



Danger of Piracy - Guidelines for yachts considering a passage through the Gulf of Aden, Yemeni and Somali waters including the NW Indian Ocean north of 15° south and west of 78° east

These notes are published in co-operation with the MSCHOA (Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa) set up by EU NAVFOR ATALANTA and UKMTO. The notes are for guidance only and a final decision on whether to enter the Gulf of Aden or any waters where pirates operate and how to conduct a vessel in those waters remains entirely the responsibility of the master of each vessel. All vessels entering the area do so at their own risk.

1 The danger of piracy and consequent loss of life and property in the GoA (Gulf of Aden), Yemeni and the Somali waters (up to 750 miles offshore), is high. Yachts are strongly recommended to avoid the area.

See advice from the UK FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) at

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/> and the Noonsite web site

<http://www.noonsite.com/General/Piracy>. Piracy has also occurred in the adjoining areas of the Indian Ocean north of 10° south and west of 78° east and you should take appropriate self protections when in this area.

2 MSCHOA liaises with anti-piracy patrols being conducted by warships from several nations in the area and UKMTO Dubai coordinates the management of all merchant ship and yachts in the area. The patrols operate mainly in the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin but may operate anywhere within the area and will provide surveillance and support as far as possible to yachts however no guarantee whatever can be offered as to the safe transit of any yacht through these waters, and no dedicated escort can be expected.

3 A yacht which, despite the risks described decides to make a passage should advise her plans with as much notice as possible* to UKMTO Dubai and provide the information set out in the attached Yacht Vessel Movement Form, preferably by email but alternatively by telephone:-

- UKMTO (UK Maritime Trade Organization) (RN) Dubai ukmto@eim.ae
+971 50 552 3215; Telex (51) 210473 (24 hour watch)**

US-flagged vessels may wish to contact MARLO (Maritime Liaison Office) (USN) Bahrain marlo.bahrain@me.navy.mil +973 3940 1395 (24 hour watch)

A vessel considering entering the area is recommended to carry UK Admiralty Anti-Piracy Planning Chart – Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea – Q6099.

3.1 If under attack a ‘mayday’ call should be made using VHF or HF DSC, VHF 16 or VHF 8, Sat-C or any other means, please contact UKMTO by telephone and pass your last known position.

*Yachts are urged to register at least two weeks before entering a high risk area. Yachts coming south through the Red Sea should report well before reaching Bab al Mandeb and should register before reaching Safaga/Jeddah.

3.2 When a yacht registers its movements UKMTO will pass details to patrolling warships and will regularly send to the yacht piracy alerts by email.

3.3 During her passage a yacht should monitor VHF 16 and VHF 8 and report by the means and at the intervals advised by UKMTO, or by a patrolling warship.

4 Merchant ships transiting the GoA are being advised to use an Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor (IRTC) in order for warship patrols to be effective. UKMTO advises yachts to remain close to or within the IRTC as follows:

4.1 The IRTC has two lanes, each 5NM wide and a separation zone between them 2NM wide. To all intents and purposes it operates as a Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) although formally it does not have that status. The co-ordinates of the IRTC lanes are:

Westbound lane, northern boundary: 12 00N 45 00E 14 30N 53 00E

southern boundary: 11 55N 45 00E 14 25N 53 00E

Eastbound lane, northern boundary: 11 53N 45 00E 14 23N 53 00E

southern boundary: 11 48N 45 00E 14 18N 5300E

The course eastbound is 072°T and westbound 252°T.

4.2 A yacht which has registered her intention to transit the GoA is invited to sail EITHER in the 2-mile-wide buffer zone between the two lanes OR close to the outer limit of the appropriate lane. These options give the best chance of a yacht’s transmission on VHF16 or VHF 8 being received by a patrolling warship, or being relayed by a merchant vessel. However VHF contact is not guaranteed.

4.3 A yacht coming from for example Aden eastbound or Salalah westbound may join the IRTC some way from its start point. The area of the IRTC between 47E and 49E is considered the most dangerous and a yacht should ensure she has joined well before the “high risk area” to enjoy the maximum possible protection. The yacht should plan to conduct as much of this part of the passage as possible at night. In the interests of navigation safety, on joining the IRTC mid way along its length a yacht should act as if joining a Traffic Separation Scheme.

5 It has long been common practice for yachts intending to transit the GoA to form small informal convoys in either Djibouti, Aden or Salalah. It is emphasized that this is a decision for individual skippers but the military forces support this concept. If the convoy approach is to be followed it is suggested that there is a limit of no more than five vessels in any one convoy. This is because vessels will need to keep close to one another if they are to offer any protection through numbers, and close station-keeping for the duration of the voyage through the GoA may prove a strain particularly if short-handed.

6 Carriage of arms is not advised. There is a serious risk of escalation of the levels of violence.

7 AIS, Communications, Radar, EPIRBs etc.

Current advice to ships (which are required to carry AIS class A) is to have it transmitting limited information whilst transiting the Gulf of Aden, restricted to ship's identity, position, course, speed, navigational status and safety related information. Most AIS class B transponders (commonly carried by yachts) can only transmit limited information and are not configurable by the user. Current naval advice to yachts is to leave it switched on in the Gulf of Aden so that the warships know where they are. Navigation lights are to be illuminated at night or periods of low visibility and should not be turned off because of a perceived threat.

In the Somali Basin or further afield where there are fewer warships an AIS transponder should be switched off unless the yacht is either aware of military forces in their vicinity, or is under attack.

Use of AIS should be verified when possible through contact with MSCHOA for the latest advice.

