



Universal Maritime Solutions Pte Ltd
No. 21 Bukit Batok Crescent, WCEGA Tower, #28-70, Singapore 658065

WEEKLY THREAT ADVISORY NO. 678

(26 Sep – 2 Oct 2024)

Summary of Threat Activities and Conclusion

1. Pirate and maritime crime activity in East Africa and the Indian Ocean HRA saw an increase in the number of attacks in the HRA. For the first time, we may be seeing evidence of a joint pirate action group and the Iranian-back Houthis against commercial shipping. There were three reports of attacks arising from political conflicts or piracy-related activities during the reporting period.
2. ARABIAN SEA: On 1 Oct, a UAV approached a Liberian-flagged tanker drifting approximately 224 NM southwest of Karachi, Pakistan.
3. RED SEA: On 1 Oct, a missile struck a Liberia-flagged bulk carrier while underway approximately 97 NM northwest of Hodeida, Yemen.
4. RED SEA: Overnight from 30 Sep to 1 Oct, missiles and an unmanned surface vessel (USV) targeted a Panama-flagged crude oil tanker while underway approximately 64 NM northwest of Hodeida, Yemen.
5. Based on the geographical development, the forecast is that the piracy situation will get worse as the conflict between Israel, the Hamas, the Hezbollah, the Houthis, Iran and other Arab factions intensifies. The attacks by the US and UK against Houthi targets in Yemen will only deepen and magnify the problems. In the meantime, pirate and criminal syndicates operating in Somalia will exploit the turmoil and chaos to conduct opportunistic attacks against defenceless commercial shipping.
6. There have been some calls by some ignorant commercial bodies that do not understand the threat deeply and well enough to call for the removal of AST onboard commercial vessels due to concerns that the onboard AST might cause an incident with approaching naval craft. While the concerns are reasonable, the proposed solution to remove the onboard AST is highly unprofessional and dangerous. Implementing it would make the commercial vessels concerned 'sitting ducks' in the face of attacks by Somali pirates who take advantage of the chaos and distractions caused by the conflict. Some intelligence sources have established



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that some pirate action groups are working in cahoot with the Houthis. Therefore, we should see the increased attacks by Somali pirates linked with the Houthis activities in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. For this reason, UMS HQ instructed how UMS Maritime Marshals will respond and behave when confronted with this situation.

7. All vessels in the vicinity are, therefore, to exercise caution and report any suspicious activity to UKMTO.
8. In the latest quarterly report by UKMTO, it was reported that there has been an increased incidence of suspicious sightings compared to a year ago before the lifting off of the HRA by commercial shipping bodies. Intelligence agencies have unanimously agreed that there would be attempts by pirates' syndicates to exploit hopefully a relaxed attitude by the shipping community, and today we are seeing the manifestation of the situation happening. In other words, the possibility of a successful hijack can only be prevented if vessels have on-board armed security teams (AST) to deter and if necessary, prevent any attack and boarding by pirates.
9. The main message of the Quarterly Reporting by UKMTO is that piracy has been suppressed but not eradicated. So long as the socio-politico-economic problems of Somalia and Yemen are unresolved, the threat of piracy against commercial shipping will remain.
10. All Masters and UMS Maritime are advised to remain vigilant. The increased piracy-related activities in the waters of the Indian Ocean and East Africa/Red Sea have, in fact, been anticipated by intelligence agencies by the removal of the HRA by world commercial bodies but not by the War Committee, which assessed that the present situation has inadvertently increased the threat level.
11. UKMTO and other intelligence agencies have noticed increased activities by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). This recent development brings a new equation and range of challenges to the safety of commercial vessels transiting in waters that are prone to pirates' attacks in the Northern Indian Ocean and Southern Red Sea and maritime security operations. UMS HQ repeats the article on the subject in paragraph 31 given its importance in understanding the capabilities of UAV in maritime security operations (in particular paragraph 31.6) for a detailed exposition.



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12. The hijacks of product tanker MONJASA Reformer and Success tanker in West Africa waters remind all stakeholders that we cannot be complacent and take security nonchalantly. A successful hijack is an incident waiting to happen if ship owners, Masters and onboard Maritime Marshals are not serious about security, thus jeopardising their crew members' lives and their family interests. A vessel transiting in waters that can possibly be attacked by pirates without armed security protection has a high risk of being hijacked. Therefore, an armed security team cannot be over-emphasised for the safety of the crew members on board.

13. 2024-001-Southern Red Sea, Bab el Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden, Northwestern Indian Ocean, Somali Basin, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Strait of Hormuz, and Persian Gulf-Threats to Commercial Vessels

13.1. This advisory replaces and cancels U.S. Maritime Advisory 2023-011 and U.S. Maritime Alert 2024-001B

13.2. Issue: Regional conflict, military activity, and piracy pose significant threats to commercial vessels operating in the above listed geographic areas as evidenced by recent Houthi attacks and Somali piracy activity. The U.S. government is continually assessing the maritime security situation in the region to safeguard freedom of navigation, ensure the free flow of commerce, and protect U.S. vessels, personnel, and interests. The recent standup of Operation Prosperity Guardian is one of many examples of U.S. and international cooperative maritime security operations within this region. The following are currently deemed to be the most pressing threats to U.S.-flagged and U.S.-affiliated commercial vessels throughout this region.

13.3. **Houthi Hostile Actions:** Commercial vessels transiting the Southern Red Sea, Bab el Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden are at an elevated risk of hostile actions from the Houthis. Hostile actions include one-way Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) attacks; ballistic and cruise missile attacks; small arms fire from small boats; explosive boat attacks; and illegal boardings, detentions, and/or seizures. There have been at least 30 separate Houthi attacks on commercial vessels and one Houthi seizure of a commercial vessel in these areas, affecting over 55 nations since November 19, 2023. In November 2023, the Houthis conducted a helicopter-borne landing and seizure of a Bahamas-flagged commercial vessel in the Southern Red Sea. Entities claiming to be Yemeni authorities have also attempted to direct



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commercial vessels in the Southern Red Sea to divert to Yemen. These threats pose both direct and collateral risks to U.S.-flagged and U.S.-affiliated commercial vessels transiting in international shipping lanes, or otherwise operating in these areas.

