

PIL confirms Kota Wajar hijack crew are safe

Marcus Hand - Monday 19 October 2009

THE crew of Pacific International Lines vessel *Kota Wajar* are said to be unharmed by Somali pirates, who hijacked the ship on Thursday, *writes David Osler* .

A PIL spokesman said the crew were safe, but declined to give any further details, including whether the company had made contact with the pirates.

In a statement issued to local press on Thursday, PIL said it was “taking all possible steps to ensure the safety of the ship, crew and cargo on board”.

Few details of the hijacking of the Singapore flagged vessel and its 21 crew have emerged. The 1997-built, 1,550 teu *Kota Wajar* was boarded by pirates 550 miles off the coast of Somalia while en route to Mombasa, Kenya.

It is the first known hijacking of a merchant vessel since the capture of Turkish bulk carrier *Horizon 1* on July 8.

The International Maritime Bureau’s Piracy Reporting Centre in Kuala Lumpur sent out a warning to shipping following the hijacking. The attack so far away from the coast underscores concerns that pirates are targeting vessels further and further away from Somalia as ships are warned to stay 600 miles from the coast. “Now the pirates are going out 600 miles to attack ships,” said IMB piracy reporting centre head Noel Choong.

With the improved weather conditions following the end of the monsoon season, the number of attacks has been increasing.



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