

MAKING WAVES

The Monthly e-News Brief of NMF

Volume 4, Number 4

Apr 2009

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Editorial Team

Cdr BK Verma
Dr Joshy M Paul

Phone : +91 011 26154901
Fax : +91 011 26156520

Address

National Maritime Foundation
Varuna Complex, NH-8 New Delhi-110010, India
E-mail: maritimeindia@gmail.com
URL : www.maritimeindia.org

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Acknowledgment: Making Waves is a compilation of maritime news published in various national and international newspapers, journals and websites. NMF expresses its profound gratitude to all the sources of information and organizations thereof cited in this News Brief.

Port Operations Being Privatised in Qatar

The operations of the Doha Port and a new multi-billion dollar port now being built will be privatised for enhanced efficiency, a top official at the General Customs and Ports Authority said yesterday. Addressing a press conference, Captain Ahmed Yousuf al-Mass, deputy chief of the General Customs and Ports Authority (GCPA), said the new QR20bn port, which is scheduled to open by 2014-2015, would be run by private firms. "There is a plan to hand over the operations of the new port to private firms in a general bid." Al-Mass denied that the global financial crisis had affected the progress of the new port located between Al Wakrah and Mesaieed. "The construction is going on according to schedule."

He said the capacity of the new port would be 2mn containers a year in its first stage and would be increased to 10mn containers a year by 2030. He also revealed that the government would hand over the operations at the current Doha Port also to a private firm to improve efficiency. "We have completed a study on port privatisation as a solution for many problems. The issue is now in the hands of the higher authorities. We have hired a consultant company to look into the regulations of the port's operation. It will be run by one company," he said. Although the new port, which is located in the coastal area between Al Wakrah and Mesaieed, will not become operational before 2014, other solutions for the congestion problems at the present Doha Port are being sought to reduce the hold-ups."

He expected that the Doha Port's storage capacity would be increased this year. Al-Mass said the Al Ruweis coastal town, located in the north of Qatar, would be developed into a new port that could receive small and medium ships within the next two years. Among the other measures taken to address the congestion at the Doha Port, the official said that a new system of storage fees would be introduced to address the delays by traders to collect their goods.

"The storage fees have not been increased since 1994. This was mainly because the government was keen on supporting traders. But it seems that some traders are taking advantage of such low storage fees by not clearing their goods for periods exceeding the 21-day charge-free period." "Some traders leave their goods at the port on purpose because the port

Source(s): Anwar Elshamy, Gulf Times, http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=286410&version=1&template_id=57&parent_id=56

Extension of Shipbuilding Subsidy on The Cards

A move that could come in as a relief to Indian shipbuilders, The Indian Government plans to extend the shipbuilding subsidy. Mr APVN sarma secretary of (Shipping), Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport & Highways on sidelines of India International Maritime Logistics Expo '09 told newsmen that "The scheme is still with us on drawing board. So when the Government approves it, there will be a formal announcement." However, he said it would take three to four months and any decision will come only after the elections.

The Government, in the last week of February, approved a move to disburse about INR 5,100 crore as shipbuilding subsidy to domestic shipyards for orders secured till August 15th 2007. Domestic shipbuilders are demanding extension of the Government's five year shipbuilding subsidy, which lapsed in 2007.

Source(s): Apr 12, 2009
http://steeltguru.com/news/index/2009/04/12/ODk5MjY=/Extension_of_shipbuilding_subsidy_on_the_cards.html

Historic Shipyard Equipment Sails for India

The end of an era is truly at hand, with the UK's Port of Tyne preparing for the final departure of the Swan Hunter floating drydock, which is to sail away on board a heavy lift vessel. The iconic Swan Hunter cranes will work again in India. During its 145 year existence, Swan Hunter built more than 1,600 ships, with the record breaking 'Mauritania' prominent amongst many fine ships of almost every type and size. Much of the equipment from Swan Hunter will be reinvigorated and continue to operate in India. Vanguard Shipping has been project



managing the transfer of equipment to Bharati Shipyards of India. Ted Scurr, director at Vanguard Shipping said, 'This project began in 2007 and has involved dismantling, packing and shipping all of the associated items from the Swan Hunter shipyard to Dahbol in India.'

Source(s): Maritime Journal, Apr 02, 2009

http://www.maritimejournal.com/archive101/2009/april/online_news/historic_shipyard_equipment_sails_for_india

Gloomy Days Ahead for Indian Shipbuilding Industry

The ship building industry in India has no respite even if the central government has announced heavy subsidy package for the industry as the implementation hurdles make things blurred for the companies. The Government of India had approved the subsidy claims of private shipbuilders with respect to all ongoing ship building contracts entered up to 14th August 2007. The Subsidy would be released as per the guidelines subject to modifications, and on submission of requisite documents. The department of Shipping (Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport & Highways) and Ministry of Defence shall make budgetary provisions for shipyards for subsidy disbursal.

According to reports, the total liability of the government for the scheme would be at about Rs.51bn, of which subsidy receivable by ABG Shipyard from Government stood at Rs.3.1 bn in FY08 (Rs61.4 per share), while that for Bharati Shipyard is recorded at Rs.1.7 bn as on FY08 (Rs60.9 per share). The amount of subsidy is expected to increase significantly by FY12E for both these companies. Subsidy for ABG Shipyard is expected to increased to Rs.6.8 bn by FY12E (Rs134.4 per share) while that for Bharati Shipyard is expected to increase to Rs.4.4 bn as on

Experts believe that the government's subsidy approval brings much needed respite to the Indian shipbuilders especially as a sentiment booster, as the government had provided a miniscule budgetary allocation for the industry. However, in the absence of committed timelines for disbursal, it will be difficult to quantify when the exact benefit is expected to accrue to the shipbuilders. Further, the subsidy disbursement is presently contingent on delivery of vessels by the shipyards and is not liable for payment in the event of cancellation of the contract. Though, both ABG Shipyard and Bharati Shipyard have not witnessed any cancellations yet. However, both are said to have experienced delays and postponement in delivery schedules to the tune of 7-14 months. Such postponements will result in delayed receipt of subsidy from the government.

Source(s): Apr 03, 2009.

<http://www.commodityonline.com/commodity-stocks/Gloomy-days-ahead-for-Indian-shipbuilding-industry-2009-04-03-16612-3-1.htm>

S. Korea Tries to Keep Shippers Afloat

South Korea will establish a fund of up to 4 trillion won (\$3 billion) to purchase vessels from struggling South Korean shipping lines, saving them from scrapping boats amid a protracted economic slump that has submerged freight rates. The state-run debt clearer Korea Asset Management Corp., credit banks and private investors will participate in setting up the fund, Yonhap News reported Tuesday, citing unnamed officials. The move comes after the Baltic Dry Index, which measures shipping freight rates, dropped to a two-month low at 1,486 points on Monday. That's a far cry from the record high of 11,440 it was at less than a year ago in May 2008. Shippers around the world have been idling vessels and breaking contracts to buy ones they'd ordered during flusher times.

