

**Hostage Support Programme (Project 045)
(Part of the Maritime Crime Programme)**



**Lessons Learned
After Action Review
Improvement Plan**

**“It was truly like being born again. We had given up hope
and suddenly we were brought back to life.” - MV Iceberg
Hostage**

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Executive Summary

The Hostage Support Programme was born from the strong desire of those involved in Counter Piracy Capacity building, and the then Secretary General's Special Representative for Somalia (SRSG), Dr Augustine Mahiga, to provide good offices support to the victims of Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia. This gap in our response was assessed to be particularly glaring given that so much international effort was directed at prosecuting the pirates themselves, and preserving their human rights, whilst none was focused upon assisting the hostages – the primary victims of this criminal activity.

Initially, the programme was carried out as an unfunded activity jointly between UNPOS and UNODC. After several successful activities, most notably the repatriation of 14 Myanmar citizens, the programme attracted funding support from the Contact Group for Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) Trust Fund. The programme continued to be managed by UNPOS and UNODC until UNPOS was dissolved in May 2012. The programme now continues using the same staff on a contract basis, but managed by the UNODC Global Maritime Crime Programme in Vienna.

This review was commissioned by UNODC Vienna to ensure that a single document captured the lessons learned from the first twelve months the programme under funding support from the CGPCS Trust Fund.

Key Findings

The key findings relate to three areas: Authority to negotiate; flexibility of funding; and the need to provide follow up services to the victims of piracy.

During the rapid decline in successful attacks over the course of 2013, the number of ships and hostages held has declined. The remaining hostages are generally from piratings of vessels where the ship owners and insurers (if indeed there was insurance) have since become untraceable. This has left crews held hostage ashore where neither the ship owner nor insurer are willing or able to resolve the crisis, and the capacity of crew nationality states to respond is negligible. In certain cases this has left the Hostage Support Programme (HSP) as the only point of contact for the hostages, those holding the hostages, and the families. Whilst the UN and the HSP have laid clear boundaries so as to ensure we are not involved in ransom discussions with pirates, responsibility for the crew has fallen to the programme, and this has required the HSP team to seek novel approaches to humanitarian release.

The second key issue has been funding, and there is clear evidence that the stated aims of the programme to provide direct support (such as medical aid) to hostages in captivity has been made significantly more difficult by the UN rules and regulations on procurement. A flexible funding pool that allows instant funding for flights, medical support and human information and assistance should be created for the current HSP, and considered during the initial set-up of any future HSP.

The third area, linked to the issue of funding flexibility, in that it is quite clear that hostages held by pirates are victims of crime just like any other. Not only have they and their families suffered over a protracted period, but they often are then subjected to continuing hardship when employers

fail to provide back-pay for the time the seafarer was held hostage, nor support their often (and understandably) considerable medical requirements. Further, many seafarers, once released, return home to bureaucracies that do not comprehend what has happened to them in captivity, and which do not or cannot provide the immediate and medium term support they require (medical, financial and documentary) to get their lives back to a semblance of normality. The HSP has developed a follow-up process for all piracy victims, with home visits, medical support and debriefing as the current focus. There are many lessons to be learned from the victims of this crime, and these lessons will benefit others once they have influenced policy and training. However, this follow up will require a level of funding flexibility that is not available in the normal course of routine UN programming.

In summary, the HSP – whilst currently a modest programme - brings huge credit to the Trust Fund and UNODC. It deserves the full support of the UN to achieve its aims, even if this requires some novel and flexible approaches be taken in light of the challenges presented by short term situational changes, and the difficulties of facilitating local humanitarian assistance in the context of Somalia. Further, whilst it is hoped that the need for this particular HSP will soon evaporate as a consequence of the release of all remaining Somali pirate-held hostages, the lessons learned during this programme should be made available to other concerned parties in case a similar programme is in the future necessary in another context.

