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THE MONEY QUOTE: SEYCHELLES "PUNCHING WELL ABOVE ITS WEIGHT"

The Seychelles is a small country bravely punching well above its weight, and it was wonderful to be able to give them some sorely-needed assistance.

– Alan Cole, Programme Coordinator, U.N. OFFICE OF DRUGS AND CRIME (UNODC). According to a news release issued Thursday by the world body, Mr. Cole is the “point man for the U.N.’s growing counter-piracy programme in eastern Africa.” Part of UNODC’s work is training prison staff in the Seychelles where 10% of the inmates are pirates. **LOOK FURTHER.** The UNODC is most proud of the new prison it opened in Hargeisa, Somaliland, in November 2010, a facility it deems superior to those in Kenya and the Seychelles.

FLASH: TORTURE, MURDER & THE NEW BARBARISM – SHABAAB-LINKED SOMALI PIRATES STRIKE AGAIN

The tragic tale began two weeks ago, details are still scarce, but at least one mariner was killed and two others tortured when Somali pirates retaliated for a haphazard attempt by the Seychelles Coast Guard to free the cargo ship pirates had seized. (Hat Tip to **Cap’n Willie of SEA WOLF MARINE** whose assistance in preparing this report was instrumental.)



MV BELUGA NOMINATION (Hand-out photo courtesy of EU NAV FOR SOMALIA.)

The maritime authority plausibly responsible for the botched attempt to rescue MV BELUGA NOMINATION – the Seychelles Coast Guard – has been silent since the incident. Predictably, the heavy-lift ship’s owner in Bremen, Germany, has been vocal and outraged, and that anger is withering away resistance by legislatures and maritime organizations to the embarkation of professional armed security aboard merchantmen transiting the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.

The ship’s master is Polish, and when the voyage began, the crew consisted of 2 Russians, 2 Ukrainians and 7 Filipinos. VIKNO, a Ukrainian news outlet, reported Saturday morning that the nationality of the murdered crewman was Russian, but VIKNO suggested that a second crewman, a Filipino, has been killed.

Pirates boarded and captured BELUGA NOMINATION on Saturday 22 January, and in so doing breached another “citadel defense”¹ when they took the heavy-lift vessel north of the Seychelles. It was not the first BELUGA SHIPPING GMBH vessel pirates had seized. On Sunday 24 October, pirates boarded BELUGA FORTUNE and worked assiduously to break into the “safe compartment” into which master and crew had repaired. In that case, naval forces were close by. HMS MONTROSE (F 236) closed and dispatched a team of Royal Marines. Expecting company, the pirates abandoned their seizure effort and left the ship before the Marines boarded and found the crew safe in their locked compartment.²



This is imagery of BELUGA NOMINATION made by a maritime patrol aircraft Tuesday, 25 January. The latitude/longitude (lower left, light-blue font) puts the vessel 180 nautical miles bearing 319.5° true from the PORT OF VICTORIA, Seychelles, and about 750 nautical miles east of the Kenya-Somalia border (Hat Tip to Cap'n Willie, SEA WOLF MARINE). We are not familiar with this particular display, so the bottom-center compass rose that reads “275” might reflect the aircraft’s heading (275° true) or the target ship’s heading. If it is the latter, that means BELUGA NOMINATION was on a course for southern Somalia – that is to say, SHABAAAB-controlled Somalia – at the time this image was made. Just forward of the superstructure, note the bows of two sailing yachts. That checks out with our report late last month that BELUGA NOMINATION was carrying luxury yachts and speedboats.³ This was not a Spanish or French aircraft that flew out of Djibouti as first thought. Note the light, white “S.P.D.F. Air Wing” at the top of the image. That is the abbreviation for “SEYCHELLES PEOPLE’S DEFENCE FORCES AIR WING.” This aircraft took off from and belongs to the Seychelles, just 180 miles away on 25 January, 3 days into the seizure.

Unlike BELUGA FORTUNE, none of the planets aligned in the seizure of BELUGA NOMINATION. And there was no signature Somali craftiness needed to break into NOMINATION’s locked compartment. It just took a cutting torch and time. A whole lot of time. Pirates had the ship to themselves for 2-and-a-half days while the crew waited for a naval response.

