

19 Nov 21

## **MARITIME INFORMATION EXCHANGE VESSEL OPERATORS MEETING (MIEVOM)**

### **UKMTO (Dubai)**

#### **Readout of Meeting and Discussion**

1. Lt Cdr Yee RN, Officer in Charge UKMTO(D), opened the meeting and introduced the agenda.
  - a. The next CMF/EUNAVFOR SHADE is expected to take place 18-19 Jan in Bahrain. UKMTO(D) will promulgate minutes from this forum to MIEVOM attendees post-event.
2. Cdr Edwards RN (Maritime Security Advisor Yemen) presented a Yemen Update.
  - a. Overview;
    - (1) A new Special Envoy to Yemen, Hans Grundberg, has assumed the role and is conducting a detailed review prior to developing his thoughts on Yemen.
  - b. Political Update;
    - (1) The Riyadh Agreement between the internationally recognised Government of Yemen and the Southern Transition Council remains extant.
    - (2) Terrorist organisations believed to remain within Yemen include AQAP, IS Y and Hezbollah.
  - c. Military Update;
    - (1) The frequency of cross-border attacks into KSA has been reported in the media as to have decreased significantly in the last two months.
    - (2) The fall of Marib would be a significant event, and the situation there is being watched closely.
    - (3) Govt forces in Hodeidah city have been reported to have withdrawn; how this will impact the operation of the port itself is still to be determined.
  - d. Ports Update;
    - (1) UNVIM Inspections in Djibouti of vessels destined for Hodeidah port are getting quicker but on occasions there still remains an issue of getting final approvals, in the form of a Letter of Credit from the GoY, to allow the vessels to berth in the port. This is outside the control of UNVIM.
    - (2) Mokha port has been operational since September this year.
  - e. Threat Update;
    - (1) Sea Mines. There has been a significant reduction in reports of sea mines in 2021 (3 vice 30 in previous years). Those reported were all coastally orientated on or near the shoreline, and did not impact shipping routes.
      - Q. Mark Roberts, MSC. How credible are open-source reports suggesting that more than 200 sea mines have been detected by KSA authorities in 2021.

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A. There is no independent corroboration of these reports. Any updated threat assessment will be shared with MIEVOM attendees through UKMTO(D) and other standard routes.

(2) WBIED. Reports of WBIED have increased in the last 2 years. These are focussed in the Red Sea and have been intercepted with no impact on merchant shipping.

Q. Sundeep, GEM. Are the WBIED events reported as sightings or interceptions, and are they targeting merchant traffic?

A. The WBIED events have been reported as interceptions. They appear not to be targeting merchant vessels.

f. Threat Assessment;

(1) Conflict Overspill. Risk to International Shipping using the MSTC is directly related to the political situation in Yemen. It is assessed that the risk to International Shipping remains low.

(2) Piracy. Risk of piracy is assessed as being LOW. Piracy is suppressed but not eradicated. The capability remains, but there is no demonstrable intent to target international shipping within the MSTC.

(3) Maritime Terrorism. Risk of activity by Yemen-based terrorist organisations within the Gulf of Aden and Southern Red Sea is assessed as being LOW.

g. FSO SAFER Update;

(1) Oil flow modelling indicates the likely impact on coastal regions will be significant, affecting food, water and power security.

(2) These models show limited impact on international shipping routes, but will affect ports. All models have a degree of uncertainty and should only be considered as a guide to how to plan to mitigate. Academics also assess that in the summer months, 30-40% of any leaked oil is likely to evaporate in a month.

(3) The UN and the IMO are leading international contingency planning. The international community supports national efforts to replace the SAFER and so mitigate the risk.

(4) PERSGA, the regional authority for the environment in the Red Sea, made up of KSA, Egypt, Yemen, Somalia, Djibouti, and Jordan, has been supporting Yemen by conducting training of members of the GoY. They have also developed a contingency plan in the event of any spill from SAFER.

h. Yemeni CG Update;

(1) International investment continues to support UNODC and UNDP capacity development activity with the Yemeni Coast Guard. Recent training has included equipment maintenance, board & search training and interaction with Yemeni Port Authorities.

(2) Aden port has seven operational boats. They are now more identifiable by having uniforms, and painted vessels. Training is now also integrated with the port authority showing a degree of interoperability between different agencies.

