



Singapore Shipping Association

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Media release

SSA VOICES CONCERN OF INCREASED PIRACY ATTACKS

The escalating number of maritime piracy and ship hijacks in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia in recent months has become intolerable and is adversely affecting the recovery of international shipping and trade!

In view of increasing concerns about the situation, the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA), jointly with the Maritime & Port Authority (MPA) of Singapore, has just concluded a half-day "*Workshop on Maritime Piracy and Ship Hijacks in the Gulf of Aden and in the Indian Ocean*" this morning of 8 February 2010 at the Capital Tower Auditorium. The closed-door Workshop was attended by more than 200 participants from the SSA membership and the Singapore shipping community.

The speakers at the Workshop included invited representatives from shipping companies, namely Pacific International Lines, APL Co Pte Ltd and Ocean Tankers (Pte) Ltd. The shipping company representatives shared and exchanged information relating to best practices their companies had adopted for dealing with maritime piracy and ship hijacks in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia.

An MPA representative also briefed the participants on the guidelines on Anti-Piracy and Anti-Armed Robbery measures.

A representative from the Singapore British High Commission, on behalf of the UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), provided updates on the UKMTO's ongoing efforts at coordinating the flow of information between industry and naval enforcement patrols in the region.

At the invitation of SSA, a representative from the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) based in Bahrain also flew in specially to provide the participants with the latest information on the pirate activities and military operations of the CMF to counter piracy and ship hijacks in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia.

Mr S. S. Teo, President of the SSA, gave an opening speech at the workshop. A copy of Mr Teo's speech is attached for your attention.

The participants found the briefing and presentations by the speakers very useful. The speakers were also unanimous in their strong encouragement to industry to adopt the best management practices as promulgated by the International Maritime Organisation and industry associations to counter with the piracy and armed robbery problem in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia.

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9 FEBRUARY 2010

OPENING SPEECH BY MR S S TEO, PRESIDENT OF SINGAPORE SHIPPING ASSOCIATION AT THE SSA/MPA WORKSHOP ON MARITIME PIRACY AND SHIP HIJACKS IN THE GULF OF ADEN AND INDIAN OCEAN TO BE HELD at 9.00 am ON 8 FEBRUARY 2010 AT THE CAPITAL TOWER AUDITORIUM

Capt Chris Chambers, Director of Plans, Combined Maritime Forces,
Commander Paul Haycock, Asst British Defence Adviser, British High Commission in Singapore on behalf of the UK Maritime Trade Operations or UKMTO,
Mr Lam Yi Young, Chief Executive, Maritime & Port Authority of Singapore,
Excellencies, SSA members, Ladies & Gentlemen

Good Morning!

Welcome to this MPA-SSA Workshop on Maritime Piracy and Ship Hijacks in the Gulf of Aden and in the Indian Ocean. We are very pleased to see such an excellent response to this Workshop. I would like to express our appreciation to all the speakers, especially Capt Chris Chambers from the Combined Maritime Forces who has flown in from Bahrain. Thank you.

Maritime piracy and armed robbery around the world today has reached an unprecedented scale – hardly a day goes by without a piracy-related story appearing in the media. In their 2009 Annual Report, the International Maritime Bureau listed a total of 406 reported incidents of piracy and armed robbery around the world, compared to 293 incidents in 2008 – an increase of almost 40%!

By geographical location, the continued escalation of attacks and ship hijacks in the Somali Basin, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, has become grossly intolerable and of paramount concern to all mariners, the shipping and trading community. Last year, the number of attacks around the Horn of Africa alone had almost doubled to 217, with 47 ships hijacked and 867 crewmembers taken hostage.

The continued prevalence of piracy off the Horn of Africa is a real and serious challenge for all mariners navigating their ships through the Gulf. Furthermore, the relative ease with which these pirates and hijackers could extort and escape with millions of dollars of ransom money from the shipowners is simply unimaginable in this modern day and age.

As SSA, we are very concerned with the deteriorating situation in the Somali basin. In the absence of any firm response from the United Nations, the Somali methods of hijack and violent kidnapping can be easily emulated by others elsewhere.

Whilst SSA fully supports the ongoing efforts by both the United Nations and the IMO to address the piracy situation in Somalia, we strongly feel that more firm actions need to be taken. Notwithstanding the unprecedented degree of co-operation among the wide array of navies providing protection to ships in the region, for which SSA and the shipping industry remain very appreciative, the current level of response is simply insufficient. It is vitally important that all governments, at the very highest level, become more engaged in finding a long term solution to this crisis.

Whilst maritime security forces can provide some measure of security, the only possible long-term solution lies in addressing the underlying root causes of the problem, poverty and the lack of a functional government in Somalia being two key issues that must be resolved

In the interim, however, SSA continues to urge, all our members, shipowners and operators to remain highly vigilant and continue to follow the Best Management Practices as promoted by the IMO as a temporary measure until a lasting solution can be found.

Today, our panel of speakers includes owners and operators who have practical experience navigating through those treacherous Somali waters. We have also invited the MPA to provide us with the current regulatory guidelines and requirements in dealing with the pirates and armed robbers.

Also on the panel are Commander Paul Haycock and Capt Chris Chambers. Both speakers will provide us with an update on the piracy situation around the Horn of Africa and also brief us on the naval co-ordinated operations in the Gulf of Aden.

In closing, let me share with you my personal experience.

My company, Pacific International Lines (PIL) has ships plying this-said region on a regular basis, and, like many other ship owners and operators, we took all precautions possible and hoped that we would never be attacked. However, when I received a telephone call on 15th October last year, informing me that our vessel, the Kota Wajar, had been hijacked by Somali pirates, it hit me that it has finally happened to us.

It was a very traumatic time for the ship's crew, their families and the company as a whole. During those 75 days, our hearts were always with our crew of being held against their will, and their families - their agony, especially during the festive season. Nonetheless, whilst we made every effort to ensure that the crew and their families received all the moral and emotional support we could offer, we had to remember that business cannot stop whilst we deal with the pirates – for the rest of us, life must go on.

We cannot allow our seafarers from being discouraged from resuming their careers at sea. Furthermore, we must also ensure that the threat of hijack and piracy does not discourage our young people from taking up a sailing career of their own.

On this note, I will conclude and hope that all of you will benefit from the discussions at this Workshop.

Thank you.

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