Shipowner BELUGA SHIPPING GMBH Managing Partner Niels Stolberg was outraged, but the Indian Ocean is vast, and navies cannot be everywhere. *INSIDER* reported that on Tuesday, 25 January, a maritime patrol aircraft spotted pirates on board and a Seychelles Coast Guard patrol craft tried to pursue BELUGA NOMINATION but abandoned the effort due to heavy seas.⁴ We indicated later in January

¹ The “citadel” is a locked compartment. Upon attack, the master and crew sound the alarm, radio for assistance, shut down the main engine, and proceed to a compartment and lock themselves in. They should maintain radio contact with naval forces, but there is no guarantee such forces will be able to respond. When would Somali pirates figure out how to breach the so-called “citadel defense?” First posed by OSEN-HUNTER, the question was also raised by the South African maritime journal PORTS & SHIPS and by Russian maritime journalist Mikhail Voytenko. The answer was “Any day now.” (“3rd Ship Thwarts Pirate Attack Thru Safe-Room – When Will Pirates Catch On?” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 10-151 29 October 2010.) For a “citadel defense” to work, all the planets line up, especially radio contact with and proximity of naval forces. There are certain ships that must not shut down engines, generators and recirc systems – such as chemical products tankers with hazardous cargo. There are also piloting situations – straits or heavily trafficked waterways – in which engine shutdowns could be homicidal as well as suicidal.

² “Royal Marines Free Pirated German Cargo Ship.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 10-150 28 October 2010.

³ See photo/caption page 7 under “When Pirates Pirate Pirates.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-019 31 January 2011.

⁴ “Pirates Seize Heavy-Lift Ship After International Navies a No-Show for 2 ½ Days.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-016 25 January 2011.

that two mariners made it off the ship aboard freefall lifeboats and were later rescued by a Danish warship.⁵ Only last week did the details of the mariners’ escape become public when the owner of BELUGA NOMINATION made them known.

LOCATION OF BELUGA NOMINATION’S CAPTURE LOCATION IN DISPUTE

On 25 January, the same day the Seychelles aircraft spotted BELUGA NOMINATION with at least 4 pirates aboard (image page 2), BELUGA’s Niels Stolberg railed against navies for their lack of response. He emphasized that his company alerted authorities of the ship’s distress call on the very day the crew sounded the alarm: Saturday, 22 January. Among those notified was EUROPEAN UNION NAV FOR SOMALIA. Finally that day, NAV FOR SOMALIA sent a release that, in light of the revelations by Mr. Stolberg of BELUGA SHIPPING and pirate sightings by the maritime patrol aircraft, began with **a rather tentative declaration:**

After 4 days of uncertainty regarding the exact status of the crew, MV BELUGA NOMINATION is now believed to be pirated.

<p>comment by brenda</p> <p>posted 3 days ago</p> <p>my brother was one of the crew of beluga nomination and i was very disappointed w/ the naval forces. for two days, they were waiting for their help but no response. if beluga is not a member of whatever, at least these forces should be human enough to respond to a distress call.</p> <p>add comment</p>
<p>comment by sophia</p> <p>posted 6 hours, 33 minutes ago</p> <p>do you know the nationality of the crewmember that was excuted?</p> <p>add comment</p>

After EU NAV FOR SOMALIA posted the “4 days of uncertainty” news release on its website, it received two responses shown above.



BELUGA NOMINATION was loaded with fast, luxury yachts and speedboats – a.k.a. pirate mother ships. Shown above is BELUGA ELEGANCE, a sister ship of BELUGA NOMINATION, with speedboats and yachts on deck. (BELUGA promo photo.)

Saying the closest warship was “1000 miles” away, a maritime journal placed the location of BEGULA NOMINATION’s 22 January seizure “390 miles north of the Seychelles,” citing NAV FOR SOMALIA as its source. However, the latitude/longitude read-out on the FLIR (image page 2) put the ship just 180 nautical miles from the Seychelles 3 days after her seizure. Did the maritime journal get it wrong? If not, why the discrepancy?

⁵ See photo/caption page 7 under “When Pirates Pirate Pirates.” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 11-019 31 January 2011.

The nearest warship was either in Djibouti or more likely Mombasa on an “imminent mission to escort of a WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME vessel” delivering food aid to Mogadishu. The escort of ships carrying humanitarian aid (and military cargo to AFRICAN UNION troops in Mogadishu) is a higher priority for EU NAVFOR SOMALIA than counter-piracy, and the command rightly emphasizes that priority in virtually every news release.

