



## Somali piracy warning

While piracy incident levels in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden today remain significantly lower than in the past, recent incidents underline that the threat persists. Vessels operating in these waters should maintain heightened vigilance and fully implement Best Management Practice guidance.

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So far in 2026, the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre ([IMB PRC](#)) has recorded six incidents that may be linked to Somali piracy groups, five in the Somali Basin and one in the Gulf of Aden close to the Yemeni coast. Since 20 April, three merchant vessels have been hijacked and are reportedly still under pirate control.

Reflecting this development, the Joint Maritime Information Center ([JMIC](#)) has raised its threat level for waters off the Somali coast to "severe". It advises mariners to maintain a vigilant watch, adhere to the latest Best Management Practice Maritime Security ([BMP MS](#)) guidance, and report any suspicious activity to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations ([UKMTO](#)) and the Maritime Security Center Indian Ocean ([MSCIO](#)).

## Comparing with the past

At the height of Somali piracy in 2011, there were just over 200 attacks against vessels, including 28 successful hijackings and more than 600 seafarers taken hostage for ransom. Following years of coordinated naval operations and strengthened self-protection measures by the shipping industry, incidents declined significantly, and the industry-designated Indian Ocean High Risk Area ([HRA](#)) was removed in 2023.

Despite this improvement, the IMB PRC has consistently warned that Somali pirate groups retain both the capability and intent to carry out attacks in the Gulf of Aden and wider Indian Ocean region. These concerns gained renewed relevance at the turn of 2023/2024, when reports of Somali pirate activity once again increased. Nine incidents linked to Somali piracy, including four hijackings, were recorded between December 2023 and May 2024. A further five incidents were recorded in 2025.

## Capability of Somali pirates

According to the most recent Maritime Industry Threat Overview ([MISTO](#)), Somali pirate groups are typically well armed. Attacks are commonly carried out using small, fast skiffs, sometimes deployed from larger "mother vessels" such as hijacked fishing vessels or dhows. In recent years, attacks have been recorded as far as 800 nautical miles from the Somali coast, and based on past patterns, operations may extend even further into the Indian Ocean when conditions are favourable.

Pirate groups have demonstrated the capability to board vessels with a freeboard of 10 metres or more. However, experience indicates that boarding vessels maintaining speeds of 18 knots or higher is significantly more challenging.

# Recommendations

While piracy incident levels in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden region today remain significantly lower than in the past, recent incidents, including successful hijackings, underline that the threat persists.

Vessels operating in the region should implement all relevant recommendations in BMP MS and follow guidance issued by flag States, industry bodies, and maritime security specialties. This includes:

- Conducting voyage-specific risk assessments, staying updated on the latest threat reporting, and hardening the vessel prior to entering high-risk waters.
- Registering with and reporting to MSCIO and UKMTO, including regular position reporting and prompt notification of suspicious activity or incidents.
- Maintaining a 24-hour visual and radar watch. Early detection of approaching skiffs is critical and enables the master and PCASP to assess the situation and take appropriate action to maintain distance from fishing vessels, dhows, and other small boats, and, where necessary, implement evasive manoeuvres and request assistance.
- Ensuring crews are trained, briefed, and ready to respond, including through regular drills.

Note also that, according to the IMB PRC, fishermen in the region may behave aggressively when attempting to protect their nets. In some cases, they may be armed for this purpose and should not be automatically assessed as a piracy threat.

Please refer to Gard's website "[Piracy and armed robbery at sea](#)" for further advice.