

Ship hijacks up in first nine months of 2010

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A total of 39 vessels were seized in first nine months of 2010, a five-year high

HIJACKS of merchant vessels hit a five-year high in the first nine months of 2010, hitting a total of 39 compared to 36 in the same period last year and 11 in the same period of 2006, according to a statement released today by the International Maritime Bureau's Kuala Lumpur-based Piracy Reporting Centre.

Pirates worldwide boarded 128 ships during the first nine months of 2010.

Of the 289 reported incidents of piracy witnessed between January and September this year, Somalis are suspected in 126 cases, equivalent to 44%. The IMB sees them as responsible for 35 out of a total of 39 hijackings.

Pirates worldwide boarded 128 ships and fired at 52. A total of 70 vessels said they had thwarted attacks. Pirates used guns in 137 incidents and knives in 66, killing one crew member, injuring 27 and taking 773 hostages.

Although attacks in the Gulf of Aden fell sharply in comparison to the same period in 2009, probably on account of bad weather, the IMB is urging continued vigilance now that the monsoon season is over.

IMB director Pottengal Mukundan paid tribute to the work of navies in the Horn of Africa region. But he added: "This is a vast area and the navies cannot realistically cover it. The naval presence does, however, remain vital to the control of piracy in this area."

Pirate attacks in the South China Sea tripled to 30 compared to 2009 and an increase in piracy was also noted in areas such as Chittagong in Bangladesh and the waters off Indonesia. In Nigeria 11 piracy incidents were reported, although real figures were believed to be far higher, the IMB said.

Meanwhile, the operator of VOC Daisy has confirmed to Lloyd's List that the bulk carrier was freed by Somali pirates on Sunday after nearly six months in captivity.

The 1998-built, 47,183 dwt vessel was hijacked on April 21 in the Indian Ocean, about 190 nautical miles south-east of Salalah, Oman. Panama-flagged VOC Daisy was carrying 21 Filipino seafarers

According to the Lloyd's List Intelligence database, VOC Daisy is associated with JP Samartzis Maritime Enterprises of Piraeus. A spokesman for Samartzis said: "The crew are fine and all in very good health. They have not been mistreated at all. The vessel seems to be fine, but we have to take a close look at it."

VOC Daisy, which is laden with sulphur, is now making for Salalah, the representative added.

It has also emerged that South Korean trawler *Keummi 305*, carrying a crew of 39 Kenyans, two South Koreans and two Chinese, has been taken by pirates while fishing in Kenyan waters. The seizure took place on October 9, although the development is only being reported now.

Keummi 305 is the sixth Korean vessel to be captured by Somali pirates since 2006, the Yonhap news agency added.

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