

# Republic of the Marshall Islands

## MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

11495 COMMERCE PARK DRIVE, RESTON, VIRGINIA 20191-1506  
TELEPHONE: +1-703-620-4880 FAX: +1-703-476-8522  
EMAIL: marsec@register-iri.com WEBSITE: www.register-iri.com

### SHIP SECURITY ADVISORY No. 04-26

**To: Owners/Operators, Masters, Company Security Officers, Recognized Security Organizations**

**Subject: RESURGENCE OF SOMALI-BASED PIRACY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION**

**Date: 4 May 2026**

This Ship Security Advisory (SSA) supersedes SSA No. 04-25 and should be circulated to Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)-flagged vessels that are operating or intend to operate in the:

- Gulf of Aden (GoA);
- Arabian Sea; or
- Indian Ocean.

#### 1.0 Updates

- 1.1 This SSA has been revised to reflect the recent escalation of Somali-based piracy in the Indian Ocean Region (see §2.0 for details).
- 1.2 Section 3.0 has been updated with enhanced advice for heightened vigilance while operating in the region.

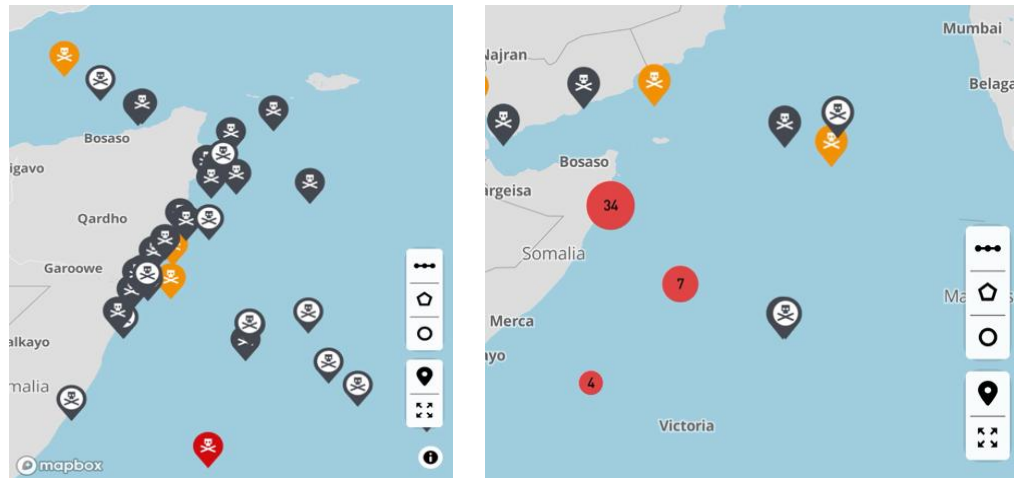
#### 2.0 Threat and Risk

##### 2.1 Recent Incidents

- 2.1.1 Activity indicative of Somali-based piracy has re-emerged in the Indian Ocean Region since November 2023. With a renewed escalation observed in April and May 2026, multiple merchant vessels and fishing dhows have been approached, fired-upon, and hijacked off the coast of Somalia, with the most recent indicator activity also reported in the southern Gulf of Aden and at anchorages on the south coast of Yemen. While these events were first attributed to local fishery disputes, it now appears that these hijacked dhows are being used as pirate motherships in the Indian Ocean (including the GoA and Arabian Sea).

This SSA is evaluated annually by the Administrator and expires one year after its issuance or renewal unless otherwise noted, superseded, or revoked.

2.1.2 The following images depict reported piracy incidents (hijackings, attempts, boardings, and attacks) since November 2023:



Source: Risk Intelligence

2.1.3 Recent Somali-based piracy and armed robbery against ships incidents have included the successful hijacking of well over a dozen fishing dhows and small boats, the attempted boarding of multiple merchant vessels, and the successful hijacking of two bulk carriers and two tankers. This is in addition to multiple reported sightings of suspected piratical activity or PAGs in the Indian Ocean Region. Recent incidents include the following:

- .1 On 21 April 2026, the Palau-flagged combined chemical and oil tanker HONOUR 25 (IMO 1099735) was hijacked at 08°57'N 050°34'E, approximately 32.5 nautical miles (nm) south-southeast of Hafun, by six armed individuals using AK-variant rifles and a rocket-propelled grenade. The vessel had a freeboard of approximately 0.9 meters, was transiting at 3–5 knots, and had no embarked armed security; some crew of Pakistani and Sri Lankan nationality used the citadel during the boarding. The vessel was subsequently brought to anchor between Xaafun and Bandarbeyla, Puntland, with all 17 crew members remaining aboard.
- .2 On 23 April 2026, the Barbados-flagged general cargo vessel ELFRIEDE (IMO 9300946) was attacked at approximately 06°23'N 049°48'E, approximately 83 nm southeast of Eyl, while underway from Mogadishu to Karachi, Pakistan. Two small vessels approached the vessel; following warning shots from the embarked private armed security team, the attacking vessels returned fire. ELFRIEDE increased speed northbound close to the coast and the approaching vessels broke off and returned to coast.

