

# Report on Somalia

*Detailed Weekly Piracy Report and On-the-Ground Analysis*



*Piracy - At Sea - On Land - Domestic News - International Developments*

## Report on Somalia ~ SUMMARY

March 18 – 24, 2013 (Week 12)



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### At Sea:

- No known pirate incidents were reported during this period, effectively continuing a trend of no successful pirate hijackings off the coast of Somalia in 2013.

#### Key Statistics

- Hijacks: 0
- Attacks: 0
- Sightings: 0
- Releases: 0

### Updates:

- **21 March 2013** - In a stunning turnaround, Italy announced today that it will send two marines back to India where they are awaiting trial for the murder of two fishermen.
- **19 March 2013** - The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has confirmed that the fourteen Filipino crew members of a Greek tanker that was hijacked by pirates off Somalia last year have returned to the Philippines.

### Piracy Related News:

- **19 March 2013** - With pirate attacks rapidly decreasing off the Horn of Africa, mainly due to tighter security, ransom demands are likely to increase dramatically if Somali pirates successfully hijack a vessel.

### On Land:

- **23 March 2013** - Reports have indicated that a woman working for a human rights agency has been shot and killed in Mogadishu's southern Dharkenley district.
- **21 March 2013** - A suicide bomber has blown himself up outside of a police post in Mogadishu's main market.
- **19 March 2013** - Somali soldiers, backed by Ethiopian troops, have recaptured the town of Aw Diinle which had been temporarily lost to al-Shabaab militants who had gained control of it a day earlier.
- **18 March 2013** - At least ten people have been killed in a suicide car bomb that exploded in the capital city, near the presidential palace.
  - Meanwhile al-Shabaab militants have beheaded a 75-year-old Imam in Hudur on Monday night, just one day after they took control of the town.

### Domestic News:

- **21 March 2013** - An African Union (AU) Commander has indicated on Thursday that AU troops battling al-Shabaab militants are preparing to take over should Ethiopia withdraw its soldiers from the region.
- **20 March 2013** - In the wake of the al-Shabaab takeover of the town of Hudur, high level officials have visited Baidoa for talks with the local regional administration.

### International Developments:

- **21 March 2013** - The United States has offered bounties of US \$5 million each for the arrest of two Americans who are said to have joined Islamic militants in Somalia.
- **20 March 2013** - The European Union Commission has announced that the EU has pledged an additional 33 million euros (US \$43 million) to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).
- **19 March 2013** - A bomb blast has killed a Kenyan policeman and wounded two others in Mandera, a northeastern town which is located near the border with Somalia.

### About MS RISK

## Report on Somalia

March 18 – 24, 2013 (Week 12)

### At Sea:

- No known pirate incidents were reported during this period, effectively continuing a trend of no successful pirate hijackings off the coast of Somalia in 2013. Increased naval cooperation, coupled with the presence of more armed security guards aboard ships and Somalia's newly formed stable government, have resulted in a sharp decline in pirate attacks, with no successful hijackings this year.