Facing severe liquidity squeeze from banks and weaker demand for vessels, South Korean shipbuilders have been struggling to raise funds to keep their businesses running. Hyundai Heavy tapped 300 billion won (\$227 million) last Friday in a domestic bond sale to fund its diversification into renewable energy, following Daewoo Shipbuilding which sold 500 billion won (\$379.3 million) worth of bonds earlier last week for operational expenses. Samsung Heavy Industries as well raised 700 billion won (\$530.8 million) from a domestic bond issue last month to finance expansion and pay back short-term debt.

Source(s): Vivian Wai-yin Kwok, Forbes, May 07, 2009.

<http://www.forbes.com/2009/04/07/shipping-south-korea-markets-equity-freight.html>

China Shipbuilders Still in Doldrums

China Daily quoted Clarkson Research Service said that China's fledgling shipbuilding industry is set for more hard times as industry insiders have indicated that the global shipbuilding industry is unlikely to recover in the near future. New shipbuilding orders received by China in the first quarter of this year fell 98.3%YoY to 0.19 million deadweight tonnes. New orders worldwide in the first quarter have fallen by 97% to 1.33 million DWT.

In 2008, Chinese accomplished shipbuilding output was 28.81 million deadweight tonnages, rising by 52.2% of last year. The newly undertook ship orders were 58.18 million deadweight

tonnages, a reduction of 40.9% of last year. Ship orders in hand were 204.6 million deadweight tonnages, increased by 28.7% compared with 2007. According to the Clarkson, in 2008, the global newly undertook ship orders were totaled at 150 million deadweight tonnages, a reduction of 42.7% of last year. Especially In Q4 2008, the global newly undertook ship orders were only totaled at 4.76 million deadweight tonnages, which mean each month had an order as small as 1.59 million deadweight tonnages during this quarter, which was only 1/10 of the monthly average during the previous nine months of 2008.

Mr Zhu Rujing researcher, China Shipbuilding Economy Research Center said "New orders worldwide will be less than 5 million DWT in the first half of this year and it will be quite optimistic if the figure reaches 15 million DWT for the full year. He estimated that 204.6 million DWT orders Chinese shipyards have pooled by the end of 2008 will decline to 150 million DWT. Mr Zhu said "The global shipbuilding depressions will last three years at least or even more than five years." Although major shipyards in China have pooled enough orders for production till 2011 order cancellations may increase as clients are facing cash problems. Mr Zhang Guangqin president, China Association of the National Shipbuilding Industry "In 2009, Chinese shipyards will deliver vessels of 56 million DWT as planned, but I guess 5% of them will be cancelled."

Source(s): Steeltguru, Apr 12, 2009.

http://steeltguru.com/news/index/2009/04/12/ODk5NDc=/China_shipbuilders_still_in_doldrums.html

ResearchinChina, April 22, 2009

<http://www.pr-inside.com/china-shipbuilding-industry-report-r1199241.htm>

Japan's Shipbuilding Orders Plunged 45% to 7-Year Low in FY 08

Orders for new ships tumbled 45.2 per cent to the equivalent of 6 .7 million compensated gross tons in fiscal 2008, according to data released Tuesday by the Shipbuilders' Association of Japan. With shipping firms less willing to invest since the downturn in the global economy last fall, orders fell to the lowest since fiscal 2001, when the tally came to 5.42 million compensated gross tons. The market for new vessels had been brisk since 2003 due to such factors as rising resource shipments to emerging economies. As a result, domestic shipbuilders "have a three-year backlog of construction orders," Masamoto Tazaki, association chairman, told reporters. But Tazaki cautioned that "over the coming one to two years, we don't expect the high level of new orders enjoyed to date." Japanese shipbuilders are bracing for intense competition from South Korea, China and other foreign rivals. In the wake of the shipbuilding boom, South Korea and China have been building new dockyards and making huge capital investments.

With overseas competitors offering extremely low order prices, "This could lead to market turmoil," warned Tazaki, who is also chairman of Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd. Leading domestic shipbuilders believe they must be competitive in other areas apart from price, such as energy conservation and green technology. They are focusing on developing new models with reduced emissions of nitrogen oxides as well as improving ship geometry to create highly fuel-efficient vessels.

Source(s): April 22, 2009.

<http://www.tmcnet.com/usubmit/-japans-shipbuilding-orders-plunged-45-7-year-low-/2009/04/22/4145618.htm>

Turkey Sees Continued Growth in Shipbuilding

Foreign Trade Minister Kürşat Tüzmen said Turkey will continue to grow in the shipbuilding industry, improving its standing as the third largest yacht builder in the world and eighth in shipbuilding. Speaking on 24 April in Kocaeli, Tüzmen said shipbuilding in Turkey is primarily supported by free trade zones (FTZs) that currently provide jobs to some 50,000 workers. Tüzmen was in the Kocaeli Free Trade Zone (KOBSTAŞ) to participate in a ceremony to deliver to Saudi officials the luxury yacht Nourah of Riyadh (Riyadh's Splendor), built for Saudi Arabian Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud by Turkish-Lebanese yacht builder Yachtley Gemi Yapım A.Ş. Underlining that each FTZ has become specialized in certain areas, the minister said FTZs in Kocaeli, Antalya and Adana have concentrated on shipbuilding. "We thank all our entrepreneurs who have contributed to the development of free trade zones," he added. The Aegean FTZ specializes in space technologies and aviation, while the İstanbul Atatürk Airport Free Trade Zone (İSBI) is focused on software program development. FTZs in Turkey enjoy a \$22 billion trade volume. With regards to the Saudi royal family's new yacht, he said Nourah of Riyadh, 65 meters in length, was the largest-ever motorized yacht built in Turkey. "This is a clear sign that we are growing fast in shipbuilding. Our experts have already started preparations to build a 75-meter yacht here in Kocaeli. Turkey has gotten used to breaking new records, and we will work harder to introduce even better projects," he said.

Source(s): April 25, 2009. <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=173470&bolum=105>

India Singapore Naval Exercise Build on Synergies

Naval warships from India and Singapore conducted a week-long exercises started in the last week of March in the Andaman Sea aimed at ensuring maritime and coastal security and combating piracy on the high seas. Four naval ships, including two destroyers from the Indian Navy, and a fleet of vessels of the Singapore navy took part in the annual exercises that involve anti-submarine, anti-air and anti-surface manoeuvres in one of the world's busiest sea lanes.

