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SECURITY RELATED INFORMATION TO MARINERS

Q6099/2020/001

THIS IRTA IS RELEASED TO THE MARITIME COMMUNITY AS A JOINT EU NAVFOR / COMBINED MARITIME FORCES (CMF) THREAT ASSESSMENT OF THE RED SEA, BAB EL MANDEB, GULF OF ADEN AND THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN. ISSUED 1 MARCH 2020

ALSO SEE UKHO MARITIME SECURITY CHART Q6111 - EDITION 4.

Current as of 1st March 2020

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Introduction

1. This Industry Releasable Threat Assessment (IRTA) has been written by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and European Union Naval Force Somalia (EU NAVFOR).
2. Its purpose is to articulate the threat to merchant and large fishing vessels transiting the Red Sea, Bab al Mandeb Strait (BAM), Gulf of Aden (GOA) and the Western Indian Ocean. It updates the previous IRTA released on 1 Dec 19, which had an ICOD of 15 Nov 19.
3. The Information Cut Off Date for this threat assessment is 15 Feb 20.

Executive Summary

4. The threat to merchant and large fishing vessels transiting the Red Sea, Bab al Mandeb Strait (BAM), Gulf of Aden (GOA) and the Western Indian Ocean:
 - a. from piracy is **LOW** (an attack is unlikely)
 - b. from conflict-related activity is **MODERATE** (an attack is possible but unlikely)
 - c. from terrorism is **LOW** (an attack is unlikely).



Situation in Somalia

5. The continuing tensions between Somalia's Federal Member States (FMS) and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) remain a cause for concern. These tensions will likely continue in the forthcoming period prior to general elections in Somalia in late 2020.

6. Another issue that can cause friction is the recent approval of the oil exploitation law in the Upper Chamber of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), followed by the signature of the President. This law is intended to facilitate financial investments from international actors. To date, however, it is unclear who will manage the process for approving the licenses.

7. Maritime crime in the HoA remains a concern for the international community. Although there were no piracy incidents in the reporting period, there is evidence that arms and possible people smuggling are being conducted from camps on the northern coast of Puntland. It is HIGHLY LIKELY that former pirates still retain the capability and intent to conduct acts of piracy, but currently lack the opportunity to do so due to the influence of local elders, the presence of foreign warships, the implementation of BMP and embarkation of PAST, and legal finish.

8. Despite the ongoing operations by Somali National Army (SNA) and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops, Al Shabaab (AS) has been able to remain a threat by adapting its tactics, techniques and procedures, and its targeting priorities. The FGS's prioritisation of establishing security on land has left it with limited ability to establish security in the maritime.

Situation in Yemen

9. The war in Yemen has been ongoing since 2014. On 13 Jan 20, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2505 (2020) which renewed the mandate of the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeida Agreement (UNMHA) until 15 Jul 20. This means that UNMHA will continue to lead and support the Redeployment Coordination Committee which oversees the redeployment of forces, mine clearance operations, and monitors the area covered by the ceasefire.

10. It is HIGHLY LIKELY that the Hodeida Agreement has been effective in reducing the level of violence in the city and in maintaining the flow of aid into the country. However, it is holding tentatively and clashes between the Houthis and the Government of Yemen continue to occur in the city. Fighting also continues in other parts of Yemen, such as Merib, and the situation remains highly volatile.



Significant events 15 Nov 19 to 15 Feb 20

Piracy

11. There have been no incidents of piracy reported during the reporting period. The last attack by pirates, against the Republic of Korea flagged FV ADRIA and the Spanish flagged FV TXORI ARG1, occurred on 21 Apr 19 in the Somali Basin and was unsuccessful.

Conflict Related

12. **17 Nov 19.** In the southern Red Sea, a Saudi-flagged tugboat, the RABIGH 3, was boarded and temporarily detained by two armed Houthi coastguards when she failed to answer VHF calls when she was towing a ROK barge and tugboat through the Yemeni territorial waters. All three ships and their crews were released within 24 hours.

13. **5 Feb 20.** Open source reporting stated that a fishing vessel in the coastal waters between Midi, Yemen and Jizan, Saudi Arabia, struck a naval mine in the early hours of 5 Feb 20, killing three people. The reports stated that more than one mine was in the water at that time of the incident.

14. NAV AREA IX navigational warning 071/20, issued on 15 Feb 20, stated that the mine threat area was bounded by the following coordinates:

- a. 16-45.6N 042-15.7E
- b. 15-41.5N 042-39.4E
- c. 15-54.0N 043-02E
- d. 16-58.N 042-35.1E

It is HIGHLY UNLIKELY that the mine threat will extend outside this area. The US Department of Transport also reported the incident via MARAD 2020-003A which expired on 20 Feb 20.

