

**The Ninth UNICPOLOS – 23 June 2008**  
Discussion Panel – Maritime Security and Safety  
Segment 1

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This presentation is based upon the information collected by the IMB's Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) based in Kuala Lumpur. Reports are received by the PRC directly from ship masters or owners at the time of or shortly after the attack. We submit that this represents the best source of contemporaneous data on piracy.

The key hotspots of attacks against shipping today are those around the coast of Somalia and the attacks in and around Nigerian waters.

**Somalia:** So far this year there have been 23 attacks off Somalia of which 8 have been vessels which were successfully hijacked by gangs of Somali pirates. 18 attacks took place in the Gulf of Aden and 5 off the Eastern coast of Somalia. All the attacks off Somalia are aimed at seizing vessels and holding the vessel and the crew to ransom. When a ransom is paid the vessel and crew are usually released.

The attacks often take place well outside the 12 mile territorial limit of Somalia by gangs operating from mother ships. The pirates use automatic weapons and /or rocket propelled grenade launchers. Grenades fired by the pirates have damaged the hull and accommodation of vessels. Vessels attacked have included two Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) and Product and Chemical tankers. In one case a VLCC's bunker tank was breached causing bunker fuel to leak.

At a time when oil markets are particularly sensitive to bad news on energy supplies, some of these attacks have resulted in a temporary spike in oil prices.

Crews and ships have been held by the pirate gangs for periods ranging from ten days to one case in 2007 of six months. Last year 2 crew were killed whilst in captivity.

Somali pirates have been operating with impunity once the seized vessel was brought inside the 12 mile territorial limit of Somalia ( a notable exception to this is the case of the seized French passenger vessel Le Ponant on 04 April 2008 where French Special Forces seized 6 persons and transported them to Paris where they are to be tried).

It is against this background that UNSCR 1816 was passed. It is a welcome step in circumstances where there are few solutions. It is vital that the countries with naval forces in the area take advantage of UNSCR 1816. It may not eliminate piracy, but we hope it will help to bring it under control.

**Nigeria:** In 2008, so far there have been 18 attacks reported to the PRC. This represents a significant under reporting of attacks in this region. The true number is believed to more than twice that amount. Ships mainly operating in the oil sector are attacked, briefly taken over, ransacked and crew members abducted and taken ashore pending the

payment of ransom. A number of security personnel have been killed . In some parts of the Delta Region of Nigeria oil support vessels travel in convoy under armed escort.

Malacca Straits: A success story of recent years is the dramatic and sustained reduction of attacks in the Malacca Straits. The attacks have steadily reduced since 2003. This has been mainly due to the increased co-operation and priority given to this problem by the coastal states Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore.

### **How does the response to piracy work?**

It is only governments who can effectively tackle piracy. Recent history confirms that when governments give priority to this crime, resource their law enforcement agencies to tackle it the attacks come down almost immediately. The converse is also true.

Attacks have come down as result in the past 16 years in the South coast of China, East Malaysia, Indonesia, Malacca Straits and Bangladesh.

The first vital step in this chain of response is the contemporaneous report received from the Master of the vessel. It follows that Masters should be encouraged to report every attack.

IMO Circulars 622/623 require these attacks to be reported to the Flag state, The Rescue Co-ordination Centre and to the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre.

The reporting of attacks by Masters should be made as easy a process as possible. Vessels travel from one part of the world to another. In the stressful aftermath of an attack, it is not easy for Masters to work out the contact details of the nearest law enforcement agency to whom they should report. From their perspective, the ideal solution is to report to one centre who then disperses the information promptly to all who need to know.

The IMB PRC is the only 24 hour manned centre to which ships can report attacks wherever they be in the world. Immediately upon receipt of this report, all available information is passed on to the nearest law enforcement control centre for their information and response. A log is maintained at the PRC of the time when the report was received and the time when it was transmitted to the law enforcement agency. This log is available for inspection to all who need it.

The PRC process is transparent. Every attack in its database is backed up by a report from the Master or the owners.

Furthermore, based upon this information a daily broadcast is sent to all ships in all the world's high risk areas advising them of the type and time of attack so that other Masters transiting the area have this piece of intelligence. The services of the PRC is free to all ships at all times.

The PRC is one of the largest contributors of piracy data to the IMO and to law enforcement agencies.

We ask that the role of the IMB PRC be recognized and encouraged by this distinguished meeting.