Analysis: While it can be argued that an SOS supercedes a mission priority, the surface combatant could do no more than the maritime patrol aircraft was already doing: surveillance. After all, the BELUGA NOMINATION was underway – a sure sign that pirates had breached the so-called “citadel” and, at gun-point, ordered the crew to re-start main engines, man their stations and head for Somalia. If a crew is safely locked away (in radio contact, naval forces close by, etc., etc.), an opposed boarding can work with minimum risk to innocents. If the crew is held at gun-point, however, it’s a hostage rescue situation with considerable risk to the victims. **In essence, the time to prevent pirate seizure expires the moment pirates are on the bridge with guns leveled at hostages, and that axiom reveals the chief advantage to embarking professional armed security: preventing the attack in the first place.**

THE “HUGE RUCKUS” WHEN PIRATES “LOST CONTROL”

Niels Stolberg of BELUGA charges that, on Wednesday 29 January, a Seychelles Coast Guard vessel closed BELUGA NOMINATION and opened fire on the cargo ship with 12 hostages aboard. In response, the pirates “evidently lost control:”

The pirates shot dead one of our men, probably in a fit of anger.



HDMS ESBERN SNARE (L17) is a Danish command and support ship that, along with sister ship HMDS ABSALON (L16), forms the backbone of Denmark’s new focus on international naval operations. It was ESBERN SNARE who closed BELUGA NOMINATION but further distant than the Seychelles coast. LCDR Jacqui Sherriff told BBC that when ESBERN SNARE reached the immediate vicinity, she was warned to keep her distance by the master of BELUGA NOMINATION. “We did not want to inflame the situation so we backed off,” said LCDR Sherriff. She had no comment on the actions of the Seychelles vessel, as the island republic is not a member of NATO and the vessel was not in the EU NAV FOR chain of command. **INSIDER** emailed LCDR Sherriff but we have received no reply. (Photo courtesy of the Royal Danish Navy.)

Mr. Stolberg indicated that there was a “huge ruckus” aboard, and in the confusion, two of his seafarers escaped. The second officer jumped into the freefall lifeboat (photo page two, orange craft on rails, aft). The second mariner simply jumped overboard, made it to the

lifeboat and clambered aboard. These were the two sailors who were rescued by a “Danish warship” that we reported⁶ that turned out to be HDMS ESBERN SNARE (L17). And Niels Stolberg is just as incredulous now as he was two weeks ago:

This is a disaster, particularly as there was, at the very beginning, ... the ability to save the team. The crew was two-and-a-half days in the armored security cell, but no one came to their aid. The international community has failed. Such a completely uncoordinated approach is to me incomprehensible.

THE PIRATES’ HAUL: FAST, EXCLUSIVE AND VERY EXPENSIVE

Five of the yachts aboard BELUGA NOMINATION were shipped by PETERS & MAY of London and worth a total of \$2.3 million. PETERS & MAY ships their yachts throughout the region weekly but normally on faster vessels and rarely to the Seychelles. Spokesman:

It is very rare to have a number of yachts shipped to the Seychelles and unfortunately the BELUGA NOMINATION is a smaller, slower vessel with the yachts visible on deck that has proven to be a more attainable vessel for the pirates.



Some of the luxury craft aboard BELUGA NOMINATION are made by **AICON** and **ITAMA** of Italy, two of the finest, most exclusive yacht builders in the world. Above is the ITAMA 55. (Promotional photo by ITAMA.)

Assessment: We doubt “yachts visible on deck” was the decisive factor in targeting BELUGA NOMINATION. An informant in the PORT OF VICTORIA, Seychelles, on the pirates’ payroll is more likely. Pirates devote considerable cash to obtaining intelligence, and we would be shocked if they did not have paid informants in all major seaports in the region, especially the PORT OF SALALAH, Oman, off which there has been a virtual pirate free-for-all.⁷ **Countering the pirates’ eyes and ears is precisely the sort of “rigorous” intelligence called for by VADM Mark Fox, Commander, U.S. FIFTH FLEET, last month.**⁸

The advertised max speed of BELUGA NOMINATION is 15.5 knots. The vaunted **BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ISSUE 3** published by the MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE HORN OF AFRICA, the industry liaison office established by EU NAV FOR, urges best speed, 18 knots or better if possible.