15. It is unclear whether the mine struck the hull of the fishing vessel or whether it exploded after being pulled onboard in its nets. While CMF and EUNAVFOR are unable to confirm the Saudi Led Coalition's (SLC's) claim that the naval mines had been deployed by Houthi forces, the locations of the naval mines in the area specified by NAV AREA IX, make it HIGHLY LIKELY that their intended targets were SLC vessels operating in coastal waters in the vicinity of Jazan and the border between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Therefore, it is HIGHLY UNLIKELY that naval mines currently pose a threat to ships transiting international shipping lanes in the southern Red Sea.



Maritime Security Events – Suspicious Activity

16. **11 Jan 20.** In the GOA, MV NAVIG8 HONOR reported that she had been closed to 600 yards by 7 skiffs with approximately 4 persons on board (POB) each. The skiffs turned away after the embarked PAST fired warning shots.

Non-Maritime Security Events

17. **19 Jan 20.** In the GOA, SY WINDROSE reported that she had been approached by one skiff with 6 POB. The skiff changed its course when the embarked PAST made its presence known.

18. **02 Feb 20.** Also in the GOA, MV BBC PERU reported that she had been approached by one skiff that was travelling at 17kts with 4 POB. The occupants of the skiff displayed no aggressive behaviour and no piracy tripwires were present.

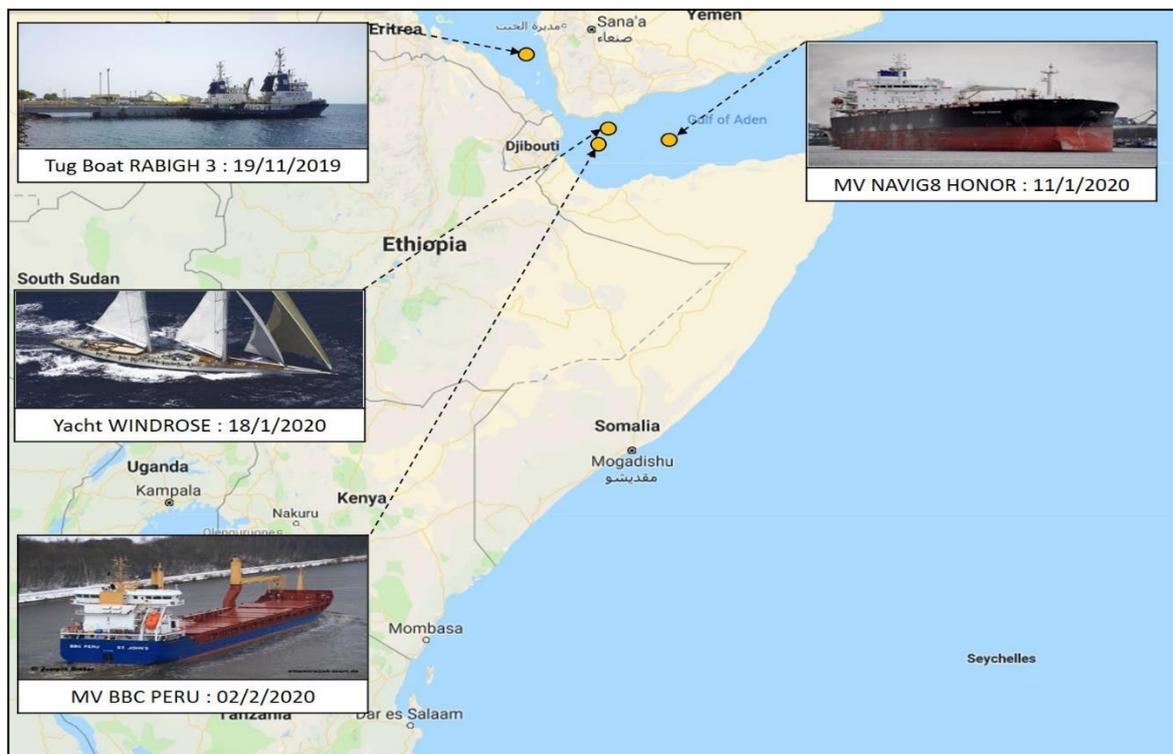


Figure 1 - Geographic Location of Maritime Events

Assessment

Piracy - LOW

19. The piracy threat in the Gulf of Aden and Western Indian Ocean is currently LOW (attack is unlikely).
20. Piracy is currently suppressed due to:



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- a. Widespread implementation of Best Management Practice (BMP).
- b. Embarkation of PAST on vessels.
- c. Continued presence of numerous 'grey hulls' in the area from CMF, EU NAVFOR and other nations.
- d. The prospect of 'legal finish' for pirates.
- e. Weather conditions that are not conducive to piracy in most parts of the AOO during the Northeast monsoon period, Dec 19 – Mar 20.
- f. The adoption of lower risk, criminal activities such as smuggling by former pirates.
- g. Slight improvements in the capability and competence of Somali maritime security forces, including:
 - i. The Puntland Maritime Police Forces.
 - ii. The Somaliland Coast Guard.

