to region. Accurate knowledge and insight are vital to deliver protective measures that are effective and proportional to the threat.

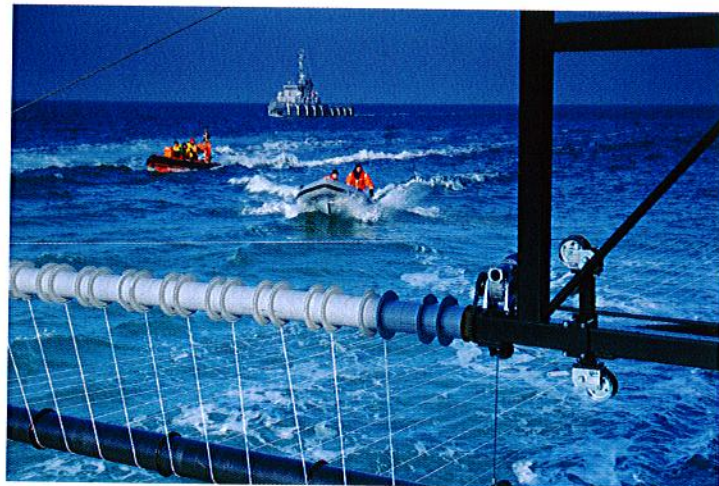
### The Somali story

Off the Horn of Africa, attackers almost always aim to hijack a commercial vessel to hold it for ransom. There has been a decline in Somali piracy, with attacks dropping by around 80% over the last year. Thanks to improved security on board merchant vessels and naval operations, there hasn't been a hijack since the MT Smyrni was taken off Oman in May 2012. The money men behind the attacks from Somalia have realised it is an unreliable criminal investment and are now looking at other ways of making money. As a

result, Somali piracy is now a high impact, but very low probability, risk and expensive armed guards are not commensurate to the statistical risk of attack, which is now less than 0.1%.

However, a handful of groups remain active and committed, driven by the big potential gains set against the backdrop of widespread poverty that grips the country. Average ransoms are around USD 5 million, though they have been as high as USD 13.5 million. When searching for a slow moving target, attackers will play a game of 'cat and

mouse' with naval patrols for weeks on end, using mother ships across the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. Driven by desperation and faced with starvation, arrest or possible death if they don't capture a ship, Somali attack groups will be persistent.



### Higher risk, lower impact

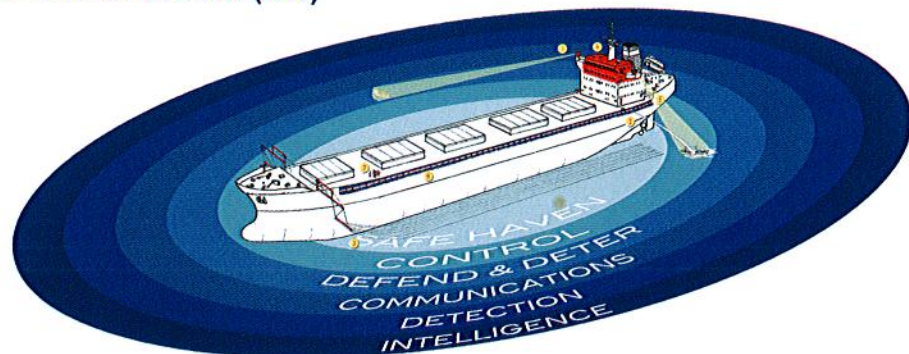
By contrast, the risk of attack is far higher in south-east Asia – particularly in Indonesian waters where around one-third of the world's sea crimes occur – but the impact is less. Almost all attacks are opportunistic 'smash and grab' type robberies on vessels in port or at anchor. The aim is usually to steal stores, cash and valuables, then escape as quickly as possible without being noticed. However, the robbers are often armed with knives or small arms, so crew members can face threats or actual violence. Basic security measures, such as deck lighting and alarm systems are effective in deterring most attacks.