13.3.1. U.S.-flagged commercial vessels operating in these areas are advised to remain as far as possible from Yemen's territorial sea without compromising navigational safety. Crewmembers should be especially vigilant when at anchor, operating in restricted maneuvering conditions, or proceeding at slow speeds.

13.3.2. Coordinate voyage planning with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) and consider their recommendations and guidance whenever possible. NAVCENT NCAGS stands a 24-hour watch and has the latest information on the current maritime security threats and the operational environment in this region.

13.3.3. The route taken through these areas, and timing of the transit, remains at the discretion of individual companies and vessel Masters. Transiting these areas during hours of darkness may frustrate efforts to target vessels.

13.3.4. Adherence to all U.S. and international requirements and guidance regarding operation of AIS remains the responsibility of individual companies and vessel Masters. Ships operating with AIS switched on and off have both been the object of Houthi attacks. Switching AIS off makes it marginally more difficult to track or target a ship but may also hinder the ability of coalition forces to provide support.

13.3.5. U.S.-flagged commercial vessels are advised to provide hourly positional email updates to the NAVCENT NCAGS detachment when transiting these areas.

13.3.6. Maritime operators are advised to alert their crews to the fact that all electronics signals from their vessels pose a risk to maritime operations.



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13.3.7. A missile strike on a Marshall Islands-flagged commercial tanker in the Gulf of Aden on January 26, 2024 resulted in a significant onboard fire. U.S.-flagged commercial vessels carrying flammable, explosive, or otherwise hazardous cargoes are strongly advised to reconsider transit through these areas. However, if planning voyages through these areas, vessels should take all prudent safety precautions, including thoroughly preparing for emergency responses, and considering carriage of additional safety and damage control preparedness supplies and equipment, such as those needed to extinguish fires.

13.3.8. If hailed on VHF by the Houthis, or entities claiming to be Yemeni authorities, and instructed to alter course to Al Hudaydah or another location on the northwest coast of Yemen, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels should ignore the VHF call and continue their passage if safe to do so.

13.3.9. If the Houthis seek to board U.S.-flagged commercial vessels in these areas, the ship's Master should, if the safety of the ship and crew would not be compromised, decline permission to board, noting that the vessel is proceeding in accordance with international law, as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention.

13.3.10. When combined with evasive maneuvering, vessels transiting these areas with armed security details onboard have successfully deterred boarding by individuals in approaching small craft. The decision whether to embark a contracted armed security detail and assessment of associated risks is the responsibility of individual companies and vessel Masters, who are responsible for establishing use of force guidance and pre-planned responses for vessels carrying contracted armed security details.

13.3.11. If Houthis board a U.S.-flagged commercial vessel without a contracted armed security detail onboard, the crew should not forcibly resist the boarding party. Refraining from forcible resistance does not imply consent or agreement to that boarding.



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13.3.12. When operating in these waters, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels should maintain a vigilant lookout at all times. If U.S.-flagged commercial vessels observe or hear a suspected UAV or missile or observe a small boat approaching with apparent hostile intent, crewmembers not needed for the safe navigation and operation of the vessel should be relocated to a safe space until the threat has passed. Additional precautions should be taken to ensure small boats are kept at a safe distance whenever possible.

13.3.13. In addition to U.S. Maritime Alerts and this Advisory, interim industry transit advice for the Southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden has been established by Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). CMF guidance messages are available on the Maritime Global Security website at maritimeglobalsecurity.org/geography/goa-etc/.

13.4. Iranian Illegal Boarding/Detention/Seizure: Commercial vessels transiting the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, and Arabian Sea are at risk of being illegally boarded and detained or seized by Iranian forces. Recent incidents include the April 2023 Iranian seizure of a Marshall Islands-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman, the May 2023 Iranian seizure of a Panama-flagged vessel in the Strait of Hormuz, and the January 2024 Iranian seizure of a Marshall Islands-flagged vessel in the Arabian Sea. Iranian forces attempted to seize one Marshall Islands-flagged vessel and one Bahamas-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman during July 2023, but were prevented from doing so by U.S. Naval Forces. Iranian forces have utilized small boats and helicopters during boarding operations and have attempted to force commercial vessels into Iranian territorial water

13.4.1. If hailed by Iranian forces, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels should provide vessel name and flag state and affirm that they are proceeding in accordance with international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention.

13.4.2. If Iranian forces seek to board a U.S.-flagged commercial vessel navigating these waters, the ship's Master should, if the safety of the ship and crew would not be compromised, decline permission to board, noting that the vessel is proceeding in accordance with international law, as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention.



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13.4.3. If Iranian forces board a U.S.-flagged commercial vessel, the crew should not forcibly resist the boarding party. Refraining from forcible resistance does not imply consent or agreement to that boarding.

13.4.4. It is recommended that vessels in the Persian Gulf remain as far as possible from Iran's territorial sea without compromising navigational safety. When transiting eastbound in the Strait of Hormuz, it is recommended that vessels transit close to Oman's territorial sea.

13.4.5. Industry transit advice for the Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and Gulf of Oman was established on 9 November 2023, and can be found on the Maritime Global Security website at maritimeglobalsecurity.org/geography/goa-etc/.

