

# MODERN-DAY PIRACY IN SOMALIA

## GPS Pirates



The Gulf of Aden is currently one of the world's most dangerous shipping routes. Pirates originating from Somalia, or rather that part of the country called Puntland, launch frequent attacks on commercial vessels bound for the Suez Canal or the Indian Ocean. Pirates - the word sounds medieval, and their vessels sometimes also resemble classic pirate vessels, including skull-and-crossbones flag. However, don't be misled; these modern-day pirates use state-of-the-art equipment. Not only do they boast an impressive array of armaments, they also use the latest versions of GNSS, GIS and telecommunication equipment.

Vessels passing the Bab al Mandeb between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and those leaving ports along the Arabian Gulf bound for Europe and passing the Madiq Hurmuz, are spotted by pirate accomplices and reported to primary bases and well-equipped headquarters in Puntland. There are even reports that tracking and tracing equipment is smuggled onboard vessels, enabling pirates to co-ordinate their hijacking operations. Pirates currently operate small boats from the coasts of Somalia and from pirate mother-ships, enabling them to attack ships as far out as four hundred nautical miles from the coasts of Somalia. However, primary areas of risk are the Gulf of Aden and up to 250 nautical miles from the Somali coast.

It would appear easy enough to put a stop these activities. Several warships are patrolling the area; satellites capture high-resolution pictures, radar systems sweep the seas, GNSS and every other kind of modern system are put into action. But it is very difficult to locate these small vessels in a million square miles of ocean.

This map, created by UNOSAT, shows an overview of events that took place in 2008. It is clear at a glance which part of the Gulf mariners and ship-owners have nicknamed 'Pirate Alley'. Pirate activity seemed to be on the increase during the first quarter of 2009 and is big business in this part of the world. Unfortunately for the inhabitants, it is often also the only one.