21. However, the causes of piracy still exist in Somalia and include: poverty; youth unemployment; the lack of effective governance; corruption; conflict; and illegal and over-fishing.

22. It is possible that piracy could re-emerge if some or all of the following conditions are met:

- a. The shipping industry neglects to implement BMP or to embark PAST.
- b. There is a significant decrease in the presence of warships and local maritime security forces in the area.
- c. There is a significant increase in the level of poverty and instability in Somalia.



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Conflict related - MODERATE

23. The conflict related threat to vessels transiting the Red Sea and BAM is currently MODERATE (attack is possible but unlikely).
24. The last known attack against a merchant vessel in international waters in Red Sea was the unattributed attack on the Iranian flagged MV SABITI on 14 Oct 19.
25. While vessels associated with Saudi-Led Coalition (SLC) nations are more likely to be at risk than vessels associated with other nations, there is always a chance that vessels might be misidentified by combatants (e.g. the MV INCE INEBOLU in May 18) or struck by accident.
26. Possible threats to vessels include rockets or missiles, limpet mines, and Water Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (WBIEDs).
27. Although Houthi forces have ALMOST CERTAINLY deployed naval mines in Yemeni coastal waters in the past and are alleged to have done so as recently as 5 Feb, such mines are LIKELY of low quality and are HIGHLY UNLIKELY to drift into international shipping lanes. Therefore, the threat from mines in international waters including the Maritime Security Transit Corridor (MSTC) continues to be LOW.

Terrorism - LOW

28. Although the conflicts in Somalia and Yemen continues to provide bases of operation and freedom of maneuver for International Terrorist Organizations (ITOs) such as Al Shabaab, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS, the last ITO attack against a merchant vessel was against the MV MUSKIE in May 17 and the current threat to merchant or fishing vessel from ITOs is LOW.

Maritime Security Centre (Horn of Africa) Analysis

29. MSCHOA continues to analyze impacts on BMP compliance and changes in behaviour within vessel registration area (VRA).
30. A slight decline in registrations in terms of percentage has been observed since last year: this is because the number of ships transiting the area has increased but the number of registrations has remained the same. This suggests a possible relaxation in BMP compliance in general, caused probably by a lower perception of threat due the reduction in HRA boundaries.