Source: a large catamaran is aboard NOMINATION bound for CREOLE TRAVEL SERVICES in the Seychelles. The craft may be the 30-knot, 87-foot, 219-passenger **CAT COCOS II** built by INCAT CROWTHER of New South Wales, Australia. Finding the CAT COCOS II aboard a merchantman will likely be the pirates’ only chance of nicking one of INCAT CROWTHER’s vessels. The firm’s biggest cats, KILIMANJARO I and II, are 124-foot, 558-passenger vessels that run **Zanzibar to Dar es-Salaam**, Tanzania –prime pirate hunting territory these days, but those bad boys run 30 knots. **Faster than any commandeered merchantman or fishing vessel currently used by pirates, CAT COCOS II would make an ideal mother ship, and her size and speed would be a game-changer.**

⁶ Photo/caption page 7 under “When Pirates Pirate Pirates.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-019 31 January 2011.

⁷ “Should Maritime Security Firms Rent an Office in Salalah, Oman?” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-013 19 January 2011.

⁸ “The Money Quote: Not “a Higher Level of Lethal Activity,” But ...” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-018 28 January 2011.

AL SHABAAB INVOLVEMENT IN THE NEW BARBARISM

The initial volley fired by the Seychelles Coast Guard vessel killed one pirate, left the others in disarray and damaged navigation gear, contended Mr. Stolberg, who says pirates radioed their leader ashore for help. The pirate chieftain responded by dispatching the Liquid Petroleum Gas tanker, MV YORK, with pirate reinforcements embarked.

Assessment: The LPG tanker YORK is believed to be among the 6 cargo ships and tankers anchored in the vicinity of Ceel Gaan, the coastal village adjacent to Xarardheere. This may be a pirate town, but it is ruled by AL SHABAAB.⁹



Assessment: It has been our consistent view that the most significant development in both terrorism and piracy in the Horn of Africa in 2010 – arguably the entire decade – occurred in April 2010 when AL SHABAAB swept through the Mudug/Galguduud region and rolled over pirates in Xarardheere under the command of *Sheekh Yuusuf Ciise (Kaba ku Tukade)*.¹⁰ Some of the *Dagaalyahan Shabaab* (“youth warriors”) believed to have fought that battle are pictured above. Note that two fighters wear trousers “AL-QAEDA-length.” All pirates in that region now belong to ‘The Lads. *Kaba ku Tukade* is now considered *Waaliga ee Wilayada Galguduud* (essentially overseer of what amounts to the Galguduud mini-Caliphate). **Significant: Pirates have expanded to the north (off Oman), south (Seychelles), east (Maldives) and west (Mozambique Channel). **Also significant:** Pirates have commandeered vessels and crews to serve as mother ships – a mother flotilla, if you will, commanded by kidnap victims. Another first: Pirates used one pirated ship, MV IZUMI, to attack a NATO warship – and we have no doubt AL SHABAAB will mount an attack on another warship. **As significant as all these developments are, all stem from the April 2010 AL SHABAAB capture of Xarardheere.** (Un-marked photo from a Somali source.)**

It is an open question whether NATO has informed BELUGA SHIPPING GMBH that Somalia’s AL-QAEDA-linked terrorists are likely involved in the holding of BELUGA NOMINATION and her crew. If not, NATO should. BELUGA SHIPPING or its insurer has likely hired a Private Security Firm with core strength in K&R (Kidnapping & Ransom) to deal with pirates directly. **That said, governments have an abysmal record in sharing information with private K&R experts seeking the release of hostages in Somalia.**¹¹ Unlike past hostage negotiations, however, the case involving BELUGA NOMINATION features AL SHABAAB in the background, and that completely changes the dynamic. **The ship owner must be informed.**

⁹ “Pirates: Transforming the North Arabian Sea into a Somali Lake.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-014 20 January 2011. See also: “News of a New Year Seajacking Suggests More Pirated Ships Under AL SHABAAB Control.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-008 11 January 2011. “Somali Pirates: From Mother Ships to Mother Flotillas.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-002 3 January 2011. “Piracy Shifts Toward Tanzania & Mozambique Channel.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-001 1 January 2011. “Somali Pirates Hang a Shingle Over the Maldives.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 10-175 15 December 2011. YORK was seajacked about 50 miles off Mombasa, Kenya, on Saturday, 23 October 2010, and is owned by BERNHARD SCHULTE, GMBH, the German ship management firm (17,000 employees, 700 ships, land-based centers in more than 25 countries worldwide); photo/caption page 10, *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 10-148 25 October 2010. See also: *“Flashb: U.S. Marines Land Near Xarardheere, SHABAAB-Controlled Town.”* *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-015 21 January 2011.

