MARITIME SECURITY:
ACTIVITY MOVES NORTH AND WEST

31 JULY 2015

Overview

The maritime industry represents 90% of global trade by volume, and while merchant ships have not been taken and held in Somalia since May 2012, maritime security remains a vital aspect of transport security in general. Maritime piracy is but one of the problems that mariners face on a daily basis. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) with the maritime advocacy group Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) recently completed a study with prisoners convicted of piracy and found there was a clear economic basis for piracy; the motivation for many who carried out attacks was financial. Interviewees cited incarceration as a major deterrent but significantly they also mentioned the use of armed guards on vessels and the presence of international navies. A different problem is migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees says that during the first half of 2015 137,000 refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean Sea. These suggest that where vessels are in areas with a disparity of wealth or high levels of poverty there will be a risk to vessels or mariners. The diverse nature of the world however should not be allowed to confuse the issue that the threats the maritime industry faces in simple terms are – theft, kidnap and terrorism. The challenge is quantifying the risk and finding ways to minimise it.

West African Influences

On 29 May Muhammadu Buhari assumed the presidency in Nigeria. As the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria's accounts for approximately 70% of the total maritime traffic in West and Central Africa. President Buhari has so far sought to redefine Nigerian maritime security, by cancelling security contracts with ex militants, dismissing the head of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and appointing a new Chief of Naval Staff. Since the beginning of June the Nigerian Navy and Air Force have conducted operations against pirate gangs operating out of the Bakassi Peninsula and Calabar / Cross River area, stoking tensions. At least 53 seafarers have been taken hostage in 2015 so far (all but one off Nigeria) with more incidents likely unreported. It remains uncertain as to how President Buhari's administration will appeal to the southern piracy states that are predominantly supporters of former president Goodluck Jonathan.

Non-Traditional Security Threats On The Horizon

Since the start of this year, global media attention has been focused on the growing issue of illegal migration towards Europe that has seen over 70,000 rescued (an 86% rise over 2014) and over 1,000 have been killed this year attempting the crossing (according to the International Organization for Migration). Many of the migrants are escaping from war in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan or extreme poverty in Africa, while some are moving for economic reasons. International conventions including the UN International Maritime Organization's Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) and UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) place obligations on Masters to render assistance in rescues at sea but with these obligations comes risk. In February and April 2015 Frontex patrol crew were threatened and fired upon by armed human smugglers in the Mediterranean. Officials from the EU, Libya and Italy have warned the Islamic State could use migration routes to enter Europe. Whilst Frontex's Operation Triton and regional co-ordination has assisted in the rescue of migrants at sea, more economic and

humanitarian development is needed in the countries of migrant origins to stem the flow of trafficking to North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean.

Conflicts in North Africa have also spilled in to the maritime domain as Islamic State affiliated militants belonging to Sinai Province recently used a guided missile to attack an Egyptian Coastguard vessel 1NM off the coast. Concurrently the conflict in Libya has seen state sponsored actions against merchant shipping. These include the Turkish freighter hit by artillery fire near Tobruk in May 2015, Libyan National Army airstrikes against two fishing vessels approaching Benghazi in July 2015 and a cargo ship attacked in January 2015 whilst approaching Derna, resulting in the death of a Greek merchant sailor.

Asian Problems Rising

Criminal boarding or 'armed robbery against ships' is the most common risk facing mariners and their ships in Southern and Southeast Asia. Both the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) have highlighted rising numbers of incidents. Extended Duration Cargo Thefts (EDCT) remains a persistent concern in Southeast Asia with over 30 incidents of hijackings and EDCT so far in 2015. Most recently the ORKIM HARMONY hijacked in June 2015 carrying 50,000 barrels of petrol and its sister ship the ORKIM VICTORY that had 6,000 barrels of oil cargo stolen eight days earlier; both incidents occurring off the eastern coast of the Malaysian Peninsula. Although interstate co-operation and efforts by the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has seen greater maritime coordination, it has remained unable to significantly counter piracy in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) and increasingly the South China Sea. Corruption allegations remain against personnel from the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) in co-operation with government officials and police officers. Five Indonesian Armed Forces personnel were arrested in September 2014 in connection with an organised piracy and smuggling investigation. Insurers are watching closely to see if the region is becoming a more costly risk.

Indian Ocean Changes

Though there has been an 80% decline in the piracy incidents in the High Risk Area (HRA), economic and political development within Somalia has not yet matched the strong advances made by African Union forces against Al-Shabaab. As a result, international navy missions such as EUNAVFOR and national convoys through the Gulf of Aden remain. As the prisoners interviewed for the UNODC / OBP report indicated, the deterrent effect of these is keenly felt but an economic solution is vital. Efforts to revitalise Somali domestic fishing fleets and Somali National Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) enforcement remain deficient and still allow Irregular, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing within Somali waters.

Conclusion

The complexity of problems facing mariners and operators means there is no single or simple solution. Each region has a myriad of problems and causal factors but none of these excuse vessel owners and operators from maximising efforts to minimise risks. Identify the most likely and worst case threats, threats specific to each region and plan accordingly, then update using regular intelligence and information.