

BMP5 AWARENESS BRIEF

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In June 2018 the latest edition of the [Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea \(BMP5\)](#) was published. BMP5 is a maritime industry-produced document that sets out guidelines for vessels to assist them in detecting, avoiding, deterring, delaying and reporting attacks from pirates and other adversaries while transiting in the region.

BMP5 succeeds BMP4, published in August 2011, and as such responds to an altered threat environment. Understanding the key differences between BMP4 and BMP5 and the reasons for those differences is essential for ensuring safe transit through one of the world's busiest shipping zones.

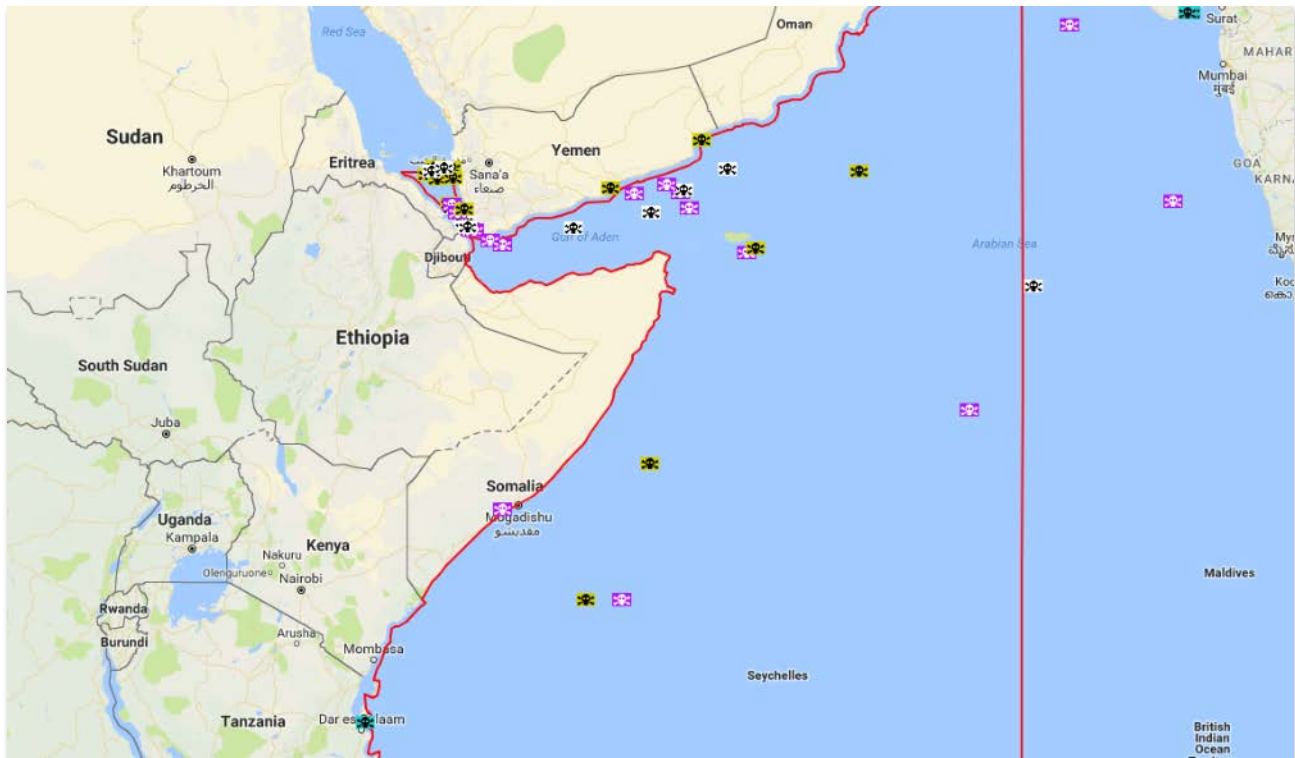
Key differences from BMP4:

1. Identification of new adversaries
2. Identification of new weapons
3. Recommendation to report all suspicious / irregular activity to UKMTO

A salient difference between the two documents is their geographical focus. Whereas the title of BMP4 – Best Management Practices for Protection against Somalia Based Piracy – places the focus of anti-piracy efforts broadly on the Somali basin, BMP5 covers the wider area of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. This is a reflection of the shifting threat of piracy in the region, which has not been entirely eradicated, highlighting the continued need for strict adherence to BMP5.

