

# A Brief Overview of Maritime Security.

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(Security) Codes, has centralised the international sea going industry in relation to large vessels over 500GRT. Pirates generally fly under this radar through the use of smaller boats in deregulated or not yet regulated countries.

Vessels as Classed by IMO have been the constant and successful targets of Pirates. This section reviews the security, safety and operational envelopes before providing guidance to Masters on how to think rather than what to think. All vessels are vulnerable, even the ones used by Pirates. As Pirates operations gain in strength and boldness then so needs the security measures of every vessel on the sea.

Quite simply, the Crew of a ship are injury free (physically and psychologically) if you maintain the operational, safety and security envelopes. These envelopes more or less overlap and sometimes they conflict. An example of conflict is whether you leave hatches normally locked from the inside or outside. Without the operational envelope you cannot work safely; and with out security you cannot assure safety.

Every cargo is different and ships vary and so do their vulnerabilities; the ISPS Code assists Masters to prepare for Security both strategically and onboard.

The Code allows you to identify high security risk regions and localities, and gets you internal management of those risks. The ISPS Code does not offer too much by way of guidance concerning combat with Pirates.

As a Master you must know you can beat Pirates no matter what your vessel. There are some simple things to think about in order to maximise your chances of combating Pirates. The first is to fight for information where you intend to voyage. You should obtain the following information:

Your cargo and how tradable it is on the black market, i.e. can someone profit from you or your company;

The Ports you will visit before you enter an area of known security risk – what other people will know your cargo and your waypoints;

The security risk your Crew represent with regard to confidential ship information;

Expected weather on the voyage – flat and calm seas increase the success of Pirate operations;

The operational capability of your vessel – some vessels cannot gain speed easily;

Regions known for Pirate activity;

The weapon systems Pirates use – some weapons have an arming distance of the armament so cannot be affective a close range;

The vulnerability of your ship (cargo) to Pirate arms – e.g. will your cargo explode or will your ship sink;

The types of boats Pirates use, the number of boats and Pirates, and the marine methods they employ to control your ship – this paper provides you some information; and Is there a Navy at hand or are the actions of Pirates not yet subject to close Government control.

Communicate with other vessels transiting the same region before you do so they can relate what they encounter learn to share information.. Don't forget some of the benign ships you pass may be gathering information and be marking your route for piracy operations.

Safety Alerts and Security Advisories provide you with a good idea of others experience. I received one recently advising that a little bit of sea and wind severely limits a Pirates capability to operate. Information on weapons can be obtained from the internet; though you may contact military experts for advice.

Under the ISM Code the Master has an absolute authority over the vessel; however, some of the methods suggested by experts are not cost effective nor will they perhaps stop determined Pirates. Masters have the responsibility to manage security in order to provide for crew and cargo safety. Not all security suggestions have to be costly; below are some low cost suggestions that may just get a Master out of a difficult security situation while at sea, and guidance on how to combat pirates using the risk management approach.

After obtaining information on your imminent security situation the first thing need to do is look for opportunities to avoid contact with Pirates..

Once you have all the information about the Pirates, your vessel and crew, and the environmental state of the places you are entering you are now in a position to recognise the main consideration of a Pirate threat to you. Without this consideration the Pirate threat does not exist; it might be motivation, tactics, arms, boats and must be something you can affect. In reality a Master can only consider the boats and tactics employed.

In the case of Somalia the Pirate threat is their fast moving small boats (inclusive of navigational equipment). Pirates use small fast moving boats to board and control ship, which then becomes a robbery or ransom situation.

Some Police boats can attain 60 knots, how many cargo or white boats can match this sort of speed - none. Expect money rich Pirates to obtain fast moving boats. This article already details the type of methods employed with small boats.

Avoidance is the best way to eliminate the threat but sometimes the pirates have the element of surprise by acting far from their base and deploy from unassuming vessels. Elimination can also be applied in confrontation.

You have to look at methods a pirate employs and appreciate the most critical to your type of vessel. Typically the stages will be the Pirate's:

1. Ability to close on your vessel; and
2. Ability to board your vessel.

Mobility is linked to both of these concepts. Therefore if you combat the Pirate's mobility you prevent them from controlling your vessel. Now you can

review the Pirate's small vessels in detail and consider how small boats can be immobilised.

Any research to identify the type of vessels should let you determine what will be the best methods to deploy. The fuel capacity and consumption rate at high throttle will provide an appreciation of how long they can sustain operations.

If you have a boat that gains speed easily then maybe early detection of the Pirates may give you the time to attain a high enough speed that is eliminates or makes dangerous the Pirate's ability to board. Early detection can be gained through thermal imaging as all boats have a hot exhaust; this will allow you to detect boats hiding behind others.

If you cannot gain speed easily then you will need to look at how you can make the Pirates attempt to board where you want; such as on the weather side. Early detection will assist to get the crew to their stations. Consider equipping your vessel with the same security concepts as you would your home. Modern houses have proximity senses; door/hatch opening sensors; (accommodation/bridge) area lockdown; and partitioned alarms for night/day routines. The cost is low and these concepts will decrease the number of areas that requiring patrolling.

Commercial ships may be able use a number of improvised measures to mitigate the impacts of an attack. Fire monitors can be used very effectively with a second strategy.

Every Master can appreciate what can render a vessel immobile. Simple and elegant solutions don't encourage Pirates to purchase more sophisticated weapons systems. A Pirate would only have to use a 'fire and forget' once and merchant shipping will instantly be plunder for the taking.

Whatever you methods you employ to combat Pirates, you need a confident and trained crew to execute your strategies. Key elements to your success are drills and exercises; leadership; vigilance and discipline.

Generally, the best tactic will be to delay the Pirates from boarding as they lose the elements of surprise and momentum, and later motivation with you as the target.