

Background

Pirates have launched 23 attacks against ships off Somalia since March 15 2005. They have started to organize themselves in a new faction who call themselves the National Volunteer Coast Guard. Somali pirates are trained fighters, often dressed in military fatigues, using speedboats equipped with satellite phones and Global Positioning System equipment. They are typically armed with automatic weapons, anti-tank rocket launchers and various types of grenades.

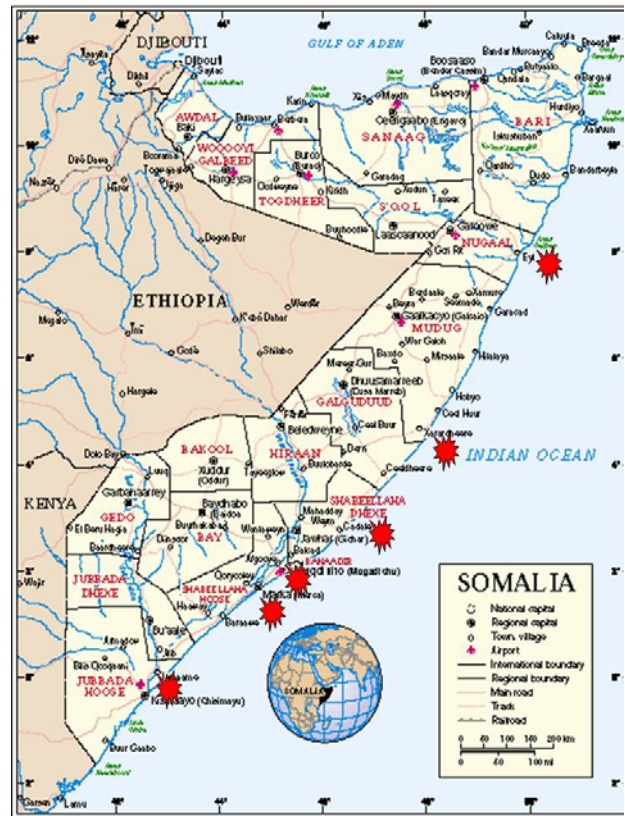
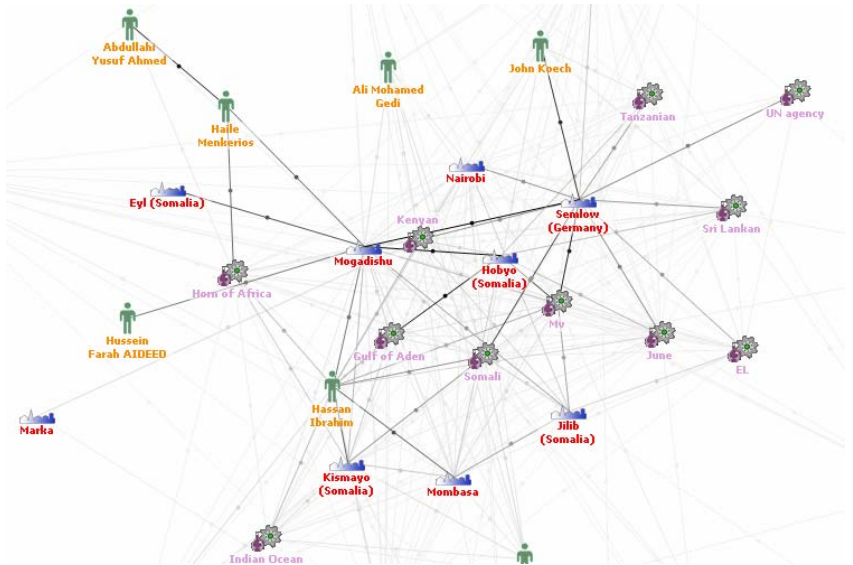
Ships have been approached 180 miles off the coast. In most cases the ships and their crews are held to ransom. Once the ransom is paid the ships and crew are released. Alternatively, the seized ships have their cargos unloaded and the ship is re-registered with false papers to become a "phantom ship". It is used to load more cargos, which then disappear.