¹⁰ “AL SHABAAB Strikes Pirates in Xarardheere.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 10-070 26 April 2010.

¹¹ The case of concern involved Canadian Journalist Amanda Lindhout and Australian Photographer Nigel Brennan. See “Amateur Night at the Movies, Part II?” under “When Pirates Pirate Pirates.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-019 31 January 2011. “Abject Gov’t Incompetence Cost Somali Hostages a Year in Captivity.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 09-213 27 November 2009.

GRASPING THE NEW BARBARISM

- **THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY: COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE BARBARISM.** He may not have realized it at the time, but shipping giant Niels Stolberg captured the essence of the reason *ku Burcad Badeedka iyo Argagixisada* (“the pirates and terrorists”) have the world’s strongest navies in a hammer-lock, and why preventing the capture in the first place is the best strategy:¹²

[The pirate chieftain] sent them a mother ship, the YORK hijacked the end of October. You have to imagine this: You have this ship [MY YORK], laying off the Somali coast, which can go out [to sea] in peace. Not even the military units of ... NATO [can] prevent [it]. Here the York was [in transit] captained by a German hostage ... I do not understand. [During that transit], one might have also try to take back our ship and free the colleagues on board. The pirates were totally exhausted ...

Indeed, “not even the military units of NATO can prevent it.” **It is a sign of troubled times when the shipping industry must acquaint itself with the vagaries of hostage rescue in a foreign culture dominated by agnatic clans and a sub-culture driven by *burcad badeed* (literally, “sea bandits”) or ally itself with a maritime security firm with that knowledge base and the requisite core strengths.** The simple truth is, pirates with guns in their hands can still execute hostages. If “exhausted” and spooked, as they were before YORK came alongside BELUGA NOMINATION, they are more likely to shoot, not less. With the likelihood of loss of innocent life so high, it was the least opportune time to mount an opposed hostage rescue.



Bureaucratic incompetence in Canada and Australia cost Nigel Brennan and Amanda Lindhout one additional year in Hell (solitary confinement in Mogadishu). The impact of that incompetence can be seen vividly in these photographs. On the right is Nigel Brennan in the summer of 2008 shortly before he and Amanda Lindhout were kidnapped in Somalia. On the left is Nigel on 26 November 2009 – after 15 months and 2 days of malnourishment, torture and solitary confinement. In seeking the release of Mr. Brennan, the Australian government did not even use a Somali interpreter, relying on the good graces of pirates to get the language nuances right. Canada withheld the hostage negotiation record from the families while placing them in charge of talks by default. The degree of incompetence was astounding.¹³

(Right, family photo; left, handout photo from the TRANSITIONAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.)

Mr. Stolberg grasps the new barbarism, and he asks, will legislators come to grips with it as well?

Berlin has underestimated this issue. The violence has increased in intensity. I have heard from fellow owners that crew members were beaten on land. **We’re not talking about piracy but terrorism.**

At present, Germany can legally embark soldiers – not private security – in merchantmen, but only in Mr. Stolberg’s *German-*

¹² “*Burcad Badeedka iyo Argagixisada*: The Unique Somali Problem of ‘Pirates & Terrorists.’” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 10-176 18 December 2010.

¹³ *INSIDER* tracked the case of Mr. Brennan and Miss Lindhout assiduously since their abduction in 2008, filing nearly 50 reports on developments, both good and bad. For a summary of their release, see: “Abject Gov’t Incompetence Cost Somali Hostages a Year in Captivity.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 09-213 27 November 2009.

flagged ships. Germany refuses to embark soldiers on a ship that flies a foreign flag.

Our sense is, that may soon change. **Legislatures in Berlin and all major capitals will soon go beyond the dollars and cents of insurance premiums, war zone stipends to seafarers and the cost of concertina wire and finally grasp that there is a human dimension to suffering, torture and murder that should come first.**

• **COMMANDANT GENERAL, ROYAL MARINES, UNDERSTANDS THE NEW BARBARISM.** On Tuesday, 1 February, MGEN Buster Howes, OBE, Royal Marines, Operation Commander, EU NAVFOR SOMALIA,¹⁴ briefed the press on the BELUGA NOMINATION seizure. (Hat Tip to “Galrahn” at **INFORMATION DISSEMINATION.**) MGEN Howes told AP:

Pirates have recently tied hostages upside down and dragged them in the sea, locked them in freezers, beaten them and used plastic ties around their genitals, Maj. Gen. Buster Howes told THE ASSOCIATED PRESS.

