Joint Maritime Information Center

JMIC Information Note

JMIC# 125

UNAUTHORIZED BOARDING

Indian Ocean

INCIDENT REPORT
Ref. **UKMTO ADVISORY 040-25 – ILLEGAL BOARDING**

MT HELLAS APHRODITE (IMO: 9722766) has been attacked 560NM southeast of Eyl, Somalia. The Master of a vessel reported an approach by 1 small craft on its stern. The small craft fired small arms and RPGs toward the vessel. The vessel was boarded by personnel presumed to be Somali pirates in position of 0205N 05710E. Vessels in vicinity are advised to transit with caution and report any suspicious activity to UKMTO. Military Task Force assets are responding.

Figure 1 represents an area of increased threat of piracy to shipping outlined in red. The red shaded circle denotes the PAG approximate position on 04 Nov. The green shaded circle denotes the boarding on 06 Nov. JMIC reminds maritime industry to exercise extreme caution while transiting the area and consider extending the standoff distance from the Somali coastline.

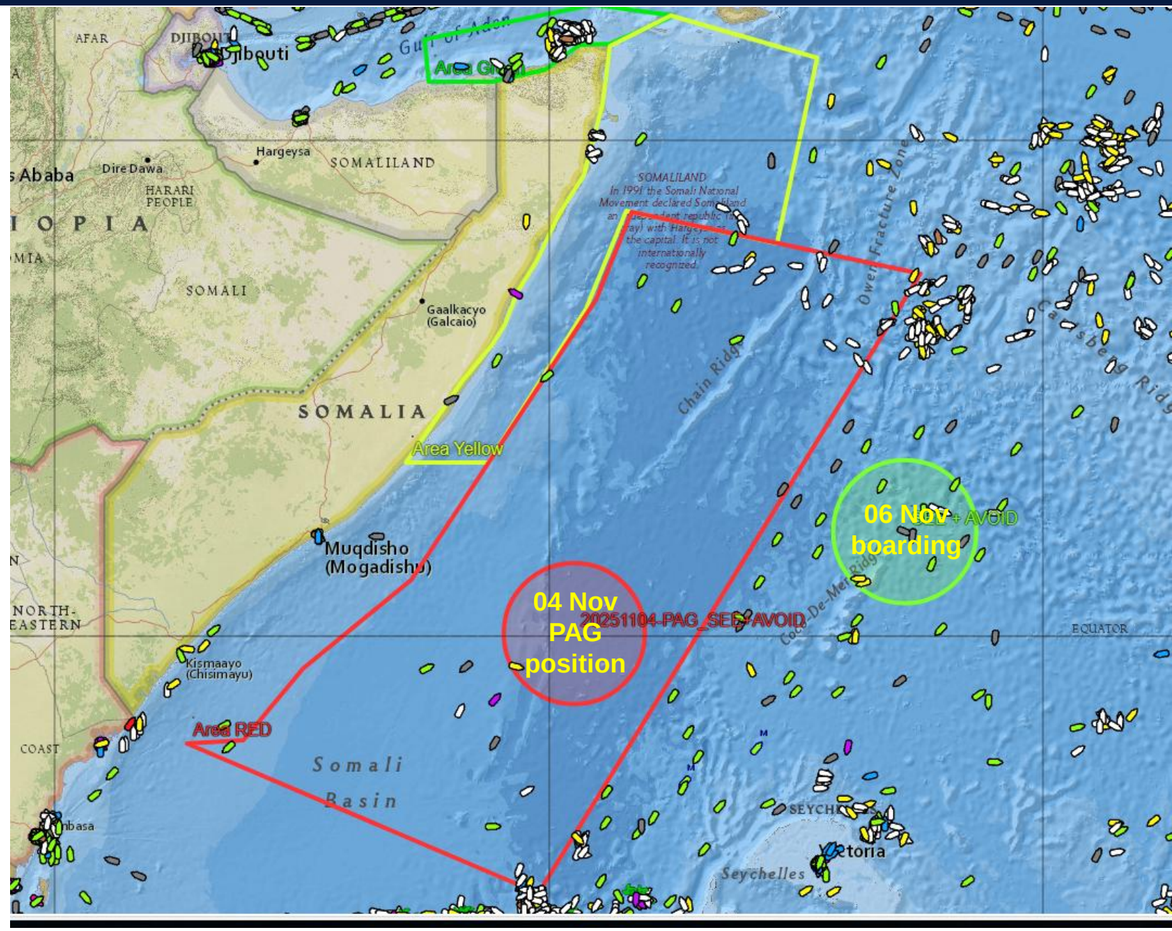

Fig 1 (Source: UKMTO)

JMIC Guidance

JMIC GUIDANCE

1. Freedom of navigation and the free flow of maritime commerce continue as a top priority within the Southern Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.
The current threat assessment identifies:

a. Any vessel transiting the Somali Basin is at risk of encountering a PAG with the most recent attack approx. 560 miles east of the Somali coast.
b. Vessels with an Israeli affiliation and or vessels within a Group or Company fleet structure whereby the company has been identified making port calls to Israel are at risk of targeting by Houthis.

2. Vessels intending to transit the threat area are recommended to exercise caution by considering the following:

a. Conduct a threat and risk assessment prior to entering the area including a review of ports calls of other company vessels
b. Review security measures/incorporate appropriate vessel hardening measures into their security plans
c. Turning off any form of non-essential emissions (e.g. intraship UHF/VHF transmissions) and AIS policy in the vicinity of, or before transiting or entering the threat area is to be very carefully considered as part of the voyage risk mitigation process, as broadcasting on AIS is assessed to aid Houthi targeting
  i. While transmitting AIS may be consistent with SOLAS, it may compromise the safety & security of the vessel and crew
  ii. If AIS is turned off, consider altering course and speed to minimize tracking by Dead Reckoning