- .3 On 25 April 2026, the cargo dhow FAHAD 4 (UAE-flagged, MMSI 470007178), transporting dry goods, was hijacked by approximately 11 pirates approximately 10 nm off Dhinowda, Somalia, at 07°00'N 049°00'E. The vessel's last known position prior to the hijacking was on 23 April 2026 at 05°18.5'N 048°43.7'E.
- .4 On 26 April 2026 at 2000 UTC, the general cargo vessel SWARD (IMO 9174244) was hijacked in the vicinity of Garacad, Somalia, outside Somali territorial waters near the Godobjiran area, while underway from Berbera to Mombasa, Kenya, by an estimated 10 armed individuals approaching in three skiffs; the vessel had no embarked armed security. The vessel was subsequently re-directed and anchored within Somali territorial waters at 07°13'N 049°32'E. Most of the 15 crew were mustered on the bridge under armed control, with two engineers held in the engine room.
- .5 On 28 April 2026 at 1600 UTC, the Malta-flagged crude oil tanker MINERVA PISCES (IMO 9410179) reported a suspicious approach by a suspected mothership and skiff at 03°15'N 056°24'E, approximately 471 nm southeast of Garacad, while underway from Jazan, Saudi Arabia, to Mombasa, Kenya. The skiff closed to 400 meters on the starboard bow before disengaging in response to embarked armed security taking defensive positions, the vessel increasing speed, and conducting evasive maneuvers.
- .6 On 02 May 2026 at approximately 0500 local time (0200 UTC), the Togo-flagged tanker M/T EUREKA was boarded and seized by armed individuals while at anchorage off Qana Port, Shabwa Governorate, Yemen. Per MSCIO ALERT 41/26 (02 May 2026, 1215 UTC), the vessel was assessed to be underway following the hijacking, transiting at approximately 5 knots in the direction of the the Somali coast. Operation ATALANTA is investigating, and Yemen Coast Guard units have been deployed to locate the vessel. The seizure of a commercial tanker at anchorage in Yemeni waters represents a notable departure from the close-inshore Somali coast and deep-offshore mothership-launched profiles observed earlier in the current cycle.
- .7 On 02 May 2026 at 0640 UTC, UKMTO reported a suspicious approach at 13°35.0'N 050°12.9'E in the Gulf of Aden, in which a suspected mothership and skiff closed to within 500 meters of a merchant vessel. The transiting vessel implemented hardening and security measures, and both suspicious craft subsequently disengaged. The temporal proximity (within hours) and approximate 110 nm geographic separation between this approach and the M/T EUREKA hijacking are notable. Attribution remains unknown pending further reporting from MSCIO, UKMTO, and Operation ATALANTA.

- 2.1.4 Hijacked fishing dhows are now being utilized as pirate motherships, enabling the pirates to travel long distances to carry out attacks. One successful hijacking of a merchant vessel in 2025 occurred approximately 600 nm off the Somali coast in the Arabian Sea. Attempted boardings and other suspected piratical activity have been reported up to approximately 900 nm off the Somali coast. It is further assessed that, should the EUREKA hijacking be confirmed as Somali-aligned, the threat envelope now extends to anchorages on the south coast of Yemen and demonstrates the potential for exploitation of vessels at non-Somali anchorages.
- 2.1.5 The 21 April 2026 hijacking of HONOUR 25 is assessed as the first successful hijacking of a commercial tanker in the Somali Basin since the March 2017 ARIS-13 incident. Together with the 26 April 2026 hijacking of the general cargo vessel SWARD approximately 6 nm northeast of Garacad, the two hijacking constitute the first successful near-shore hijackings of commercial vessels in the current piracy cycle and are distinct in profile from the prior offshore, mothership-launched seizures of MV RUEN (December 2023) and ABDULLAH (March 2024). The concurrent control of two merchant vessels by Somali PAGs is the first simultaneous merchant hijacking situation since the RUEN/ABDULLAH events of December 2023 to March 2024.
- 2.1.6 Per [IRTB 052 Update 2](#) (29 April 2026), Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and Operation ATALANTA assess two distinct pirate action groups (PAGs) to be operating concurrently in the Somali Basin in different modes. PAG A is most likely responsible for both the 23 April 2026 attack on ELFRIEDE and the 26 April 2026 hijacking of SWARD, operating close inshore in the vicinity of Garacad and Godobjiran. CMF and EUNAVOR Operation ATALANTA further assess this PAG is highly unlikely to attempt further attacks on merchant vessels in the near term, having now consolidated a hostage situation.
- 2.1.7 PAG B is likely responsible for both the 25 April 2026 hijacking of cargo dhow FAHAD 4 and the 28 April 2026 mothership-launched approach on MINERVA PISCES, employing the hijacked dhow as a mothership for deep-offshore operations. The 23 April ELFRIEDE and 28 April MINERVA PISCES outcomes demonstrate the continued efficacy of BMP-MS measures, embarked armed security, and active evasive maneuvering in deterring boarding. Conversely, neither HONOUR 25 nor SWARD carried embarked armed security at the time of attack.
- 2.1.8 The 2 May 2026 hijacking of EUREKA at a Yemeni anchorage is not assessed at this time to be attributable to either PAG A or PAG B as currently characterized. Therefore, the possibility that a third, separate threat actor (“PAG C”) is responsible cannot be discounted.

