



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 60° east

These notes are published in co-operation with the MSCHOA (Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa) set up by EU NAVFOR ATALANTA. 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.

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 600 miles offshore), is high. Yachts are strongly recommended to avoid the area. See also advice from the UK FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>. Piracy has also occurred in the adjoining areas of the Indian Ocean north of 15° south and west of 60° east.

2 The MSCHOA liaises with anti-piracy patrols being conducted by warships from several nations in the area and UKMTO Dubai principally for the protection of merchant vessels. 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.

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

- UKMTO (UK Maritime Trade Organization) (RN) Dubai ukmto@eim.ae +971 50 552 3215 fax +971 4 306 5710; Telex (51) 210473 (24 hour watch)
- MSCHOA postmaster@mschoa.org +44 (0)1923 958547, 39, 35. Fax +44 (0) 1923 958520 (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)

3.1 In emergency any of the above numbers (or a warship on VHF 16 or VHF 8 when in range) will respond on a 24 hour basis.

*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, MSCHOA will email to her piracy alerts until she is clear of the area (+72hrs). MSCHOA will pass details of yachts to patrolling warships.

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 the MSCHOA, 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. MSCHOA 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.

In the Somali Basin or further afield where there are far fewer warships operating 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.

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 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 the 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 has thought through and agreed how they will respond. Guidance on what to do in the event of an attack is available at para 13. Mental preparation is essential. 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. 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

Try to remain calm

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 PASSAGE INFORMATION FORM

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| 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 | |