



Guiding Spirit to Shipping Industry

Sagar Sandesh

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JOHNNY DEPP MAYBE LOVABLE, BUT REAL PIRATES AREN'T - By Capt Shiv Halbe



Capt Shiv Halbe

The recent incident of ‘piracy’ (boarding and assault) on a bulk carrier in Singapore Straits set the social media abuzz, with comments ranging from ‘condemning the heinous act’ to ‘registering a grievance’.

However, the comments set the old grey cells in ‘operate’ mode to wonder how serious is the problem? Targeting ‘innocent’ merchant ships is not new. Whatever be the category- robbery, piracy, threat or attempted boarding- all point towards invasion of personal space of the innocent seafarer, a ‘violation’ in its worst form. And his crime? Being on board a merchant ship engaged in International Trade (to use a the hoity toity phrase – keeping the wheels of global supply chain moving).

Let’s look at the statistics published by the International Maritime Bureau, the global watchdog in these matters, based out of Kuala Lumpur.

The recent report published for the period 1st Jan 2023 to 30th Sept 2023 (9 months) with a comparison going back to 2019 for the same 9-month period, makes interesting reading (for the statisticians, not for the seafarer).

The report defines ‘Piracy and armed robbery’ by reproducing the relevant sections from UNCLOS (Art 101) and IMO resolution A.1025(26). Then there is an interesting statement:

Quote

The definitions of piracy and armed robbery are aimed to assign responsibility for responding to these illegal acts. It is worth noting that these definitions do not consider the resulting consequence on the crew, vessel, and cargo, which in IMB’s experience ranges from opportunistic theft, cargo theft, taking crew hostage, assault and injury, kidnapping and in some cases death of crew member’

Unquote

This is legal jargon, but essentially limits the response to the act itself and not the consequences!! Sorry seafarer- you don’t count!

The report then presents the statistics:

Of the 99 incidents reported in the 9-month period, 45 took place in SE Asia, with a bizarre 33 taking place in Singapore straits!!

Out of the 99 incidents reported, the perpetrators were successful

in 89%! Out of the 33 incidents reported in the Singapore Straits, 31 were ‘successful’!

Various tables then list out the types of violence to the crew, the types of arms used, and states that a staggering 69 crew members were

taken hostage in the first 9 months of 2023!

Page 25 of the report displays graphically, trends within areas of continued concern:

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JOHNNY DEPP MAYBE LOVABLE..... From Page : 2

Area of reported incidents	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Singapore Straits	1	15	20	31	33
West Africa-Gulf of Guinea	48	44	27	14	21
Peru, Callao	5	5	15	8	13

Though all incidents of piracy and armed robbery are worrisome, of particular concern is the trend shown in the Singapore Straits. 14 vessels of over 80000 dwt were boarded! The IMB believes that there is gross under reporting of incidents in this area.

This begs some questions.

Considering the huge maritime traffic transiting straits of Singapore, is it not a matter of time that a piracy incident could turn into a navigation environmental disaster? Who is responsible then? Or the littoral states will take the easy way out and 'arrest/detain' the crew

pending 'investigation'?

For far too long the seafarer has been at the short end of the stick. Every entity has used the seafarer's cause as a 'lean to' to portray themselves as champions, but hardly anything trickling down to the seafarer. However, any maritime incident leads to 'detention' of

crew, irrespective of his/her participation in the incident! Examples galore:

1. Vessel allegedly transgressing national boundaries- vessel arrested and whole crew detained for months
2. Vessel allegedly involved in collision with fishing vessel- vessel arrested and whole crew detained
3. Vessel allegedly running sanctions- vessel arrested and whole crew detained!

The list is endless...

However, the world does not seem to find its bearings to take adequate measures to prevent violent acts against the hapless crew in the piracy prone areas.

Its beyond comprehension how vessels at anchor are 'attacked' and local authorities do not know the perpetrators! Its not possible that littoral states around Straits of Singapore are not aware of the perpetrators of crime in their waters. After all, the small skiffs used in the attacks must be having their abode in one of the many islands in the archipelago.

Johnny Depp made the pirate 'Jack Sparrow' lovable, but real pirates aren't funny. So, move over Johnny, seafarers may not want to spend their hard-earned money to watch you portray a pirate. Its too close to bitter reality for them!

MARINE NEWS India files a case seeking the release of 8 of its Naval Veterans



External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.

New Delhi
Sagar Sandesh News Service

India has filed an appeal in a Qatar court seeking the release of the eight Indian Naval veterans according to External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi. The appeal was filed 2 weeks after the naval personnel arrested in a case of espionage were sentenced to death by a court in Qatar

The judgment is confidential. There is a court of first instance that gave the judgment, which was shared with the legal team. Considering all legal options, an appeal has been filed. We are in touch with the Qatari authorities," MEA spokesperson

Arindam Bagchi said on November 9th

We got another round of consular access with the eight Indians on November 7. We are in touch with the family members," he said, adding that India will continue to extend all legal and consular support in the case.

The Indian nationals, all employees of Doha-based Dahra Global, were taken into custody in August 2022. The charges against them were not made public by Qatari authorities. According to a report in the Financial Times, they were charged with spying for Israel. There was no official word from India on the charges against them. Former Navy personnel had been working in their private capacity with Dahra Global to oversee the induction of Italian small stealth submarines U2I2.

The Eight have been identified as Captain Navtej Singh Gill, Captain Birendra Kumar Verma, Captain Saurabh Vasisht, Commander Amit Nagpal, Commander Purnendu Tiwari, Commander Sugunakar Pakala, Commander Sanjeev Gupta and Sailor Ragesh.

Days after they were handed the

death sentence, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had met them government attaches highest importance for the release of the their family members and assured naval veterans



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F-1, Gautam Budh Nagar, Sector-3, Noida, Uttar Pradesh - 201301
Ph: +91 7823921234 / 0120-4578814
Email: hr@cormorant.in / md@cormorant.in www.cormorantshipping.com