



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

Modern Maritime Piracy Update

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Introduction

In analyzing piracy in 2008, researchers at the International Maritime Bureau reported that the number of attacks by maritime pirates had increased by 11% from levels in 2007. These attacks have also become more violent in the past year, with twice as many incidents involving firearms as the year before. Recently, there have been small successes in combating piracy worldwide, but there is still much to be done to secure waters around the world. The United Nations Security Council holds a unique position within the world and has an opportunity to use its mandate to decrease the incidence of piracy around the world and return stability and security to the world's oceans.

Summary of the Problem

There are three primary **hotspots** for pirate activity in the world today. Each of these locations possesses several factors which combine to create hotspots for pirate activity. They are located in areas with natural formations that benefit pirates (*i.e.* narrow channels or rugged coastlines with many good hiding spots), they are in areas with high commercial traffic, and they are surrounded by countries with weak militaries or unstable political climates.

One region that is the most plagued by piracy is the Malacca Strait, situated near Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. This strip of water saves tankers a full three days of travel between the Middle East to East Asia and is therefore extremely valuable to commercial shipping. Pirates in this region vary greatly in terms of capabilities and organization, but some possess sufficient knowledge to take control of an entire supertanker. Of particular concern is that pirate activity Malacca Strait has been funding terrorist groups in the region.

The coast of West Africa, mainly around Nigeria, has also seen a high level of pirate activity, with a terrible impact on the Nigerian economy. Already an economically disadvantaged nation, Nigeria began experiencing further financial woes when pirates began attacking oil tankers exporting Nigerian oil from, causing investors to withdraw from the country. As things worsened, pirates began to attack even Nigeria's domestic fishermen. Though Nigerian citizens disapprove of the piracy in their waters, the nation lacks a centralized government that is strong enough to combat the pirates.

The largest hotbed of pirate activity, however, is off the coast of

Hotspot—*an area with a great deal of a particular activity.*

i.e.—*for example.*

Somalia. In this region, warlords have recognized the great profitability of piracy and have greatly increased the incidence of piracy in recent years. One oft-used method in Somali waters has been the kidnapping of commercial crews for ransom; through this strategy, Somali pirates have taken in ransoms amounting to millions of dollars while seriously hampering the economic prospects along the Somali coastline.

Recent Developments

In the past year, Somalia has seen the greatest increase in pirate attacks in its waters. Last year, 42 ships were hijacked and 815 individuals were taken hostage off the coast of Somalia. In November of 2008, the *Sirius Star*, a Saudi-owned oil tanker carrying \$100 million worth of crude oil was hijacked by pirates. It was the largest ship ever captured by pirates, and was enough to earn them a \$3.5 million ransom. This hijacking was particularly shocking, as it occurred hundreds of miles out at sea and was a large ship, indicating that the Somali pirates were becoming bolder and more advanced in their tactics.

Shortly after the attack on the *Sirius Star*, the Somali government announced approval of Indian forces to enter its territorial waters to combat piracy. With this, India joins the United States and France in having official Somali approval to fight Somali pirates. The strengthening government of Somalia has also expressed a strong desire to combat piracy, with the newly elected president vowing to gain international support in **bolstering** Somalia's army so that it can fight the pirates on land.

Bolstering—
strengthening.

Though piracy in the waters around Somalia worsened this past year, the Malacca Strait saw a sharp decrease in pirate activity. The combined forces of Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and Singapore have proven highly effective in combating piracy in the region. Though the Malacca Strait has been relatively safe in the past year, experts warn that only the continued vigilance and aggressive patrols of the coalition navies will prevent an escalation of pirate activity. The United States has also taken an active role in combating piracy in the Strait of Malacca through its provision to Indonesia of 15 high-speed boats.

Focus of the Debate

India

India has recently become a key player in the fight against piracy. After allying with the local nations in the Malacca Strait, the combined forces were able to greatly decrease piracy in the waters, a feat hitherto unaccomplished. India has also recently committed to fighting piracy along the Somali coast, joining with US and French forces. India

is situated between the two piracy hotspots, so the two shipping routes are particularly valuable for India's economic well-being.

Russia

In September of 2008, Russia pledged to join the fight against Somali pirates. Though Russia is not one of the nations approved by Somalia to fight piracy in its territorial waters, Russia can still conduct operations in the international waters in which many of the pirate attacks take place, like that on the *Sirius Star*. Though Russia has similar goals as the other nations fighting Somali pirates, it has decided to conduct its operations independently and not **collaborate** with other forces in the area.

Collaborate—to work together.

Questions for Policymakers

The largest question that policymakers must answer is whether the threat of maritime piracy to the international community outweighs the sovereignty of an individual nation. Nations such as Somalia and Nigeria have proven ineffective at fighting piracy on their own and it is unclear whether the forces Somalia has approved to enter its waters will be sufficient to complete the daunting task of combating piracy. Particularly in the case of Nigeria, the members of the United Nations Security Council will need to decide whether to pass a resolution allowing international intervention in the nation's affairs.

Conclusion

These hotspots of pirate activity are among the most valuable shipping lanes in the world. Many nations depend on the free flow of goods through these waters for their livelihood. It is essential for the stability of the global economy that these dangerous regions are made safe. The United Nations Security Council is in a unique position to gain the international support necessary to combat this threat.

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