

Ship Security Reporting System (SSRS) - An industry solution to piracy



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New solutions are needed to tackle the continuing piracy problem in the Gulf of Aden. SSRS uses the existing mandatory Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) to vastly improve the response time of naval forces to reported pirate attacks. By using SSRS, ships under attack will be directly connected to Task Forces via the relevant Naval Co-ordination Centres, so enabling the possibility of deployment of a rapid, co-ordinated response.

SSRS was developed in response to calls by naval forces and flag states for better intelligence on ship positions and piracy threats in the Gulf of Aden. Its developers believe SSRS can reduce the time taken to report a pirate attack to naval authorities from hours to as little as 30 minutes.

The system, which went live in the Gulf of Aden in the first week of January 2010, has been recommended by the flag states of the Marshall Islands and Liberia, with other flag states in evaluation.

The problem

When a ship is under pirate attack it can send a distress message using its Ship Security Alert System (SSAS). However, it is widely acknowledged that a potential weakness of the SSAS regulations in combating piracy is that security alerts are required to be routed only to the Company Security Officer and the Flag.

Not all shipping companies follow Best Management Practices, not all have an effective, 24/7 monitoring operation in place and not all have escalation procedures to communicate piracy attacks to the Naval Co-ordination Centres in the Gulf of Aden.

As a result, a critical delay is introduced before the armed forces are informed of a piracy attack. Any delay negates the chance of a naval asset being able to influence the piracy attack. To make a difference, immediate notification is crucial.

The Solution

Pole Star was approached by flag administrations and EUNAVFOR command to develop a solution that could improve response time to pirate attacks and provide real time tracking of ships under attack.

The result is SSRS, which includes MSC-HOA command in any SSAS alert transmissions, enabling the naval forces in the Gulf to check the validity of the alert, assign the nearest naval asset and provide a fast response to pirate attacks.

SSRS enhances the existing SSAS procedure which is already mandatory for all commercial vessels and fitted to 50,000 ships. Most SSAS can be programmed to transmit position reports automatically and all are able to send a security alert message via satellite.

SSRS is designed to work with existing SSAS systems, requiring no hardware installation and minimal software intervention. Users need only add the address of MSC-HOA to their SSAS alerts.

The costs (\$500 per ship per year) are borne by the ship owner since they benefit from reduced risk.

SSRS Delivers

Time for the Naval Forces in the area to respond and affect the attack, or in the event that the attack was successful, potentially stop the ship reaching the protection of the coast;

Confidence in the knowledge that the initial SSAS alert location information has been automatically routed to the appropriate Naval Co-ordination Centres;

Validation. The company security officer is copied on all alerts sent to the Naval Co-ordination Centres (providing a clear incentive to validate the authenticity of the alert);

Cost-effectiveness. The SSRS service is an open system with which all existing SSAS units are compatible. There is no capital expenditure requirement and low operating costs - \$500 per ship per year;

Ease of use. The www.ssrs.org user interface allows straightforward company registration and vessel subscription;

Procedural extension. The defined SSRS methodology is easily integrated into existing ISPS Ship Security Plan and Best Management Practice procedures.

David Plumer, chief executive of Pole Star said: "This system is a global extension to the SSAS regulation which gives the master, crew and the Company Security Officer a level of confidence. They know somebody has got their back. Also it is a major benefit for the flags who can demonstrate they take piracy seriously and that any process failings don't put the ship and crew further at risk."

Source: Polar Star

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