Beat: Miscellaneous

IMB: Piracy on world`s seas drops to lowest level since 2008

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USPA News - The number of pirate attacks on the world`s seas dropped to 233 during the first nine months of 2012, the lowest third-quarter total since 2008, according to figures released by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). The report, Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships, showed only 70 attacks were carried out in waters around Somalia during the first nine months of this year, a significant decrease from the 199 attacks during the same period last year.

Only one attempted attack was reported in Somali waters between July and September, compared with 36 such incidents during the same three months period last year. But despite the positive developments, the International Maritime Bureau warned seafarers to remain vigilant, especially in the high-risk waters around Somalia, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. There is also evidence that violent attacks and hijackings are becoming more frequent in the Gulf of Guinea. "We welcome the successful robust targeting of Pirate Action Groups by international navies in the high risk waters off Somalia, ensuring these criminals are removed before they can threaten ships," said IMB Director Captain Pottengal Mukundan, commenting on Monday`s report. "It`s good news that hijackings are down, but there can be no room for complacency: these waters are still extremely high-risk and the naval presence must be maintained." According to IMB`s Piracy Reporting Center, pirates boarded 125 vessels so far this year, hijacked 24 of them, and fired upon 26 vessels. They were also responsible for killing at least six crew members and taking 448 seafarers hostage. Eleven vessels and 167 crew members are still being held hostage, and an additional 21 crew members are being held hostage on land. In the Gulf of Guinea, at least 34 piracy-related incidents were reported between January and September as pirates pushed their territory westward from Benin to neighboring Togo. IMB said attacks in the region are often violent, planned and aimed at stealing refined oil products which can be easily sold on the open market. Togo reported more attacks this year than in the previous five years combined, with three vessels hijacked, two boarded and six attempted attacks. Off Benin, one ship was hijacked and one boarded. Nigeria accounted for 21 attacks, with nine vessels boarded, four hijacked, seven fired upon and one attempted attack. "Not all navies in the Gulf of Guinea have the resources to fight piracy far out at sea, so criminal gangs shift to other areas," said Captain Mukundan. "The Nigerian navy must be commended however on its reactions to a number of incidents where their presence was instrumental in rescuing vessels." Meanwhile, at least 51 incidents were recorded in waters around Indonesia during the first nine months of 2012, an increase from the 46 incidents in 2011. But the International Maritime Bureau said most of these attacks appeared to be opportunistic thefts and mainly carried out on board vessels at anchor.

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