Attempts to restore maritime security have been limited and fraught with difficulty amid power struggles between unruly land-based militia in control of various fiefdoms and the sea-borne pirates. Some sources claim that the warlords are powerless; they cannot do anything about piracy. The pirates have substantial economical means and could kill or overthrow a warlord who tries to expand his control offshore. The fishermen claim they had permission to work from the warlord who controls a region but the the National Volunteer Coast Guard - refuse to recognize his authority.¹

Places

The ships are hijacked on routes from and to Africa-Europe, Africa- Asia either at sea or in the ports. The following ports and costal areas are especially targeted

- Eyl, Marreray, Haradere, Port of Merka
- El Maan port Mogadishu, Port of Kismayo, ,



¹ Mail & Guardian 13 October 2005

Event	Source and date
<p>Raiders with grenade launchers repelled in attack off Somalia'. "Pirates armed with grenade launchers and automatic weapons failed to board a Russian vessel off Somalia despite setting the starboard rescue boat on fire in an attempt to gain access. The incident is reported by Russia's Itar-Tass news agency, which did not give a date for the attack. The ship involved was named as Tim Buck (19,240 dwt, built 1983), a Cyprus flag bulk carrier operated by Murmansk Shipping Co."</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 13 April 2005 (No.58890) , p 3</p>
<p>Militia using Mayday signals to hijack ships off Somalia'. "Somali militia groups have lured at least two vessels into their waters in recent weeks prior to boarding them and holding the ships and their crew to ransom"</p>	<p>- COMMERCIAL CRIME INTERNATIONAL, May 2005 (Vol.22, No.12) , p 2</p>
<p>Pirates seize relief ship and demand \$500,000'. "Somali gunmen have hijacked a general cargoship carrying 850 tonnes of rice for Somali tsunami survivors and are demanding \$500,000 to free the 10 crew on board, the shipowner said yesterday. In the latest hijack, Semlow (918 dwt, built 1971) was captured between Haradhere and Hobyo, some 300km northeast of the Somali capital Mogadishu on Monday, while en route to the port of Bossaso." -</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 1 July 2005 (No.58945) , p 12</p>
<p>Piracy forces UN to halt food ships'. "The United Nations World Food Programme has been forced to suspend post-tsunami aid shipments to Somalia, following the recent pirate hijack of a merchant vessel. The decision will be a huge blow to the struggling country, with around 250,000 people dependent on such help. The Semlow (918 dwt, built 1971), along with its 10 crew and 850 tonnes of rice, was captured last month between Haradhere and Hobyo, some 300km northeast of the Somali capital Mogadishu, while en route to the port of Bossaso." -</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 6 July 2005 (58948) , p 3</p>
<p>We're not pirates, claim Somalis in aid ship seizure'. "Somali gunmen who hijacked a vessel chartered by the United Nations' World Food Programme denied yesterday they were demanding a ransom but said they had yet to decide what to do with the ship and hostages. "We are not pirates and we are not after any financial gain as people are claiming," Mohamed Abdi Hassan, the leader of the group, said by telephone from Harardheere, 70 miles from where his men were holding the ship, the Semlov, at anchor."</p>	<p>- LLOYD'S LIST, 8 July 2005 (No.58950) , p 2</p>
<p>Aid threat over Somali piracy'. "World Food Programme shipments to central Somalia will stop for 10 years if pirates do not immediately return a hijacked vessel on charter to the UN agency. WFP director Robert Hauser set the 48-hour deadline on Tuesday, in an interview with the BBC." -</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 14 July 2005 (No.58954) , p 3</p>
<p>Somalia gets ultimatum over hijacked ship'. "The UN food agency has threatened to stop aid shipments to Somalia for a decade if the hijackers of one of its ships do not release the vessel within 48 hours. The ultimatum was made by the World Food Programme's (WFP) director for the region, Robert Hauser, according to a report by BBC News. Hauser says the WFP had become "increasingly concerned" for the safety of the ship as bad weather was bringing high winds and rough seas to Somalia's north-east coast." -</p>	<p>TRADEWINDS, 15 July 2005 (Vol.16, No.28) , p 24</p>