13.5. **Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships:** Recent cases of piracy pose a threat to commercial vessels operating in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, and Somali Basin, and Northwestern Indian Ocean. Since November 2023, there have been three boarding/hijacking incidents, representing the first such attacks against commercial shipping in the region since March 2017. Pirates may utilize captured fishing vessels as motherships to target vessels operating hundreds of miles from the coast of Somalia. In November 2023, one Liberian-flagged vessel was boarded in the Gulf of Aden; in December 2023, one Malta-flagged vessel was hijacked in the Arabian Sea; and in January 2024, one Liberia-flagged bulk carrier was boarded in the Indian Ocean. Specific case details are available via the Office of Naval Intelligence's weekly "Worldwide Threat to Shipping" product at <https://www.oni.navy.mil/ONI-Reports/Shipping-Threat-Reports/Worldwide-Threat-to-Shipping/>.

13.5.1. The Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea (BMP5), and Maritime Global Security website at: <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org> should be consulted prior to operating in the above listed geographic waters.



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13.5.2. Transit by yachts and privately owned sailing vessels through the region is hazardous and may result in capture. The U.S. Government advises against all operation of yachts and pleasure craft in these areas. American citizens abroad should inform the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate of their plans to transit the area and/or update their information via the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program at: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Yachting guidance can be found at: <https://on-shore.mschoa.org/reference-documents/advice-for-sailing-vessels>.

13.5.3. **UAVs:** Outside of the Southern Red Sea, Bab el Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden, UAV attacks also pose a threat to commercial vessels in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, and Arabian Sea. The most recent attacks were on a Malta-flagged vessel in the Arabian Sea in November 2023, and on a Liberian-flagged vessel in the Arabian Sea in December 2023.

- If U.S.-flagged commercial vessels observe or hear a suspected UAV, crewmembers not needed for the safe navigation and operation of the vessel should be relocated to a safe space on the vessel until the threat has passed.

13.6. **Limpet Mines:** Limpet mines have been used to damage commercial vessels on multiple occasions in recent years and are primarily a threat to commercial vessels in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and the Gulf of Oman. Limpet mines, or similar improvised explosive devices, can be attached to vessel hulls, above or below the waterline, via swimmers or small boats, while a vessel is berthed, at anchor, or underway.

13.6.1. When operating in these waters, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels should maintain a close lookout and remain vigilant for suspicious activity to include the approach of swimmers or small boats. Close attention should be given to the vessel's waterline, especially at slow speeds, at anchor, and when moored.

13.6.2. If a mine has been, or was attempted to have been, attached to a vessel, crewmembers not needed for the safe navigation and operation of the vessel should be relocated to a safe space on the vessel until the threat has passed.



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13.6.3. Guidance: U.S.-flagged commercial vessels operating in these waters are advised to exercise caution, review security measures, and monitor VHF Channel 16. To afford best protection in the region, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels are also advised to in the event of any attack, incident, or suspicious activity, immediately:

15.6.3.1. Activate the Ship Security Alert System

15.6.3.2. Contact the U.S. Fifth Fleet Battle Watch

15.6.3.3. Contact UKMTO

15.6.3.4. Simultaneously register with both the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Office (UKMTO) and the IMSC watch 24 hours prior to entering the Indian Ocean Voluntary Reporting Area by sending UKMTO and IMSC, via a single e-mail, the Initial Report from Annex D of (BMP5). Include the estimated times of arrival at the Suez Canal, Bab el Mandeb Strait (BAM), and Strait of Hormuz (SoH) in line 10 of the report and add line 14 for comments as needed (e.g., speed restrictions or other constraints, anticipated time of entering/exiting the SoH Traffic Separation Scheme; an outline of the navigation plan for operating in the SoH and Persian Gulf, etc.). Utilize other reports included in Annex D of BMP5 as necessary.

15.6.3.5. Vessels operating in this area are advised to include both NAVCENT NCAGS and the IMSC watch on all updates or incident report emails. By including both as addressees on each email, awareness will be enhanced without creating an additional reporting burden.

15.6.3.6. Conduct a pre-voyage risk assessment and incorporate appropriate protective measures into vessel security plans.

15.6.3.7. The Maritime Global Security website at <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/> offers industry issued best practices and guidance to mariners by geographic region and



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provides contact and subscription information for regional maritime security reporting centers, particularly in high risk-areas.

15.6.3.8. Answer all VHF calls from coalition navies. Vessels should be aware that U.S. and other coalition naval forces may conduct maritime awareness calls, queries, and approaches to ensure the safety of vessels transiting these listed waters.

15.6.3.9. Due to the risks of piracy, kidnapping, hijacking, and robbery while operating within U.S. Coast Guard designated High Risk Waters, U.S.-flagged commercial vessels are required to comply with the Guidelines for U.S. Vessels Operating in High-Risk Waters contained in U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security Directive 104-6 (Rev 8) and comply with their Coast Guard approved Vessel Security Plan annex on counter piracy. The U.S. Coast Guard Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance announced in the Federal Register in August 2021 the availability of Revision 8 to Maritime Security (MARSEC) Directive 104–6. U.S. vessel owners and operators who needed to act under previous versions of MARSEC Directive 104–6 should immediately contact their local Coast Guard Captain of the Port or District Commander for a copy of Revision 8.

15.6.3.10. Per 33 CFR 101.305, report all suspicious activities, breaches of security, and transportation security incident events involving U.S. vessels or persons to the U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center. Additional U.S. Coast Guard port specific requirements may be found in Port Security Advisory 1-22 at <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Portals/9/DCO%20Documents/InternationalPortSecurity/Port%20Security%20Advisory/PSA%20%201-22%20Remove%20Cote%20d'Ivoire.pdf?ver=6DzYOEswAJQVh7ld4c0ycQ%3d%3d>.

15.7. Contact Information:

a) Fifth Fleet Battle Watch: cusnc.bwc@me.navy.mil or + 973-1785-3879.

b) NAVCENT NCAGS:
+973-1785-0033 (Primary/Watch Desk), +973-3940-4523 (Alternate), or mba-navcent-ncags@us.navy.mil.