The exercises gained in significance as the safety of commercial shipping routes in the region and port security have become top priorities for both India and Singapore. The Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise, or SIMBEX, finished on Thursday (April 2) in the South China Sea. First held in 1994, the exercises, which began with Anti-Submarine Warfare operations, have over the years expanded in scope and complexity, reflecting the growing strength and capabilities of the two sides and their inter-operability skills. In the 16 years the two countries have conducted SIMBEX, their individual and joint naval capabilities have expanded manifold.

The advanced naval warfare exercises demand a high level of coordination from the navies, enabling them to carry out complex missions in the high seas building on each other's strengths without compromising each other's security, Indian officials said Wednesday. The Singapore navy's impressive state-of-the-art Formidable Class frigates, part of city-state's recently-operationalised frigate squadron comprising six stealth frigates, and its Endurance class landing platform dock (LPD) ships will be an attraction for visiting Indian navy hands. After the exercises, the Indian ships separately visited Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea and the Vietnamese port of Hai Phong. Later, "the two ships headed to the northern Chinese port city of Qingdao to participate in China's first International Fleet Review. The fleet review, was held April 20-24, to mark the 60th anniversary of the modern Chinese navy.

At the end of their South East and East Asian deployment, two of the ships will return to Singapore to take part in the maritime defence show IMDEX Asia 2009 which begins here May 12. The two Indian warships will be joined by an Indian Coast Guard vessel. More than 20 warships from 15 countries and around 5,500 trade visitors are expected to join the maritime jamboree. The trade event will coincide with the first International Maritime Security Conference which will bring the top brass of around 20 navies and coast guard fleets to Singapore.

Source(s): Nirmala George, Thai Indian, Singapore, April 01, 2009.

http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/india-singapore-naval-exercises-build-on-synergies_100174199.html

China, Japan, Russia and RoK Stage Maritime Oil Spill Emergency Drill

China, Japan, Russia and the Republic of Korea (ROK) conducted a drill off the east China coast on April 10 to handle an oil spill emergency. The drill was conducted to address extensive drifting oil leaks after an oil tanker bumped into a cargo ship off the southern coast of ROK, said an official with Shandong Maritime Safety Administration. China, Japan and Russia provided technical support and resources to handle the spillage as soon as they received ROK's call for help. The exercise, of nearly three hours, used English as its working language for communications. The drill aimed to enhance regional cooperation to cope with major oil spill emergencies within the northwestern Pacific area, the official told Xinhua. China, Japan, Russia and ROK passed the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) in 1994 in order to deal with oil pollution accident at sea.

The four countries signed a memo on oil spill response cooperation in May 2004 on the basis of NOWPAP. Another drill of the same kind will be staged at the end of this year, the official said. China and ROK held "The 2008 Maritime Rescue and NOWPAP China-ROK Pollution Exercise" last September, the first time that China has hosted an international joint maritime oil spill emergency exercise.

Source(s): Xinhua, April 10, 2009.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/10/content_11166355.htm

Chinese Navy Expands Foreign Cooperation

China's navy is stepping up foreign exchanges and cooperation to cope with non-traditional security threats in oceans, Navy Commander Adm. Wu Shengli said here on April 15. Since the new century, the Chinese navy has conducted 37 joint military drills with its foreign counterparts in areas including non-proliferation of weapons of destruction, security defense of sea-land-air channels, anti-terrorism and joint search and rescue, Wu said in an exclusive interview with Xinhua.

"To cope with the non-traditional security threats in the vast sea environment, exchanges and effective cooperation among the navies of different countries are a must," Wu said one week ahead of the navy's 60th founding anniversary. He said such joint military exercises were expanding in frequency and scale and covering a widening variety of fields. The Chinese navy held its first joint exercise in October 2003, when the Chinese and Pakistani naval forces conducted a joint search and rescue exercise off the coast of Shanghai in the East China Sea.

In March 2009, Chinese naval destroyer Guangzhou joined a 10-day multinational "Peace 09" military exercise at the Arabia Sea off the southern Pakistani port of Karachi. During the operation, the Chinese navy sent for the first time special forces to take part in a land anti-terror drill, expanding its sea anti-terror cooperation to new spheres, Wu said. According to the commander, since 1985, the Chinese navy has also sent more than 40 warships to more than 30 countries for friendship visits, and received more than 100 ships from 30 foreign countries. Wu said Chinese naval delegations have visited Russia, the United States, Britain, France and Pakistan, among others, in recent years. They exchanged views on peace and development and tackling non-traditional security threats on the sea, and signed a number of bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements. "The Chinese navy is playing an increasingly important role in safeguarding world sea peace," he said

Source(s): Xinhua, April 15, 2009.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/15/content_11191644.htm



Piracy Could Bring Maritime Trade to Its Knees: Experts

Maritime experts say shipping will only get slower and more expensive unless something is done to stop the threat of Somali pirates. As details continue to emerge about the dramatic rescue of the American ship Captain Richard Phillips, more questions are being asked about the impact of piracy on shipping routes. This comes as Somali pirates raised the stakes this morning, seizing two more ships and throwing down the gauntlet to tough-talking US President Barack Obama. The problem has already sent insurance rates up and more ships are opting to take the slower route around South Africa instead of through the Suez Canal.

Australia's shipping industry says it will have an adverse effect on the world economy as trade slows down. Friends and colleagues of Captain Richard Phillips are still dealing with his dramatic rescue at the hands of US Navy Seal marksmen. Shane Murphy is Captain Phillips's chief mate onboard the Maersk Alabama. "I just got off the phone with our captain, Richard Phillips for the first time, and it was an extremely emotional experience for all of us to actually hear his voice and hear the condition he was in," he said.

John Burnett is an expert on international piracy, and told Radio National's breakfast program that poverty drives many young Somali men to become pirates.

"These kids, the young men, if they're lucky will earn probably even less than \$30 a month. So when they become a pirate they will earn something in the hundreds of thousands and that's a hell of a lot more profitable and less risky than pulling up a half empty fishing net," he said. And the toll extracted by the pirates is increasing.

There's the cost of ships out of commission as well as ransoms to free crews and extra security measures. Add to that rising insurance premiums and higher labour costs for crews travelling in the area. And there are extra costs for shipping companies which are choosing to avoid the area.

Source(s): Michael Edwards, ABC, Apr 15, 2009.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/15/2543069.htm>

Total Container Traffic Between Asia and Europe Down 21% in March 09

Total container traffic between Asia and Europe has fallen by 21% in March, compared with the similar period of 2008. From April 1st 2009 all rates are to be increased by \$250-350 per 1 TEU, the Sea Bulletin reports, with reference to AXS-Alphaliner. Currently 24 container lines are in operation on routes from the Far East and Europe, 19 of these use Mediterranean Sea ports only. 19 lines have closed down since October 2008, whilst others have reduced volumes; most reductions have been suffered by New World Alliance and SKYH, (down 25% and 24% respectively).

Source(s): April 04, 2009

http://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=42584&Itemid=79

Who Will Stop the Pirates?