Background

The pirate business model

The main focus of pirates off the HoA has been to take vessels and hostages for ransom. Whilst the focus in the early stages of the current phenomenon (2008-2009) was on hijacking vessels for ransom, targeting people as hostages for ransoms has risen in prominence. This has prompted a number of new pirate business models, including splitting hostage groups and holding them in a variety of locations ashore (to make military hostage recovery operations more difficult), and opportunistic shore based kidnapping, such as of two British tourists from a coastal resort in northern Kenya in 2011.¹

Genesis of the Hostage Support Programme (HSP)

The then UN SRSG to Somalia (Augustine Mahiga) under his "good offices" mandate undertook to try and assist member states with recovery of their hostages in Somalia (taken in both Piracy and other kidnapping incidents) by raising the plight of hostages with the then Transitional Federal Government and with other influential leaders inside Somalia, and where possible providing assistance to help secure the release of hostages. The SRSG created a Chief of Counter Piracy post within his staff (initially a secondee and then, following ACBQ approval, a P5 recruited specifically for the post).

In direct cooperation with UNODC and with IOM, the UNPOS Counter Piracy Office directly assisted with the repatriation from Puntland of a group of 14 Burmese hostages released by Pirates. The lessons learned

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/26/british-woman-court-pirates-kenya>

during this process and the plight of the other remaining hostages led to the submission to the CGPCS Trust Fund for the funding of a Hostage Support Programme (HSP). This was approved in November 2012 with a mandate to provide monitoring of all hostages held in Somalia, to provide (where possible) medical care and other support in captivity, and then medical support, accommodation, food, clothes and welfare items to hostages during the release phase, followed by support in getting them home swiftly with diplomatic support, documentation and travel.

Implementation of the Hostage Support Programme (HSP)

The HSP, implemented by UNODC and the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), until the end of the latter’s mandate in June 2013, has so far provided humanitarian assistance and support in recovery and repatriation of 93 hostages. The Programme is now managed by two consultants (one being the former UNPOS Chief of Counter Piracy; the other a UNODC Associate Hostage Release and Repatriation Officer) under direction from the Maritime Crime Programme HQ in UNODC Vienna.

Current Situation

<i>Ship</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Held Since</i>	<i>Nationalities</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
FV Naham 3	27	26/3/10	China, Phillipines, Indonesaiia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Taiwan	Held ashore since vessel ran aground in 2013
MV Albedo	11	12/11/10	Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran	7 released following payment in 2012. 1 killed. Remaining 11 held ashore since vessel

				sank in 2013. 4 missing following sinking.
MV Asphalt Venture	7	26/9/10	India	8 released last year with ship. Remaining 7 held ashore for further ransom.
FV Prantaly 12	4		Thailand	5 died during initial attack. 1 subsequently died. Ship sank in storm. 14 Myanmar crew released and repatriated by HSP. Remainder held ashore for further ransom
Sub Total Hostages Ashore	49			
Other kidnap victims	12 ²		Kenya, USA, UK	Kidnapped from Kenya and Somalia. Held by Al Shabaab/pirate groups.
Total	63			

² Two Kenyan aid workers kidnapped in 2011 were found near Dhobley, apparently abandoned, in the week of 07 April 2014.

Summary of actions delivered³

In November 2012, the HSP provided advice to the Government of Seychelles for the repatriation of two Seychellois fishermen after a year of captivity in Somalia.

In late November 2012, the HSP provided humanitarian support to 19 hostages, whose release was secured by the Royal Netherlands Navy from a vessel captured by Somali pirates. The HSP provided direct support with the Associate Hostage Release and Repatriation Officer deploying to Dar Es Salaam in support of the Royal Netherlands Navy and the embassies of member states with released hostages.

In late December 2012, the HSP coordinated the repatriation of the remaining 22 seafarers from Ghana, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Sudan and Yemen who were held hostage on board the MV Iceberg-1 for more than 1,000 days. For those States that did not have the resources to recover hostages, the HSP stepped in, expending around \$50,000 and employing an UNHAS aircraft and two UN staff, who flew directly to Bosasso to collect the hostages.

On 10 January 2013, one Sri Lankan and two Syrian hostages from the MV Orna were recovered from Mogadishu by the HSP. The Sri Lankan seafarer travelled to Nairobi on a United Nations aircraft, while the two Syrians boarded commercial flights to Beirut. On 12 January 2013, three remaining Syrian hostages were released in Adado, and were flown to Beirut for onward repatriation.