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c) IMSC: m-ba-ims-c-bwc@us.navy.mil or +973-1785-8412/8192/8193. IMSC organizational information is available at <https://www.ims-sentinel.com/>.

d) UKMTO: watchkeepers@ukmto.org or +44 (0) 2392 222060. UKMTO advisories and warnings are available at <https://www.ukmto.org/>.

e) U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center: +1-800-424-8802.

f) USCG NAVCEN: www.navcen.uscg.gov/contact/gps-problem-report or +1-703-313-5900.

14. Maritime Advisory 2022-007-Gulf of Guinea-Piracy/Armed Robbery/Kidnapping for Ransom.

14.1. Issued on 6 July 2022. This revised advisory cancels U.S. Maritime Advisory 2022-001. Issue: Piracy/Armed Robbery/Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR) serves as a significant threat to U.S.-flagged vessels transiting or operating in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) as well as U.S. mariners onboard a vessel or transiting to or from a vessel in the GoG. Guidance: Mariners transiting this area should visit the Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade-Gulf of Guinea MDAT-GoG) website at <https://gog-mdat.org/home> and the NATO Shipping Centre website at <https://shipping.nato.int/nsc/operations/global-maritime-risk/west-africa-gulf-of-guinea> for additional information on threats and specific recommendations for their vessels.

14.2. Additionally, the “Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security Off the Coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea” (available under the Geography – Gulf of Guinea pull-down menu at <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/>) provides additional guidance and resources for operating in this area. For any maritime industry questions about this advisory, contact GMCC@uscg.mil. This Advisory will automatically expire on 2 January 2023

15. U.S. Maritime Advisory 2023-001-Gulf of Guinea-Piracy /Armed Robbery/ Kidnapping for Ransom Issued on 3 January 2023. This revised advisory cancels U.S. Maritime Advisory 2022-007. Issue: Piracy/Armed Robbery at Sea/Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR) serve as a significant threat to U.S.-flagged vessels transiting or operating in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) as we as U.S. mariners onboard a vessel or transiting to or from a vessel in the GoG. Guidance: Mariners transiting this area



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should visit the maritime Domain Awareness for Trade-Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG) website at <https://gog-mdat.org/home> and the NATO Shipping Centre website at <https://shipping.nato.int/ncs/operations/global-maritime-risk/west-africa-gulf-of-guinea> for additional information on threats and specific recommendations for their vessels. Additionally, the “Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security Off the Coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea” (available under the Geography – Gulf of Guinea pull-down menu at <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/>) provides additional guidance and resources for operating in this area. For any maritime industry questions about this advisory, contact GMCC@uscg.mil. This Advisory will automatically expire on 2 July 2023.

- 16.** Pirate and maritime crime activities in West African waters are at a low level. No reports of piracy or crime at sea were made during this period.
- 17.** In other parts of the world, there were three reports of piracy or crime at sea during the reported period.
- 18.** INDONESIA: On 2 October, five armed robbers boarded a Cook Islands-flagged tanker while underway in the eastbound lane of the Singapore Straits Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS).
- 19.** INDONESIA: On 30 September, five perpetrators boarded a Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier while it was underway in the eastbound lane of the Singapore Straits TSS.
- 20.** SOUTH CHINA SEA: On 29 September, armed assailants on two unidentified ships boarded and attacked the crew of a Vietnam-flagged fishing vessel operating in the Vietnam-claimed area of the Paracel Islands.
- 21.** The navies of China, Japan, India, Russia, Korea and Iran continue to provide escort naval services to their flag vessels due to the continued presence and danger posed by Somalia-based piracy threats. These efforts, combined with the increased deployment of armed maritime marshals on board commercial shipping, have significantly reduced the success of Somalia-based piracy in the HRA in hijacking commercial vessels of late but not the presence of pirate groups operating in the HRA. International Intelligence Agencies’ assessment is that the existing presence of Somali-based piracy threats can easily be translated to successful hijacks as were experienced in 2009/2010/2011 should these preventive measures be eased off by all stakeholders.



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Instructions and Piracy Related News

22. Warning for Red Sea, Bab el-Mandab Straits and Gulf of Aden

22.1. There have been numerous attacks and suspicious approaches reported near the southern entrance to the Bab el Mandeb Strait during the reporting period. Levels of pirate activity in the Indian Ocean remain elevated, with five hijacks reported since March 2017 (MT ARIS 13, CASAYR II NO.30, AL KAUSAR, SALAMA 1 and OS 35). The threat of further attacks and hijacking remains high. All Masters are advised to exercise heightened vigilance within the High Risk Area (HRA), stringently implement BMP4 and liaise closely with embarked armed security teams (AST) and regional authorities. If not making calls in Yemen, it's recommended by UKMTO that vessels should use the IRTC and western lane of the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) in the Bab el Mandeb / southern Red Sea region, to provide a greater lee from Yemen. Further such incidents and hijackings are likely to take place, and all vessels transiting this region are advised to remain vigilant. While international naval patrols and anti-piracy measures on-board commercial vessels have practically eradicated Somali piracy since its peak in early 2011, poverty coupled with other factors that motivate pirates remain and some vessels transiting this region may have increasingly become complacent in the belief that the piracy threat had diminished.