The American merchant sailors who fought pirates to retake their US-flagged ship, which had been seized in waters off Somalia in early April, showed a stiff resolve against maritime piracy that the world community so far has not. Merchant vessels and the global economy will continue to be at risk from ransom-seeking pirates until the maritime powers adopt – and enforce – a zero-tolerance policy to stop the hijackings, say maritime security experts. With the ship's captain reported to be in pirates' hands, the unfinished drama casts a bright spotlight on increasingly insecure shipping lanes. The hijacking of the Maersk Alabama cargo ship – which apparently involved the first hostage-taking of American merchant sailors in the pirate-infested waters off Somalia – at first appeared to end hours after the ordeal began, with the 20-member crew overpowering and detaining one pirate and others fleeing to the sea.

Then it was learned that the foiled pirates had kidnapped the ship's captain and were holding him hostage in a lifeboat. An American warship and a small fleet of other vessels had been dispatched to the scene, US officials reported on April 9th afternoon. But it also is likely to cause closer look world actions thus far to combat the problem. With ship seizures off Somalia tripling between 2007 and 2008, a consortium of international maritime powers, including the US, has increased patrols in the shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean. The patrols and stepped-up training of navies whose waters are seeing pirate activity rise are the result of measures the United Nations adopted in December 2008. Three months into the international anti-piracy campaign, as many as 17 nations are participating in increased patrols, and more are expected to join, according to the Associated Press. But more decisive action is needed if piracy is to be stopped, experts say.

"The bottom line is you have to stop them from being able to use their booty," says Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Director of the Center for Terrorism Research at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in Washington. Among other things, he says, maritime powers should go after the pirates' bases of operation. In the case of the Somali pirates, he adds, that means taking seriously the symbiotic relationship that has developed between the pirates and the Shebab Islamist organization that controls Somalia. The two groups do not seem to have an ideological link, says Mr. Gartenstein-Ross, but evidence suggests each benefits from the other: The pirates pay "taxes" for their haven and to avoid being shut down. The two groups have trained each other in martial and maritime skills, he adds. More worrisome still, says Gartenstein-Ross, is the link Shebab has developed with Al Qaeda.

"If you take the communications we know exist between the two, add Al Qaeda's stated hope of bankrupting the global economy, and mix in the devastating impact of a skyrocketing price of oil because of some dramatic act of piracy against oil tankers, you see why we could wake up some day wishing we'd done a lot more to stop the Somali pirates."

Given the "ripple effects" of pirates' actions throughout the global economy, the world must do more to stop them, agrees Larry Howard, chairman of the Global Business and Transportation Department at State University of New York Maritime College. But the necessary international tools already exist in the 1958 Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea, he says.

Source(s): Howard LaFranchi, *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 09, 2009
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0409/p02s01-usfp.html>

Maritime Officers Say Pirates are Winning The War

Master Mariner and Certified Ship Security Officer, Captain Kelly Sweeney of Spokane, US says the seizure of this latest ship is a sign that the situation off the Somali coast has escalated to a new level of danger. He says on the one hand, the fact that this attack occurred hundreds of miles from the coast is evidence that the pirates are using the money from selling stolen cargo or ransoms to equip themselves with bigger guns, better boats, and more sophisticated technology. "They're already using state of the art GPS and satellite information to track their targets, now they have ships seaworthy enough to operate far from the coast," Sweeney said. "That hugely expands their operating range... which in turn means the danger areas that need patrolling have become so large that the military ships in the area have a nearly impossible job. It's like finding a needle in a haystack."

Sweeney also said this incident is further proof that while the pirates are better armed than before- their prey remain almost helpless. "What they'll do is track a ship and match its speed, often during daylight hours, they attack from several sides at once. You can see them coming, but most of the crews are unarmed and without military training. He points out that the pirates know most shipping companies don't carry arms over fear of complications with countries like England and Canada which have strict restrictions on the private ownership of firearms, and they count on target

ships being poorly defended. Cases in point, according to Sweeney, Israeli shipping boats are seldom attacked because all crew members are armed and trained. The answer lies in a three pronged effort: First, there must be a political solution to the lawlessness in Somalia which allows pirates near free-reign. Second- the military presence in the danger zone must be stepped up so that patrols can keep up with the pirates' longer range. Lastly, Sweeney thinks all boats should either carry armed military staff or have armed and trained crew members. "At the very least, companies afraid to have guns on board should beef up the ship's defenses with electrical fencing or a directional super amplifier that sends high decibel signals so loud it blows out eardrums if you get too close, "

Source(s): Dan Restione, KIRO Radio, Apr 8, 2009.
<http://www.mynorthwest.com/?nid=11&sid=154021>

To Stop Pirates, Do Ships Need Firepower?

After pirates boarded the Maersk Alabama, the unarmed crew did the unthinkable: They fought back and, apparently, regained control of the huge and lumbering container ship. It's not yet clear how the American crew was able to do it. Neither international nor US maritime regulations require shipboard crews to be trained in the use of weapons. But at least some of those aboard are known to be among a relatively small number of US merchant sailors who've been trained in weapons and defensive tactics at maritime academies.

In the wake of Alabama incident in waters of Somalia, all aspects of security training for merchant marines are likely to be reexamined and, probably, intensified, say educators at the nation's maritime academies. "I can almost guarantee there will be a major review of course curriculum after this incident," says Glen Paine, executive director of the Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies in Linthicum, Md. That academy, which offers graduate training for seamen, is among the few that offers limited weapons training to meet requirements of the US Military Sealift Command, which requires weapons training for ship officers and other crew. Most US maritime academies do not offer weapons or force-on-force training. That's because most shipping companies follow a long tradition of merchant vessels remaining unarmed – which makes them easy prey for pirates, but prevents bloodshed and damage to the ship. Except for using fire hoses and axes to try to prevent pirates from boarding, merchant crews have few options except to surrender. Many shipping companies remain opposed to weapons training for crews, but that could change, educators say.

Some shipping companies that serve the US Navy's Military Sealift Command, including Maersk, are required to have crew members trained to use weapons. Of six merchant maritime academies in the US and other union-run educational institutions, at least two – the Massachusetts Maritime Academy and the union-run Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies – provide training in defensive tactics and weapons use.

Most US maritime academies graduate perhaps 200 students a year – for a grand total of about 1,000 to 1,200 new merchant marines per year.. Some 20,000 US mariners work in the shipping industry. Among those, a fraction have had weapons training. In all likelihood, one of them is Shane Murphy, chief officer of the Maersk Alabama and a 2001 graduate of the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. It could not be confirmed if he has had weapons training, though it seems likely given Maersk's service to the Military Sealift and company comments. "All the crew members are trained in security detail in how to deal with piracy," Maersk CEO John Reinhart told reporters Wednesday in a press conference. "As merchant vessels, we do not carry arms. We have ways to push back, but we do not carry arms."

