

Insurance

Fresh Somali piracy threat to shipping unlikely to end soon, UN warns

International and regional cooperation holds the key to limiting the danger from ship seizures, according to expert panel



Pirates try to board the bulker Abdullah.

Photo: Atique IA Khan/Facebook

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The risk to commercial shipping from piracy off the Somali coast remains high but is unlikely to reach the levels seen 15 years ago, according to a United Nations report.

Armed guards on board ships and improved international cooperation have been key to keeping down attacks, said a five-strong UN expert panel investigating Somali-based Islamist group Al-Shabaab.



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Attacks on commercial shipping in international waters resumed in November for the first time in 18 months when pirates boarded the Greek-managed 50,000-dwt tanker Hellas Aphrodite (built 2016) about 1,000 km off the African coast.

The attack failed after the tanker's crew barricaded themselves in the citadel until a Spanish warship arrived and discovered the pirates had fled. The frigate later captured the pirate group's mothership to disrupt their operations.

Hijackings were down sharply in the year to October 2025, compared with the previous 12 months, with four successful hijackings of fishing vessels and dhows in Somali territorial waters, according to the UN experts. The previous year saw 25 attacks.

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The UN said crew were held for only three to six days, suggesting that this was because of greater pressure put on the pirate groups owing to better cooperation between regional and international bodies.

A further opportunist attack saw local fishermen break open a container and steal 49 machine guns from the deck of the 2,838-dwt general cargo ship *Sea World* (built 2005) while the ship was drifting off the coast of Puntland in July. Nearly 30 of the guns were later recovered.

In the year to October, authorities arrested five pirate suspects. They included the alleged accountant for a pirate group behind the seizure of a bulker, the 58,100-dwt *Abdullah* (built 2015), in March 2024.



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The ship and its crew were released after more than a month following the reported payment of a \$5m ransom, the report said.

It added: “It is unlikely that pirate attacks will end soon, and the risk to both commercial vessels and fishing dhows is still high.

“Piracy incidents are, however, unlikely to rise to the levels reached between 2008 and 2012” if international and regional cooperation continues and shipowners

take adequate precautions.

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