22.2. While the international community has over the past several years taken significant steps in order to improve security in the region, including boosting naval forces in the area and requiring ships to take protection measures, including reporting in and out of high risk areas, sailing at top speed as far away as possible from the Somali coast and travelling with armed escorts on-board, the threat of an attack and hijacking remained as the real root of the cause on the ground in Somalia has never been properly addressed. After five years without a successful attack, analysts say that complacency may have set in and this week's successful hijacking is likely to result in potential copycat attacks, as pirate action groups head-out in a bid to successfully hijack a commercial vessel. Masters are advised to remain vigilant at all times inside the HRA and are advised to adhere to strict guidance and protective measures as set down in BMP5. Sailing yachts should avoid transiting the HRA. Past activity has demonstrated that pirates will attack both large and small yachts transiting this region. While successful attacks and hijackings of merchant vessels have significantly decreased over



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the past two years, the possibility of attacks and the successful hijacking of sailing vessels continue to remain high. This is due to the reduction of revenue sources from pirated merchant vessels and the fact that sailing yachts are vulnerable and easier targets. PAG's continue to conduct "soft approaches" on merchant ships transiting the area. Skiffs have approached vessels in order to probe the reaction of the crewmembers and any possible Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) on-board. If the pirate approach does not elicit a response, the pirates will likely proceed with an attack, in which additional skiffs may participate. Vessels transiting the greater Gulf of Aden region should operate under a heightened state of alert. This is due to increasing tensions in the region, which in turn can escalate the potential for direct or collateral damage to vessels transiting the region. These threats may come from a number of different sources such as missiles, projectiles, or waterborne improvised explosive devices. Houthi rebels have claimed responsibility for the 1 October 2016 attack on a UAE vessel.

22.3. UMS HQ advises all vessels transiting this region to report any hostile activities immediately. Somali pirates have recently shown an ability to mount hijacking expeditions far out into the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, and inshore traffic might be an easier target. EUNAVFOR spokesperson Commander Jacqui Sherriff said that the recent series of attacks against commercial shipping again highlights the need for vigilance and adherence to self-protection measures (by the deployment of on-board AST) and compliance to Best Management Practices (BMP) 5. It is crucial that Somali pirates are denied opportunities to attack vessels so that there will no chance of a successful hijack. One successful hijack is one hijack too many because it will encourage and motivate more Somalis to taking up piracy!

22.4. CMF and EUNAVFOR and intelligence agencies have warned of increased complacency amongst stakeholders which may give rise to opportunities for piracy action groups and organizations funding piracy activities to revive the threat.

23. Actions to be Taken when a Vessel with On-Board UMS Maritime Marshals is Approached by a Naval Craft.

23.1. On 16 Dec 23, in the face of increased attacks from pirate action groups and approaches from naval craft, UMS HQ issued the orders on actions to be taken when a naval craft approaches a vessel. These orders were issued to all Team Leaders, and they were further personally briefed by the UMS



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Operation Officer because of the importance of the subject and the requirement that these orders be fully understood and complied with.

23.2. UMS Maritime Marshals onboard a vessel are to protect the vessel and crew members from pirate action groups. They are equipped with weapons and equipment to handle the threat posed by pirate action groups and **ARE NOT MEANT TO DETER NOR OPPOSE ANY NAVAL CRAFT THAT MAY APPROACH THE VESSEL FOR WHATEVER PURPOSES. The Orders is repeated in the paragraphs below.**

23.3. If a naval craft approaches our vessel, the following actions will be taken.

23.3.1. The Team Leader is to alert and discuss the approach of the naval craft with the Master.

23.3.2. The Master must notify the vessel's owner/HQ of the situation.

23.3.3. The team Leader will notify the UMS Operations Officer/UMS HQ.

23.4. If the naval craft asks the vessel to stop, the Master will take the appropriate action, as per his discussion with his HQ.

23.4.1. Based on the decision to stop, the Team Leader will immediately give orders to his Maritime Marshal(s) to unload and clear their weapons.

23.4.2. **NO WEAPON WILL BE LOADED.**

23.4.3. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL ANY MEMBER OF THE MARITIME MARSHAL TEAM SHOW HIS WEAPON TO DETER THE NAVAL CRAFT, FIRE WARNING SHOTS, OR FIRE ANY SHOT AT THE APPROACHING NAVAL VESSEL. THE TEAM LEADER IS TO ENSURE THIS IS CLEARLY BRIEFED AND UNDERSTOOD TO HIS TEAM MEMBERS. THERE MUST BE NO DEVIATION FROM THIS ORDER.**

23.5. When the vessel stops as ordered and naval personnel come on board, UMS Maritime Marshals will take the following actions:

23.5.1. All Maritime Marshals should keep low on the deck and cover their head with both hands, with their hands visible. They will all be together, lined up side by side.



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23.5.2. On no account should any Maritime Marshal make any movement that could be misinterpreted as hostile actions. Their individual weapon should be placed on deck next to the Maritime Marshal, and at no time should any Maritime Marshal handle his weapon.

23.5.3. Do not take any videos or photographs.

23.5.4. All Maritime Marshals should be ready to be questioned on their identity and roles. They will answer the questions truthfully and cooperate fully with the naval personnel on board.

23.5.5. The Team Leader will be the spokesperson of the Maritime Marshal Team, working closely with the Master.

23.6. Remember to be cooperative and calm. There is no need to be unduly concerned as the vessel and crew members, including the Maritime Marshal Team, have not committed any wrongdoing.

23.7. After the naval personnel depart and the vessel resumes its mission, the Team Leader reconstitutes the Team to continue the mission.

23.8. The Team Leader will report the matter to UMS HQ accordingly

24. Piracy in the Indian Ocean HRA has NOT Been Eradicated

24.1. UMS HQ has always maintained this position not to give stakeholders a sense of false security. The current development of piracy raging its ugly head again in the waters off Somalia and in the Indian Ocean is testimony to the accuracy of our analysis.

24.2. The decision by world shipping bodies such as BIMCO and the like has given the wrong perception that piracy in the Indian Ocean HRA has been eradicated. **Nothing can be further from the truth!**

24.3. Piracy threats have been reduced due to the strong presence and sustained effort by naval forces, namely EUNAVFOR and the US-led Combined Military Force (CMF) and the deployment of armed security teams (AST) onboard commercial vessels. The deployment of ASTs onboard commercial vessels since the peak of the piracy threat in 2008 has proven effective, as no vessel with an AST has ever been hijacked.

24.4. Naval and intelligence agencies think pirate syndicates lie low due to the strong deterrence and are involved in other forms of criminal activities, such as drug smuggling. These pirate and criminal syndicates have not been



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wiped out, and given the correct circumstances and environment, they can get their acts together quickly.

