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SSRS - An Industry Solution to Piracy

By: Ship Security Reporting System
January 13, 2010

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 Coordination Centres, so enabling the possibility of deployment of a rapid, coordinated response.

The Problem:

It is widely acknowledged that a potential weakness of the Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) regulations in combating piracy is that security alerts are required to be routed only to the Company Security Officer and the Flag. However 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 Coordination 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 Best Management Practices were developed by a group of 11 industry organisations in an effort to counter piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the Coast of Somalia. They are designed to assist companies and ships in avoiding, deterring attacks and delaying pirate attacks. Central to BMP guidance when undertaking in-transit operations and if attacked by pirates is that specific early detection, warning and avoidance measures may deter, distract and delay boarding attempts. In all cases, delaying the boarding attempt is paramount and buying time 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. SSRS enhances the existing Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) 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.

SSAS is regulated by each Flag State or Maritime Administration which determine how the system is installed, set up, tested and used. The ship owner is responsible for installing the SSAS equipment and subscribing to a SSAS service, which are available from a number of different commercial providers.

SSRS is designed to work with existing SSAS systems, requiring no hardware installation and minimal software intervention. Subscribers need only add the address of MSC-HOA to their SSAS alerts to advise naval forces when they are under pirate attack.

The SSRS server includes a geospatial processor which determines if the ship is inside a naval operational zone and alerts the relevant naval command. When any ship enters or leaves the zone, the system is configured to route the position report data or the security alert to the designated naval authority for that region.

Coverage is global. Although developed for the Horn of Africa, it will operate as effectively in the Malacca Strait, South China Sea, West Africa etc. All flags and naval authorities can participate. The costs (\$500 per ship per year) are borne by the ship owner since they benefit from reduced risk. Owners can sign up at www.ssrs.org and are vetted before being invited to submit their fleet details.

Benefits:

1. For Naval Forces
 - o Actionable SSAS location information within a few minutes of the alert being activated (and each 30 mins thereafter)
 - o A User Interface of the Area Of Operation (AOO), including each ship's basic risk level (speed and freeboard)
 - o Clear and specific communications whereby only 'real' alerts in the AOO are routed from SSRS (test alerts are excluded).

Featured:

DHS Security Policies, Standards and Programs Report Card

The *Maritime Executive* is running an informative five part series over the coming weeks titled "A Report Card on DHS Security Policies, Standards and Programs" written by Dr. Jim Giermanski, Chairman of Powers Global Holdings, Inc. and President of Powers International, LLC an international transportation security company.

Currently available are:

- Part One: CBP's False Positive Standard, and Legislation on 100% Scanning.
- Part Two: CBP's Container Management Standard; and CSI and The 24-hours Manifest.
- Part Three: CBP's Sealed-Door Standard and the RFID Standard.
- Part Four: In-bonds standard; and the Science and Technology Directorate CSD standard.

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2. For Flag States

- o A practical and effective method to extend Best Management Practices through issuance of Marine Notices and Advisories
- o A straightforward way to meet SSAS obligations and improve operational efficiencies without extra resources
- o Gives duty officers time to contact the shipowner to validate the alert and engage other stakeholders whilst still ensuring naval planning and reaction continues.

3. For Ship Owners

- o A practical, highly effective and low-cost method for ship owners and operators to extend Best Management Practices and so reduce risk
- o An opportunity for the industry to improve the effectiveness of SSAS by completing the communication chain from point of alert activation to Naval Forces
- o An opportunity to improve the performance of SSAS by ensuring the correct installation, configuration and testing of systems
- o Demonstrate commitment to the protection of their seafarers.

Summary - SSRS Delivers:

1. 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
2. Confidence in the knowledge that the initial SSAS alert location information has been automatically routed to the appropriate Naval Co-ordination Centres, and will continue each 30 minutes
3. Validation. The CSO is copied on all alerts sent to the Naval Co-ordination Centres (providing a clear incentive to validate the authenticity of the alert)
4. 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
5. Ease of use. The www.ssrs.org user interface allows straightforward company registration and vessel subscription
6. Procedural extension. The defined SSRS methodology is easily integrated into existing ISPS Ship Security Plan and Best Management Practice procedures.

Contact for more information:

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