“There have been regular manifestations of systematic torture,” he said. If warships approached a pirated ship too closely, the pirates would drag hostages on deck and beat them in front of naval officers until the warship went away, Howes said. “A few years go, they were very constrained and much more respectful” to hostages, he said, but now “they’ve shown a willingness to use violence much more quickly and much more violence.”



Last week, skiffs being towed by a suspected pirate mother ship were destroyed by gun fire from the guided-missile destroyer USS MOMSEN (DDG 92) – likely a **Mark 38 25mm Chain Gun** – after the tin can disrupted a pirate attack on a commercial oil tanker in the Arabian Sea. MOMSEN and the cruiser USS BUNKER HILL (CG 54) came to the aid of a merchant vessel in a coordinated rescue and assist effort after receiving a distress call. (Public domain photo by HTC John Parkin, U.S.N.)

• **CAUTIONARY NOTE: THE BALANCE BETWEEN AL SHABAAB AND NON-ALIGNED PIRATES IN MUDUG.** AL SHABAAB is so firmly anchored in the Xarardheere region that a former pirate fighter felt the need to appeal to pirates for security assistance. Ismail Xaaji Nuur, *Wasiiru Qaranka Dowlada Galmudug* (“Minister of Security for the State of Galmudug”) used to be the counter-piracy point man for the TRANSITIONAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT in Mogadishu. Yet last September, Minister Nuur staged what amounted to a pirate open house in Hobyo to strike a deal with pirates not aligned with AL SHABAAB to provide security to the fledgling “state.”

Pirates in Hobyo have built a considerable land militia, and Nuur wanted to tap into that strength by developing an agreement with Maxamed Gafaje. The press mistakenly referred to Gafaje as the “top pirate boss.” He’s not, but he’s close to the Godfather: Maxamed Cabdi Xassan Hayir (*Afweyne*) (“Big Mouth”). *Afweyne* is the *Guddoomiyihii Budbad Badeeda* (“Chairman of the Pirates”) who visited Libyan President Muammar Al-Qadaafi and persuaded Qadaafi to tell the U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY in September 2009 that Somalis aren’t the pirates, but “We are the pirates.” “Big Mouth,” Gafaje and gang are responsible for all of piracy’s big hauls, from SIRIUS STAR and MV FAINA in 2009 to the Korean supertanker MV SAMHO DREAM in 2010.

¹⁴ The Commandant General, Royal Marines, MGEN Howes’ appointment as Operation Commander is significant and signals more than a passing interest in going ashore.



This photo is labeled *dagaalyahan shabaab ee galmudug* – or “SHABAAB warriors in Galmudug.” Hobyo and Xarardheere are the main pirate port towns in the secular “state” in central Somalia called Galmudug (a combination of the names of the *gobolka* or “administrative regions” Galguduud and Mudug. (Un-marked photo from a Somali source.)

As we assessed last September:¹⁵

Let's observe also no SHABAAB fighter carries a union card that reads “never deal with pirates,” and businessmen in the illegal weapons smuggling trade are just as well-versed at cunning and treachery¹⁶ as any pirate chieftain. Whether the subject of inquiry is a fighter with AL SHABAAB, a corrupt government minister, a Mudug pirate or a crooked businessman, they are all global guerillas wading in same toxic swamp of the post-failed state.

The Take-Away: Strategic planners must be cognizant of the fact that land-based pirate militias are used by regional Somali governments as hedges against AL SHABAAB.

• SHIPPING ASSOCIATIONS CALL NEW BARBARISM “FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT” IN PIRACY – MAYBE. Seafaring associations are “outraged:”

The international shipping industry is truly disturbed at reports that pirates have been torturing seafarers physically and mentally, often in the most barbaric ways, including hanging them over the ship's side by ropes around their ankles with their heads under water and even subjecting them to the horrendous practice of keelhauling....

The associations said the violence “appears to represent a fundamental shift” in Somali piracy – maybe, maybe not¹⁷ -- and “once again strongly urge[d] governments to empower their naval forces to take fast and robust action against pirates” and promised they are “looking at all possible options.”