During the second week of March 2013 the MV Smyrni and the MV Royal Grace were released with a total crew of 47 seafarers. The HSP

³ Extracted from the Report of the Secretary-General on the situation with respect to piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia – S/2013/623 dated 21 October 2013

coordinated with EUNAVFOR to monitor the release, and was on stand-by in case the crew needed assistance with their repatriation.

On 6 July 2013, the MV Albedo, which had been held by Somali pirates since November 2010, sank. Despite the hazardous and fragile condition of the vessel, 15 seafarers were kept hostage on board. Eleven hostages from Bangladesh, India, Iran, and Sri Lanka were transferred to another location, while four crewmembers remain missing and unaccounted for. The HSP is working with the Federal Government of Somalia, regional administrations, local leaders, the Maritime Piracy and Humanitarian Response Programme, the European Union, INTERPOL, and concerned Member States to determine the precise details and status of the seafarers and to routinely update their families. In August and September 2013, medical support, including two visits by a doctor, was delivered to these seafarers through local contacts. This was the first time medical aid has been delivered to a crew in captivity.

The HSP is also seeking to re-establish contact with crews from the MV Asphalt Venture and MV Prantalay-12, both of which have been held for more than three years, and with other individual hostages. This sensitive and painstaking work has recently yielded results in establishing contact with the Thai seafarers after two years.

Following a request from the US Government, the HSP has established contact with the family of Michael Scott Moore, held hostage in Somalia since January 2012. The HSP is using its political and other contacts to try and assist the family understand the context in which Michael is held and to assist in establishing contact with the group holding MSM. The HSP tried to deliver spectacles to the hostage lost during his capture but so far there has been no indication that they were received.

Throughout each process, the HSP has maintained contact with Member States, international and regional organizations, and more recently with family members of the hostages, all of whom have expressed appreciation

and commended the support and regular updates provided by the HSP.

Funding

CG Trust Fund bid/allocation

The HSP is solely funded by the CGCS Trust Fund, with approved project grants of \$219,350 in November 2012, and \$240,750 in November 2013. This funding covers the salary of HSP staff (consultants), information gathering and lessons identification activities, and related project support. It does not provide sufficient funding for recovery operations for all current hostages (when this hopefully becomes possible), and the HSP would benefit immensely from access to contingency funding should a major release take place.

Recommendation 1: The HSP should seek access to the Expedited Facility (or a similar arrangement) in order to be able to book air or sea evacuation, and subsequent repatriations, at short notice.

Flexibility issues

By its very nature this type of work requires a great deal of flexibility and timely response to developing situations on the ground. Releases (some of which are not notified to the UN in advance) require a fast response on the ground, including the immediate charter of an aircraft (usually through UNHAS, although there have been reservations from WFP over neutrality issues), the deployment of UN staff into the region, and all of the support required to enable repatriation. These kinds of activity are very difficult under existing procurement and financial regimes within the UN system.

Equally, the ability to deliver rapid medical or other support to hostages in captivity is not always predictable, is often dangerous for those who undertake delivery, and often does not fall strictly within the mandate of those UN agencies one would initially think could be tasked to deliver that support. For example, recent medical support to the hostages from the MV Albedo was set up with WHO help within the region. However, funding the medical visits and paying the medical staff (who were recommended by WHO, and who risked their lives to go and visit the hostages and conduct the assessments) ran into difficulties and sensitivities with WHO's role as a neutral agency. Short notice alternate arrangements had to be found so that the opportunity to provide this vital medical support was not lost. Medical staff and medication purchases were eventually paid via the Hawallah system, direct to the local staff who provided the support via UNODC and UNON. It proved impossible to either fund these activities any other way. Additionally, because of this, securing refunds for the expenses the HSP team paid from their own pockets in order to ensure the assistance was provided before the assistance window closed, was most problematic.

Recommendation 2: HSPs require funding that can be available immediately. This funding should be held in a mechanism similar to the existing ExFac⁴. Prior procurement approvals need to be established in advance for the key contingencies (medical support and evacuation by air and sea) together with agreed MOUs with supporting agencies such as UNHAS (WFP) and WHO.