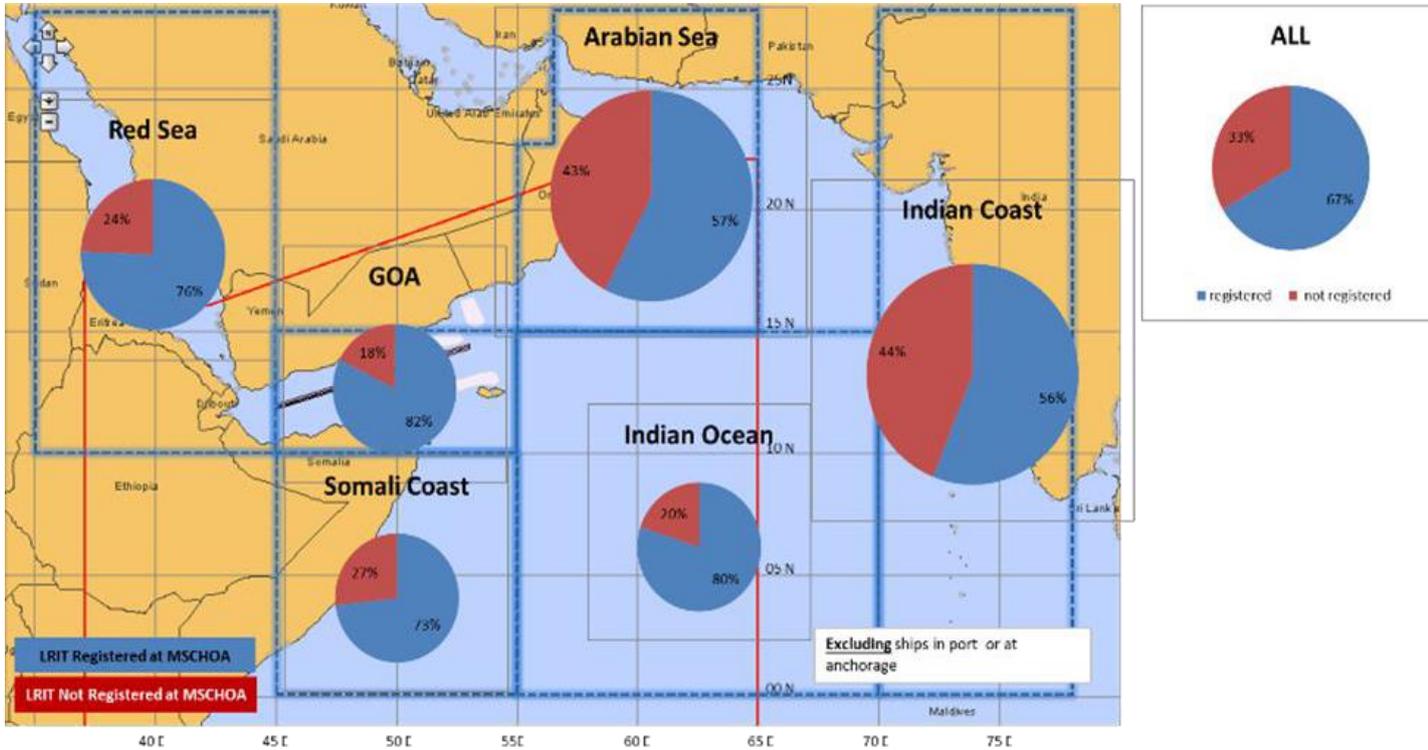


Figure 2 - Average of registration in AOO

31. MSCHOA also observed a slight decline in the use of onboard PAST outside the HRA and a possible concentration of southbound vessels skirting the boundary of the HRA. EU NAVFOR encourages shipping to register in all parts of the VRA, to implement the protection measures articulated in BMP5, and to remember that pirates still have the intent and capability to conduct attacks if the opportunity arises.