24.5. The pirate syndicates are privy to the announcement of the lifting of the HRA. They could view the situation in 2023 as a golden opportunity to resume their proven lucrative 'business'. The current political situation in the Middle East is a significant distraction to the naval forces that will not focus their attention and presence on the more critical military problems with the Iranian-backed Houthis.

24.6. Given Somalia's poor socio-economic situation, thousands of Somalis will be more than happy to take up arms to hunt and hijack commercial vessels again. The lack of local law enforcement to prevent piracy activities will make this revival a strong possibility. Therefore, the comeback scenario cannot be discounted and is a likely possibility.

24.7. Therefore, from a risk assessment point of view, the risk level in 2024, if deterrence measures are removed, the risk of piracy in 2024 will be objectively higher than in the last 5-6 years.

24.8. **Low piracy threat does not mean NO PIRACY THREAT!**

25. Present Tactics Employed by the Houthis and What We Should Do

25.1. UMS HQ recently studied the profile of attacks against commercial vessels and made the following observations.

25.2. They comprised attacks on commercial vessels by 2-3 skiffs with about 5-9 armed personnel on board (POB). Some vessels have ladders to suggest their intention to board the vessels.

25.3. They approached the commercial vessels, exchanged fires, and then kept a stand-off distance of about 1-2nm.

25.4. In some cases, one or more unmanned surface vessels (USVs) would strike the vessels.

25.5. This is what is happening.

25.5.1. The POB on board the skiffs could be either pirates working with the Houthis or Houthi personnel themselves.



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25.5.2. The approach to a vessel is, in military terms, "recce by fire."

The objective is to ascertain if the vessel is protected by armed personnel on board because a vessel that is not protected by armed personnel could be easily boarded and hijacked. If they confirmed that the vessel was not protected, they would simply try to board the vessel.

25.5.3. Once they confirmed that the vessel is protected, after exchanging fires they will withdraw if they are just pirates not working with the Houthis.

25.5.4. If the POB are pirates working with the Houthis or Houthi personnel themselves, they would withdraw to a stand-off distance of about 1-2nm and continue trailing the vessel. Why?

25.5.5. The POB would use their laser designator(s) to guide the USV(s) to engage the commercial vessel. These laser designators have an effective range of about 1-2nm and the further the target is, the less accurate the designation of the USV will be against the target vessel. For this reason, have you noticed that these attacks always happen in daylight hours because the POB does not have night capabilities to designate their lasers at night or in poor visibility?

25.6. What must we do?

25.6.1. Apply the current SOP when responding to Alert Grey and Alert Red. **The vessel should be transiting at maximum speed.**

25.6.2. After the withdrawal of the skiffs and if the skiffs are still trailing the vessel, it suggests that the threat has not disappeared. Be ready to respond to an attack against USV. UMS HQ has issued an SOP on how to destroy an approaching USV. To perfect this drill, UMS maritime marshals should conduct training and rehearsals regularly as part of their anti-piracy drill.



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25.6.3. **The vessel must continue to transit at maximum speed to make it more difficult for the laser designators to designate our vessel.**

25.6.4. After the skiffs' withdrawal, the personnel in the citadel should not remain there as the threat (if any) is different, and they should remain at a location above the vessel's watermark. This presupposes that all Masters have designated this location and approved it by their respective Company Chief Security and Safety Office.

26. Iran Fires Barrage of Ballistic Missiles at Israel, Escalating Middle East Tensions

26.1. Iran fired ballistic missiles at Israel on Tuesday in retaliation for Israel's campaign against Tehran's Hezbollah allies in Lebanon, drawing vows of a sharp response from both Israel and the United States.

26.2. Alarms sounded across Israel and explosions could be heard in Jerusalem and the Jordan River valley. Israelis piled into bomb shelters and reporters on state television lay flat on the ground during live broadcasts.

26.3. Israel said more than 180 missiles were launched into Israel from Iran and Israeli air defenses were activated to intercept them. U.S. Navy warships fired about a dozen interceptors against Iranian missiles headed toward Israel, the Pentagon said.

26.4. Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps said the assault was in retaliation for recent Israeli killings of militant leaders and aggression in Lebanon and Gaza. Its forces used hypersonic Fattah missiles for the first time, and 90% of its missiles successfully hit their targets in Israel, the Revolutionary Guards said.

26.5. No injuries were reported in Israel, but one man was killed in the occupied West Bank, authorities there said.

26.6. Washington and the European Union condemned the attack, and the U.N. Security Council scheduled a meeting on the Middle East for Wednesday.



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- 26.7. U.S. President Joe Biden expressed full U.S. support for Israel and described Iran's attack as "ineffective." He said there was an active discussion about how Israel would respond, and he would speak with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
- 26.8. Israeli officials promised consequences for the onslaught. "We will respond wherever, whenever and however we choose, in accordance with the directive of the government of Israel," Israeli Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said.
- 26.9. Washington backed up its longtime ally. "We have made clear that there will be consequences, severe consequences, for this attack, and we will work with Israel to make that the case," spokesman Jake Sullivan said at a White House briefing.
- 26.10. Sullivan did not specify what those consequences might be, but he stopped short of urging restraint by Israel as the U.S. did in April when Iran carried out a drone and missile attack on Israel.
- 26.11. Netanyahu was due to meet with his security cabinet in a bunker near Jerusalem, two Israeli officials said.
- 26.12. Iran's foreign ministry said its operation was defensive and was only directed at Israeli military and security facilities. Earlier, Iran's state news agency said Tehran targeted three Israeli military bases. Iran urged U.N. Security Council action.
- 26.13. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned what he called "escalation after escalation," saying: "This must stop. We absolutely need a ceasefire."
- 26.14. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell also called for an immediate regional ceasefire. "The dangerous cycle of attacks and retaliation risks ... spiraling out of control," he posted on X.
- 26.15. Iran said if Israel retaliated Tehran's response would be "more crushing and ruinous." Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a social media post: "This is just part of our capability. Do not get into a confrontation with Iran."