Other donors

⁴ The Terms of Reference of the Trust Fund (section VI, paragraph 23) state that "in circumstances where an immediate funding to pay or reimburse short-term prosecution related expenses is required, a Fast Track Mechanism will be developed in the form of a project proposal for review by the Trust Fund Board at the earliest opportunity." This "Expedited Facility" (hereinafter, ExFac) is intended to allow the Fund Board to delegate authority of approval to UNODC in circumstances where immediate action is needed to pay or reimburse short-term prosecution related expenses, or to support any other activities highlighted as urgent priorities by the Board. ExFac funds are, in other words, dedicated exclusively to unforeseen activities.

The CGPCS Trust Fund allocation is not sufficient to support and recover all of the remaining hostages. The HSP should be able to seek and utilize other support and direct funding into the programme. However, project proposals and requests to date – focussed on securing funding to facilitate post-release hostage medical and employment support – have been unsuccessful. To date, proposals targeted at industry concerning assistance in establishing some form of trust fund for the payment of denied back-pay and basic medical support for these seafarers, have not been successful.

Recommendation 3: The Project Manager should continue to seek other (non-Trust Fund) funding in support of the project to cover contingencies and medium term post-release support, for the remaining life of the HSP.

Programme Management

Programme Management and Leadership

At inception, the programme was managed jointly by UNPOS (Chief Counter Piracy) and UNODC Vienna. Following the demise of UNPOS, and the focus of UNSOM on Mogadishu and the SFG, programme leadership has been supported on a pro-bono basis by the former UNPOS Officer. This has been partially resolved by UNODC contracting the former officer as a HSP consultant.

Recommendation 4: The leadership, technical expertise, and knowledge necessary for this sensitive programme should be formalised into a full time consultant's post for the remaining life of this HSP. This can be combined with other roles in the same area.

Management of the programme at the strategic level by UNODC Vienna has worked well and addresses many of the wide ranging technical and legal issues associated with this very sensitive work. Whilst local liaison with member states takes place in the region via the embassies of hostages, there remains a requirement for HQ level engagement directly with governments and flag states.

Staffing

So far, staffing levels have been adequate. Provided the Program Manager post is developed into a full time consultant contract, this will be sufficient.

The programme would benefit from having a Somali Local Support Officer who can assist with negotiations, liaise daily with local administrations, and assist with information gathering on the hostages held.

Recommendation 5: The HSP should recruit a LSO for the remaining life of the programme.

Lessons Learned by Programme Area

Stage 1: Monitoring/Information Gathering

Gathering information on vessels being held, and hostages held aboard or on shore, is vital to the success of the program. Experience over the last five years is that although much effort is made by naval forces and other maritime organisations to support vessels in transit through the high risk area and then subsequently if under attack by pirates, it appears to be beyond the remit of many agencies to continue to gather information on the hostages once held by pirates. HSP attempts to continue to monitor hostages still held after their ship is released or who are held ashore. The responsibility to look after crews and citizens clearly lays with the ship-owners, flag states and member states. Often, however, all of these interested parties lack the capacity inside Somalia to track the hostages or to analyse the information that often emerges from Somalia. The HSP has tried to fill this gap, but it clearly requires partnership with all interested parties in what is a sensitive area. It should be stressed that where a ship owner (or its insurance representatives), or member state, has the ability to conduct hostage release negotiations and recover hostages, the HSP does not engage unless requested to do so.

Direct Somali Contact

Contact with Somalis takes several forms:

- a. **Contact with Government Officials.** The HSP has direct contact with Governments and Regional Administrations in Somalia, primarily through the Kampala Process (now the RMCM) nominated national Focal Points. The HSP leadership has regular contact with the Presidents of Puntland and Galmudug, together with senior ministers in all administrations. This has

proved useful in adding a political dimension to understanding the hostage situation, and putting pressure on pirates through clan elders. These contacts have also facilitated the repatriation of released hostages, often beginning with their recovery to Nairobi.

