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YACHT RALLIES: HORN OF AFRICA

1. From the commencement of Operation ATALANTA, the European Union's first Naval operation (EUNAVFOR), the military force has sought to protect World Food Programme and vulnerable shipping while seeking to deter and disrupt acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia. Throughout this process, the Headquarters has engaged and developed close working relationships with all segments of the Shipping Industry. The strength of these relationships has provided a foundation for cooperation that has been fundamental in enhancing protection to all vessels from acts of piracy.
2. The initial focus was on protecting merchant shipping transiting the strategic artery of the Gulf of Aden and whose transit directly impacts on the sustainability of world trade. However, during the course of the mission, vulnerabilities of other types of seafaring craft continue to be identified, including private cruising yachts sailing in the waters off the Horn of Africa.
3. The types of craft that are successfully pirated tend to be those that are slow and have a low freeboard and sailing through the High Risk Areas (this area is defined as the area bounded by Suez to the North, 10°S and 78°E). In conjunction with the International Sailing Federation EUNAVFOR produced specific yachting guidance for yachts that elect to transit through this area. The advice given was that yachts should avoid the area; however, if they choose to ignore this advice and transit the area they should:
 - a. Ensure registration with the Maritime Security Centre-Horn of Africa (www.mschoa.eu);
 - b. Report to UK Maritime Trade Organisation (ukmto@eim.ae); and
 - c. Follow a corridor between the transit lanes for merchant ships along the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor.

4. This advice remains extant and as we enter another yachting season it was felt necessary to write to you to reinforce this position. We have become aware of a number of planned yacht rallies that will transit through the High Risk Area in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean involving crews of various ages (including teenagers) and nationalities. The threat of piracy continues as their modus operandi and ability to operate at greater distances from the Somali Coast -evolves. While EUNAVFOR, along with partners and Independent Deployers, work to contain pirate activity, it remains a significant and growing danger to vessels transiting these waters.
5. EUNAVFOR does not have the assets to provide escorts or support to such rallies and therefore, wishes to ensure that the yacht associations and sailors are informed of the risks. The advice remains that yachts should avoid the area because of the danger and their specific vulnerabilities. In addition to the advice detailed above, all rally leaders, captains, sailors and crew should review the Best Management Practices Version 3 (available on the MSC-HOA website) and seek travel advice from their national Foreign Affairs Departments and regional embassies.
6. You are strongly encouraged not to sail in the High Risk Areas in vessels that are vulnerable to pirate attack.

Yours sincerely



Guido RANDO

Rear Admiral, Italian Navy

Deputy Commander Operation Atalanta

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/staying-safe/river-safety/indian-ocean-piracy>

Piracy in the Indian Ocean

- *We advise against all but essential travel by yacht and leisure craft on the high seas (more than 12 nautical miles from shore) in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and part of the Indian Ocean bounded by the following latitude and longitude: 15°N in the Red Sea, 23°N in the Arabian Sea, 78°E and 15°S in the Indian Ocean.*
- *We urge all merchant shipping, including Cruise Ships, to comply with agreed shipping industry best practice on self-defence measures, including on speed, routing and maintaining adequate lookout.*
- *We urge all mariners to register with the Maritime Security Centre (Horn of Africa) for up to date advice and guidance on passage round the Horn of Africa. They should also report regularly to the UKMTO (email: ukmto@eim.ug; Tel: +971 50 552 3215), giving location, course and speed, and plan their routing carefully so as to avoid placing themselves in unnecessary danger.*

Piracy is a significant threat in the Gulf of Aden and the north-west Indian Ocean and has occurred in excess of 1000 nautical miles from the coast of Somalia. The EU Naval Force Somalia gives up-to-date information about attacks and pirated vessels.

Attacks of piracy and armed robbery against vessels in and around the Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin continue to affect only a very small proportion of overall shipping. However, these are frequent and continuing, proving successful almost exclusively against shipping which has not complied with agreed shipping industry best practice on self-defence measures. All mariners should follow the Best Management Practise for the Gulf of Aden and off Somalia.

Sailing vessels are particularly vulnerable to attack due to their low speed and low freeboard. We advise against all but essential travel by yacht and leisure craft on the high seas in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and part of the Indian Ocean, as bounded by the latitude and longitude coordinates above. All mariners intending to sail through high risk areas should consider the necessity of their travel and alternatives, such as transporting the vessel by yacht carrier.

Yacht races and rallies do not have to take place in these high risk areas and place their competitors at unnecessary risk of attack. These events are often publicised and could draw attention from pirates. We advise mariners not to take part in these races.

We urge mariners to register with the Maritime Security Centre (Horn of Africa) for up to date advice and guidance on passage round the Horn of Africa. They should also report regularly to the UKMTO giving their location, course and speed, and plan their routing carefully so as to avoid placing themselves in unnecessary danger.