A 406 EPIRB or PLB will quickly draw attention to you but remember these are emergency devices intended specifically for saving life. An SART will show a signal on any nearby marine radar which may include that of pirates. It is legitimate to call "mayday" if under attack (VHF or HF DSC, VHF 16 or 8, Sat-C or any other means). For an early warning call discreet use of a satellite phone to one of the numbers in para 3 above may be the best option. When in transit a radar transceiver should be used in the normal way. A radar target enhancer (RTE) provides an apparently large echo and should be switched off unless there is danger of collision. The possibility of an HF communications facility for yachts in the region is under discussion.

8 Preparations. Ensure that all systems (in particular the engine) are in good shape, radios and satphones are working properly, that you have plenty of fuel and the ship's batteries are in good shape. Be prepared to motor or motor-sail at your maximum speed for the entire transit of the IRTC. Carry additional supplies (particularly water purification, medical supplies and vitamin supplements) in the event that you are unfortunate enough to be pirated.

8.1 split up money into different caches

keep electronic copies of your passport etc.on yahoo- or google-type accounts with spurious names - if your original papers are lost you can access the copies from any police station or internet cafe

consider carrying only copies (not originals) of essential documents on the boat

consider having two passports (a legitimate exercise for eg business travellers)

wear a cheap watch

have an old mobile phone

keep only old (out of date) credit cards in your wallet

(if ashore) wear only such clothing that you can afford to lose

before entering a dangerous area study FCO advice on conduct if you are taken hostage

advise your next of kin if you are going into a dangerous area so they are prepared to deal with matters if the worst happens – they should know in advance which authorities to talk to, etc.

9 Pirates operate from very small craft, which limits their operation to moderate weather conditions. While no statistics exist, it is likely to be difficult to operate these small craft in sea states 3 and above though operation in higher sea states cannot be ruled out. Pirates are less likely to launch attacks in the dark and merchant ships try to pass through the area between 47E and 49E in the IRTC during the hours of darkness for this reason. Even during

the day, the typical pirate's visual horizon is less than five miles; he will see a merchantman long before he sees a yacht.

10.1 In a typical pirate attack small high speed (up to 25knot) open boats deploy from a mother ship, often a pirated fishing vessel or dhow. Commonly two or more of these small high speed open boats are used in attacks, often approaching from either quarter of the intended target. Be aware that perfectly legitimate tuna fishermen often employ similar tactics when chasing fish. It can be very hard to differentiate between a genuine fisherman and a prospective pirate; in general, the crew of a fishing boat will have 'all eyes' trained on their elusive target; in a pirate boat, the 'gunmen' may remain hidden.

11 Despite the odds being uneven, it is worth making a risk assessment in advance of a transit and making sure everyone on board (including new crew) has thought through and agreed how they will respond. Guidance on what to do in the event of an attack is at para 13. Thorough mental preparation is essential – think through all the scenarios. Continuous vigilance and an early call to the authorities if in doubt, is recommended as the arrival of military units (by sea or air) or a VHF call to a warship (even if you cannot see a warship) may cause an impending attack to be called off. If you can delay the pirates from boarding by even 15 minutes, it may give the warships time to react. The time between first sighting a pirate and the commencement of an attack could be as little as 5 minutes. When making a routine call on VHF, do not give your posn in Lat and Long, unless you are absolutely certain that the warship is close enough to be able to assist you, or you are making a May Day call. The risk is that in reporting what turns out to be a false alarm, you could alert other skiffs of your position and excite their interest in you.

12 Under Attack. A vessel is recommended to:

make a mayday call

report immediately to UKMTO Dubai by telephone if possible on +971 50 552 3215 – please make sure you know your position . If possible, the call to UKMTO Dubai should be followed by a call to MSCHOA, and MARLO Bahrain (who focus on US-flagged vessels).

13 Pirates on Board

Stay calm - attackers are likely to be excitable and nervous - you will think more clearly and your conduct may also calm them – do not make sudden movements

Stay together as far as it is practicable to do so

Offer no resistance

Cooperate with the pirates

Do Not Use firearms, even if available – the risk of escalation is significant.

Do Not use flash photography, which may be mistaken for muzzle flashes by the pirates or by any military force sent to assist

Do Not use flares or other pyrotechnics as weapons against pirates.

In the event that military personnel take action on board the vessel, unless otherwise directed all crew members should keep low to the deck, cover their head with both hands (always ensuring that both hands are empty and visible). Be prepared to answer questions on identity and status as military personnel will need to differentiate quickly between crew and pirates.

14 Follow-up Reports should be sent to MSCHOA who will advise on information needed.

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Gulf of Aden/Somali Basin YACHT VESSEL MOVEMENT FORM

1. YACHT NAME	
2. MMSI	
3. NATIONAL REGISTRATION NUMBER (IF ANY)	
4. HOME PORT	
5. FLAG STATE	
6. CALLSIGN	
7. LOA	
8. NUMBER OF PERSONS ON BOARDM /....F /TOTAL.....	
9. SATCOM C NUMBER	
10. SATPHONE NUMBER(S)	
11. MF/HF (DETAILS PLEASE)	
12. NORMAL CRUISING SPEED /MAX SPEED	
13. COLOUR OF TOPSIDES	
14. COLOUR OF DECK	
15. RIG	
16. SAIL NUMBERS/INSIGNIA	
17. EMAIL ADDRESSES ON BOARD	
18. MASTER'S NAME	
19. MASTER'S NATIONALITY AND PASSPORT NO	
20. PRINCIPAL YACHT CLUB OR ASSOCIATION	
21. 24/7 SHORESIDE CONTACT PERSON WITH BOAT INFORMATION	
22 DATES/PLACES OF INTENDED PASSAGE	