Some shipping companies, though, are moving beyond basic security training to include weapons instruction and other active defensive measures. At least one international company now issues rifles to its crews, according to a recent article in Professional Mariner, the journal of the maritime industry. That flies in the face of current training for most US and international merchant vessels, maritime educators say.

Source(s): Mark Clayton and Bridget Huber, The Christian Science Monitor, April 08, 2009.
<http://features.csmonitor.com/globalnews/2009/04/08/to-stop-pirates-do-ships-need-firepower/>

Philippines Coast Guard to Deploy More K-9 Units in Seaports Nationwide

The Philippine Coast Guard will continue intensifying its security measures as thousands of maritime commuters started flocking the various seaports nationwide. Admiral Wilfredo Tamayo, Coast Guard commandant, said the influx of ship passengers returning to Manila from provinces started Friday night. Tamayo said no significant untoward incidents and maritime accidents occurred during the Holy Week. "So far, everything is in place. Our PCG personnel did well in their jobs and the cooperation of the public is very helpful. There are a few instances that some vessels and bancas ran aground, but the PCG managed to immediately respond," said Tamayo in a mobile interview.

The Passenger Assistance Centers (PACs) would remain in all ports and ferry terminals all over the country to assist the riding public, Tamayo said. "The PACs that aim to serve the needs of those riding ships on their way to celebrate the Holy Week and/ or spend their vacations in the provinces or in other maritime tourist destinations will remain there. Many passengers are returning home after the Holy Week," said Tamayo. Tamayo ordered the deployment of additional personnel on ports and Sea Marshals on board inter-island vessels as part of the "OPLAN: Mahal na Araw 2009." He also ordered the deployment of additional personnel from Special Operations Group and K-9 Units. "OPLAN: Mahal na Araw 2009" is in line with the directive of Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza to effect special operations and humanitarian services during passenger peak seasons. "The essence of the security measures is to insure effective implementation of maritime security based on accurate security assessments. Ship inspectors and K-9 units are also directed to be extra vigilant in ports and conduct random checks of passengers and luggage," Tamayo said. He also urged passengers to report vessels that were carrying passengers in excess of authorized capacity and/or those without adequate provision of life jackets and other life-saving appliances.

Source(s): April 12, 2009.

<http://balita.ph/2009/04/12/coast-guard-to-deploy-more-k-9-units-in-seaports-nationwide/>

Incidence of Sea Piracy in Bangladesh Waters Drops

The crimes against vessels in Bangladesh waters have declined substantially when it has increased alarmingly around the globe in recent years. International, regional and global forums at their recent meetings highly appreciated Bangladesh efforts in making safer its waters by combating sea piracy and other crimes with regards to vessels. Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) officials claimed that Bangladesh had achieved tremendous improvement in terms of number of incidents and the nature of grievousness of the crime in the sea. According to the CPA, only 12 incidents of 'various natures' were recorded in 2008 compared to 18 in the previous year. The number was 27 in 2006, 28 in 2005, 54 in 2004 and 62 in 2003.

No armed robbery was recorded in 2008, while the number of rope snatching were nine, ship store theft was one, attacks on ship crew were only two, CPA officials said. RECAAP, an Asian forum to combat sea piracy, at its governing council meeting in February and the International Association of Ports and Harbour at their meeting in March, both held in Singapore, lauded the development in Bangladesh and appreciated the combined efforts taken to tackle the incidents of piracy. However, International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a Malaysia-based maritime crime watchdog cautiously admitted the improvement in Bangladesh but noting that the area was still listed as one of very high risk. "Pirates are targeting ships preparing to anchor. Most attacks are reported at Chittagong anchorages and approaches," it observed.

Talking to the news agency, Captain Arif Mahmud, member (Harbour and Marine) of CPA, said the country had gained significant development in the sea piracy situation following successful implementation of International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code) -- a mandatory security compliance set by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), a UN body, and concerted efforts of various organisations including the navy and coastguard. The IMB in its report titled "Piracy prone areas and warnings" has identified Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malacca Straits, Malaysia, Singapore Straits, South China Sea, Philippine, Vietnam, Africa and Gulf of Eden, Nigeria, Tanzania, Somalia, Brazil and Arabia Sea as the most sea piracy risks zones. The IMB in its annual global piracy report released in mid January last said the northern Somali coast was the most vulnerable area in the Gulf of Aden where Somali pirates armed with automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenades (RPG) were attacking vessels frequently for realising ransom for hijacked vessels and their crews. "Bangladesh (Chittagong) and Tanzania (Dar es Salaam) have shown a few similarities in the method of attacks with vessels at anchor and those were approaching the anchorage targeted," the IMB report published in its website said.

Source(s): The Financial Express, April 10, 2009.

<http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2009/04/11/63678.html>

Chinese Navy to Develop New Warships, Aircraft

The navy plans to develop a new generation of warships and aircraft as part of the country's effort to upgrade the maritime security defense system, the service's commander-in-chief said on April 15. Admiral Wu Shengli outlined key missions, present and future, in an interview with Xinhua News Agency on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Chinese navy on 23rd. Such an interview with a high-ranking military officer is rare, military sources said, adding that the message conveyed by the navy chief reflects key thinking on the navy's strategy

Wu - who is 64 and assumed his post in August 2006 - said the navy will develop weaponry such as large combat warships, submarines with longer range and stealth capability, supersonic cruise aircraft, more accurate long-range missiles, deep-sea torpedoes and upgraded information technology, among others. Senior Colonel Li Jie, a researcher at the Chinese Navy's Military Academy, said the "large warships" Wu mentioned do not mean only aircraft carriers, but he did not elaborate. The media have reported that China will have an aircraft carrier "very soon".

East China fleet commander Admiral Xu Hongmeng said last month during the national legislature's annual session that the country possessed both the ability and motivation to build a carrier. "China really needs a carrier. Both technologically and economically, China already has the capacity to build a carrier," Xu said. Wu, a member of the Central Military Commission, the nation's top military body, also said the navy will greatly strengthen its logistics and support facility system to improve far-sea repair, delivery, rescue and replenishment capacities. "The navy will establish a maritime defense system that corresponds with the need to protect China's maritime security and economic development," he said.

Peng Guangqian, a Beijing-based military strategist, said Wu's remarks are more than routine remarks to mark the navy's landmark anniversary. "He outlined the missions of the navy in a new historical stage, where more of the country's national interests overseas need to be protected with a correspondingly strong navy," he said. The navy has witnessed rapid progress in its logistics and support capability, with the tonnage of complementary ships now six times higher than 30 years ago. The network of naval bases, airports and ammunition supply systems have enabled the navy to conduct missions further offshore. Wu also said the navy is stepping up exchanges with foreign navies to tackle non-traditional security threats. "To cope with the non-traditional security threats in the vast sea environment, exchanges and effective cooperation among the navies of different countries are vital."

