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Pirates of Somalia Order No. 352296 January ' 10 Pirates of Somalia

Introduction The pirates of Somalia and their acts of piracy off the Somali Coast have been posing a threat to international shipping from the early 1990s since the start of the Somali Civil War. From 2005 the International Maritime Organization, the World Food Program and many other international organizations have expressed their concern over the rise in piracy. This piracy has led to an increase in shipping costs and hindered the delivery of shipments. Many ships today require military escort. According to reports Somali pirates have received huge amounts of ransom in the past few years. Armed extortion is one of the ways of making a living in Somalia. Piracy today in Somalia is a highly profitable enterprise raking in millions of dollars through ransom. It is growing at an alarming rate. According to reports about 41 ships were attacked in 2007, more than 122 were attacked in 2008 and more than 100 in 2009. The situation is grim and has become a cause for worry with reports of connection between the pirates and Islamist extremists.

Profile of the Pirates

Most of the pirates are from Puntland, situated in northeastern Somalia and their ages range from 20 to 35. According to The East African Seafarers Association there are about five pirate gangs consisting of about 1, 000 armed men. The pirates are mainly local Somali fishermen who work for themselves and are known for their skill and knowledge of the sea. Some pirates are ex-militiamen who used to fight for the local warlords.

Cause for concern

What began as small acts of piracy on small and vulnerable ships has today reached alarming proportions. From 2008 Somali pirates have attacked ships

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much outside the Gulf of Aden. There has been an increase in the frequency and sophistication of the attacks. The size of vessels hijacked has also increased and today large cargo ships and international oil and chemical tankers have become the new targets for the Somali pirates. The economic success of the pirates has had negative effect on local residents. The presence of armed men makes the local residents feel insecure, and the lavish spending ways of the pirates has caused great fluctuations in the local exchange rate. There are also reports that some Islamist groups have used Somali Pirates to smuggle arms.

Measures to stop piracy

US Navys Fifth Fleet and many other countries have deployed ships to patrol the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden. Egypt along with Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan and Sudan has formulated a joint strategy against piracy. But the size of the coast and the traffic of ships that goes past Somalia make it difficult to guarantee the safety of vessels.

Conclusion

The main problem is that Somalia does not have an effective government that can enforce law. According to Jonathan Stevenson (2009), "taming Somali pirates will ultimately require rebuilding the Somali state in such a way that young men can both find viable means of support other than maritime banditry and be subject to law enforcement". He further says that from the "the serial failure of over a dozen internationally anointed "transitional governments" formed in exile, its clear that the Somalis need an unprecedented degree of outside help to accomplish the daunting task of state-building".

References

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1. Stevenson Jonathan (2009), How to Stop the Somali Pirates, <http://www.forbes.com/2009/04/10/somalia-navy-hostage-opinions-contributors-pirates.html>