Dear Yachtsman,

All Sailing Yachts under their own passage should remain out of the High Risk Area (HRA) or face the risk of been attacked, hijacked and held hostage for ransom.

Overview

1. The danger of piracy and consequent loss of life and property in the Gulf of Aden, Yemeni waters and Somali waters remains a threat to sailing vessels. Sailing yachts and pleasure craft are strongly recommended to avoid the area. In March 2018 EU NAVFOR and CMF produced a Threat Assessment, the conclusions of this report state that the Somali-based pirate networks and their affiliates retain both the intent and capability to conduct acts of piracy. The last pirating of a Merchant Vessel was in early 2017, subsequently there has been attacks by well-equipped and armed pirates on 3 MVs, 1 in the Gulf of Aden and 2 in the Somali Basin. The 1st MV was able to deter an attack by the use of a Private Armed Security Team (PAST), the 2nd MV with a freeboard of 8m was able to increase her speed to 22kts. The 3rd MV was successfully boarded by pirates but was rescued and freed by a counter-piracy boarding party from the Chinese Navy. In addition there have been numerous incidents of armed robbery, indiscriminate shootings and attacks on local fishing dhows. Sailing vessels which are slow and low are extremely vulnerable from opportunistic attacks and hijackings. The general security situation in the HRA region remains unstable. Many coastal areas of Yemen are subject to maritime military operations conducted by the Saudi led coalition. Vessels that enter Yemen TTW can expect to be hailed and challenged by coalition warships.

2. MSCHOA liaises with anti-piracy patrols being conducted by warships from several nations in the area. The patrols operate mainly in the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin, however no guarantee can be offered as to the safe transit of any yacht through these waters, and no dedicated escort can be expected.

3. However a yacht/leisure craft which, despite the advice to stay out of the HRA, decides on such a passage it is strongly recommended to register its transit with MSCHOA; please email postmaster@mschoa.org to request an offline registration form. Visit the MSCHOA website (www.mschoa.org) and World Sailing Ltd websites for the most up to date information.

Preparation

4. A vessel should carry UK Admiralty Anti-Piracy Chart – Q6099 in addition to its holdings of navigation charts.

5. Yachts are urged to register with MSCHOA and UKMTO prior to entering the High Risk Area.

6. During her passage a yacht should monitor VHF 16 and VHF 8 or as advised by patrolling warships.

7. Merchant ships transiting the GoA are advised to use the Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor (IRTC). Yachts are advised to remain close to or within the IRTC as follows:

The IRTC has two lanes, each 5nm wide and a separation zone between them 2nm wide. To all intents and purposes it operates a Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) although formally it does not have that status. A yacht which has registered her intention to transit the GoA is invited to sail either in the 2nm 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 VHF transmission being received by a patrolling warship, or being relayed by a merchant vessel. However VHF contact is not guaranteed.

9. Ensure that all systems (in particular the engine) are in good working order, radios and satphones are working properly and have been tested. Ensure you have plenty of fuel and the ship's batteries are serviceable.

AIS, Communications, Radar, EPIRBs

10. Current advice is to leave AIS switched on and transmitting whilst transiting the Gulf of Aden. In the Somali basin or further into the Indian Ocean it remains the Captains decision as to the status of his AIS transmission. However AIS should be switched on if the yacht is aware of military forces or is under attack.

Under Attack

11. The following initial steps should be taken if you are under attack:

Make a Mayday call. If possible report immediately to UKMTO on +44 2392 222060 – make sure you know your position.

Pirates onboard

12. If pirates are on-board:

Stay calm and do not offer any resistance Cooperate with the pirates

Summary

13. The crew of sailing vessels are very valuable targets of maritime crime. If captured the crew will be the subject of brutal captive conditions and possibly sold to Islamic terrorists. Merchant Vessels and the crew are insured and protected financially by multi-national cooperation's. As a private sailing crew the full weight of any financial burden in the case of a ransom will fall to family and loved ones.