

One myth has it that piracy can be stopped
by the application of naval power

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報告各位長官：

有關deployment of onboard armed security guards in high-risk waters

新聞一則如附加檔案供參：

One myth has it that piracy can be stopped by the application of naval power.

Shipowners and managers who are concerned about the safety of their vessels and crews can turn to a responsible flag state for advice on issues that concern them.

And those same responsible flag states will issue appropriate guidance.

including advice on the deployment of onboard armed security guards in high-risk waters.

Best wishes

全國船聯會

秘書長 許洪烈

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Secretary General

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Open response to threat of piracy

Tuesday 13 December 2011, 17:23 by Scott Bergeron



Myths are linked by a romantic idea involving the effectiveness of military sea power.



Debates on flag will not help prevent pirate attacks, or piracy in general

IN shipping, as in every other walk of life, the good old days are a myth, polished to utopian splendour by the bad or selective memories of the industry's most seasoned observers.

So it is that there is no lack of experienced shipping people today only too ready to remember the best of the past and to create myths to apply to the present.

Take, for example, some of the myths currently circulating about how piracy should be tackled and what shipowners can do to protect themselves against it. These myths are linked by a romantic idea involving the effectiveness of military sea power.

One myth has it that piracy can be stopped by the application of naval power. Another argues that, if shipowners flagged their vessels with their national registers, they would enjoy enhanced naval protection in parts of the world where shipping is subject to piracy attacks.

Both myths are easily exploded. The navies involved in the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean cannot do more than mitigate part of the threat. The only viable long-term solution is to introduce a functioning government and the rule of law to those parts of Somalia from which the pirates operate.

As for flag-specific protection, each of the navies active in the Indian Ocean today can only cover a tiny part of the vast area that is at risk. And the navies that are present in the area are not the navies of the nations where today's shipowners are based, or from where today's seafarers come.

The great trading powers of the old days, such as the UK, Spain and Holland, had global economic interests. They also had big navies. They had shipowners who lived in their countries and operated ships under their flags, and drew their crews from those nations.

So power and the best interests of powerful maritime nations went hand-in-hand — and it was much easier to assign responsibility for protecting maritime commerce from the threat of piracy.

Today, the great trading nations are headed by the likes of China and the US. The great shipowning nations, however, are Greece, Norway, Germany and Japan. And the great seafaring nations are India and the Philippines, whose citizens sail predominately on ships operating under open registers, largely based in developing countries.

Meanwhile, the major naval powers with the ability to intervene in the fight against piracy are the US and, to a lesser extent, the likes of the UK and France — as well as, increasingly, China.

typically owned in one country, flagged in another, crewed by nationals of several others, and carry cargo owned by multinational companies based in different countries still.

Who has the responsibility — or the vested interest — to send a warship to protect such ships from attack by pirates? The ship is unlikely to be flying the flag of either the seafaring nation that provides the crew, or the trading nation that depends on the cargoes, even if the shipowner opts to use its national register.

Transportation by sea has never been cheaper, cleaner or more reliable than it is today. Open registers are a key part of that efficient global trading and shipping network. But shipowning nations, seafarer supply nations and open registers don't have global naval forces. Nor, by any means, do all of the leading trading nations.

Responsible open registers have led the way in promoting Best Management Practice, in concluding agreements with US and EU naval forces that allow naval detachments to board vessels flying their flags, and in creating clear lines of communication with naval forces.

Shipowners and managers who are concerned about the safety of their vessels and crews can turn to a responsible flag state for advice on issues that concern them. And those same responsible flag states will issue appropriate guidance, including advice on the deployment of onboard armed security guards in high-risk waters. Furthermore, they will push for international guidelines on the deployment of such guards, properly co-ordinated by the International Maritime Organization.

Responsible open registers have made shipping more efficient and rendered international trade less costly than it would otherwise be. They should be judged, like any other ship registry, on their commercial effectiveness, their safety record, their environmental performance and their track record on crew welfare. They should not be judged on their ability or their willingness to mount a national, naval response to pirates.

Debating issues about flag will not help prevent a pirate attack, or piracy in general. What will help is each party doing what it does best. Open registers are efficient flag states that can help owners run their ships effectively and safely. Crew supply nations can help with training their crews in best practice. And nations with global trade and global power can use their influence to extend the rule of law to where it is needed to protect the global commerce upon which we all depend.

One day, today's shipping industry will be regarded as the good old days by a whole generation of people. Less muddled and less partisan thinking, now, about major issues such as piracy, will make them seem better still in a few years' time.