

## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TERROR-THREAT ON THE SEAS

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***Abstract:** Some decades ago about piracy the romanticism of the picaresque novels occurred to the central-europeans. We already know that the modern-age piracy threatens the safety of the shipping and the trade. The terrorism also may mean a serious danger on the seas. The pirates and the terrorists may threaten the liners and the cargo ships equally. The lecture deals with the geographical definition of piracy and the terrorism on the world's seas and oceans. It analyses those safety risks and dangers. The research expands on presenting the identities and distinctnesses of the piracy and the terrorism. The lecturer analyses the experiences of the attacks until now, and the possible methods of defending against them and its devices.*

***Keywords:** sea terrorism, piracy.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Acquiring and holding the command of the seas – it was a highly important strategic and geopolitical issue already at the ancient times. There are numerous examples where the Great Powers lose wars because the lack of the naval control over the seas. The command of the seas – that's why the British Empire could enforce the so called "Last Fight" theory. The security of the sea transport is significant nowadays too. The countries of the World have to cope with challenges like the terrorism on the seas or the continually increasing piracy. From an economic aspect the security of the seas was never so significant problem than in the age of globalization. Over and above this problem is present not only in economic point of view but in the aspect of production process too. Nowadays the bulk of energy resources, raw materials and large scale of parts are transported on the seas, that's why the security of the seas is a strategic social and economical issue on the world.

### 2. TERROR THREAT OF PASSENGER SHIPS

The terror attacks against passenger ships are not too frequent. This is because of the

structure of these vehicles. Though it is easier to get up to the vehicles in the ports than to the airplanes on airports, but acquiring and maintaining full control over the ships is a really hard task from the point of view of the attackers. The hardness is derived from the relatively much closed working areas and passenger cabins that are cannot be fully controlled. Over and above these ships are built such a way that the open passenger-areas neither consist of one continuous area. By the way these structural characteristics are also making organization and execution of hostage saving actions more difficult at a hostage-taking terror attack.

In the history of modern-age terrorism the Archille Lauro case is cannot be eluded at the discussion of attacks committed on the seas. On 7th October 1985 Palestine terrorists are possessed the holiday liner Archille Lauro, which was fly under Italian flag, on the Mediterranean Sea. The terrorists took the control over the vehicle shortly afterwards when it left the port of Alexandria and made its way towards Port Said. The attackers demanded to set free 50 of their associates who were imprisoned in Israel and they threatened that if this request does not come true then they will set off the ship. After the terror attack there was confusion related to the

solution and the Italian authorities are informed that they do not know anything about the exact position of the ship since it left the Egyptian territorial waters. It neither was possible to know the number of passengers aboard. Originally there were 750 of passengers and 350 of the crew when the ship ran out of the Port of Genoa but a considerable number of tourists went ashore in Alexandria for sightseeing and – in accordance to the preliminary program – they would get on board again in Port Said.

There was a dramatic turn in this case on 9th October when the terrorists – who were keeping 750 of passengers and 350 of crew under restraint – killed the American Leon Klinghoffer 69, who was bound to wheelchair because of his illness. His body was thrown to the sea together with his wheelchair. Fortunately the attackers did not continue the slaughter and – presumably owing to the background deals and the prospective serious sanctions – they set their hostages free in Port Said on 10th October 1985. The Egyptian authorities wanted to transport the 4 committers to Tunisia to the headquarters of PLO with a Boeing 737 in answer to the request of Jasser Arafat. This attempt was unsuccessful because the F14 jet fighters that are took off from the aircraft carrier Saratoga forced down the airplane that transported the terrorists in Italy. In spite of the protestation of the American authorities the committers were released after relatively short imprisonment. Otherwise the attack was organized by Abu Abbas who was caught by the American Special Forces in Baghdad in April 2003.

### **3. THE DANGERS OF CARRIER SHIP'S DESTRUCTION**

The bomber terror actions are endangering the security of warships too. The case of USS Cole is a good example. The Cole – the destroyer of the US Navy – suffered a bombing attack in the Port of Aden, Jemen on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2000. As a consequence of this attack 17 seamen were killed and 30 wounded. The suicide bombers exploded more than 300 kg of explosive. The detonation knocked a 72 square metres hole on the hull of the ship.

