

Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP)

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ABSTRACT: In recent years nearly 5000 seafarers have been hijacked and detained for months often in appalling conditions, while thousands of others have been the victims of a pirate attack. Given these numerous concerns, a pan-industry alliance of ship owners, unions, managers, manning agents, insurers and shipping- and welfare associations (maritime, labour, faith or secular) has come together to establish the "Maritime Piracy: a Humanitarian Response Programme" (MPHRP). The objectives of this Programme address the three phases of "pre-, during and post-incident", with the aim of implementing a model of assisting seafarers and their families with the humanitarian aspects of a traumatic incident caused by a piracy attack, armed robbery or being taken hostage.

Numerous diplomatic, military and other initiatives have been applied by many governments and governmental agencies to root out piracy. Ship owners, ship-managers and their representatives have likewise applied protective measures to ensure the safety of ships and crew. These measure, along with international intervention in Somalia, have been successful in curbing Somali-based incidents of piracy in the Indian Ocean. No new reports of successful pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean have been received, although several false alarms and suspicious activity have been reported. It is feared that pirates' capacity to attack ships persists. At the date of publication no vessels are held by Somali pirates, but 37 seafarers and fishers are reportedly being held ashore by pirate gangs, after one died last May of, it is suspected, malaria. The latest release of seafarers occurred in June 2014 when the remaining survivors from the *Albedo* were repatriated, after three years in captivity. Some of the remaining seafarers have now been held hostage for 4 years.

No known negotiations are in process to facilitate the release of the 37.

Meanwhile piracy and other forms of maritime crime have increased in the Gulf of Guinea and Malacca Straits. These regions have been notorious for piracy. However, the nature of piracy in these regions has evolved and the political challenges they pose are both unique and complex to address. Ships are regularly attacked, often for product theft and seafarers are robbed of personal possessions or kidnapped for ransom and put at risk as they go about their legitimate business in national and international waters.

The MPHRP is deeply concerned for the wellbeing of seafarers in hostage situations. There have been cases of brutal treatment, abuse and torture and lately, most regrettably, several fatalities, including the apparent murder of hostages, while others have been used as "human shields". Many other seafarers, even though their ship may not have been hijacked, have found themselves under armed attack and may

have also been subject to a harrowing time locked in a citadel until released.

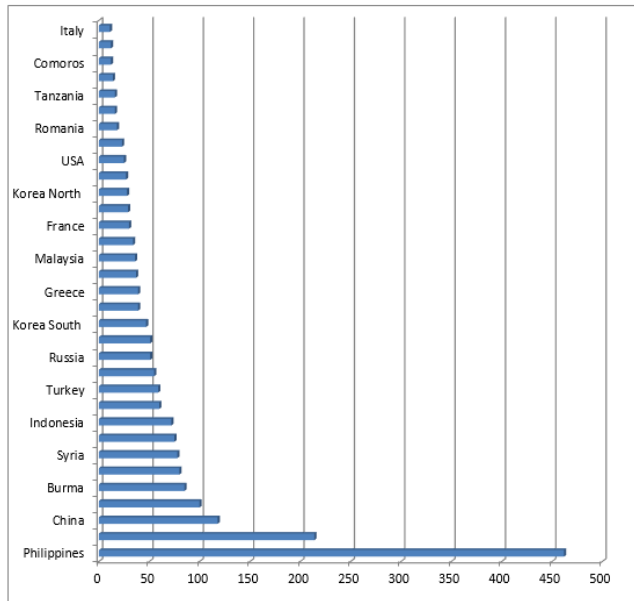


Figure 1. Affected by pirates' incidents. By nations

While acknowledging the actions of governments, the United Nations and the International Maritime Organisation, the shipping industry has recognised that more needs to be done to support seafarers and their families, not least due to the threat to recruitment and retention of personnel.

The incidents of piracy have directly affected more than 5000 seafarers who have been hijacked and held hostage for months often in appalling conditions, while thousands of others have been the victims of a pirate attacks, albeit unsuccessful attacks. Daily more than 100,000 seafarers transit regions known for pirate activity, inducing anxiety. Their families share these worries, often with a feeling of helplessness.

Given these numerous concerns, a pan-industry alliance of ship owners, unions, managers, manning agents, insurers and welfare associations (maritime, labour, faith or secular) has come together to establish the "Maritime Piracy: a Humanitarian Response Programme" (MPHRP).

The Programme has been built around the affect piracy has on seafarers and their families. Seafarers, obviously, play a pivotal role in any piracy incident. It is up to seafarers to diligently apply appropriate Best Management Practice (BMP4) as adopted by the industry for safe transit through the Gulf of Aden, and new proposals being drafted by the industry for transiting the Gulf of Guinea. Seafarers are expected to remain vigilant and take responsibility for their own safety. In addition, understanding the motives, tactics and behavior to be expected from pirates and knowing how best to conduct themselves in hostage situations, could enhance resilience and may help to ensure continued well-being in and ultimate survival of these volatile situations.

Seafarers are integral to the overall outcome of the incident. Hence the focus on training seafarers for the unlikely event of pirate attack.