Q. Mark Roberts, MSC. Are recent IRN state media reports of IRN authorities intercepting pirates credible?

A. These reports are unverified and are not viewed as credible. The risk of piracy in the region is assessed as LOW.

3. Ambrey delivered a brief on the Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) threat within the region.

a. Recent events in the region highlighted the significant threat posed to merchant shipping and mariners by UAS.

b. In the aftermath Ambrey has conducted a review of preparedness, mitigation and responses and makes the following observations:

(1) There are two main types of UAS which are equally effective. Straight and delta wing variants. Both are capable at operating at range from the shore, either organically or via small launch craft. Both travel at high speeds and can be GPS guided or remotely operated. Reports indicate that some can loiter in a location for surveillance or targeting.

(2) Counter UAS (CUAS) measures include:

(a) Understanding the UAS threat – ranges etc

(b) Training embarked personnel in CUAS tactics, techniques and procedures

(c) Denial of information (eg change vessel routing and AIS denial)

(d) Physical protection measures and location of safe spaces/areas for crew

(e) Personal protection measures and post-attack actions/survivability

(f) CUAS technology including detect and destroy capabilities

c. Project Wraith is an Ambrey-led initiative to deny AIS information for targeting purposes, while remaining legally compliant. Project Wraith seeks to remove AIS information from open-source while maintaining provision to authorities including UKMTO.

Q. Valeriy Baranov. Are Ambrey security teams able to differentiate between friendly and hostile UAS? Can Ambrey share the information they have on UAS operating in the region with Industry?

A. Ambrey teams are trained to differentiate between UAS. This is reliant upon accurate reporting and information from merchant shipping. Ambrey will share the information they have with Industry.

Q. Rahul, Chevron. How do UAS target vessels? Would counter RPG netting or similar existing countermeasures help?

A. Targeting varies by type, but often it is AIS derived from open source which provides initial targeting information. UAS can be pre-programmed to fly to a GPS position independently based on historical tracking, or can be piloted remotely, or a combination of the two where the UAS flies autonomously to a location before a remote pilot takes over to deliver the UAS to its intended target. Some UAS may be able to target RF emissions. UAS typically fly low to avoid detection, only gaining height in the final approach allowing little time for detection or warning. High risk areas are the bridge and monkey wings. RPG and piracy countermeasures will have little to no impact on UAS as they are too fast, and their explosive payload is too great.

4. Cdr Bessant RN (CMF) presented an overview of CMF activity, future operations and regional activities.

a. CMF Overview;

(1) CMF is non-state facing, supports the international rules-based order, free flow of commerce and freedom of navigation. CMF promotes interoperability and regional leadership through development and maintenance of relationships. CMF seeks to deter illicit activities, develop regional capability and reassure international maritime trade.

(2) CTF 152 conducts maritime security operations (MSO) in the Arabian Gulf, CTF 150 conducts MSO outside the Arabian Gulf, CTF 151 conducts counter piracy operations.

(3) Recent capacity building activities include CMF HQ provision of MDA mentorship in the Seychelles and CTF 150 mentorship as part of the established UNODC course. A CTF 151 unit recently conducted a port visit and Naval training in Djibouti, while CTF 152 participated in EX FALCON WARRIOR including development and mentoring of staffs.

b. CMF Outlook;

(1) Broader and more deliberate focused operations, capability development with existing and new partners, understanding patterns of life, operations within the Red Sea and Western Indian Ocean.

(2) Incorporation of uncrewed systems and technology into CMF operations, including interaction with TF59 (NAVCENT uncrewed systems task force).

c. Piracy Overview;

(1) Piracy is assessed as suppressed but not eradicated within the region. BMP and PCASP are significant deterrents, supported by naval forces. ROK and JPN have dedicated assets in the region. CMF coordinates with EUNAVFOR.

(2) Opportunistic maritime crime is exacerbated by a regional political and military instability. Such crime funds criminal groups and international terrorism.

(3) The MV ANATOLIAN incident highlights the opportunistic risk of armed robbery present when operating within TTW. While the intent to conduct piracy appears to be low, the capability to conduct illicit maritime activities remains.

d. Security Concerns;

(1) FSO SAFER. A potential environmental and economic disaster.

(2) Sea Mines. No corroborated reports of sea mines recently.

(3) UAS. Availability of systems to non-state actors is increasing. The risk to merchant shipping exists primarily from mis-identification.

Q. Mark Roberts, MSC. All attendees and organisations should be aware that up to 5 cruise ships will be present in Qatar as accommodation for the football world cup in 2022.