#### Key Statistics

- Hijacks: 0
- Attacks: 0
- Sightings: 0
- Releases: 0

### Updates:

- **21 March 2013** - In a stunning turnaround, Italy announced today that it will send two marines back to India where they are awaiting trial for the murder of two fishermen. The announcement comes a week after Rome had unleashed a diplomatic furore by stating that it would not be sending the two marines back to India. The two in question, Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone, had been granted special leave by the Supreme Court in India last month which effectively enabled them to return to Italy in order to vote in the national elections. Although they were allowed to stay in the country for a period of four weeks, officials in Rome later announced that the two marines would not be returning to face trial. However today, the Italian government has announced that it had received “ample assurances” from Indian authorities “on the treatment that the marines will receive and the defence of their fundamental rights.” Furthermore it stated that “the government decided, also in the interests of the marines, to maintain the commitment taken when they were granted leave to take part in the elections to return to India by March 22.” Reports from Italy have indicated that the marines have agreed to the decision. Prior to the announcement, Prime Minister Mario Monti met with Defence Minister Giampaolo Di Paola and Steffan de Mistura, a junior foreign minister who has taken a lead on the case, in order to discuss the issue. Italian President Giorgio Napolitano has also indicated that he appreciated the “sense of responsibility” displayed by the two marines. The decision comes after an announcement made by the government on 11 March 2013 which indicated that the marines would not return from their leave. In light of that announcement, Indian authorities moved quickly in order to prohibit Italy's ambassador to New Delhi, Daniele Mancini, from leaving the country, citing that he had broken a written promise. In return, Italy had accused India of violating international laws on diplomatic immunity as the Indian Supreme Court issued a decision requiring Mancini to seek the court's permission to leave the country. In defence of ambassador Mancini, European Union foreign police chief Catherine Ashton stated on Tuesday that diplomatic immunity “should be respected at all times,” further warning that limiting his movement “would be contrary” to international obligations. The two marines are accused of shooting dead two Indian fishermen who they mistook for pirates off the Indian region of Kochi last year while they were serving as security guards on an Italian oil tanker. **Update** - The two Italian marines have arrived back in New Delhi. India's Foreign Ministry spokesman Syed Akbaruddin has confirmed that Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone touched down in an Italian military plane in the evening after being flown from their homeland. A spokeswoman for the Italian embassy in India confirmed that the two marines were accompanied on the flight by Deputy Foreign Minister Staffan de Mistura. The Indian government has hailed the decision as a victory for diplomacy. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who had warned of consequences if the pair did not return to India by March 22, was amongst those who expressed their satisfaction with the decision. The turnaround in decision came shortly after officials in Italy had stated that they had received assurances from the Indian government that the marines would not face the death penalty if convicted. The two countries do have a prisoner transfer agreement, which has raised the possibility that the marines could serve out their sentences in Italy if they are convicted.
- **19 March 2013** - The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has confirmed that the fourteen Filipino crew members of a Greek tanker that was hijacked by pirates off Somalia last year have returned to the Philippines. Foreign Affairs spokesman Raul Hernandez indicated that the crew members of the MT Smyrni had arrived in

Manila on 19 March. The MT Smyrni, along with its twenty-six crew members of mixed nationalities, was seized by Somali pirates on 10 May 2012 and was released on 9 March 2013. After its release, the vessel sailed to the port of Salalah in Oman, where the Filipino crew members were provided with counseling and medical treatment from Philippine embassy officials. According to Mr. Hernandez, there are still nine Filipino crew members from two separate vessels that are being held hostage by pirates in Somalia. The Philippines is one of the world's largest providers of shipping manpower in the world in which a large bulk of its crew members, which amount to more than twenty percent of the world's 1.2 million sailors, are responsible for manning oil tankers, luxury liners, and passenger vessels worldwide. This effectively exposes them to piracy attacks. Furthermore, piracy and ransom kidnappings of Filipino crew members by Somali pirates in waters off the Horn of Africa has long been a problem for the Philippine government which lacks the capacity to monitor their movements at sea.

## Piracy Related News:

- **19 March 2013** - With pirate attacks rapidly decreasing off the Horn of Africa, mainly due to tighter security, ransom demands are likely to increase dramatically if Somali pirates successfully hijack a vessel in the coming months. In 2011, the average ransom increased from about US \$4 million in 2010, to US \$5 million. In 2012, there were 14 hijackings and 75 pirate attacks, down from the 28 hijackings and 237 attacks that had occurred in 2011. A strong naval presence in the high risk areas and an increase in armed guards on board vessels transiting through the region have helped in preventing attacks and hijackings from occurring. In turn, increased stability and security on land in Somalia has effectively prevented pirates from having a safe haven to dock hijacked vessels which would be held for months or years while ransoms were being negotiated. All this has led to a number of reports which have estimated that due to the decreasing numbers in hijackings over the last six months, Somali pirates will increase the ransom rates as a means of further fueling their activities at sea. Saeed Rageh, a counter-piracy minister in Somalia's autonomous Puntland region has recently stated that "the pirates know the fight against them has succeeded, hence the increase in ransom money...their desperation has made them charge exorbitant amounts of ransom money. This puts the hostages at risk if quick and appropriate interventions are not put in place." Since the release of the chemical tanker MV Royal Grace on 8 March 2013, along with its twenty-one hostages who were held in captivity for over a year, experts have indicated that they believe that the ransom received by Somali pirates was well over the US \$1.7 million that relatives had stated was demanded during threatening phone calls made to them by pirate negotiators. In turn, experts have stated that the MV Smyrni, a tanker hijacked in May of last year along with twenty-six crew members on board and carrying 135,000 tonnes of crude oil, was released last month after a ransom payment believed to be more than US \$9 million. While no confirmations on ransom payments have been made by the owners of the MV Royal Grace and the MV Smyrni, if they are confirmed, this would indicate a possible sharp increase in ransom payments, a backlash which will undoubtedly result in more intensive negotiations, and a higher risk to the crew members on board those vessels that will be hijacked. Other factors which will raise the ransom demands include the vessels cargo and crew, as well as the cost to the pirates who hijacked the vessel - this will include food supply, loans for mounting the hijack operation as well as pay for the pirates and any other support staff who may have been involved. Over the coming months, oil tankers will especially be high-valued targets as pirates attempt to gain back some of the profits that they have lost over the past few months.

