



CHANGING THREATS DEMAND A CHANGE IN METHODOLOGY

Author ARX Maritime CEO, Joshua Hutchinson

I recently was invited to give a presentation before the BIMCO Security forum; it was an honour for me to attend and to listen to the ideas of our industry leaders.

However, I now feel even more passionate about challenging the maritime industry, both in regard to what they are doing, and as to the reasons why they are doing it.

We can't ignore the fact that over the past decade there has been a paradigm shift when it comes to threats within the maritime domain, as the threat has shifted from East, to West.

From 2008 to 2018, the movement of traffic when it comes to piracy related incidents has declined in the East covering SE Asia, Indian Ocean, South China Seas and the GoA, whereas the amount of reports from WA, GoG and Latin America, has increased rapidly.

Looking at the 2017 Oceans Beyond Piracy reports, we can see that when it comes to current threats, there is a dramatic change in both the economic and human cost associated with these attacks.

In East Africa the cost has remained the same over the past 3 years, whereas the total costs associated with West Africa have risen to over \$100m in the past 12 months.

Keep in mind that the total number of seafarers affected in East Africa is around 1100, compared to over 2000 in West Africa in 2017.

We could attribute this success to the combined efforts of maritime forces that support the industry with the challenges that security threats pose. It is because of their fast response, that the threat has decreased, if only for the time being.

However, with this new change, we now face not only economic, but also legal challenges, in terms of how a vessel can prepare itself.

We should also give credit to the timely production of management reports produced by BIMCO and OCIMF respectively. These reports highlight the fact that the change and introduction of new threats, calls for a clear, outlined approach, as to how ship owners and operations can prepare, respond, and manage these new threats.

Both of these reports acknowledge the fact that not all threats in the future will be "bullets and knives". Recent reports of Waterborne IEDs (WBIEDs) and Airborne IEDs (ABIEDs) call for all involved to seek specialist advice.

As the nature of the threat changes, we too, should be looking at changing the methodologies we use to deter these threats. I raise this question to all involved in the preparation of vessel security; do you look to delay the threat, or do you look to deny it all-together? The First Step is Risk Prevention.

Recent experience demonstrates that vessels can significantly improve their chances of delaying or even completely avoiding an act of piracy by taking a number of relatively simple preparatory steps.

Experience also suggests, that before pirates have gained control of a vessel, the appearance of Naval Forces by air or sea usually persuades them to abandon the attack. Therefore, delaying the pirates at any stage of an attack buys additional time and can greatly increase the chance of Naval Force intervention.

Careful preparations by the ship's crew may dissuade the pirates from pressing home an attack and hijacking a vessel, if a closer inspection of the potential target reveals a number of protection measures.

But is delaying enough? I believe that looking at the approach of each layer of security (see BMP5 for layers of security), and the way vessels can be prepared would help the industry deny threats, instead of simply delaying them.

So, rather than adopting a methodology to delay, what can we do to deny a boarding all-together?

If we take the 3 layers of approach, (Primary, Secondary and Third), we see that all layers focus on levels of denying.

The Secondary layers look to stop unwanted personnel from gaining access to the super structure; blocking the external doors and windows from access is a simple and yet effective method of denial.

The Third layer looks at internal doors, access to the bridge and fundamentally, the Citadel. This is the final layer and if Primary, or Secondary layers are not done correctly, your last means of defence.

But more importantly, the concentration of cost and effort should be focused on the Primary layer.

If you're looking to deny any unwanted personnel from boarding a vessel, this has to be done through your Primary layer.

The role of the Primary layer should not be limited to that of an initial visual deterrent. As mentioned earlier, a vessel that appears hardened will be avoided, but considerations should be made during the installation process seeing as it might have to be removed during port, STS or mooring operations.

Let's just get it out there. Razor does not work, Chinese spikes, oil barrels etc... period.

I have never seen or read a report around this type of equipment stopping an attack, so why do we still use them at all in the industry? Because they're cheap? Because they can potentially delay attacks? It's the wrong approach, and it's my firm belief that it should be classified as bad practice by any operator or owner.

As the tides continue to change when it comes to the shifting economic and geographical threats, I urge all involved to consider the importance of their primary layers of defence; to focus on what can be done to fundamentally deny intruders, and in the process, keep not only the vessel but also the crew safe at all times.

ARX Maritime provide commercial risk management for vessels trading in high risk areas, making sure that vessels adopt and implement the best risk management practices.

As part of this service ARX Maritime have designed the ABaC (anti-boarding and climbing) system. An anti-piracy barrier solution that stops pirates from boarding vessels that are vulnerable to attack in high risk areas.

The ARX ABaC system is designed to repel grappling hooks and ladders, significantly increasing the chances of company vessels and crew surviving unwanted pirate aggression. The ARX ABaC system is easily installed and provides a cost-effective alternative to razor wire.