5. John Steed (UNODC) delivered a Somalia Update presentation.

- a. Regional Context. International competition for influence continues (CHN, UAE, TUR, QTR, IND). Multiple conflicts and disputes affect regional states, with the conflict in Mozambique spilling into the maritime. Terrorist organisations have regional bases and insurgencies are frequent. Tensions within the SoH remain and illicit maritime activity flourishes where there is limited capacity to conduct maritime detection or interdiction.
- b. Political Situation;
  - (1) Somalia is in political crisis. It remains a politically divided nation comprised of federal states lacking centralised control and operating in a state of self-declared autonomy. Without a significant change Somalia could follow the same path as Afghanistan.
  - (2) UNSC resolution 2607/21 was passed earlier this month placing sanctions on Somalia. Shipping companies and exporters should ensure they are fully appraised of these sanctions and the impact on their operations.
- c. Military Situation;
  - (1) There is no overarching central control or demarcation of military forces within Somalia, with control fragmented between the AMISOM/Federal govt coalition, unionist and separatist militias and terrorist organisations (including Al Shabaab and ISIL cells) operating as alternative administrations.
- d. Maritime Crime Climate
  - (1) Maritime crime is the main threat (inc weapons & drug trafficking, human smuggling, and IUU fishing), with established links between the leaders of organised crime groups and international terrorism.
  - (2) Pirate Action Groups appear to lack financing and safe areas to operate. Piracy is therefore assessed as suppressed but not eradicated, with PAG focusing on alternative, more lucrative criminal activities exercising considerable power and control of territory around ports and competing with the Federal Member States to govern. The risk of piracy attacks is unlikely at this stage.
  - (3) However, former PAG leaders could finance a resumption of pirate activity through organised crime inc kidnapping, militias, illegal fishing and human smuggling.
  - (4) Efforts by the Federal Govt of Somalia to generate offshore oil & gas exploration and production are embryonic. While exploration and production platforms themselves are unlikely to be at risk, offshore support vessels are traditionally at significant risk from piracy. It is likely that there will be a resurgence in PAG activity linked to these support craft if the national and international community are unable to respond.

## 6. Maritime Governance

- a. Somalia has withdrawn from the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS). This is thought to be due to issues with the Kenyan Chair and is likely to hamper international efforts to coordinate and deliver capacity development resources.

## 7. Maritime Capability Update

- a. The significant maritime capability gap between Bosasso and Mogadishu is being addressed by the development of an Galmudug Maritime Police Unit (MPU). This capability is embryonic and other capability gaps remain.

(1) Galmudug MPU. Training in seamanship, law enforcement and maintenance delivered in the Seychelles by UNODC, funded by UNODC and CGPCS Trust Fund. A UNODC funded patrol vessel is due to be delivered and additional training is to be conducted with EUNAVFOR. Operational focus on IUU fishing, but issues relating to force protection and recognition remain.

(2) Somaliland Coast Guard. Received engineering support and maintenance training from UNODC and EUCAP Somalia. Conducting maritime presence operations patrolling port and coastal waters. Operational focus is SAR, IUU fishing and marine environmental protection missions.

(3) Bosasso Port Police. Have received BPU training in engineering support and maintenance. Construction of a police unit compound and HQ is underway with recognisable uniforms and boats in use.

(4) Puntland Maritime Police Force. Supported by a UAE funded logistics contract providing a land, sea and air capability with bases around the coast. Active against terrorist groups and supportive of current President.

(5) Mogadishu MPU and AMISOM Marine Unit. Internationally resourced, recognisable and delivering maritime law enforcement patrols. Have received support and training from EUNAVFOR, CMF and others in the Seychelles. AMISOM sole responsibility is ensuring Mogadishu airport is clear.

b. Other Threats

(1) IUU Fishing. A significant issue within the region with links to organised crime and international terrorism. Response is hampered by poor MDA and limited/no patrol capability. UNODC Demonstrator Project will comprise 2 active patrols for a 2 week period in Mar 22. Crews trained by UNODC in the Seychelles with support from EUNAVFOR. A vessel will be chartered and this will require international support/donors to become sustainable and enduring.

c. Hostage Support Partnership

(1) Last 3 maritime hostages were released in Aug 20, however non-maritime hostages remain.

d. Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. Can be effective at disrupting financial flows and piracy networks. Progress is slow but ongoing.

e. Law Enforcement Task Force. Efforts by international law enforcement to pursue organisers and financiers of piracy and kidnapping. Cooperation between prosecuting countries, freezing assets if possible to deter and disrupt. Progress is slow but ongoing.

f. Sanctions. UNSC 2607/21 seeks to coordinate efforts against maritime smuggling and trafficking that funds terrorism in Somalia. Affected cargo includes charcoal, sugar, IED components, weapons and trafficking on fishing vessels. Exporters and shipping companies will need to be aware of impact on own activities and supportive of states and owners to achieve the desired effect.

**LT CDR S YEE**  
**OiC UKMTO(D)**

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