Wu announced major missions for the navy this year, including: Anti-piracy missions off the coast of Somalia, port visits, the National Day parade and a sea parade to mark its 60th anniversary. Preparations have entered final stages in Qingdao, headquarters of China's North Sea Fleet, for the celebrations next week. More than 40 vessels from 15 countries are scheduled to take part in the event.

Source(s): April 16, 2009.

http://www.beijingdaily.com.cn/chinanews/200904/t20090416_514979.htm

China Launched Celebration to Mark 60th Anniversary of Navy

China's naval chief welcomed delegations on April 17 from 29 naval forces attending the celebrations for the navy's 60th anniversary at Qingdao harbor. In a banquet attended by delegation chiefs, captains and crews of visiting vessels, Chinese navy commander Admiral Wu Shengli declared the opening of a four-day celebration under the theme of "Harmonious Ocean", which marks the anniversary on Thursday (Apr 23). "The ocean is the common home to navies of the world. It is the responsibility of every navy to protect maritime security while establishing a peaceful and harmonious maritime environment," said the commander. Thursday's naval review off the northern port of Qingdao, which included vessels from the United States and 13 other foreign nations, was the most tangible sign yet of the change in attitude.

A large fleet from the host country was also deployed for the review, only the fourth time one has been held in China since 1949. The admiral also told the naval leaders that the Chinese navy, after six decades of development, will expand cooperation in the high seas while strengthening its capabilities to perform diverse mission on its way to modernization. The celebrations, which featured military, music and sports exchanges



starting today, aim to promote the ideas of "Peace, Harmony, Cooperation" by the Chinese navy, said the admiral. Senior Colonel Li Jie, a researcher at the Chinese Navy's Military Academy, said a lack of naval exchanges had led to misunderstandings in the past. "But with more foreign exchanges like this, the navies will have a chance to exchange their views on the maritime order," he said.

On the occasion of the celebration, Chinese President Hu Jintao sought to reassure the international community over China's rising military strength before presiding over a naval display

highlighting Beijing's ambitions of becoming a major sea power. In remarks to U.S. and other foreign naval commanders, Hu repeated China's standard position that it would never threaten other nations or seek regional dominance. China's military, including the fast modernizing navy, "will always be a force for the preservation of world peace and advancement of common development," Hu said.

Hu called also for stepped-up cooperation among navies to safeguard maritime safety, a nod to China's first-ever deployment of anti-piracy patrols last December to Somalia. "Strengthening exchanges between the navies of all countries and embarking on international maritime safety cooperation substantially contributes to the building of harmonious oceans and seas," Hu said.

Hosted by the People's Liberation Army Navy, the international fleet inspection featured the first known public display of its nuclear submarines. Two diesel-electric submarines also took part in the half-hour sail past, along with five missile destroyers, six frigates, and a large amphibious landing ship. Above them flew electronic reconnaissance and early warning planes, fighter jets and anti-submarine-warfare helicopters. Foreign vessels included those from Australia, Brazil, France, India, South Korea, Pakistan, and Russia. Adm. Gary Roughead, chief of naval operations, represented the U.S. Navy at the events, along with the guided missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald.



All naval vessels attending the fleet review assembled at the naval harbor in west Qingdao

Japan sent the deputy commander of its navy, Vice Adm. Koji Kato, but did not participate in the naval review in deference to Chinese sensitivities over Japan's brutal World War II invasion and occupation of much of the country. Japanese forces controlled Qingdao from 1914 to 1922 and again from 1938 to 1945.

Source(s): China.org, Apr 18, 2009.
http://www.china.org.cn/china/news/2009-04/18/content_17629430.htm

Ken The, Associated Press, Apr 23, 2009.
<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5h7i1so3EPxByMVNR-a9JPNeiB6vwD97O7ALG0>

Pacific Alliance for Peace

As the left-leaning news media relish reports that President Barack Obama is seeking to temper the image of the United States as the world's pre-eminent power, it can be forgotten that there are overseas allies who want and need America to remain strong and vigilant against rising threats. They want America to continue its leadership role in forging coalitions to meet global dangers. This message was very clear at a conference on April 17 in Washington sponsored by two Japanese think tanks, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Ocean Policy Research Foundation.

The theme of the conference was the U.S.-Japan Maritime Alliance and how it can be expanded. Japan's ambassador Shotaro Yachi opened the session by reading a message from Prime Minister Taro Aso calling for Washington and Tokyo to take the lead in building an "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" which would sweep across "Japan, the Republic of Korea, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, Central Asia, Guam, Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic region and Scandinavia roughly speaking." This geographical description is of the opposite side of the "Arc of Instability" that has been used since the 1970s to describe the main trouble spots in the Eurasian landmass. The positive concept of the Arc would be founded on the values of "freedom, democracy, basic human rights, the rule of law and the market economy" according to Aso. The Asia-Pacific section of the Arc, extending as far as the Persian Gulf, would be backed by a "Seapower Network" that should expand beyond the current U.S.-Japan alliance to include Australia, India and the United Kingdom. For diplomatic reasons, Aso had to say that the Arc "is not intended to contain China or Russia," but his extended remarks were filled with examples of the dangers Beijing and Moscow pose to peace, stability and economic development. The Prime Minister noted

China's advancement to the ocean is particularly spectacular. The Chinese Navy is proactively modernizing. We also have information that China is working to build aircraft carriers. China's opaque expansion and modernization of its military, including the Navy, may greatly impact the maritime security environment which is so important to both Japan and the U.S. Moreover, Russia is increasingly more actively engaged in military activities in the Far East.

A major element in the "Japan-United States Seapower Alliance for Stability and Prosperity on the Oceans" paper presented at the conference by the Ocean Policy Research Foundation is

development of seabed resources, both minerals and energy. The proposal calls for joint research and the sharing of new technology that can reach these untapped resources. But it is also clear that ocean wealth will also have to be protected from rivals. Prime Minister Aso pointed out that Japan and China have conflicting claims in the East China Sea, and that "China continues to carry out unilateral development based on its own claims. This cannot be considered to be an action of a responsible major power." He also noted "excessive claims of jurisdiction by coastal states. This is a problem the U.S. Navy has faced from Chinese harassment of its ships in international waters. Beijing claims that the Exclusive Economic Zones awarded by the UN Law of the Sea Treaty confer sovereignty over large ocean expanses and not just a limited right to exploit resources.