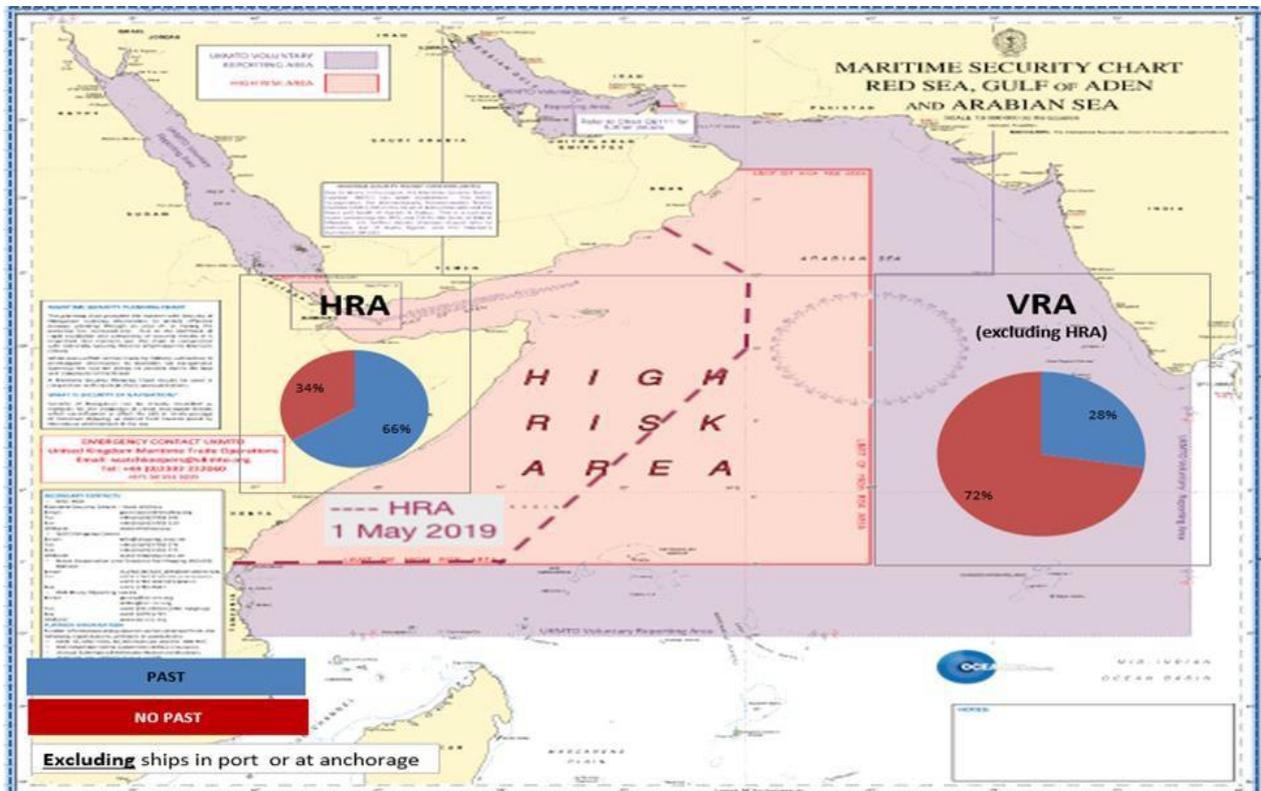


Figure 3 - PAS/NO PAS comparison

CMF activity

32. CMF Combined Task Force (CTF) 151 has continued to use its ships and maritime patrol aircraft to conduct counter piracy operations in the GOA. It conducted one Focused Operation, (FO) IKARUS, from 6 to 8 Feb 20.

33. At the same time, CTF 150 has added to the presence of 'grey hulls' in the area by conducting maritime security operations in the GOA, Gulf of Oman and Indian Ocean, seizing 10,590 kilograms of narcotics with a combined street value of US\$5,668,717 since 1 Dec 19.

EU NAVFOR activity

34. EU NAVFOR continued to deploy an Autonomous Vessel Protection Detachment (AVPD) to protect five World Food Programme (WFP) vessels carrying food and other aid to Somalia.

35. EU NAVFOR continued to implement the Cooperation Concept for Atalanta (COCOA) which allows nations to participate in OPERATION ATALANTA for a short period of time or for a specific activity. From Nov 19 to Feb 20, EU NAVFOR units interacted several times with units from CTF 150, CTF 151 and French naval forces in the Indian Ocean. EU NAVFOR units also conducted PASSEXs with Indian Navy, Seychelles Air Force and Coastguard, Japanese Navy.



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Conclusion

36. While the current threat from piracy is LOW, the last incident of piracy in Apr 19 underlined that piracy has not yet been eradicated and that industry must continue to implement BMP5. The next reporting period will see more permissive conditions for piracy when the monsoon period ends at the end of March.

37. The ongoing conflict in Yemen continues to pose a MODERATE threat to shipping in the BAM and the Southern Red Sea. Should the situation in Yemen deteriorate further, Houthi targeting Saudi-led coalition (SLC) warships and flagged MVs could LIKELY resume without notice, bringing with it a risk of unintentional damage to neutral shipping.

38. The 46th Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE) conference will take place on 27-28 May 20 in Manama, Bahrain. This conference is an opportunity for the shipping industry to share information and discuss maritime security with CMF, EU NAVFOR and other national representatives.

Annex:

A. Glossary of Terms.



AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AOO	Area of Operation
AQAP	Al Qaeda Arabian Peninsula
AS	Al Shabaab: Terrorist group operating in Somalia
AVPD	Autonomous Vessel Protection Detachment (military detachment)
BAM	Bab-al-Mandeb strait
BMP5	Best Management Practice (Version 5) IMO and industry sponsored suggested planning and operational practices for ship operators and Masters of ships transiting the Indian Ocean
CMF	Combined Maritime Force: 33 nation multi-national maritime force operating in Indian Ocean and Red Sea
COCOA	Concept for Cooperation ATALANTA
CTF	Combined Task Force
EU NAVFOR	European Union Naval Forces Counter Piracy Mission, Op ATALANTA
GOA	Gulf of Aden
GOO	Gulf of Oman
GoY	Government of Yemen
HRA	High Risk Area Industry defined area where it is considered there is a higher risk of piracy and within which self-protective measures are most likely to be required
GOA IMSC	Gulf of Aden International Maritime Security Construct
IRTA	Industry Releasable Threat Assessment
IRTB	Industry Releasable Threat Bulletin
IRTC IRG	Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor Internationally Recognized Government
MSCHOA	Maritime Security Centre (Horn of Africa) The maritime industry control centre for the EU's Op ATALANTA.
MSTC	Maritime Security Transit Corridor
PAG	Piracy Action Groups Individual group of pirates formed to capture a vessel at sea
PAST	Private Armed Security Team
POB	Persons on board
SHADE	Shared Awareness and De-confliction



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SLC	Saudi Led Coalition
SOH	Strait of Hormuz
SRS	Southern Red Sea
STC	Southern Transitional Council
TTP's	Tactics, Techniques and Procedures
UKMTO	United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, based in Dubai
VRA	Vessel registration Area
WBIED	Water Borne Improvised Explosive Device