Ports must join the global battle against pirates

Since 2008, the capturing of commercial vessels and their crews by Somali pirates has become an ever increasing threat to international shipping, portstrategy.com reports. This threat has had a significant and detrimental effect on the ports surrounding the high risk areas, now encompassing the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

As a result of the threat of piracy, countries like Kenya, Yemen and the Seychelles, have seen a direct fall-off in trade, which has a corresponding effect on freight and port rates. Around 30,000 ships transit the Gulf of Aden each year but around 10% of this ship traffic now opts to re-route around the Cape of Good Hope, rather than transit the Gulf of Aden and the Suez Canal.

Certain governments have adopted the attitude that terrorists would not have any reason to attack their ports. However, in light of recent attacks, such attitudes have proved to be short-sighted. The pirates may have no interest in attacking ports themselves but they can take advantage of gaps in security measures to attack commercial vessels. And although ports may not suffer directly as a result of these attacks, there may be indirect consequences for ports and terminals - an attack in a national port is likely to damage the tourist industry in the region, it may also hurt foreign trade. International relations between countries may be damaged if a national port is unable to adequately protect foreign vessels.

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