- b. **Contact with pirate groups.** Up until very recently the HSP has deliberately had no direct contact with pirate groups and their facilitators and translators. The programme has concentrated on the repatriation and recovery of hostages released as a result of member state or ship owner negotiations, or hostages who have been abandoned inside Somalia. Following the sinking of the MV Albedo – where there is now no owner available, no shipping company, and no insurance, the HSP has by virtue of necessity become a point of contact for the pirates holding the 11 crew survivors and with the families of the crew. Following the Albedo contact, the HSP initiated direct contact with other groups of hostages, many of whom have not been heard from for over 2 years. This has produced contact with 4 Thai citizens from the Prantaly-12.

Recommendation 6: Because of the probability of contact with negotiators, K&R negotiation familiarity training should be provided for HSP staff (both now, for the remaining life of the Somali piracy HSP, and for any future HSP).

Member state contact

The programme has established direct contact with all member states with hostages held in Somalia, and regularly shares updates with them on any information received. Whilst the HSP has no right to expect briefings on member state own activities to release their citizens, the HSP stands ready to assist - particularly during the recovery stage. The programme hopes that through good contact and information sharing with member

states, it can build an increasingly accurate picture of efforts to release hostages. Aware of member states efforts is important so as to concentrate HSP efforts upon those hostages not being assisted.

Recommendation 7: Clear communications guidelines and methods should be contained with HSP SOPs, dealing with both formal and informal diplomatic contacts.

International Organisations/NGOs

The HSP attends UN DSS weekly security briefs for situational awareness and to alert DSS to impending operations.

The programme maintains contact with interested IOs and NGOs, and regularly briefs Working Group 3 of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast Of Somalia (CGPCS).

The programme partners with the NGO Maritime Piracy Human Response to Piracy (MPHRP) on releases and messaging both to pirates and families.

Close liaison with INTERPOL, and now also with REFLECS3, has been in place for some time. Whilst the law enforcement objectives of INTERPOL and REFLECS3 are somewhat different to the humanitarian assistance objectives of the HSP, there needs to be further development of the debrief process of crews so as to gather information not just for prosecution, but also about other hostages whom the crews may have had contact with.

Recommendation 8: The current HSP should develop, with other interested parties, a formal debriefing process for crews and hostages that goes beyond gathering information for prosecutions, and includes data about how pirates behave, other hostages, locations and key personnel in the pirate group.

International Naval Forces shared information

Partnership with EUNAVFOR and other military operations in the Indian Ocean has been superb and information is routinely exchanged confidentially. The HSP is often able to provide context to land based activity by pirates for the naval forces. This liaison also helps de-conflict recovery operations and - as was the case with the sinking of the MV Albedo, where "safety of life at sea" was a critical issue - joint planning, liaison and information gathering. HSP was also able to place some pressure on the pirates in order to try and avoid a disaster at sea and loss of life.

REFLECS3/SEYPIC

As with Naval forces, sharing of information with both REFLECS3 and SEYPIC have proved useful on both sides.

Open Source Intelligence

The HSP has no analytical staff and needs to make better use of open source material - particularly from Somali media. Electronic collection and forwarding, and the use of search engines and subscription sites, should all be addressed.

Commercial Intelligence

Most ships have insurance and have access to kidnap and ransom expertise. Whilst industry is unlikely to share sensitive information with the HSP, efforts should be made to engage and make contact with lawyers, risk managers, and K&R companies in order to share experience and lessons learned. A good relationship with industry will ensure unity of effort and de-confliction.

Use of the media

Use of the media to raise awareness of the plight of hostages, and to directly message pirate groups (who monitor the media closely), has been a useful tool. However, the media can also create dangerous expectations, and clear parameters need to be set so as to ensure that pirate groups do not gain hope from the media that fund raising efforts are under way, or that a particular group of hostages has a champion raising funds. All of this has in the past proven to delay (even stop negotiations, in some cases) and extend negotiations by raising expectation that more money is available.

Recommendation 9: A HSP must have clear guidelines for media use, and provide advice to families about what to say to the media - including the dangers of social media.