## On Land:

- **23 March 2013** - Reports have indicated that a woman working for a human rights agency has been shot and killed in Mogadishu's southern Dharkenley district. Media have reported that the woman was shot and killed Saturday morning by two men armed with pistols. District commissioner Ma'alin Abdulle Ali Hilowle has stated that an investigation is pending and that the reasons behind the shooting remain to be unknown. The commissioner further added that security in the district has vastly improved since a number of al-Shabaab suspects were arrested by authorities. However with this recent incident, it is evident that security issues are still a major issue throughout Mogadishu. Although al-Shabaab has not claimed responsibility for this attack,

the commissioner is suspecting that members of the group are behind the targeted killing. Al-Shabaab has been known to target human rights agencies throughout the country. They are still holding two hostages who at the time of their kidnapping were working for Doctors Without Borders.

- **21 March 2013** - A suicide bomber has blown himself up outside of a police post in Mogadishu's main market. The attack, which wounded a number of people, is the second bombing to occur in the capital city this week. Police official Abdi Mohamed has stated to the public that "a suicide bomber tried to enter a police post, but he was stopped and he blew himself up...he died but four other people including a woman were wounded." So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the blast which occurred in Bakara market which was once an al-Shabaab stronghold but which in recent months has sprung back to life and transformed into the city's economic centre. On Monday, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for a car bomb that killed at least ten people and wounded a top intelligence official (*See Below*). The two suicide bombings in Mogadishu also come days after the group retook the southern town of Hudur just hours after Ethiopian troops had withdrawn from the town. While the newly formed government in Somalia offers the most serious hope for stability since the fall of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991, al-Shabaab's continued influence in a number of rural areas of the country, coupled with its capabilities of carrying out hit and run attacks have proven that security remains to be a major issue within Mogadishu.
- **19 March 2013** - Somali soldiers, backed by Ethiopian troops, have recaptured the town of Aw Diinle which had been temporarily lost to al-Shabaab militants who had gained control of it a day earlier. Bardaale district commissioner Mohamed Isaq has indicated that the takeover followed a lengthy battle between the militants and allied Somalia National Army and Ethiopian troops. Reports have indicated that there were at least seven casualties however no further information has been provided. Aw Diinle, is located in the Bay region, just thirty kilometers west of Baidoa.
- **18 March 2013** - At least ten people have been killed in a suicide car bomb that exploded in the capital city, near the presidential palace. The attack, which was claimed by Islamist insurgents, is one of the bloodiest attacks to have occurred in Mogadishu in recent months. It also comes just one day after al-Shabaab insurgents retook the key town of Hudur, which is located in the southwest and which is the capital of the Bakool province. The takeover reportedly occurred just hours after Ethiopian troops, who had held the town since 2011 after entering into Somali in order to attack al-Shabaab bases, had withdrawn, sparking fresh concerns of a wider withdrawal that may leave the peacekeeping forces in the country overstretched. Security sources have indicated that the blast in Mogadishu targeted and injured a top intelligence official. Witnesses have indicated that a car carrying the intelligence chief and other security officials, was travelling along Maka al Mukarram road, located about 100m (330 ft) from the presidential palace compound, when another vehicle filled with explosives drew up alongside. However just as the bomb was detonated, a minibus drove between them, taking the force of the blast and leaving Mr. Ereg with some minor injuries. Somali Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon later confirmed that ten people were killed and fifteen others were wounded "when a car bomber drove into a passenger bus." The explosion also damaged nearby buildings, including a restaurant, however the heavily fortified presidential palace was left untouched. Since the attack, al-Shabaab fighters have boasted of the killings, stating that they had targeted and wounded Mogadishu's intelligence chief Khalif Ereg. Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage, a spokesman for al-Shabaab, further noted that "attacks against elements like him will continue until they are eliminated from the holy land of Somalia." This most recent bombing in Mogadishu, coupled with the retaking of Hudur, have marked a major victory for al-Shabaab, and a sharp turnaround for the group who for the past several months have been on the back foot in Somalia, mainly due to the loss of a number of strongholds to a 17,000 - strong African Union (AU) peacekeeping force. It has also sparked increasing concern that this recent withdrawal by Ethiopian troops from Hudur may be the first in a much wider withdrawal from the region that would likely benefit al-Shabaab. Ethiopian troops are also reportedly beginning to withdrawal from Baidoa, which is another key city in the region. Although Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn indicated last year that Ethiopian troops would remain in Somalia until AU troops were ready to replace the soldiers, no reports from the Prime Minister regarding this recent withdrawal have been made. However some believe that while Ethiopian troops may not be withdrawing from Somalia completely, they may be withdrawing from certain regions in order to focus more closely on those towns and cities that straddle the country's border with Somalia. The withdrawal from Hudur has also resulted in some 2,000 civilians, many women and children, fleeing the town and currently moving towards the Ethiopian border. This comes amidst reports from Hudur that al-Shabaab militants have arrested a number of civilians who are believed to have supported Ethiopian or government troops. Although it could take up to three days to reach the Ethiopian border, it is likely that a number of civilians may be exposed to possible ambushes along the way.