Event	Source and date
<p>Number of pirate attacks worldwide fall 30 per cent'. "The number of pirate attacks worldwide has dropped by 30 per cent in the first half of this year, says the International Maritime Bureau, reports Lloyd's List DCN in Australia. The number of reported attacks overall dropped from 182 in the same period in 2004, to 127 between January and June this year. Indonesia accounts for a third of the global total, with 42 attacks, most involving violence or intimidation of crews. Despite the overall drop, a number of hotspots, including Somalia, Nigeria and Iraq, have flared up in recent months despite the presence of large western naval forces in Iraqi waters." -</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 21 July 2005 (No.58959) , p 5</p>
<p>Italian ship escapes pirates off Somalia'. "Pirates armed with rifles and a bazooka fired on an Italian ro-ro boxship last Thursday as it travelled along the Somali coast, port authorities said, AP reports. The ship escaped unharmed and none of the crew were hurt. Two smaller vessels, carrying 10 people, attempted to board the 27,267 dwt, 1,182 teu Jolly Marrone some 100 miles (160 km) off the coast, a spokesman for Italy's central port authority in Rome said."</p>	
<p>'Food-aid crew "to be released"'. "Gunmen who hijacked a United Nations food-aid ship bound for Somalia almost a month ago yesterday have pledged to release the vessel's crew, Agence France-Presse reported , citing a shipping agent." -</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 26 July 2005 (No.58962) , p 3</p>
<p>Italian owners demand military protection from Somalian pirates'. "Italy's shipowners have called for military protection following two attacks in a week on Italian vessels off the coast of Somalia. In a statement issued on Wednesday, shipowners' association Confitarma "requests that the Ministry of Defence, and in particular the navy, mindful of the need to ensure the security of Italian interests around the world, assess the possibility of taking monitoring and protection measures, given the sudden emergence of grave risks to our merchant ships"." -</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 29 July 2005 (No.58965) , p 1</p>
<p>Italy throws down the gauntlet to Indian Ocean pirates as warship is dispatched'. "Italy will despatch a warship to the Indian Ocean to protect Italian merchant ships operating in the region, the country's Ministry of Defence said on Friday. The move follows two attacks by pirates on Italian-owned merchant ships within the space of a week, and a subsequent call for naval protection from national shipowners' organisation Confitarma." -</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 1 August 2005 (No.58966) , p 1</p>
<p>Hong Kong-based company that owns Feisty Gas, a liquefied petroleum gas tanker that was seized on April 10, paid \$315 000 to a representative of the Somali hijackers in Mombasa, Kenya, according to a recent UN report.</p>	<p>News 24</p>
<p>Pirates who seized 48 Asian fishermen and their three vessels on August 15 are still holding them captive near the southern Somali port of Kismayo.</p>	<p>News 24</p>
<p>UN aid ship hijackers say crew members will be released'. "The Somali gang holding the crew of a general cargoship have agreed to release most of the men, according to a spokesman for the hostage takers. Eight Kenyan nationals will be the first to be released following the intervention of Kenya's ambassador to Somalia, Muhammad Abdi Afey." -</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 1 August 2005 (No.58966) , p 3</p>
<p>Piracy alert strengthened after spate of incidents off Somalia'. "Shipping's anti-piracy watchdog has toughened its recommendations for Somalia following a spate of piracy attacks off the coast of the East African nation. There have been nine incidents in the past two weeks in the country's waters, according to the International Maritime Bureau." -</p>	<p>LLOYD'S LIST, 8 August 2005 (No.58971) , p 2</p>