Stage 2: Support to Hostages and their families during captivity

Medical support to hostages

The ability to provide medical and other humanitarian support to hostages in captivity has always been controversial and difficult to deliver. Previously, hostage support processes have tried to deliver medical and other aid directly to hostages, but have been prevented by the pirates themselves (as assisting the hostages is not conducive to leveraging a ransom or negotiations). Pirate groups find it far more effective to pretend that the hostages are sick to try and persuade the ship owner or family to agree a deal. In many cases pirates have tortured and even killed hostages and therefore the provision of medical aid is not welcome.

However, there have been some instances where Somali medical staff (and journalists) have visited hostages and they have had some medical support provided. Recently, the HSP has managed to facilitate the visit of a doctor to carry out an assessment of the Albedo hostages, and to deliver some medical supplies. This was funded by the HSP but delivered by Somali medical staff working in Adado. The WHO help identify local medical professionals who could provide the services (drawn from a registry of medical professionals the agency employs on an ad-hoc basis).

Another method of support has been through HSP access and contacts with senior politicians and Kampala Process (now RMCM) Focal Points in Galmudug. These Somali contacts have managed to pass a package of mosquito nets to the Albedo crew via their own contacts, in relatively quick time.

These contacts need to be developed, but not over-used. However, the psychological effect on the crews of both of these deliveries has been well worth the effort involved.

Recommendation 10: Linked to Recommendation 2, flexible funding and procurement methods are required. Using the RMCM Focal Points should continue for the life of the existing HSP.

Direct/indirect negotiations with hostage takers

This is a wholly new area and highly sensitive for the UN, but continues to fall within the “good office” mandate. Negotiations are limited to humanitarian help and humanitarian release and do not discuss ransoms. This contact has been highly successful and has led to direct contact with the crews, the ability to deliver (for the first time) medical aid to hostages, and most recently the delivery of mosquito nets.

Following the Albedo contact, the HSP has initiated direct contact with other groups of hostages, many of whom had not been heard from for over 2 years. As noted previously, this has produced contact with 4 Thai citizens from the Prantaly-12

Alternative release options are now being developed by the HSP and member states, with a view to facilitating the release of the remaining hostages.

Recommendation 11: The HSP should continue to investigate alternative release options with member states and other interested parties.

Information and support to families

Following the MV Albedo incident, the HSP has maintained contact with families and has begun to provide a regular update to families in the absence of any other information from ship owners and governments. This has become important because pirate negotiators tend to try and access families in order to steer and put pressure on negotiations, which can be quite destabilising and can exacerbate delays.

There are NGOs and other organisations whose aim is to support families during and post capture. HSP SOPs need to make clear what the role of HSP is in this regard, and why. HSP support - particularly where relationships have been created with families and hostages - has clearly been proved necessary, and the continuity beneficial psychologically.

Recommendation 12: HSP SOPs should clearly define responsibilities and parameters for communicating with families, and should include de-confliction arrangements with other interested parties.

Advice to families and those negotiating releases

In some cases HSP support and advice has been given to those involved in their own endeavours to release hostages. This has ranged from member states (Seychellois fisherman) who require support and information on recovery options, to individual family members negotiating or trying to support a hostage (Michael Scott Moore).

Stage 3: Hostage Release and Recovery

The recovery phase requires detailed planning, flexibility, and swift delivery. The HSP needs to call upon support from parent organisations within the UN system to deliver the necessary response in a timely manner. The key elements in the recovery are:

Diplomatic clearance

Several diplomatic actions are required during the recovery phase, and these actions require direct and indirect liaison with governments and local authorities. First, it is vital to obtain clearance on the ground from Somali authorities for the recovery to

"Repatriating them was never going to be an easy task. I had to deal with multiple embassies, as well as the Puntland and Kenyan authorities, and different international agencies in order to prepare all the required documentation and meet the logistical challenges of the repatriation"

take place. This usually includes political clearance from the highest levels and diplomatic clearance for the aircraft to enter Somalia (via the Somali Federal Government and by local regional authorities). Second, clearance from the transit country (Kenya or Djibouti) through which the hostages will pass prior to returning home is also required. Third, diplomatic effort with the member states' consular offices in the nearest country, so as to

secure temporary/emergency travel papers, is necessary. Some of this can be pre-arranged, and this further evidences the benefits of close liaison with embassies so that recovery and repatriation can be a smooth process.