The training is evidence based, relying on the research and input of a task group of multi-disciplined, international specialists and on extensive fact finding and feedback gained from firsthand meetings and interviews with seafarers and families worldwide, including many with firsthand experience of attacks and hijackings.

Advisory groups on industry practices and procedures were consulted and offered collaboration.

The Programme is governed and advised by a Programme Steering Group, the largest known alliance in the industry, with the aim of caring for seafarers and families affected by piracy.

The Programme provides pre-deployment piracy training for seafarers and companies, and teaches the skills required of welfare responders on how best to assist seafarers and families who fall victim to piracy.

The Programme has developed:

- "good practice" guides for use by shipping companies, manning agents and welfare associations to support both seafarers and seafarers' families through the three phases of a piracy incident; pre-departure, the crisis and post-release/post-incident,
- associated training modules,
- an international network of trained first emergency- and welfare responders with appropriate skills within partner and associated organisations,
- access to a network of professional aftercare,
- a 24 hour seafarers' international helpline

The objectives of this Programme address the three phases of "pre-, during and post-incident", with the aim of implementing a model of assisting seafarers and their families with the humanitarian aspects of a traumatic incident caused by a piracy attack, armed robbery or being taken hostage. The services of the Programme are offered to the industry as an integral part of the Emergency Response Procedures of shipping companies and manning agencies in cooperation with partners involved in seafarers' welfare (maritime, union, faith or secular based agencies), company representatives and other bodies as appropriate.

The outcomes are anticipated to include:

- Guidelines on "good practice" for companies and seafarer welfare organisations on supporting seafarers and their family members through the three phases of a piracy incident from pre-deployment, during the crisis and post release/post incident.
- The development and implementation of relevant training modules.
- The development of an international network of trained first-responders with appropriate skills within partner and associated organisations.
- Access to a network of professional aftercare.
- The availability of a seafarers' telephone helpline.
- A resource to collect appropriate research/information and to make this available where further advice or assistance is sought.

MPHRP has established regional offices and appointed its representatives in Ukraine, India and

Philippines – in countries where the greatest number of seafarers were affected by pirates' incidents.

In Ukraine representatives of Maritime Community has organized MPHRP National Working Group aimed to adapt and implement MPHRP guides and training for seafarers' benefits within the country taking into account peculiarities of National law, mentality and traditions. Thus Odessa National Maritime Academy is an active participant of the Programme. It has delivered joint courses, lectures and seminars for its students with MPHRP Director in the Eastern Europe region.

The MPHRP has achieved many of its ongoing objectives in its first five years of operations and has received acclaim and recognition for its excellence in delivery of services to seafarers and the industry. The Seatrade Award for Safety at Sea, a prestigious annual award recognising the best in the industry, was awarded to MPHRP in 2014.

The Programme has achieved

- The release, with the help of the Programme's partners, of several hostages, the most recent being the survivors of the *Albedo*. Eleven seafarers came home to Iran, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. These seafarers and families were supported with 450 other seafarers and families that the MPHRP is helping to overcome the aftermath of piracy. The Programme also supports the families of seafarers who have not returned but are missing or have died. One Indian seafarer from the *Albedo* was shot dead by pirates, and four Sri Lankan seafarers are missing since the *Albedo* sank off the Somali coast
- 37 seafarers remain in Somalia. One recently died in captivity. MPHRP tries to raise interest in facilitating these seafarers' possible release. No-one else is doing anything to secure their freedom as all negotiations with owners have stalled. MPHRP continues to support the families of these seafarers, including the crew of the *Naham 3*.
- Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is a very different problem than Somali-based piracy. The MPHRP have been researching the unique aspects of Gulf of Guinea West African piracy. The industry is developing a new standard for good management practice to mitigate the risk of piracy in West Africa. Attacks continue. Some attacks lead to kidnap for ransom. MPHRP is reviewing and

expanding its original Good Practice Guides for all the industry to include up to date information on how piracy has evolved, and to include information unique to Gulf of Guinea. MPHRP is looking towards developing a quick response procedure that would suit the needs of seafarers affected by piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

- Piracy in Indonesia has been flaring up and there are signs that the modus operandi mimics that of West African pirates: product / cargo theft, taking the valuables off the ship, damaging communication equipment, etc. The MPHRP is developing appropriate responses for this part of the world.
- Welfare Responders Training has been launched since the end of 2013. 130 welfare responders have been trained worldwide to support seafarers and families. Some were trained in Ukraine, as many affected seafarers come from here. The training course for welfare responders focuses on reassurance. It includes dealing with the anticipation of piracy (fear and anxiety), good practice in dealing with hostage situations, humanitarian responses to the needs of seafarers and families during captivity and immediately after release. Recovery includes re-employment, preferably at sea.
- Research on the impact of piracy on seafarers and families is being done in Ukraine in collaboration with Oceans Beyond Piracy / One Earth Foundation.
- Due to excellent work being done in Ukraine, the MPHRP has extended the remit of the Ukraine team to include the region Eastern Europe, operational since the beginning of 2014.
- The Programme continues to support 200 seafarers' families who have not been able to readjust to the situation post piracy. These families and seafarers are helped financially, medically, with counselling and general support.

REFERENCES

MPHRP Guides 2011
IMB Statistics 2011