• **ASSESSMENT: ALL POSSIBLE OPTIONS? WORKING MARINERS HAVE THEIR DOUBTS.** Motor Tug SVITZER KORSAKOV was seized by pirates in 2008. Soon after the supertug's release, Chief Engineer Fred Parle wrote to a shipmate of ours, John Konrad at gCAPTAIN, expressing his

¹⁵ Nuur's appeal to pirates in Hobyo for security assistance is discussed in “Hobyo Chamber of Commerce: Pirates and Only Western Press Are Welcome.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 10-127 3 September 2010.

¹⁶ “Cunning is a highly-valued cultural attribute among Somalis. And it is regarded as highly cunning to break a contractual agreement ... at an opportune moment.... Somali history bristles with treachery and massacres of former protectors. The latter are struck down and robbed of their women and herds ... The ... threat of treachery [is] ever present.” *REGULARITY IN CHAOS: THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE IN THE RECENT HISTORY OF SOMALIA* by Günther Schlee, 2001. Noted in: “The Money Quote.” *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 10-040 14 March 2010.

¹⁷ Although it was the lead signatory on the statement, **two days later** BIMCO (the **BALTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARITIME COUNCIL**) dismissed the incidents aboard **BELUGA NOMINATION** as “isolated, non-typical and ... not indicative of an increasing level of violence.” **Astonishingly, BIMCO is actually disagreeing with the assessment of the Commandant General, Royal Marines (see previous entry). We'll go with the Royal Marines.**

anger that seafarers must fight pirate with fire hoses (*emphasis probably in original*):

As one who has survived two piracies in seven years, one in Bangladesh and one in Somalia, I feel that I ... have the edge on commentators who believe they are being helpful by advising seafarers to put up a fight with firehoses and boxing gloves.... I'm angry, right, as I see, after all these years of chaos that results to improve Safety at Sea have been a big ZERO.¹⁸

Fully two years after Fred Parle and KORSAKOV were seized, piracy has ballooned, spread geographically⁹ and is spiking now – during the usually pirate-hostile monsoon season – with some 30 ships held and 750 mariners in chains. From the absolutely livid Russian maritime journalist Mikhail Voytenko to twice-pirated Fred Parle, genuine working seafarers are losing faith that “all possible options” will be examined at all, much less honestly.



A second frame in the story begun on page 8 with USS MOMSEN (DDG 92) destroying pirate skiffs. (*Public domain photo by HTC John Parkin, U.S.N.*)

The opportunity for change exists in the person of industry leaders like Niels Stolberg of BELUGA. Leadership is just as abundant in CAPT Gianluigi Aponte of MEDITERRANEAN SHIPPING COMPANY, a genuine seafarer whose ships have been pirated once too often.¹⁹ Another leader stepping to the wheel house of industry is Jacob Meldgaard of TORM SHIPPING who nearly lost MV TORM KANSAS in November and two ships in January (TORM KRISTINA and TORM CLARA) a few hundred miles off PORT OF SALALAH, Oman.²⁰

The best way to counter the new barbarism is to prevent seizures by Somali pirates in the first place – by attacking their bases ashore and equipping merchantmen with professional security teams to fight back at sea. And fight back we must, as ship seizures are almost certain to increase and barbarism is likely to grow: AL SHABAAB now controls all pirates south of Xarardheere and oversees a virtual flotilla of 6 mother ships operated by hostages. “The Lads” are in turn controlled by Abdullah Muhammad Fazul Husseine *Mullah Ati*, operational commander of AL QAEDA IN EAST AFRICA.

¹⁸ “Report on the MARITIME SECURITY COUNCIL ‘Chairman’s Leadership Summit.’ Washington, D.C.7 October 2008.”

¹⁹ The cruise ship MSC MELODY was attacked in 2009. **It was a close call. Before the off-duty Israeli security guards were able to break out guns from the captain’s locker, MELODY’s passengers held pirates at bay – by wielding deck chairs.** “*Arrivederci, Abu Pirata!*” and “Cruise Ships: The Pirates’ Hope Diamond.” **FORWARD-LEANING** 09-021 27 April 2009. Some 80 miles off the Tanzania-Mozambique border, pirates seized MSC PANAMA in early December 2010. **“Flash: Somali Pirates Seize Merchantman Managed by Florida Firm.”** **FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER** 10-173 10 December 2010. Both MELODY and PANAMA are owned by CAPT Aponte’s MEDITERRANEAN SHIPPING COMPANY.