Japan also has territorial disputes with Russia, and Aso mentioned the construction plan Moscow has for a strategic nuclear submarine base on the Kamchatka peninsula. China has recently built a similar base on Hainan Island menacing the South China Sea. Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe appeared in person to deliver the keynote address at the Sasakawa conference. He echoed Aso's arguments, and even compared, without naming names, the rising Chinese threat to that posed earlier by the Soviet Union. He stated that during the Cold War, Japan was the "cap in the bottle" past which the Soviet fleet could not pass from its Pacific base at Vladivostok. He then observed that the "Japanese island chain can fulfill the same role against another power if it pushes the envelop." Geographically that chain could be seen as extending all the way south to Taiwan and the Philippines, forming a base for containing China's naval ambitions.

The OPRF paper urges Washington and Tokyo "to cooperate with all nations opposing the emergence of any aspiring hegemonic state that could disrupt the balance of power on the seas and create instability in the security environment" another thinly veiled reference to the rise of China. "The process of building the new sea power alliance will also serve as a new challenge for the Japan-U.S. alliance that many believe is beginning to waiver," says the OPRF document.

An example of those who believe the alliance should not just waiver but dissolve was presented during the question period following Abe's speech. Stanley Kober, a research fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute, cited out of context George Washington's warning against "entangling alliances." He then claimed such alliances only serve to keep the world divided. He asked the former Prime Minister, "If the U.S. and Japan strengthen their alliance, what will Russia and China do?" Kober also thought it was a mistake to try to include India in the alliance. Cato has a history of trying to undermine American defense policy, and has been exhibiting a growing pro-Chinese bias.

Abe restated that the U.S., Japan and India "are democracies with shared interests" who also believe in human rights and the rule of law. Next year will mark the 60th anniversary of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Abe declared, "The United States has no better friend in the world than Japan." Other Japanese speakers at the conference reinforced this point. Shunji Yanai, an advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and professor at Waseda University argued that the Iraq War has helped pull Washington and Tokyo closer together, as has the crisis over North Korean nuclear and missile programs. Japan sent military engineers to Iraq to help with reconstruction and has deployed naval units to support coalition operations in Afghanistan. Yanai also believes that North Korea has a secret uranium enrichment program that has not been addressed by the Six Party Talks orchestrated by China.

Source(s): William R. Hawkins, FrontPageMagazine.com, April 27, 2009.

<http://frontpagemagazine.com/Articles/Read.aspx?GUID=2C231E54-F81B-422C-915F-6827E90EAA70>



MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Addressing the Crisis in America's Oceans

By every measure, serious policy reform is long overdue to address the crisis in the marine environment of the United States. Ninety percent of large predatory fish are now gone. There is a "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico, created by an estimated 1.5 million metric tons of nitrogen fertilizer carried by the Mississippi River from America's hinterland, that has grown to an area roughly the size of Massachusetts. Nearly 90 percent of U.S. wetlands have vanished due to development, and twenty-six thousand of the country's beaches have been temporarily closed or put under advisories because of pollution. These are just a few of the indicators that U.S. oceans are in serious trouble. Reversing this decline in ocean health requires a comprehensive national ocean policy, coordination among agencies, and collaboration with states and stakeholders.

Fortunately, a fresh blueprint for such a policy has been produced. On April 7, the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (JOICI) published a landmark report (PDF), *Changing Oceans, Changing World*, which details ocean policy priorities for the administration of President Barack Obama and the new Congress. The report outlines a series of excellent recommendations that include strengthening science- and ecosystem-based approaches to ocean management and developing a sorely needed national ocean policy. It details how a

comprehensive ocean agenda should be integrated with economic recovery efforts and programs to help the nation transition to a green economy. Major obstacles to reform include a lack of a clear policy direction from the federal government, confusing and overlapping jurisdictions, and fragmented laws. Currently, at the national level alone, U.S. waters are managed under more than 140 federal laws implemented by eighteen different federal agencies.

A comprehensive policy has remained an elusive goal partly because in the executive branch no senior White House official owns ocean issues. The oceans are vast, and the issues involved are so numerous that they do not fit neatly into any single official's inbox. There is no ocean czar, nor, for that matter, is any senior official on the National Security Council (NSC) charged with overseeing ocean issues solely (although there is a NSC Maritime Security Policy Coordinating Committee). Ocean issues fall under the purview of the departments of Defense, State, Commerce, Homeland Security, Transportation, and Treasury, among others, as well as under the Council on Environmental Quality, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and the authority of numerous congressional committees. Important to all but owned by no one, oceans and the policies affecting them have been adrift without a senior champion that has the president's ear.

There are very compelling reasons to join the [Law of the Sea] treaty now so that the United States can be better prepared to advance its national security, economic, and environmental interests. The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative recommends that the president appoint a high-level adviser on ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes issues equal in rank to the chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality. This new senior official would be responsible for leading a strengthened committee on ocean policy and for coordinating U.S. ocean policy among all executive agencies. This portfolio should include developing an integrated offshore planning and management regime, coordinating ocean governance among the thirty coastal states, and working with Congress to pass a comprehensive ocean policy act that would align efforts across the multiple committees with oversight of ocean-related activities.

Source(s): Scott G. Borgerson, Council of Foreign Relations, April 7, 2009.

http://www.cfr.org/publication/19056/addressing_the_crisis_in_americas_oceans.html

Arctic Marine Shipping Report to Recommend Protection Measures

A study to be unveiled at an international meeting next week in Tromsø, Norway, could boost measures aimed at protecting Arctic waters in light of growing ship traffic. The Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment will be released at the meeting of the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental group that includes representatives from Canada, the United States and other northern nations. At roughly 200 pages long, the report looks at the impact marine traffic—including cruise ships, fishing vessels and tankers—is having on humans and the environment, as Arctic sea ice shrinks and international interest grows in Arctic oil and gas exploration. "There is an interest in the level of cruise ship activity, not only where they are [but] what they're doing and how they're taking care of themselves and the environment," Chris Cuddy, international chair of the Arctic Marine Protection working group, told CBC News.

Cuddy's group has been preparing the assessment report over the past few years, looking 20 to 30 years ahead at what is needed to improve shipping conditions in the Arctic and protect northerners and the environment. The assessment includes recommendations to improve search and rescue capabilities in the event of shipping accidents and spills. The report will also recommend that rules regarding shipping in Arctic waters be strengthened in terms of meeting technical standards and ensuring search and rescue equipment and crew training for Arctic conditions.

Source(s): CBC News, April 24, 2009.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2009/04/24/arctic-shipping.html>



MARITIME LEGISLATION

US Proposes New Regulation of Antarctic Tourism

On April 6th, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called for tighter regulation of Antarctic tourism as delegates from 47 countries began a review conference of the now 50-year-old Antarctic Treaty. Antarctic tourism, principally on cruise ships, has increased nearly tenfold in the past 15 years and there is broad concern about tourism-related oil spills and damage to the delicate habitat of Antarctic penguins and other wildlife. Giving the keynote address to a conference marking the 50th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty, which preserved that land and ice shelves of the southern polar region for peaceful purposes, Secretary Clinton said strengthened environmental regulation is especially important as Antarctic tourism grows. "The United States is concerned about the safety of the tourists and the suitability of the ships that make the journey south. We have submitted a resolution that would place limits on landings from ships that carry large



numbers of tourists," she said. "We have also proposed new requirements for life boats on tourist ships to make sure they can keep passengers alive until rescue comes. And we urge greater international cooperation to prevent discharges from these ships that will further degrade the environment around Antarctica," she noted.