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- 26.16. Oil prices shot up 5% on fears of a wider war between the two arch enemies.
- 26.17. The previous round of Iranian missiles fired at Israel in April – the first ever – were shot down with the help of the U.S. military and other allies. Israel responded at the time with airstrikes in Iran, but wider escalation was averted.
- 26.18. The Pentagon said the scope of Tuesday's airstrikes was about twice the size of April's assault.
- 26.19. Iran had vowed to retaliate following Israeli strikes that killed the top leadership of its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon, including the group's leader Hassan Nasrallah, a towering figure in Iran's network of fighters across the region.
- 26.20. Hamas, the Iran-backed militant group in Gaza, praised the Iranian missile strikes, saying they avenged Israeli assassinations of three militant leaders, including Nasrallah.
- 26.21. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, locked in nearly a year of war, celebrated as they watched dozens of rockets en route to Israel. Some of those rockets fell in the Palestinian enclave after being intercepted by Israel but caused no deaths, witnesses said.
- 26.22. In Beirut, Israeli strikes killed the commander of the Imam Hussein division, Israel's military said, referring to a Hezbollah-linked group based in Syria.
- 26.23. Israel said overnight that its troops had launched ground raids into Lebanon, though it described the forays as limited.
- 26.24. Nearly 1,900 people have been killed and more than 9,000 wounded in Lebanon in nearly a year of cross-border fighting, most in the past two weeks, according to Lebanese government statistics on Tuesday.



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- 26.25. But a ground campaign into Lebanon for the first time in 18 years pitting Israeli soldiers against Hezbollah, Iran's best-armed proxy force in the Middle East, would be a major regional escalation.

27. Drone Boat Hits Merchant Ship in Red Sea, Puncturing Ballast Tank

- 27.1. Yemen's Houthi rebels appear to have hit another merchant vessel in a multi-domain, multiple-attempt attack, according to the Royal Navy's UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO).
- 27.2. At about 0140 hours GMT, UKMTO received a security report from an unnamed vessel about 60 nautical miles off the coast of Hodeidah. The captain reported that there were four splashes observed in the water near the ship, but the vessel was undamaged and the crew were safe. The ship continued onwards toward its next port of call.
- 27.3. At 0500 GMT, the master reached out to UKMTO again to report that the vessel had been hit by a suicide drone boat. The No. 6 ballast tank was punctured on the port side, but no crewmembers were injured, and the vessel remained fully operational. It is currently under way to its next port of call.
- 27.4. With support from Iran, the Houthi movement has targeted international shipping in the Red Sea since last October. Despite a U.S.-led campaign to defend marine traffic in the Red Sea, the Houthis have damaged dozens of ships and sunk two, killing four foreign seafarers. The group claims that it is targeting vessels with an Israeli connection - whether by ownership or by trading patterns - in order to protest the ongoing operation in Gaza.
- 27.5. Separately, Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree claimed that the militia had shot down an American MQ-9 Reaper drone, adding to a long list of claimed interceptions over Yemen. The MQ-9 is a mainstay for counterterrorism operations in the Mideast, and Saree asserted that the group has now taken down 11 of the unmanned aircraft.
- 27.6. Houthi leaders had a setback over the weekend when an Israeli airstrike destroyed the fuel tank farms at Ras Isa and Hodeidah, along with a



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power station located near the waterfront. The toll has risen to five people dead and 57 wounded, said Saree.

28. US Concerned About Russia Supplying Missiles to Yemen's Houthis

28.1. The US is concerned [Russia](#) may supply missiles to the [Houthis](#) in Yemen, an American official said, a move that could stoke further Middle East unrest by strengthening one of the militant groups fighting Israel.

28.2. "It's something that we are alarmed about," US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking said in a phone interview, when asked about a report that Russia is in talks about delivering Yakhont advanced anti-ship missiles to the Houthis.

28.3. "Any cooperation in the arms sector between the Houthis and the Russians would be very destabilizing," he said.

28.4. The Houthis, one of a network of Islamist militant organizations backed by Iran, began targeting shipping in the Red Sea in late 2023 in response to Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza. The group has shown no let-up even after the US and allies launched airstrikes to deter them, and sank a ship with a sea drone for the first time in June. An increasing number of shipping firms have opted to send vessels on longer routes to bypass the area and insurance costs have shot up.

28.5. Israeli fighter jets bombed a seaport and several power stations in Yemen on Sunday following a string of attacks on central Israel by the Houthis.

28.6. Russian representatives and the Houthis have held at least two meetings in Tehran this year and further talks are planned, Reuters reported last week, citing two regional officials.

28.7. The Russian Defense Ministry didn't respond to an emailed request for comment.

28.8. Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned that Moscow could provide long-range weapons to those looking to strike Western targets if the



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US and its allies allow Ukraine to fire deep inside Russian territory. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy is calling on his backers to allow the military to lift limits on the use of weapons they supply, though hasn't yet been given the go-ahead.

28.9. Putin stepped up his threats last week, saying Moscow will revise its nuclear doctrine to include a response to "aggression" by non-nuclear states supported by other nuclear powers.

28.10. The P-800 Yakhont is a supersonic anti-ship missile with a range of 300 kilometers (186 miles). Access to the weapon would significantly enhance the Houthis' ability to threaten the US and allied warships patrolling the area, while enabling the group to fire at land targets in Saudi Arabia, said Fabian Hinz, an expert at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

28.11. In July, Russia suspended plans to supply missiles and other military equipment to the Houthis after Saudi Arabia persuaded the Kremlin not to proceed, CNN reported. The kingdom fought a war against the group for about eight years until a truce agreement in 2022.

28.12. The Houthis' defiance in pursuing the Red Sea shipping attacks are undermining efforts to reach a permanent peace deal in Yemen, according to the US envoy. "That's not consistent with being a partner for peace," Lenderking said.