- Meanwhile al-Shabaab militants have beheaded a 75-year-old Imam in Hudur on Monday night, just one day after they took control of the town. According to reports, the militants later left the body of Sheikh Abdirahman Moalin Warsame in a hole near his home. Local residents have also indicated that the militants have reportedly arrested ten people in Hudur, including two women and have killed two other civilians. One of the victims, a woman, was allegedly working for the government. Al-Shabaab regained control of Hudur, which is the regional capital of the Bakool region, on Sunday shortly after Ethiopian troops retreated from the area.

## Domestic News:

- **21 March 2013** - An African Union (AU) Commander has indicated on Thursday that AU troops battling al-Shabaab militants are preparing to take over should Ethiopia withdraw its soldiers from the region. This comes amidst confirmed reports that Ethiopian troops, which are the strongest military power in Somalia's southwestern region, withdrew from the town of Hudur on Sunday. Andrew Gutti, Commander of the African Union Mission for Somalia (AMISOM) has stated that "we have in place contingent measures to ensure that areas in Bay and Bakool...remain stable and secure in the event of further Ethiopian troop withdrawals." After the Ethiopian troops' withdrawal from Hudur, which is the capital of the Bakool region, al-Shabaab militants swept into the town, which has proven to be one of their most important territorial victories in over a year. The take over has also resulted in at least 2,000 civilians fleeing the town. The recapture of the town has resulted in celebrations amongst the group, which also reportedly included the beheading of an influential cleric in the town. Although al-Shabaab has suffered a number of major losses in recent months, the group remains to be a potent threat as it still controls a number of rural areas in the southern and central regions of the country, and is still capable of carrying out deadly guerrilla attacks in areas that are under government control. The capital city of Mogadishu has witnessed a number of suicide bombings over the past months, with the most recent occurring this week. These suicide bombings have typically occurred on weekends, and in the busiest areas of the capital. Al-Shabaab attacks have also targeted security personnel and high valued targets such as members of the newly formed government. Although Hudur is the only major town Ethiopian troops have pulled out of, on the ground sources have indicated that troops in Baidoa are packing kit in an apparent preparation to leave. Security sources have also noted that the withdrawal from Hudur may eventually signal a wider pullout of Ethiopian forces. If this were to occur, the 17,000-strong AMISOM would be hugely overstretched. Further reports have suggested that Ethiopia's troops will begin to relocate to the regions of Somalia that border their country, in an attempt to prevent the spread of attacks from occurring on their soil. With cross-border attacks increasing in Kenya, officials in Ethiopia are undoubtedly aware of the increased dangers that may occur with their continued efforts to fight al-Shabaab in Somalia. Ethiopian troops entered Somalia in late 2011, in a bid to attack al-Shabaab bases. Shortly afterwards, Kenyan troops invaded the southern region of Somalia. While Kenyan troops have since joined AMISOM, Ethiopia has continued to remain separate from the mission.
- **20 March 2013** - In the wake of the al-Shabaab takeover of the town of Hudur, high level officials have visited Baidoa for talks with the local regional administration. According to reports, Assistant Defence Minister Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud, along with State Minister for Finance and Planning Mohamed Rashind Sheikh Dahir and newly appointed Commander of the National Army Abdirizack Khalif Elmi attended the meeting in Baidoa. The withdrawal on Sunday of Ethiopian troops from Hudur has raised concerns in regards to a possible wider pull out of Ethiopian forces from the Bay and Bakool regions, which includes Baidoa which is a strategically important town. Since the takeover, which has been condemned by Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon who has promised that the government is planning to retake Hudur, an estimated 2,000 people have reportedly fled the town. The Prime Minister has also condemned the murder of Imam Sheikh Abdirahman Moalin Warsame who was killed by al-Shabaab militants in Hudur.

