



M.O.S.T.

McMillan Offshore Survival Training

148 Waterville Road
Belfast ME 04195
207-338-1603

M.O.S.T. Newsletter – March 2010

From the desk of John McMillan

To Our Friends:

Maritime Safety

How safe is it?

I recently was invited to attend a program focusing on anti-terrorist/piracy training. The course was not designed to make the student an anti-piracy expert or a combatant but to build awareness in the art of watch keeping and preparations. The course overview intentions are to provide the ship's officers & crew with the proper knowledge on how to operate safely in piracy waters with a total understanding of:

- Auditing and editing of the ship's security plan measures
- Piracy attacks, un-authorized access and breach of security issues
- Non-lethal systems & tactics to keep the pirates off your ship
- General knowledge of piracy and attacks
- International guidance, rules and best practice
- Able to access on-board risks, consequences and vulnerabilities
- Methods of detection
- Conducting anti-piracy training & drills

An interesting fact is that the first counter-terrorism mission by the United States was in 1803 when the Barbary Pirates held around 300 American sailors for ransom in modern day Libya. Today we still face the threat of piracy and one of the most dangerous places is off the coast of Africa where many US companies presently operate.

Piracy is an act of boarding or attempting to board any ship with the apparent intent to commit theft or any other crime and with the apparent intent or capability to use force in furtherance of that act. In 1998, I was in Warri, Nigeria conducting survival training

for a major oil company. One of their offshore rigs had been boarded and 3 men were taken hostage in their village. For their safe return, the ransom was a boat with a motor, a soccer field was to be built with uniforms for the village kids, a generator and some fuel for the generator.

At the dinner table we discussed the amount it would cost the company and all agreed it was a small price to pay for 3 lives. The next day a man arrived in a dark suit and immediately we knew he was the negotiator. We asked if he was planning on meeting their demands. He said "If we did, the next village would kidnap you so they will get nothing".

The next night, the 3 men joined us for supper and not one of the pirates' demands were met.

While attending an international safety conference, the topic of carrying a weapon on board was discussed at the table. Many ideas and thoughts were discussed but the one that I remember most was when it truly comes time to pull the trigger would you hesitate. If so, there is not need for a weapon on board. It was apparent during the class that weapons have no place on a ship for many other reasons.

Like many other safety topics, the best defense is prevention and early detection. Piracy will continue to grow around the world especially in third world regions. It is critical for companies who operate in these regions to have a plan and implement/include monthly terrorist drills just like the abandon ship, man overboard and fire drills. It could be time well spent.

John McMillan, President
McMillan Offshore Survival Training