Limiting tourist access to the continent has taken on urgency because of the surge in visitors and recent cruise ship accidents. Two ships ran aground in Antarctic waters in the just completed tourist season and a Canadian-owned cruise ship hit an iceberg and sank off the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula in 2007. The more than 150 passengers and crew were rescued. The U.S. plan would, among other things, prohibit ships carrying more than 500 passengers from letting them disembark. From smaller vessels only 100 people could go ashore at a time, under strict supervision. About 400 delegates from around the world are attending the conference, which also includes member countries of the Arctic Council, which regulates activity in the northern polar region. The conference moves to the city of Baltimore after Monday's opening State Department events. The conference is chaired by Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store of Norway, whose country is an Arctic Council member and has recently opened a year-round scientific station in Antarctica.

Source(s): David Gollust, Voice of America News, April 06, 2009
<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-04-06-voa39.cfm>

Somali Piracy Exposes Weakness in UN Law of the Sea

The explosion of piracy off the coast of Somalia in recent years has exposed a weakness in the United Nations maritime law that makes high seas piracy illegal throughout the world. In the waters off Somalia's nearly 4,000-kilometer-long coast, warships from more than a dozen countries have formed what U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon recently described as "one of the largest anti-piracy flotillas in modern history." Ships from NATO, European Union member states, and others have been dispatched there in recent months to fight a sharp upsurge in the hijacking of vessels and crew for ransom. The United Nations says the 111 pirate attacks that took place last year in the sea corridor linking the Suez Canal and the Indian Ocean represent an increase of nearly 200 percent over 2007.

Operating from remote fishing communities in northeastern and central Somalia, pirates have earned tens - perhaps even hundreds - of millions of dollars in ransom. They have disrupted global trade and have caused untold damage to the world's economy. Horn of Africa analyst at Chatham House in London, Roger Middleton, says the international community must take some of the blame for the calamity. In 1991, Somalia descended into war after the fall of the regime of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre. During the next decade, some European and Asian countries took advantage of the chaos in Somalia and sent their commercial fleets to fish in Somali waters. Other European countries sent to Somalia thousands of drums of toxic waste, including nuclear waste, to be dumped at sea. Without a coast guard to monitor and prevent such illegal activities, Somali fishermen began organizing and arming themselves to confront waste dumpers and to collect fees from foreign vessels taking fish out of their waters. Middleton says what began as a legitimate fight against foreign exploitation turned into a criminal enterprise when everyone discovered its lucrative potential.

Signed in 1982 by more than 150 countries, the Law of the Sea defines piracy as illegal acts committed on the high seas for private ends. It also states that all countries have a right to seize and prosecute those committing pirate acts on the high seas. But maritime law specialists say the convention clearly did not consider the emergence of failed states like Somalia, and neglected to address the question of what happens if a pirate attack takes place not on the high seas, but within a country's territorial waters or in its neighbor's waters.

The international law on piracy assumes that individual states would assume the responsibility of policing and patrolling their own waters and to prosecute those seized in the act of piracy. But not all states have the resources and capacity to ensure maritime security within their waters. This is now being highlighted by the on-going piracy problem in Somalia, which after 18 years is still trying to establish a functioning government. In recent months, Somalia's neighbor, Kenya, has signed memorandums of understanding with the United States, Britain, and the European Union to accept suspected pirates and to prosecute them in Kenya. But those agreements have come under fire from local and international human rights groups and lawyers, who argue that Kenya has yet to pass relevant laws regarding piracy and that its corrupt judicial system cannot be trusted to conduct free and fair trials. The international community agrees that a multilateral approach is needed to tackle the piracy issue. Within the United Nations, there has been serious debate about whether to create a maritime peacekeeping force for Somalia. Somalis say they believe if the international community had cared about what was happening off the coast of Somalia in the 1990s, there would be no crisis to resolve now.

Source(s): Alisha, Voice of America News, April 08, 2009.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-04-08-voa67.cfm>





European River Cruises - A Great Option For Budget Minded Travelers

When one hears the words European cruise the last phrase that leaps to mind is budget travel. However, though a Silversea cruise on the Mediterranean might cost a pretty penny there are some great discount cruises to be found on some of Europe's most famous rivers. The rest of the world is slowly waking up to a fact Europeans have known for decades: river cruises are a cheap and easy way to travel, with flexible itineraries that appeal to even the most independent backpackers. The possible itineraries you can choose are virtually limitless, from a 3 night wine tour on the Saone to a 28 day odyssey adventure from Amsterdam to the Black Sea. The most popular waterways are arguably the Danube, Seine, Rhine and Rhone rivers, but there dozens more rivers and tributaries throughout Europe that can be traveled by riverboat. In fact, you'd be hard pressed to name a European country without a navigable river. Portugal, Italy, and Hungary all offer river tours, and even in the British Isles you can travel on a barge canal through England, Ireland and Scotland.

France is arguably the most popular destination for those wanting to take a European river cruise. The country boasts major rivers like the Seine, Rhone and Rhine all within its borders, and one can explore the wonders of Paris or the beauty of Southern France all in a single vacation. Explore the gorgeous regions of Burgundy, Alsace and Provence all while floating lazily down these magnificent waterways. Once upon a time these river cruisers were nothing more than cargo barges converted to carry passengers, and they quickly gained favor with backpackers and budget travelers as a unique way to see the continent of Europe. Cruise lines quickly capitalized on that popularity, building proper ships to attract a wider range of clientele. However, many of those companies didn't forget about the customer base that made them so popular in the first place, and European river travel is still surprisingly expensive when compared to the cost of a cruise on the Mediterranean or Baltic Seas.

However, the incredible value for money isn't the only draw of this form of travel. On a ocean voyage the massive liners are forced to dock far from the hub of the cities they visit, and it is difficult for passengers to explore the heart of these ports. On a river cruise the smaller boats can navigate their way right into the action, and as soon as you step off the boat you are immersed in the culture of the city proper. Once in port, your free time is your own and you can go off and explore on your own, or if you are looking for a little culture or adventure book one of the numerous shore excursions available either through your cruise company or an independent company operating in the area.

Source(s): April 27, 2009.

<http://www.european-cruise-guide.com/european-river-cruises-a-great-option-for-budget-minded-travelers>

Suggestions and contributions are welcome at maritimeindia@gmail.com