- 2.1.9 The RMI Maritime Administrator's (the "Administrator's") review of the 21 April through 2 May 2026 activity brings forth the following assessed findings:
- .1 Somali pirate operations are once again being executed within expanded areas of operations, in some cases, over 600 nm off the Somali coast.
  - .2 The spring inter-monsoon transition (approximately March through May), within which current operations sit, is assessed to be the most permissive period of the year for blue-water skiff operations and mothership deployment. The Southwest Monsoon (approximately June through September) is assessed likely to suppress deep-offshore operations and shift threat tempo to inshore waters and the Garacad and Mogadishu coastal corridors. The next comparable permissive window is assessed to open from approximately October 2026.
  - .3 Land-based Somali geography in the North and on the Indian Ocean coastline is currently conducive for Somali pirate operations including the assembly of supplies/manpower, launching to sea for operations in and near commercial shipping lanes, and bringing captured vessels to anchor near Somali coastal locations. This multi-front dynamic includes Puntland to the North, Garacad on the Indian Ocean coastline, and Eyl.
  - .4 Somali pirate tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) remain both consistent with historic operations but also demonstrating some evolution – mainly number of pirates aboard captured merchant vessels at-sea prior to being brought to anchorage and in at least one case, allowing seafarer hostages to communicate with family while being held at Somali coastal anchorages.

### **3.0 Risk Mitigation Considerations**

- 3.1 Vessels should take the below precautions when operating in the Indian Ocean Region.
- .1 Based on recent incidents and the reports of suspected pirate action groups in the region, it is recommended that ships remain at least **600 nm** off the coast of Somalia (if practicable). This advice is subject to revision as trends develop.
  - .2 Review and implement [BMP-MS](#) (as practicable).
  - .3 Undertake a thorough pre-voyage threat and risk assessment.
  - .4 Review the Ship Security Plan and amend, if necessary, after performing the pre-voyage security threat and risk assessment.
  - .5 Conduct security drills/exercises prior to entering areas of increased risk.
  - .6 Maintain a full and vigilant bridge watch for small craft approaching.

3.2 In accordance with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea Regulation V/34-1, Masters shall not be prevented from using professional judgement to make decisions necessary for safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment. The Master's discretion includes the ability to switch off the vessel's automatic identification system if it is thought that doing so will reduce threats to vessel safety or security (refer to §22 of International Maritime Organization [Assembly Resolution A.1106\(29\)](#)).

#### 4.0 Reporting

4.1 Vessels transiting the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) Voluntary Reporting Area must participate in the voluntary reporting scheme in accordance with §5.0 of RMI Marine Notice [2-011-39](#):

- .1 Register with and report to UKMTO (see [Reporting Formats](#)).
- .2 To request information or assistance from European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR), follow the instructions published on the [MSCIO website](#).

#### 5.0 Reporting an Incident or Suspicious Activity

5.1 **Emergency incident:** immediately activate the Ship Security Alert System and contact US Navy Central Command (US NAVCENT) **Battle Watch** at +973-1785-3879.

5.2 **Suspicious activity:** contact UKMTO and the IMB PRC.

5.3 **All security incidents:** report them to the Administrator at: [marsec@register-iri.com](mailto:marsec@register-iri.com), [dutyofficer@register-iri.com](mailto:dutyofficer@register-iri.com), and/or +1-571-441-1885.

5.4 Refer to *Global Maritime Security Contacts* ([MARSEC-210](#)) for a full list of relevant contacts.

#### 6.0 Supplemental Information

6.1 The [Maritime Global Security website](#) offers industry-issued best practices, including BMP-MS, guidance to mariners by geographic region, and provides contact and subscription information for regional maritime security reporting centers. BMP-MS and the Maritime Global Security website should be consulted prior to operating in the above-listed geographic areas.

6.2 Refer also to the Administrator's [Maritime Security webpage](#).