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Contact: Lt. Cmdr. Chris O'Neil
(202) 372 - 4635

Coast Guard issues Maritime Security Directive 104-6

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Coast Guard issued a maritime security directive Monday in response to the rise in piracy in the waters of the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa and in light of recent pirate attacks on U.S. flagged vessels.

Maritime Security Directive 104-6 (rev. 2) issued by the Coast Guard under the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2004 provides the maritime industry with specific, risk-based measures to take to deter, detect or disrupt piracy. Prior to entering high risk waters, U.S. flagged vessels should establish an anti-piracy plan that includes the hardening of rigging and operating vessels in a manner to prevent attacks and subsequent boarding. Ships shall also use established transit lanes, erratic ships maneuvering, increased speed and cooperation with military forces patrolling the area. During transits through high-risk areas, it is the ship's responsibility to maintain a vigilant anti-piracy watch and ensure all shipboard anti-piracy precautions are in force.

Vessel security plans for U.S. flagged vessels that operate in high risk waters must have security protocols for terrorism, piracy, and armed robbery against ships that meet the performance standards in this directive by May 25. An annex to the directive provides further specific measures required for vessels transiting in the Horn of Africa and Gulf of Aden high risk waters. All vessel security plans must be approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.

"Piracy presents a multi-faceted threat to the United States, our international partners and the maritime industry and the seafarers who make their living on the global maritime transportation system," said Rear Adm. Brian Salerno, assistant commandant for marine safety, security and stewardship. "The Coast Guard has a unique role to play in response to this threat and we remain committed to working with our governmental, defense and industry partners to bring pirates to justice and to help provide for the safety of mariners upon the high seas."

In addition to working with the maritime industry to help vessel owners and operators develop plans to deter, detect and respond to acts of piracy, the Coast Guard is actively engaged in counter piracy operations under Combined Task Force 151, in which Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments and cutters are working with the U.S. Navy to deter piracy and apprehend criminals. Coast Guard units, working with U.S. Navy Visit Board search and Seizure teams, have made four interdictions, resulting in the apprehension of 30 suspected pirates.

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