²⁰ “Danish Shipping Concerns Embrace Professional Armed Security.” **FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER** 11-018 28 January 2011.



The destroyer MOMSEN engaging in the sort of communication that pirates understand. (Public domain photo by HTC John Parkin, U.S.N.)

Before the National Command Authority (NCA) puts off action until the next shoe falls, NCA must recognize several intelligence strands.

First, in December 2009, we assessed a threat by AL QAEDA to U.S. warships and U.S.-flagged vessels:

We assess a direct, grave threat, by AL QAEDA, against U.S. Navy warships and U.S.-flagged vessels. Moreover, if U.S.-flagged merchantmen are still steaming anywhere in the U.S. FIFTH FLEET Area of Responsibility without armed security, they do so now at a considerably elevated risk.²¹

The Navy announced it had discovered the threats three days later.²²

Second, AL SHABAAB upped the ante by announcing a “Sea Jihad.” The actual message was lost in translation, and the WALL STREET JOURNAL mistakenly attributed the remarks to a “Sheikh Mahad.” The remarks were made by Sheikh Mahad Cumar Cabdikariin, the *Gudoomiyaha Wilaayada Bay iyo Bakool* – the religious leader of the mini-Caliphate consisting of the Bay and Bakool administrative regions in Somalia – and he was announcing an initiative to create the ability within The Lads’ ranks to fight the “crusaders at sea,” and the implication was to work more closely with Somali pirates.²³

Third, the *Mujabideen* have a long-standing interest in “AL QAEDA controlling the sea,” and they contend that “a narrow sea area” is “ideal ... to hunt ships.”²⁴

Fourth, *Jihadis* have completed the intelligence blueprint for a new attack on a U.S. warship.²⁵

Fifth, each of the 6 pirated merchant ships under AL SHABAAB control weighs 12 times that of a frigate. That is to say, following the attack on the Spanish frigate INFANTA CRISTINA (F 34) in November 2010 by MV IZUMI, a ship held by SHABAAB-controlled pirates and operated by hostages, **we urged commands to “anticipate the next tactical step AL SHABAAB is likely to take.”**²⁶

If we fail to take bold action, we chance invoking an ancient Somali proverb and falling victim to the curse it embodies:

²¹ *“Special Report: The Weather in Yemen is Sunny, 73° and Explosive.” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 09-228 29 December 2009.*

²² *“Flash: U.S. Navy Goes Public with AL QAEDA Threat.” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 10-004 8 January 2010.*

²³ *“Maritime Monday: Sea Threat Twist – AL SHABAAB Launches ‘Sea Jihad.’” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 10-131 13 September 2010.*

²⁴ *“Flash/Late Entry: ‘Sea Ambush’ – AL QAEDA’s Next Earthquake.” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 10-163 19 November 2010.*

²⁵ *“Flash: Cryptic Terrorist Comment on Threat At Sea may Signal AL QAEDA Advance.” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 10-119 13 August 2010.*

²⁶ *“Flash: 1st SHABAAB-Linked Pirate Attack on Warship Escort of AMISOM Supply Ship.” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 10-156 8 November 2010.* We assessed that the first SHABAAB-related seajacking was the seizure of MV ASPHALT VENTURE on 29 September by pirates from the ancient port town of Baraawe (sometimes Anglicized as “Brava”) that has long been a SHABAAB bastion. ASPHALT VENTURE was taken to Xarardheere. **“Assessment: First AL SHABAAB Sea-Jacking May Have Occurred.” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 10-136 30 September 2010.**

Nin aan waxa jooga garani waxa soo socda ma garto.

“He who does not understand what is going on now will not understand what is coming.”



Marines with the MARITIME RAID FORCE, 15TH MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT, raided MV MAGELLAN STAR Thursday, 9 September, and won back the ship from pirates who had captured her the previous day.²⁷ The pirates were taken to the cruiser USS PRINCETON (CG 59), standing off the merchantman's port side.

(Public domain photo by MC1 David McKee, U.S.N.)

PROPRIETARY CLASSIFICATION: BUSINESS –IN- CONFIDENCE
TURN TIGHTER, GO FASTER, LOOK FURTHER™

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²⁷ The news appeared in *“Flash: U.S. Marines Raid & Free Pirate-Captured Vessel.” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 10-129 9 September 2010.* The analysis appeared in *“Maritime Monday: ‘A Spectacular Symphony of Naval Power.’” FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER 10-131 13 September 2010.*