



## Piracy



Should the international community focus on re-building Somalia to give the young men a future more meaningful than attacking our ships?

report that one of our insured ships had been attacked by a Somali coastguard vessel which had appeared suddenly from within a flotilla of fishing vessels off Mogadishu. Little did I know that this was to be the precursor of events which now unfold on a daily basis in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

The growth in Somali piracy is attributed by some to the collapse of the Siad Barre dictatorial regime in 1991 and the political instability and disorder that followed. In my opinion, it stems largely from illegal fishing in Somali waters – if foreigners take away their livelihoods then the locals will attack the foreigners' ships.

In 2010, the International Maritime Bureau reported an increase in the number of pirate attacks against ships globally, as well as the number of crew members taken hostage in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, despite the deployment of warships to patrol the internationally recognised transit corridor.

Vessels reported 445 attacks in 2010, up 10% on 2009. In 2006, 188 crew members were taken hostage and by 2009 this figure had risen to 1,050, and in 2010 the corresponding figure was 1,181.

In the first two-and-a-half months of 2011, the figure already exceeded the total for 2006.

Current developments are worrying on a number of fronts. In December 2009,

Michael Frodal, who heads Sea-Level, a maritime risks consultancy based in Washington, predicted that “long-range Somali raiders would become a threat to commerce just west of India”.

A year later, the Lloyd's Market Association Joint War Committee validated his prediction by extending the excluded area for piracy attacks to 78 degrees east, deeming the waters off India to be pirate-infested. A prediction not made, to my knowledge, by any other private security company in London, or anywhere for that matter, but I am more than happy to be corrected on this issue.

In the meantime, all we have is questions and little in the way of answers.

Can the Somali model of piracy be exported to seas and oceans other than the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean?

Are vessel escorts by private security companies the answer?

Should all vessels have armed guards on board?

Or should the international community focus on re-building Somalia to give the young men a future more meaningful than attacking our ships?

Pity they haven't any oil.

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