Event	Source and date
<p>Pirates "in full swing" in Somalia'. "Piracy off Somalia's coast is raging out of control, according to operators of the World Food Programme-chartered ship Semlow, which was hijacked last month. Speaking to Fairplay, a spokesman for the Mombasa-based Motaku Shipping Agents said the flurry of recent attacks and hijackings in the region is likely to escalate and pose an increasing threat to shipping." -</p>	<p><i>FAIRPLAY</i>, 4 August 2005 (Vol.354, No.6339) , p 6</p>
<p>Pirates set to free UN aid ship'. "Somali pirates holding 10 hostages for more than a month on a ship chartered by the UN World Food Programme to carry food aid have agreed to release the vessel and crew this week. "An agreement has been reached for the release of the ship, crew and food in the next three days," said WFP spokeswoman Rene McGuffin in Nairobi at the weekend." -</p>	<p><i>LLOYD'S LIST</i>, 9 August 2005 (No.58972) , p 12</p>
<p>Hijacked UN ship freed by pirates'. "A United Nations (UN)-chartered food-aid ship and its 10 crew hijacked by Somali pirates in June are to be freed, according to UN officials. "An agreement has been reached for the release of the ship, crew and food in the next three days," World Food Programme (WFP) spokesperson Rene McGuffin said. The WFP adds that the agreement was reached at a meeting last week in Jowhar the seat of the new Somali government between diplomats, local leaders and the WFP." -</p>	<p><i>TRADEWINDS</i>, 12 August 2005 (Vol.16, No.32) , p 35</p>
<p>Somali aid cargo "intact". "The United Nations food agency says an aid consignment on a ship hijacked off Somalia is largely intact despite reports it had been offloaded on to the mainland by pirates, Reuters reports. The World Food Programme appealed for the release of the Kenyan-owned Semlow,built in 1971, and 10 hostages on board taken by gunmen in the most high</p>	
<p>Lookout: Set the press on them'. "As outsiders looking into our industry, the World Food Programme is justifiably getting nervous. Almost nine weeks after the food aid ship Semlow was hijacked by pirates off the Somali coast, no resolution has been found (see page 9). What concerns them is that nobody seems to care. How can it be that a ship and its crew taken hostage deserves only a handful of inaccurate lines in the world's press? The fact that this is increasingly common and they have actually generated more column inches than most piracy incidents doesn't seem to have allayed WFP fears. " - F</p>	<p><i>FAIRPLAY</i>, 25 August 2005 (Vol.354, No.6342) , p 2</p>
<p>WFP calls for end to aid hijack'. "The World Food Programme (WFP) has repeated its calls for the food-aid cargo ship Semlow and its crew to be released, nearly two months after it was first hijacked by pirates off the Somali coast. Despite a flurry of largely inaccurate media reports last week claiming that the hijackers had started offloading its cargo of rice, the WFP has told Fairplay that no agreement has yet been reached and the vessel's 10-man crew remain on board the vessel." -</p>	<p><i>FAIRPLAY</i>, 25 August 2005 (Vol.354, No.6342) , p 9</p>
<p>Intelligence is critical to better securing the shipping industry'. "Timely and accurate intelligence is necessary for making effective business decisions. Yet there has rarely been such a widespread debate on its utility in the decision-making process or such criticism of its practitioners when decisions are questioned, rightly or wrongly, by end users. The latest example of this is the Joint War Committee's recently released war hull risk exclusion list, advised by the private security company Aegis Defence Services." -</p>	<p><i>LLOYD'S LIST</i>, 1 September 2005 (No.58988) , p 5</p>