d. Do not loiter when transiting the threat area and proceed with caution
e. If contacted by any unrecognized organization:
  i. Report back to your company security officer and validate the source before responding
f. If contacted on VHF by “Yemeni Navy”:
  i. Ignore the VHF call and continue passage if safe to do so
  ii. Describe the incident in follow up reports to UKMTO
g. Share instances of suspicious activity with UKMTO (with recordings or imagery where possible)
  i. UAV sightings
  ii. Communications challenges
h. In case of unexploded ordnance and debris on deck:
  i. Maintain a safe distance (as far away as practically possible) and cordon off the area
  ii. Do not touch or try to dismantle any debris
  iii. Be aware that any radio emissions may trigger the device
  iv. Request assistance through UKMTO, ask for an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team (EOD)
i. Use of Best Management Practices (BMP) should be considered
  i. Chain link fencing can be used to reduce the effects of an RPG
  ii. Review: JMIC Bridge Emergency Reference Cards #5 Piracy Attack Unauthorized Boardings

Maritime Industry is recommended to:

a. Conduct a threat & risk assessment of all associated vessels and especially those that may have previous Israel ownership or associations [to include recent port calls by vessels within the company and/or group structure]
b. Companies should plan and implement risk mitigation measures in advance of the furthest identified attack areas as depicted in the JMIC and UKMTO products
c. If an association is made, shipping companies are recommended to provide the information to UKMTO prior to transiting the threat area
d. Ensure their managed vessels receive and follow the guidance for vessels
e. Review digital footprint
f. The JMIC is aware of increased email communication between unrecognized reporting entities and flag states/owners/operators:
  i. If contacted by any organization not officially recognized, report back to your company security officer and validate the source before responding
  ii. Any response should be carefully considered
  iii. Review flag state and company best practice/guidance before responding to statements by Houthi forces that encourage merchant shipping to engage with the Houthi’s Humanitarian Operations Coordination Centre (HOCC), or Yemeni Navy.
g. Open-source claims that vessels are targeted may not be factual
  i. JMIC recommends verifying source for legitimacy.