### Complex

The Gulf of Guinea represents the most complex maritime security environment. Attacks range from low level robberies like those in south-east Asia, to armed robbery of vessels underway, kidnap of specific crew members for ransom, and hijack of entire tankers to steal their cargo to sell on the black market.

Since January 2012, at least 50 vessels

### SEA CRIME DEFENSE SYSTEM (SCDS)



1. Searchlights
2. Water Cannons
3. P-Trap
4. SeaDefence
5. Sound Waves
6. Citadel Protection
7. Onboard training

have been boarded off West Africa. 11 attacks resulted in the abduction of 44 crew members. Another nine vessels were hijacked completely.

Sea crime off West Africa tends to be more violent than elsewhere. At least five crew members have been killed since January last year, and an unknown number injured.

Slow moving, low freeboard vessels – including oil field supply craft – are generally the most vulnerable as they are the easiest to board from small skiffs. Vessels at anchor, drifting, carrying out STS operations or awaiting entry to port face the highest risk of attack. The nationality of the crew also plays a role, as foreign crew members will generally fetch a higher ransom.

### Mitigating the risk

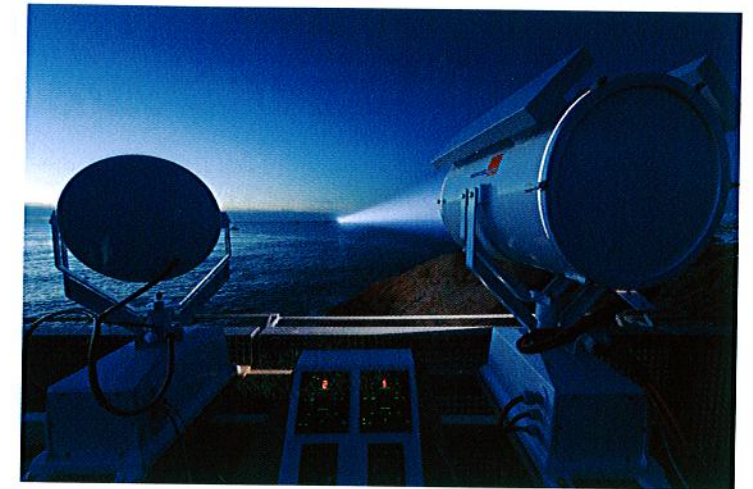
Carefully selected maritime security solutions can ensure the safety of vessels, crew and cargo, taking into account the reality of the risks specific to the region. Off West Africa, for example, assessment of where and how vessels anchor and carry out STS transfers is needed.

A vessel's characteristics and the long-

term benefits of any security measures should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Non-lethal security equipment like remotely operated water jets and re-useable anti-boarding mechanisms represent a lasting investment that a vessel will benefit from

voyage after voyage. Armed guards, on the other hand, only provide protection whilst they are on board.

Above all, proper insight into the myths and realities of global sea crime – and its root causes – inform decision making and reduce risk in an effective manner. After all, it pays to know the enemy. **gw**



Security expert AKE is GAC's partner in GAC Maritime Security Services, which combines the resources and reach of the GAC Group with AKE's extensive experience in reducing risk to people and organisations in hostile environments to protect ships, cargoes and crew from maritime security threats.

# 1,000 SAFE DAYS IN ABERDEEN

GAC UK's Aberdeen branch has completed 1,000 days with no lost time due to injury (LTI) in a notoriously hazardous and fast-moving quayside environment.



Steve Gibson, GAC UK's General Manager of Energy & Marine Services, says: "This achievement is attributable to the comprehensive GAC HSE Policy supplemented by the Aberdeen team's willingness to go beyond simply following rules and regulations. They're constantly on the lookout for ways to be even safer and this proactive mind-set has been adopted by clients, subcontractors and visitors. Everyone is encouraged and happy to suggest ideas to improve our procedures still further."

### Teamwork and training

The Aberdeen HSE team comprises GAC staff and other tenants that share the portside base. In addition to the standard HSE

training in place in most workplaces today, all contractors must complete a comprehensive induction on arrival at the GAC site and 'tool box talks' are given before any lifting of large objects takes place, no matter how often the need arises.