Among others this terror action was successful because the naval ships are not built for such warfare. The terror action against Limburg demonstrates well that the attacks against ships could cause serious environmental catastrophes. The Limburg was blown up also in the Adeni Bay on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2002. As a consequence of the detonation 90000 barrels of oil poured into the water and it spread apart on a 45 mile sector.

The attacks against USS Cole and Limburg are symbolizing that how defenceless the ocean-liners are on the seas. The suicide bombers can approach the ships with fast boat in the ports or on the open waters and the bombs can be activated by the collision with the ships. We can get conclusions about the possible consequences from the cases of the USS Cole and the Limburg. It is nearly impossible to prevent such terror-actions. Those boats loaded with bombs can hit the hull of the ships like torpedoes. The risk of such actions has to be taken seriously even if there was not any example in the past few years.

### **4. SEA PIRACY AND TERRORISM**

Sea piracy has already millennial traditions. It cannot be considered as romantic and harmless activity, especially not on South China Sea, Red Sea, in the Malaka pass (BERKI, 2008). Plunder of the seafarer cargo ships on these areas are potential source of income to the terrorist groups. Based on the ship owner claims the International Maritime Bureau in 2003 reported 445 attacks on sea, as a result of which 92 sailors lost his life. Based on these data we have to pay attention on piracy, because these attacks in 2003 were almost doubled compared to the previous year (LUFT G, A. KORIN 2004). On the world's seas the modern-age piracy started in years 1990 became getting worse. Increasing number of attacks draws the attention of international naval authorities and state officials to deal with sea robberies, start to make this threat under control.

The risk of the piracy not reduced in the previous five years so it is a must to manage continuously on governmental and international level.

## 5. PIRACY ON THE SEAS

According to the conceptual definition criteria of the terrorism, the fundamental criterion of the terrorist acts is a political objective throughout application of violence. It is not possible to relate this to the steadily increasing piracy in the area close to the Somalian coasts. It is necessary to treat the pirates similarly, than the terrorists because of the strategic significance of the endangered supply lines. True those political claims are not formulated there, but there is real threat on using them as a tool in the international terrorism. The common treatment of the piracy and terrorism is obvious, because of their character and danger.

In the second half of 2008 and in the first half of 2009 did not pass a week without news on the Somalian pirate attack. By checking the International Maritime Bureau's website we can see data and maps of the ICC Commercial Crime Services (CCS) that may shocking how dangerous to sail on Caribbean sea or near the coasts of Indonesia, Malaysia, Somalia, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Tanzania. International organizations opened a direct link to the effected organizations like shipping companies, staff of ships in order to warn them on danger (IMB Report 2009). Because of the cumulative danger of the piracy, the information from ICC Commercial Crime Services can be considered as an everyday tool.

Somalian pirates mean the greatest danger and the largest risk in Gulf of Aden and in the beachfront areas. According to the official data the number of the pirate attacks was doubled in this area from 2008. There were attacks against 60 ships until 2008 October. According to the announced official communications, the Somalian pirates committed altogether 111 attacks in 2008. From the 92 attacks in Adeni-bay, at least 19 of them happened in the east coasts of Somalia. (ICC Report, 2009).

Pirates specialized on kidnapping in order to ask ransom which can be measured in millions of dollars for the release of captured staff and passengers and for the restitution of ships and goods (MIDDLETON R., 2008).

Against a World Food Program the Somalian inhabitants cannot ensure their minimal life needs, the central government almost not exists since 1991, means the international efforts on solving the Somalian issue are rather not successful.

The whole country is in a chaos, as the state is not able to fight against the gangs specialized on piracy. The income of pirate groups was ransom which was paid for them from the robbed ships. Also the plunder means income for the well organized and equipped groups. Pirates are practically keep under control the distribution of the food and medical cargos in the area of the World Food Program, which is a further source of their income (ICG Report 2008). Of course not only the food-aid delivering ships are only in danger, but all the civil passengers and goods transporting ship.