Aircraft Charter

The swift provision of an aircraft to go into Somalia and recover hostages is an essential pre-requisite. Several options have been considered in the past, but the most flexible has been hiring a UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) aircraft. UNHAS management is familiar with the requirements of this type of operation, and they provide a similar on-call service to UN DSS for the evacuation of UN staff.



Apart from UNHAS, several commercial options approved by the UN are available. However, the procurement cycle response time make this an unviable option only to be considered well in advance where there is a predictable release.

Other charters (sea recovery)

Air evacuation is not the only option. Recently, when a vessel was about to sink and sea conditions made a shore based pickup impossible, we invited capable companies to quote for a vessel from Mombasa to central Somalia to recover crew. This option is costly in time, and expensive in terms of manpower and charter fees, but does offer a recovery option by

sea which is deemed to be safer than a land recovery by air - especially where the local area is not secure and the hostages cannot be moved to a safe airfield.

Security

Security of both UN staff and hostages is paramount during the recovery phase. Early liaison with UN DSS staff is essential, and DSS Somalia staff have proved invaluable in assisting recovery on many occasions. However, there is one serious problem faced by HSP consultant staff in that current interpretations of UN rules and regulations prohibit UNODC from either buying kidnap and ransom and health evacuation insurance for contractors for the periods they are required to enter Somalia for repatriation and associated HSP work, or from topping up their contract with the required amount so that they may purchase this insurance independently.

Recommendation 13: Trust Fund Board Members should seek clarification from the UN as to the arrangements put in place for funding necessary K+R+evacuation insurance for HSP contracted staff.

Immediate assistance after release

Once hostages are released immediate actions need to be taken to secure their wellbeing. This requires transport, secure accommodation, emergency medical treatment and access to communication with governments and family. There are instances where the cost of securing the hostages cannot be covered by our partners on the ground, and the HSP will have to provide for those needs.

Stage 4: Hostage Repatriation

Rest and Recovery

There is considerable evidence from many hostage release studies that a period of rest and recovery before being flown home is beneficial and helps the hostages face the world and their families.⁵ This must be pre-agreed with embassies, and families briefed to expect a pause before their family member flies home.

Recommendation 14: Pre-planned rest periods prior to repatriation can be beneficial for the hostages. This should be agreed with member states prior to the recovery action, and allowances made in the timing of repatriation flights.

Medical assessment on release

Medical arrangements are usually made with member state embassies, but also can and have been provided by the HSP. As a minimum, a full medical examination is required and immediate symptoms cared for.

Psychological examination can usually wait until repatriation to the home country, but a briefing on what to expect physically and mentally should be given to hostages by a trained member of the HSP team or other expert.

"They molested us so much. They tied up the captain, dragged him on the floor, the bosun and chief officer were beaten, and a lot of others were beaten.....The chief officer was being beaten so badly, he was being stabbed with a knife, and then he went missing. We never found him."...MV Iceberg Hostage

⁵ Many former hostages stated that they were ready to fly home directly after their arrival at Wiesbaden. However, following four days of rest and recovery, nearly everyone recognized that such initial feelings were overly optimistic. 'Report on Release of US Hostages from Iran' *Psychosomatic Medicine* 52:1-16 (1990)

Recommendation 15: The provision of initial medical examination should be planned for and funded by a HSP. It is unlikely to be planned for or funded by anyone else.

Recommendation 16: HSP staff should be trained in briefing hostages on what to expect, psychologically, when they return home.

Documentation with parent member state

The provision of replacement passports or emergency travel papers will normally (unless special arrangements have been made with the receiving state) be required for the initial release, but will definitely be needed for the repatriation home. This is the responsibility of the member state to deliver. In some cases a consular officer has been flown into Somalia and has conducted the issue of documents in situ, but this puts embassy staff at unnecessary risk and - with multiple nationalities - may exceed the capacity of the recovery aircraft.