Steven McGregor, Warehouse & Yard Manager, says management support and encouragement is crucial: "The risk factors are clear. We often have extreme weather conditions, heavy fenders and 16 ton forklifts deployed and the support provided to clients at quayside is complex. Our staff have demonstrated incredible professionalism in carrying out their operations without injury to themselves or others." **gw**

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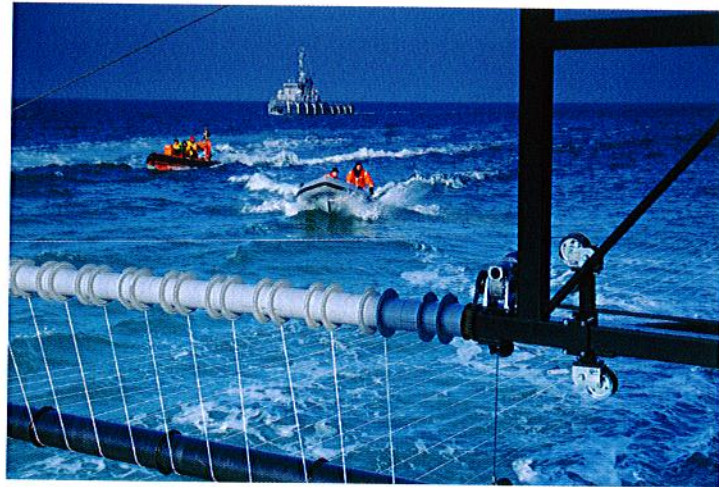
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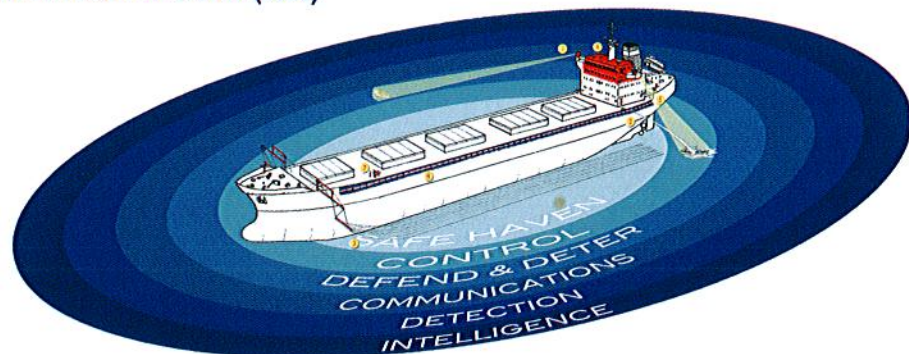
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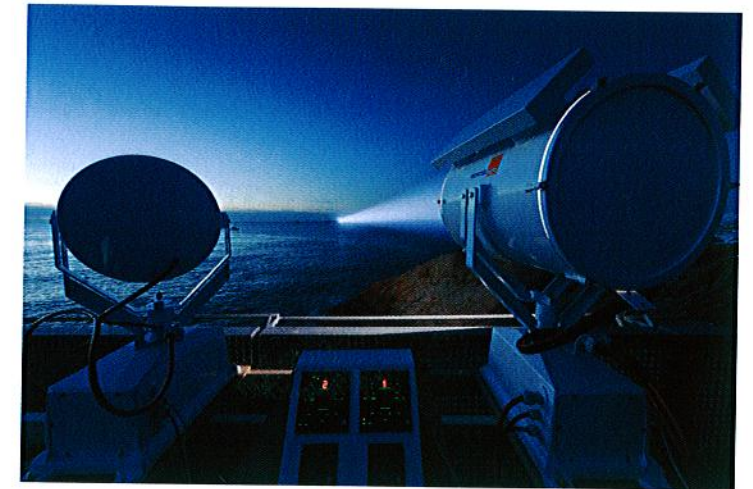
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