29. U.S. Strikes Multiple Houthi Locations Across Yemen

29.1. U.S. forces unleashed one of the largest assaults on the Houthis since the conflict began nearly a year ago on 4 Oct 24. CENTCOM confirmed that forces conducted strikes on 15 Houthi targets to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

29.2. Few details were released on the scope of the strikes but it is believed that it involved five locations across Yemen. Associated Press is



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reporting that the strikes focused on the port city of Hodeida and its airport as well as near the capital of Sanaa, and elsewhere in the county.

- 29.3. It is believed that the strikes were conducted using a combination of Tomahawk cruise missiles launched from the guided-missile destroyers patrolling the Red Sea as well as using aircraft. The Houthis are alleging that British forces were also involved in today's raids, but the British Defense Ministry is denying that it participated in the actions.
- 29.4. The targets are believed to include both command facilities and deployment centers. The U.S. was reportedly aiming for missile launch sites and storage facilities for the weapons. No damage assessments have been released but pictures appeared on social media of smoke rising over various locations. The Houthis have not announced any casualty.
- 29.5. The strikes came after the Houthi leadership staged a large-scale demonstration in Sanaa on Friday to mark the first anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel. In speeches, they vowed to continue to escalate their efforts.
- 29.6. The U.S. forces were thought to be responding in part to a large-scale attack a week ago by the Houthi targeting three U.S. warships. The Houthis claimed to have launched 23 missiles and drones targeting according to media reports the guided missile destroyers USS *Spruance* and USS *Stockdale* and the littoral combat ship USS *Indianapolis*.
- 29.7. During the week, the Houthis also attacked and damaged the crude oil tanker *Cordelia Moon* and a Greek-owned bulker. They also claimed targeting a containership chartered to Maersk that was approaching Oman.
- 29.8. The Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi in a video-taped address yesterday said the group had targeted a total of 188 vessels in addition to the growing number of assaults launched directly at Israel. The UK Maritime Trade Operation which monitors activity in the region numbered the attacks on Tuesday on the *Cordelia Moon* and a bulker as the 124 and 125 incident of 2024.



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30. Royal Australian Navy Assumes Command of International Red Sea Task Force

- 30.1. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) assumed command of a multinational task force responsible for maritime security in the Red Sea and the western Gulf of Aden during a change-of-command ceremony here, Oct. 1.
- 30.2. Italian Navy Capt. Roberto Messina handed over command of Combined Task Force (CTF) 153 to RAN Capt. Jorge McKee during a ceremony presided over by the commander of Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), U.S. Navy Vice Adm. George Wikoff.
- 30.3. Under Messina's leadership, CTF 153 led Operation Prosperity Guardian, an international presence operation intent on ensuring freedom of navigation in one of the world's most strategic waterways.
- 30.4. He also interacted with key leaders from several countries and maritime organizations, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Djibouti. Messina also met with the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) and the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM) to discuss the importance of collaboration, information sharing and knowledge exchange. These interactions strengthened partnerships with countries and other naval forces, such as the European Union Naval Forces ATALANTA and ASPIDES, supporting maritime security efforts.
- 30.5. "When I took command of CTF 153, I was aware of the importance and responsibilities that this position entailed," Messina said. "We were faced with a new threat and a challenge that required a rapid and coordinated response from all of us. Thanks to the effort and dedication of each member of this Task Force, we were able to face this challenge with competence and determination. I am deeply grateful to Admiral Wikoff, whose leadership is an example for all of us and who trusted me since the very beginning of the command."
- 30.6. Established on April 17, 2022, CTF 153 is one of five task forces under CMF. Its mission is promoting security, stability and prosperity in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb, and western Gulf of Aden in order to deter and impede illicit non-state actors. This is an area that includes some of the world's most important



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shipping lanes connecting the Mediterranean Sea with the Indian Ocean and the greater Middle East region.

- 30.7. CMF is the world's largest naval partnership, with 46 countries working together. Other task forces include CTF 150, focused on maritime security in the Gulf of Oman, Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden; CTF 151, which leads regional anti-piracy efforts; CTF 152, dedicated to maritime security in the Arabian Gulf; and CTF 154, enhancing maritime security training throughout the region.
- 30.8. CMF is a coalition of 46 Member Nations from all continents, which operates with 4 operational CTFs (150-151-152-153) and CTF 154, dedicated only to training and capacity building.

31. **West Africa**

- 31.1. Unlike the presence and substantial involvement of international navies, numbering more than 43 countries and the legit deployment of armed security team (AST) onboard commercial vessels transiting the East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA, the situation in the West Africa HRA is about just the opposite. Nigerian government laws and regulations prohibit the deployment of ASTs other than those brokered by local security companies that used personnel from the Navy, which the government has declared as not supported by it. Besides the Nigerian Navy, no other naval forces provide security and deterrence to the pirates managed by criminal syndicates operating from Nigeria.
- 31.2. In other words, the waters and ports around Nigeria are almost a perfect hunting ground for the local criminal syndicates. Given this situation, the threat of piracy at this point of time is higher and more dangerous than that posed by Somali pirates in the East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA, although depending on the continued presence of the navies of EUNAVFOR and CMF and the other independent naval forces and the continued used of on-board ASTs, the situation may quickly reverse. Somali pirates still have the intent, skills, and resources to attack merchant ships. Fundamentally naval forces and intelligence agencies have repeatedly called for continued vigilance and preparedness in the fight against the threat of piracy at both the East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA and the West Africa HRA. Ignoring these warnings places one's business, vessels, and crew members at risk!



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- 32. UMS HQ advises all stakeholders never to take the security and safety of their vessels and crew members for granted. **CURRENT LOW PIRACY THREAT doesn't mean NO PIRACY THREAT!**
- 33. ***Remember Always "Be Vigilant, Be Safe and Never Be Sorry"***

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