Recommendation 17: Embassies must be pre-briefed and asked to confirm that they are able to issue, and have available, emergency papers. In some cases these may have to be issued at the airport, on arrival from the extraction point, if a hostage is to be flown home immediately.

Accommodation on release

The provision of accommodation in the transit state is the responsibility of the member state embassy in that country. In one example (Burmese hostages Prantaly-12) the hostages were held in a hotel in Puntland, funded by the HSP whilst diplomatic arrangements were made for the repatriation.

Flights home

Repatriation flights are the responsibility of the ship owner or member state. The HSP main effort is the recovery from Somalia.

Stage 5: Post Release Follow-up

"The support given to released hostages varies enormously from country to country. Those from wealthy nations will almost certainly receive counseling upon their return home but many others will be expected to pick up their lives where they left off, without any kind of help."

Follow up visits

In order to ensure that hostage data and experience accounts and testimonies are not lost, the HSP has initiated a project to collect the accounts of hostages in order to support the development of best practices for assisting those seafarers who have been held hostage or are vulnerable to capture. It has also become apparent that on return to their home countries, many hostages remain isolated and are unable to engage with former ship owners for the back-pay owed to them for their time in captivity, or to obtain support and treatment for the ongoing consequences of their traumatic time in captivity.

Access to legal aid and labour rights

While there are several organizations and NGOs whose specific purpose is to help and protect seafarers, the HSP has experienced a disconnection between the policy level and the realities on the ground. Many times the returning hostages are unable to access the different mechanisms put in place for their protection. The requirements to access the systems can be both financially and mentally overwhelming for released hostages. Most bureaucratic processes take time to come to any resolution, during which

the released hostages suffer a debilitating lack of assistance in resolving aggravating problems.

Recommendation 18: The current HSP, and future HSPs, should be tasked with conducting follow-up interviews with all released hostages, and should provide a short-term (life of the programme) advisory service and lobbying support so that hostages do not continue to suffer post-release. The existing HSP should be funded to find ways to mitigate the immediate problems faced by released hostages, through coordinating and involving the relevant actors and donors.

Return to employment and re-activation of careers

Many of the former hostages do not desire, or are unable, to go back to sea. This is not only due to the trauma of their experience, but also to the loss of certificates and official documents. These official documents - national IDs, passports, birth certificates, etc, as well as seafarer certifications - are needed to start any kind of legal or commercial process. Most of the seafarers cannot afford to pay the fees required for the reissuing of all these documents (because they have not been provided with back-pay), but they also find it hard dealing with bureaucracy and having to explain their stories over and over again. This creates a barrier to re-accessing the labor market, legal aid, social security plans, etc.

Recommendation 19: Contact points need to be established within industry and Governmental institutions at the national level, so that released hostage seafarers are supported in attempting to re-establish the basic credentials they need in order to access support and employment opportunities post-repatriation.

Develop a debrief process specifically related to information on other hostages and humanitarian aspects

Debriefs need to include questions that may assist in the release of other hostages, including questions related to the methods of the pirate gang and their negotiators. Recording experiences from release to post-release care, for evaluation and improvement purposes, is also as important (from a policy development perspective), as is addressing questions the hostages have about their past and current situation. HSP experience is that after several months, released hostages have many questions about the circumstances surrounding their kidnaping that were never addressed, or which they feel they were never given the opportunity to ask. This is of extreme relevance for the collection of reliable information, as some released hostages feel reluctant to cooperate with organisations that - in their eyes - represent the "international community" that failed them during their time in captivity, but also after they returned home.

Debrief related to evidence collection

Debriefing of former hostages by INTERPOL has proven successful in a number of on-going investigations. INTERPOL has developed a project to debrief released hostages in support of investigations that will lead to the prosecution of their captors and encourage States to open investigations against the perpetrators.

Recommendation 20: The system of debriefing hostages needs to be reviewed and made comprehensive but not intrusive to the hostage. It needs to cover the requirements of law enforcement, humanitarian information gathering, and the human aspects that will assist future hostages through the different stages of the hostage experience.

Hostage Support Programme (Project 045)

(Part of the Maritime Crime Programme)

Lessons Learned

After Action Review

Improvement Plan

UNODC HSP

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