They approach the goods transporting ships relatively easily on their quickly moving ships and boats. The robbers trained well on how to manage the ship robberies relatively quickly, how to keep the ships under control with their staff and how to direct these ships into safe harbors. In 2008 piracy reached such a level that NATO and international organizations could not keep themselves away from this issue. In 2008 October the Somalian pirates demanded ransom already for 26 ships and 250 persons (ICG Report 2008). Even UN Security Council dealt with the case. They sent more warships into the area in order to make sure safety of the sea traffic. According to the available data of the International Maritime Bureau, the UN, EU and NATO efforts cannot be considered successful. There is a need for more efficient appearance against the pirates that would include the destruction of their land bases. It is clearly visible on the Diagram 3 that the piracy means serious danger on the seas of the world. We have to cope with this phenomenon because there is piracy activity not only in Somalia. In a possible NATO-contribution in Africa the pirates could mean huge security risk both on the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

A debate started among the specialists, whether it is allowed to discuss with the pirates or not. True that finding the solution

through negotiations is appropriate for the pirates because in this case their aims were partly attained.

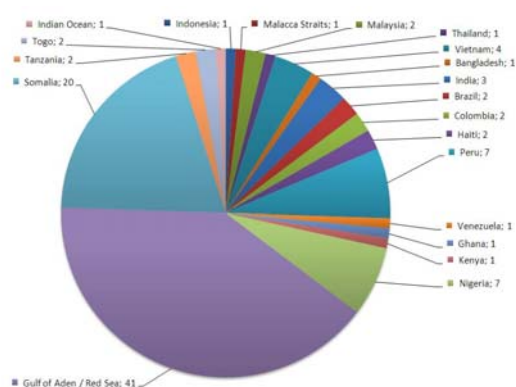


Fig. 1 Tendencies of pirate attacks in January - March 2009, Source: ICG Report 2009

On the other hand the release of the hostages is risky, altogether an attempt like this entailed complete success, when the captain of Maersk-Alabama, an American container ship managed to set free on 12 April 2009. It seems clear that the pirates increased their activity in 2008; their activity caused serious stops in the ship traffic. The rising insurances of shipping companies may raise the price of their tariff, which may reduce the competitiveness of the sea traffic. The activity of Somalian pirates caused serious economic damages to the shipping and insurance companies, to the commercial companies and already to the states who are participating in defense. According to experts it is not possible to force back the Somalian piracy without the restoration of the central state functions. The efforts on government restoration were rather unsuccessful, one after another miscarried in the last 18 years.

It is appear from the above that the pirates can potentially endanger the strategic military sea routes yet. It is practical to count on the risks of container terrorism in the future.

It is clearly visible on this map that there are several key points on the sea-routes of the world. Possession of these key points is strategic issue from economic and military point of views. The Suez and Panama Canals are outstandingly important but the Gibraltar, Hormus, Bosphorus and Malacca straights have similar importance too. These points have to

be passable freely and securely. It is not accidental that the piracy is gained strength near these areas.



Fig. 2: The main maritime routes of the World Source: Own work on the basis of the IMB Report 2008

It is also can be seen on the map that the pirates are endangering the maritime navigation at the coasts of South-Africa and Nigeria too. This is because of the frequent ship traffic on those seas, the geographical conditions - which are fortunate for the pirates - and the lack of security.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The risk of terror attacks on the seas has to be considered a serious problem. Present tendencies showing that terror threat level is lower in passenger transport than in the goods transports. In spite of that fact, we should not pass over the risk of terror attacks at this field either. Primarily the ferryboats are the potential victims of the terror attacks but - at waters that are endangered by piracy - the excursion yachts are possible targets too.

Fortunately such terror attacks are not too frequent but the experiences that are collected until now are showing that the risk is have to be considered seriously because of the general characteristics of terrorism. Unfortunately, about the piracy, which have been sketched out in this article, we cannot talk in conditional, it is to consider as a real danger nowadays too. Unavoidable question: how to defend us against pirates and terrorists. Definitely we have to have new methods and

equipments but the application of these methods and equipments could only be effective if they are accepted and applied on an international level. The air transport gives a good example where the number of terror actions against airplanes was forced back with international efforts and unified methods.

Nowadays the terror-threat and piracy are growing such measure which is demanding strict responses from the international organizations. In itself the naval patrol of the NATO members and other states is not enough for ceasing the danger in the endangered areas. There is a serious debate about the arming of the crew of merchant ships. According to some opinions this would solve the problem but this solution has serious security and legal worries. The international law strictly directs about the circumstances of the entry of an armed ship onto the waters of coastal states. If the governments of endangered states could prevent the piracy on its initial base, it would guarantee the freedom and security of maritime navigation.

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