

Date: 1st June 2017

"Making the maritime environment a safer place to live and work"



Reporting and analysis on the attacks on MT Muskie and MV Navig8 Providence



On 31st May it was reported that three pirates in a skiff armed with guns and RPG's chased and fired upon the laden Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker Muskie, while underway at 0715 UTC in position 12°33'47N 043°29'24E, around 5nm SE of Perim Island, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea.

The alarm was raised and non-essential crew mustered in the citadel. Three RPGs were fired at the vessel. MT Muskie sustained damage to the bridge. The embarked armed security team fired warning shots resulting in the skiff moving away. Two warships proceeded to the area to assist the vessel. All on-board were reported safe.

UKMTO commented saying that the incident was under on-going investigation, and could not confirm any information other than there was an attack and the vessel was now safe. However, UKMTO have advised vessels operating within the immediate area to exercise extreme caution. MAST echo's this advice.

MAST's assessment is that based on the position, it is possible that this was an attempt by AQ in Yemen to conduct a terrorist attack on a vessel in the BAM. However, given the nature of criminal activity in the region, and the fact that RPGs were fired (a Somali pirate modus operandi) an attempt at piracy cannot be entirely ruled out either.

On 1st June UKMTO issued a warning that an MV (believed to be Navig8 Providence) was attacked in position 23°32'N 060°26'E at 0430 UTC. The vessel was reported safe. MAST understands that there was an armed security team on board which repelled the attack. This attack was about 80NM NNE of Ras Al Had, Oman in the Persian Gulf, outside of the 1st December 2015 HRA. It is feasible that the attack on the Navig8 Providence was launched from the Iranian dhow hijacked a week ago off the Horn of Africa which UKMTO warned was potentially being used as a mother vessel. The hijacked dhow may since have repositioned itself outside the HRA where vessels are more likely to have relaxed their guard and where the dhow can blend in with the local pattern of life. A typical Somali pirate technique is to 'lily pad' from mother-vessel to mother-vessel as supplies run low and in this area there will be a higher density of Iranian dhows for them to choose from.

While this was an isolated incident from which it might be dangerous to draw hard and fast conclusions, an attack outside of the HRA is a worrying development. It suggests the Somali pirates are taking a strategic approach to PAG deployment, seeking to place them where they are most likely to find commercial vessels which do not have embarked security.



MAST strongly advises that all voyages through the HRA and close to the borders are risk assessed. A good lookout and a knowledge of the pattern of life are essential. Armed guards are recommended for all vessels with less than 8 metres freeboard and a passage speed of less than 18 Knots.

