

Adding Escalation of Force Capability to Combat Growing Piracy Attacks

By **Scott Stuckey**, Vice President, American Technology Corporation

The U.S. Military and maritime security industry are stepping up their efforts to fight growing maritime piracy by procuring escalation of force capabilities. With piracy incidents up over 20% in 2008, highlighted by the seizure of the Ukrainian ship MV Faina in late September, military and maritime security leadership are equipping their personnel with easy to transport and operate LRAD acoustic hailing and warning devices (AHDs). LRAD gained worldwide recognition when it was used to successfully repel a pirate attack on the cruise ship, Seabourn Spirit, off of the coast Somalia in November 2005.

In his book, *Rearranging The Deck Chairs*, Mark Gaouette, a retired naval officer and former Director of Security for Princess Cruise Lines (operator of the Seabourn Spirit), addressed the current state of maritime security as well as new challenges to maritime environment. Gaouette highlights many of the concerns of rapidly increasing pirate activity:

After pirates boarded the Dewi Madrim in the Straits of Malacca, instead of plundering and pillaging the crew and cargo, they proceeded to ask questions about steering the ship, and after piloting the ship for an hour, as quickly as they had come, re-boarded their fast boats and left, without further incident or harm to the crew.

Pirates acting like terrorists, terrorists using pirate tactics; what will the future of maritime terrorism bring? Will the tactics used on the Achille Lauro hijacking be employed to seize another cruise ship, or will the goal of the terrorists be the complete destruction of a ship as was seen in the attack on the Superferry14 or the USS Cole? Or quite possibly, will a new terrorist tactic emerge, one that cannot be defended against using current maritime security measures?

No one knows the extent of modern piracy, only that it is growing exponentially as world economic conditions deteriorate. In 2007 International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reported that maritime pirate attacks worldwide shot up 14 percent in the first nine months of that year

over a year earlier with Somalia and Nigeria showing the biggest increases.

A total of 198 attacks on ships were reported between January and September 2007, up from 174 in the same period in 2006. IMB reported that a total of 15 vessels were hijacked, 63 crew members kidnapped and three killed.

In the July to September 2007 alone, there were 72 incidents, up from 47 in the same period a year earlier, marking the second straight quarterly rise in attacks, a trend that seems sure to continue in 2008 and beyond. Officials at the IMB call the present involvement by world governments against piracy to be "in shambles." This situation is becoming even more confused and dangerous as many countries extend their territorial waters out to 200 nautical miles while failing to provide adequate maritime security in their extended ocean territories.

Fire Hoses are not Enough

In his book, Gaouette also addresses the role escalation of force capabilities played in the Seabourn Spirit attack:

The International Maritime Organization does not endorse the use weapons on merchant vessels, let alone allowing cruise ships to be armed. The Spirit was at least 80 miles off the coast of a hostile shore in a desperate situation with little to defend itself. The hope of rescue from a friendly coast guard or navy after the attack commenced early in the morning was remote. The ship was under full military attack with nothing to answer the RPG's and automatic rifle fire. That is when Security Officer Michael Groves realized the only hope lay in the LRAD. Despite continuing to spray the attackers with high-pressured water, Groves concluded that the fire hoses were not going to repel the attack and that he had to use the Long Range Acoustic Device mounted above the bridge. Aside from the high-pressure fire hoses, which are not really a defense against automatic weapons, the LRAD was truly the ship's only real defense against the pirates.

LRAD was developed to help prevent another USS Cole-style terrorist attack against criti-



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cal operational assets or the potential loss of innocent life as occurred recently in the Global Patriot shooting. In response to the growing threat to maritime security, American Technology Corp. has been working with military and commercial security for over five years to adapt and deploy LRAD systems. The US Navy has contracted for 270 LRAD 1000X units for large US Navy vessels to prevent terrorist incidents.

With these tools, security teams can employ a clear, penetrating warning tone followed by powerful voice transmissions in host nation language to influence the behavior of potential hostile entities.

LRAD employs directed sound technology to push the security engagement envelope from 50 meters (without LRAD), to well in excess of 500 meters. Extending the envelope provides critical time and distance for teams to

assess a threat and safely direct innocent civilians while simultaneously identifying and deterring targets with hostile intent.

The compact, LRAD 500X broadcasts clear voice commands well beyond 2000 meters in a calm environment and provides clear communication to operators of moving vessels beyond 300 meters. The LRAD 500X is the only acoustic hailing and warning device that meets, and in many cases exceeds, the military's requirements for vehicle and small vessel applications. The system has successfully endured several months of rigorous operational and environmental testing proving its ability to operate for extended periods in the harshest maritime environment.

LRAD 500X Scram Cart systems have been procured by commercial vessels as well as the U.S. Military for their expeditionary and ship-

board embarked security teams. This escalation of force capability is readily available to commercial ship owners and military teams. The maneuverability afforded by the Scram Cart, allows the security personnel to quickly re-deploy the unit as the ship maneuvers or the threat direction changes.

"There is finally, an effective defensive device for the mariner that can be quickly used to determine intent and ward off hostiles without creating an international incident," remarked Captain Harry Rogers of Interocean American Shipping.

With the increase in pirate attacks off the Horn of Africa and throughout the world, LRAD is quickly becoming a "must have" tool to help ensure maritime security and crew safety.

About the Author



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