Piracy and Armed Robbery — study guide

Piracy and armed robbery threaten the crew's lives, the cargo and the ship. Preparation, non-lethal deterrence and knowing how to behave if taken hostage save lives. This guide covers the causes, the defence and the survival principles.[1][2]

Causes and hotspots

Contributing causes of piracy and armed robbery include political and social instability and economic disparity. The four areas considered piracy and armed robbery "hotspots" are the **Gulf of Aden**, the **Gulf of Guinea**, the **Straits of Malacca**, and **anchorages in Venezuela**.

The ship's guidance

The ship's document with the complete guidance for piracy and armed robbery is the **Ship Security Plan**. When attackers are threatening the ship, the Master should activate the **Ship Security Alert System (SSAS)** and initiate the ship's pre-prepared piracy attack procedures.

Passive (non-lethal) defence

Passive defensive preparation can include **razor wire**, and **water cannons** may be useful as non-lethal defence.

If attackers take control

If attackers take control of the ship, violence or the threat of violence is often used to subdue the crew. The chance of injury or harm **is** reduced if the crew are compliant and cooperative.

Survival principles

Those held hostage need to concentrate on survival. Principles to follow include encouraging the crew to **work together**, **staying neutral**, **retaining dignity**, and being **patient**. A good principle if you are held hostage is to **show** your hands to the attackers — hiding your hands is not a survival principle.

Key facts to remember

- Causes: political/social instability and economic disparity.
- Hotspots: Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Guinea, Straits of Malacca, anchorages in Venezuela.
- Complete guidance: the Ship Security Plan. On attack: activate the SSAS and the pre-prepared piracy procedures.
- Non-lethal defence: razor wire, water cannons.
- If taken: compliance and cooperation reduce injury risk.
- Hostage principles: work together, stay neutral, retain dignity, be patient, show your

© 2026 maritimetest.com · free study guide

hands.

Sources

1. IMO ISPS Code (SOLAS Chapter XI-2) — Ship Security Plan, Ship Security Alert System and security measures.

2. IMO/industry Best Management Practices (BMP) for protection against piracy and armed robbery (deterrence and crew protection).