NYA MarTrack™ data shows that between January and July 2018 73% of maritime incidents in the East African High Risk Area took place in the Gulf of Aden and the southern portions of the Red Sea, and during the same period of 2017 this proportion was 85%. By contrast, in the first half of 2011 just 17% of the incidents in the region occurred in the same area. While traditional piracy threats remain in the wider Indian Ocean, stakeholders should be aware of the higher concentration of maritime security incidents in the Gulf of Aden and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

Notably, in the past 12 months (12 July 2017 – 12 July 2018), MarTrack data shows there were no hijackings or successful boardings in the entire High Risk Area region. However, it noted 15 attacks, 16 suspicious Approaches and 12 pirate action group (PAG) sightings. Outside of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, there were only five suspicious approaches and five attacks, with no PAG sightings recorded.



Map 1: Map showing maritime security incidents 12JUL2017 – 12JUL2018

Source: NYA MarTrack

One of the principal reasons for the escalation of the overall threat to shipping in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea is their proximity to the Yemeni coast. BMP5 identifies regional instability and consequent deliberate targeting of vessels by non-state actors and collateral damage as new maritime security threats.

Since 2015, Yemen has been gripped by a civil war in which the country’s most important port cities have become strategic conflict locations. Notably, vessels transiting off the Yemeni Red Sea coast – particularly off Al-Hudaydah and Mokha – have been exposed to a higher threat level.

The conflict in Yemen not only contributed to the geographical spread of threats, but also shifted the nature of the threat to vessels. Whereas BMP4 indicated that pirates generally use small arms fire and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) against vessels, BMP5 highlights the additional threat from anti-ship missiles, sea mines and water-borne improvised explosive devices (WBIEDs). This is evident in the types of attacks recorded since the beginning of the conflict in Yemen.

Since the beginning of 2018, at least three attacks with confirmed links to the war in Yemen have been reported in the southern Red Sea. All three of these took place off Al-Hudaydah – one as far as 70NM offshore – and were likely perpetrated by Houthi rebels. In each incident a vessel reported explosives being used, indicating the use of either anti-ship missiles or WBIEDs. In addition, the threat of naval mines remains off Al-Hudaydah and further south off Mokha and along the coast of Midi. *Reuters* recently reported that the French navy was considering a minesweeping operation in the port of Al-Hudaydah, underlining international concerns over the threat posed by naval mines.

A key focus of BMP5 is the need for not just a risk assessment, as recommended in BMP4, but also of a comprehensive assessment of the threat. It identifies capability, intent and opportunity as the three components of threat. The situation off Yemen's coast demonstrates the intent and capability of Houthi forces to attack vessels, although stakeholders are advised that the threat principally emanates from collateral damage and mistaken identity of vessels, rather than the deliberate targeting of merchant vessels by actors involved in the Yemeni conflict. BMP5 states that since the vessel's master cannot influence perpetrators' capability or intent, they must focus on minimising opportunity by closely adhering to carefully drawn up security plans.

Another key difference between BMP4 and BMP5 is the latter's emphasis on the role of the seafarer in improving the region's maritime security. BMP5 states, "[experience] has shown that maritime security cannot be improved by the actions of law enforcement agencies and militaries alone; seafarers operating in the region can help."

To this end, BMP5 stipulates an additional reporting recommendation to the three listed in BMP4. As well as sending initial reports, daily reports and final reports, vessels are encouraged to send reports of suspicious or irregular activity to UKMTO as and when it is detected. This enables UKMTO to communicate all incidents and suspicious activity with other vessels and to properly liaise with the military forces present in the region. In areas near Somalia and Yemen, where domestic security forces lack uncontested authority, this is particularly valuable.

Along with BMP5, in June 2018 the Global Counter Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers was also published. This new document provides practical security advice to companies, masters and seafarers and is a further indication of the industry's enthusiasm for individual seafarers and shipping companies to play an active role in enhancing regional maritime security and liaise with military and law enforcement authorities. As in BMP5, the Global Counter Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers encourages companies, company security officers and masters to conduct thorough threat and risk assessments before their voyage and to have comprehensive protection and security plans in place.

[The Global Counter Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers](#) also provides advice for vessels pertaining to non-piracy maritime security threats – identified as terrorism, war, cyber attacks and violations of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code. It highlights the need for threat and risk assessments to take these non-piracy threats into account and adapt their ship security measures accordingly. Again, this advice responds to the growing threat of anti-ship missiles, sea mines and WBIEDs off Yemen and supports the key additions to BMP5.

Both BMP5 and the Global Counter Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers are essential guides for reducing the vulnerability of vessels transiting the High Risk Area encompassing the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. Although much of the content of BMP5 is a continuation of BMP4, prudent stakeholders should understand the differences between the two documents and the security shifts that have produced those differences in order to ensure compliance and plan a safe transit.

For further information on maritime security, contact NYA at info@nyarisk.com or visit www.nyarisk.com.

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