

Pirate attacks could be reported in 30 minutes

An industry-driven initiative says it will cut the response time of naval forces to pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden

New solutions are needed to tackle the continuing piracy problem in the Gulf of Aden. The brand-new Ship Security Reporting System (SSRS), devised by Pole Star, uses the existing mandatory Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) to improve the response time of naval forces to reported pirate attacks immensely.

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, coordinated 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.

When a ship is under pirate attack it can send a distress message using its 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 administration.

Not all shipping companies follow best management practices, not all have an effective, round-the-clock monitoring operation in place and not all have escalation procedures to communicate piracy attacks to naval coordination centres in the Gulf of Aden.

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

Pole Star was approached by flag administrations and European Union Naval Force Somalia (Eunavfor) command to develop a solution that could improve response time to pirate attacks and provide real time tracking of



SSRS is a response to naval forces' requirement for better intelligence on piracy

ships under attack.

The result is SSRS, which includes the Maritime Security Centre-Horn of Africa (MSC-HOA) command in any SSAS alert transmissions, enabling 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's 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 (US\$500/ship/year) are borne by the shipowner since they benefit from reduced risk.

According to chief executive of Pole Star, David Plumer, the 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 that somebody is supporting them. Also, it is a major benefit for flag states, who can demonstrate that they take piracy seriously and that any process failings do not put the ship and crew at further risk." **TST**

Securing the right insurance cover for Gulf transits

There are differing views in the market regarding the necessity or otherwise of purchasing Kidnap for Ransom (K&R) insurance for Gulf of Aden transits.

Insurer Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT) has produced a white paper that aims to bring clarity to the discussion. The paper discusses the key risk factors; the best type of insurance cover for piracy – or in industry parlance 'where the peril is best

placed', as well as what exactly Kidnap for Ransom (K&R) covers and an assessment of its benefits. The paper benefits from JLT's recent experience involving the release of four vessels, which brought it working closely with underwriters and negotiators in order to secure the release of crew, ship and cargo.

More information on the study is available at www.jltgroup.com