Event	Source and date
Quinze navires attaqués en 4 mois dans les eaux de Somalie' -	<i>JOURNAL DE LA MARINE MARCHANDE</i> , 2 September 2005 (No.4471) , p 9
IMB piracy warning helping to stem Somali attacks' -	<i>COMMERCIAL CRIME INTERNATIONAL</i> , September 2005 (Vol.23, No.4) , pp 1-2
Mercy ship freed after 11 weeks'. "Somali gunmen have finally released a Kenyan-owned general cargoship seized almost 11 weeks ago. Semlow (918 dwt, built 1971) was captured on June 27 while on route to Bosasso, laden with 850 tonnes of rice from the United Nations World Food Programme. However, there are now reports that the ship was freed on Wednesday." -	<i>LLOYD'S LIST</i> , 16 September 2005 (No.58998) , p 3
Pirates back out of deal'. "Somali pirates have reneged on a deal to release a ship and 10 seafarers held captive for the past 10 weeks. The crisis has sparked calls from the International Maritime Bureau for naval intervention. Kenyan-owned general cargoship Semlow and its crew were seized on June 27." -	<i>LLOYD'S LIST</i> , 26 September 2005 (No.59005) , p 3
Pirates make raid using food-aid ship'. "A United Nations food-aid ship stolen by Somali pirates has been used to attack and hijack another merchant ship. The 700-dwt Semlow (built 1971), which was captured by pirates in June, was used to board and capture the cement carrier Ibnu Batuta near the port of El-Maan, Mogadishu, last week. The attack follows a failed attempt to persuade the pirates on the Semlow to unload its cargo of food aid at El Maan." -	<i>TRADEWINDS</i> , 30 September 2005 (Vol.16, No.39) , p 46
Somali pirates free UN aid ship'. "Somali pirates have freed the cargoship Semlow , carrying United Nations food aid, which they hijacked nearly 100 days ago. The Kenyan-owned 918 dwt vessel, built in 1971, is bound for a safe port under friendly guard. The crew of eight Kenyans, a Tanzanian engineer and a Sri Lankan master were all safe and well, said Inayet Kudrati, director of the Motaku Shipping Agency which owns the vessel and leased it to the UN World Food Programme." -	<i>LLOYD'S LIST</i> , 4 October 2005 (No.59011) , p 3
Recognising a dangerous world'. "Nearly four months ago, heavily armed militia in the pay of one of the many Somali warlords hijacked a small ship carrying aid foodstuffs for the United Nations' World Food Programme. Severally described as bandits, extortionists and pirates - the exact definition is unimportant, although all would be accurate - the thugs captured the crew and demanded a substantial ransom for the 10 wretched seafarers and the ship itself. This week, it was reported, the hijackers freed the ship and its crew, though the terms on which they agreed to do this were not clear. It is the 21st century." -	<i>LLOYD'S LIST</i> , 5 October 2005 (No.59012) , p 7
• 15 Oct 05 Two Maltese-registered vessels were reported hijacked - MV San Carlos oil tanker with 25 crew on board and MV Paganía with an unknown number of Ukrainian crewmembers had been hijacked by Somali pirates who were demanding a \$700 000 (€583 000) ransom for their release.	
IMB calls for help as pirates strike again off Somalia'. "Three ships have been seized by pirates off the Somali coast in recent days as hijackers extended their attacks to vessels way out at sea. The International Maritime Bureau is now calling for a naval patrol off the southern Somali coast to intercept hijacked ships before they reach Somali waters." -	<i>LLOYD'S LIST</i> , 25 October 2005 (No.59026) , p 1

Event	Source and date
Sea power needed'. "It seems quite extraordinary that gangs of heavily armed thugs are ranging around the long coastline of Somalia, shooting up large merchant ships and terrorising their crews, holding them against the payment of ransom. Somalia is a genuinely failed state, yet the amount of firepower employed by the coastal warlords who hold sway seems to be persuading governments and the United Nations to leave well alone." -	LLOYD'S LIST, 26 October 2005 (No.59027) , p 7
Somalia anti-piracy plea'. "Somalia has pleaded for international assistance to combat the increasing problem of piracy in the waters off its coastline. A senior official of the country's transitional government has now explicitly asked neighbouring countries to use their navies to protect merchant shipping off its coastline." -	LLOYD'S LIST, 26 October 2005 (No.59027) , p 14
It was nearly a fortnight ago that the prime minister of Somalia, with a candour which might be emulated by others, confessed that his government is helpless in the face of the heavily armed coastal warlords who are now ranging far out into the Indian Ocean in search of prey." -	LLOYD'S LIST, 2 November 2005 (No.59032) , p 7
Navy ships urged to get involved as Somali attacks continue'. "Naval vessels are being urged to intervene as the number of ships hijacked off the Somali coast since March reaches 23 and shows no sign of relenting" -	COMMERCIAL CRIME INTERNATIONAL, November 2005 (Vol.23, No.6) , p 2