## International Developments:

- **21 March 2013** - The United States has offered bounties of US \$5 million each for the arrest of two Americans who are said to have joined Islamic militants in Somalia. Omar Hamami and Jihad Mostafa have been named under the State Department's Rewards for Justice programme for their ties to al-Shabaab. According to the State Department, Omar Hamami (28) is a former Alabama resident who moved to Somalia

in 2006 where he began to work for al-Shabaab and recruited young trainees through his English-language rap songs and videos. He was indicted in 2009 by an Alabama district court for providing support to a terrorist organization. In 2011, he was placed on a US Treasury blacklist which froze all his assets in the United States. Hamami has also served as a military commander under Mostafa, who is a former resident of San Diego, California. Jihad Mostafa left for Somalia in 2005 where he led foreign fighters and provided the militant group with media support. Mostafa is also on the FBI's most wanted terrorist list and in 2009, he was charged in a California district court with providing material support to al-Shabaab. Although his exact date of birth remains to be unknown, he has previously stated that he was born in both 1981 and 1986. Hamami, who is better known as Abu Mansoor al-Amriki or "the American," stated last year that he had split from al-Shabaab. The group has since acknowledged his leaving and has placed him on their target list. Hamami currently spends his days denouncing his former al-Shabaab colleagues, stating that they are corrupt. He also refers himself as the "former poster boy" of the group.

- **20 March 2013** - The European Union Commission has announced that the EU has pledged an additional 33 million euros (US \$43 million) to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). According to the Commission, the continued EU support will assist AMISOM in fulfilling its mandate while the funds will cover troop, police and civilian costs as well as the operational costs of running AMISOM's headquarters which is stationed in Nairobi, Kenya. In a statement released by the EU High Commissioner, Catherine Ashton indicated that "supporting AMISOM is a key element of the EU's comprehensive approach to Somalia, assuring the security necessary for the federal government of Somalia to provide governance, re-establish the rule of law and provide basic social services to the people." Since 2007, the total EU contribution to AMISOM stands at over 444 million euros (US \$575 million).
- **19 March 2013** - A bomb blast has killed a Kenyan policeman and wounded two others in Mandera, a northeastern town which is located near the border with Somalia. The explosion is just the latest in a number of attacks that have occurred on Kenya's border region with Somalia, where Kenyan troops are continuing to battle Islamist insurgents. According to a Kenyan police source, "the explosion occurred on the roadside where the officers were patrolling...one died on the spot while the two others have been taken to hospital." Since Kenya sent its troops to Somalia to fight al-Shabaab insurgents in October 2011, the country has suffered a number of bomb blasts and shootings in a number of the border towns as well as in the capital city of Nairobi. Over the past few months, these attacks have been increasing as al-Shabaab has rapidly been losing a vast amount of territory, especially in the south. The formation of a stable official government, which has been recognized by countries such as the US, has only further fueled al-Shabaab's need of demonstrating its capabilities both within the borders of Somalia and in neighboring countries.

Map:





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References are always available.

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24 hr Contact Information:

Email: [operations@msrisk.com](mailto:operations@msrisk.com)

Telephone: +44 (0)207 754 3555

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MS Risk Limited, First Floor, Ragnall House, 18 Peel Road, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 4LZ.  
Tel: +44 1624 661881. Fax: +44 1624 611423. Directors: S.J. Bingham,  
V. Prentice, P.O.J. Tracy. Registered in the Isle of Man No 007435V

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**24 hr Global Contact: +44 207 754 3555**  
[www.msrisk.com](http://www.msrisk.com)