

Allmode Intelligence Section

Advisory: 035 (Mediterranean Sea)

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ISIS are, by now, familiar to us, through their many public beheadings and kidnappings of foreign hostages to be used in publicity propaganda. They are without doubt the major concern for all foreign workers present in many of the Arab states and the local population who are struggling to survive daily. They are no longer restricted to their traditional power bases in the cities and towns in Iraq and Syria, but are extending their influence in neighbouring countries such as Egypt and Libya, taking full advantage of the economic and political struggles of both countries.

They have sympathizers and followers throughout Europe, who are either engaged in current campaigns or returning from fighting indoctrinated with a vision of their ideology for the future. (Figures from Europol suggest that 5,000 EU citizens are engaged in fighting in Syria or Iraq or have travelled to these countries and returned home.)

Recent news headlines and comments from military sources, such as the Italian Minister of Defence, have suggested that ISIS have the motive and means to adopt a maritime attack strategy in the Mediterranean Sea, which would have huge implications for the shipping community in general. Parallels can be drawn with the recent experience of piracy off Somalia, which has plagued the shipping community for many years and continues to do so.

But what are the real chances of ISIS carrying out such threats and how can the shipping community prepare for such a situation actually happening?

Geo-political Situation

ISIS have developed training camps in Libya and are active in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, alongside other jihadist groups who are sympathetic towards or affiliated to them. These groups may not be directly involved in ISIS operations, but rather allow them to operate on their territory. The most prevalent of these groups are the Salafist jihadist group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, who have openly pledged allegiance to Adu Bakr al Baghdadi.

In Libya, the eastern town of Derna has long been governed by a federation of jihadi groups providing a permissive environment in which ISIS can operate. It is likely that they have become more powerful than the established jihadi group Ansar al Sharia. However, they are currently working with other groups, rather than superseding them.

Intelligence sources indicate that ISIS have around 800 fighters in Derna and dozens of training camps on the outskirts of the town, along with larger facilities in the Green Mountains nearby. These facilities are said to be training new recruits from Africa and returning jihadist from Syria and Iraq.

Derna however, is situated between Tobruk (where the Libyan House of Representatives have established their base as the UN recognised government) and Benghazi (where the army of General Khalifa Haftar is attempting to establish control from which to govern the rest of Libya ("Operation Dignity")).

Further west, the city of Tripoli is under the control of the other de-facto government, Libya Dawn, who are a disjointed coalition of former al-Qaeda jihadists, Berber ethnic militias, members of the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and a network of conservative merchants from nearby Misrata. In effect, the country now has a series of warring states, west verses east, with three main groups vying for power; Libya Dawn, Operation Dignity and Jihadist groups. Many see this as two main groups, with the jihadist as the 'spoilers'¹

¹ Jason Pack, Cambridge University

Means And Motive

So, could ISIS really launch a maritime campaign in the Mediterranean to disrupt the shipping community and lure Europe into acting? In theory, yes they could.

Libya has a coastline of around 1,000 miles and ISIS are known to have multiple resources and funds at their disposal. They are well armed and motivated and thrive by engaging in activities that cause worldwide condemnation and possible over-reaction. This gives them power and the image that they are greater in number than they are in reality. By making countries react, they bolster their numbers by showing western aggression as the enemy. Consider the beheading of the 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians. Immediately, Egypt reacted with airstrikes and ISIS with retaliatory car bombings. Now, thousands of Egyptians are fleeing Libya, back to Egypt for fear they may be targeted. This is effectively clearing a path for ISIS to exploit and forcing governments to pick sides.

ISIS claimed this week on social media that they intend to send 500,000² towards Europe in hundreds of boats to cause havoc. Would they have the numbers to do this? Probably not, it is thought that there are anywhere between 1,000 to 3,000 fighters on the ground in Libya, however if they were to use the hundreds of migrants that leave the Libyan coast on almost a daily basis, as their pawns, they could cause enough fear to spark a reaction, or in their hopes, an over-reaction.

Libya is close to the European shores (400 miles from Sicily). As stated by the Italian pro-ISIS blogger Adu Irhim al-Libi, ISIS could reach these shores using small boats. He goes on to suggest that such action could close shipping lanes and that ISIS could target “crusader” ships and tankers. He has written an article entitled, ‘Libya: The Strategic Gateway for the Islamic State.’ However, the reality is that ISIS are not really intent on reaching Europe, as they have their disciples already there, in every major city. They want to be noticed and feared and the best way for them to do this, is to continue parading their captives in orange overalls, for the world to see.³



Figure 1: ISIS Prepares to murder 21 captive Egyptian Christians in Libya (Mediterranean Sea in background)

² *Le Figaro*, “L’État islamique menace d’envoyer 500.000 migrants en Europe depuis la Libye”, (Feb 2015)

³ Abu Arhim al-Libim (ISIS Supporter)., *Libya: The Strategic Gateway for the Islamic State*, translated and published by Winter. C, *The Quilliam Foundation*, (Feb 2015)

How might this affect shipping?

The Mediterranean accounts for about 15 percent of global shipping activity (approximately 220,000 ships annually) and approximately 370 million tons of oil are transported per-year by around 600 tankers a day. More than 200 ferries transport about 150,000 passengers daily, not to mention the thousands of fishing boats that rely on the sea. Many wealthy people from all over Europe use the Mediterranean as their playground, moving from country to country in their superyachts.

Table 1: Potential Courses of Action

Most Likely Course of Action	Most Dangerous Course of action
<p>They may target the wealthy, as possible high value hostages to be paraded in front of the cameras on social media as a means of extorting funds to continue their campaign⁴.</p> <p>More likely, is the taking of hostages for both media attention and economic gains. This would allow ISIS to continue to advance in countries such as Libya. Hostages can be sold and traded amongst jihadi groups, enabling cooperation to continue. Hostages can also be used as human shields to prevent local militia or armies (such as Khalifi Haftar's) from attacking.</p>	<p>ISIS could use migrant boats, which they already use as cash-cows, as human missiles for these tankers and cruise ships.</p> <p>Perhaps an even more high profile option would be either using suicide bombers or planted explosive devices aboard a rescuing vessel. Worse still could be the pirating of a vessel by disguised ISIS operatives once aboard who then use the vessel as weapons, crashing it into a port, into other vessels, detonating it in a strategic location causing significant environmental, commercial disruption not to mention the potential loss of life. Envisage the scenario of a laden VLCC being detonated and sunk in the entrance to Valetta harbour. The potential consequences are unthinkable.</p>

In either eventuality, they pose a significant threat. Both would seem attractive to them, and the fall-out would be a significant impact on EU state business. It would draw significant media attention and strengthen their psychological impact.

However, just because these scenarios are possible, does not mean that they are probable. The taking of many innocent lives in one "spectacular" could be detrimental to retaining the sympathies of their followers, or could bring consequences on a large scale that would effectively prevent them from achieving their goal.



Figure 2: An Excerpt from an unofficial ISIS strategy statement and propoganda document, outlining designs on southern europe and the mediterranean

⁴ Parry, Chris (Rear Admiral) in, *The Sunday Times*, "Yachties at risk as Isis takes to the sea" (Feb 2015)

Large Scale Migration and ISIS, The link:

The link between ISIS and Large Scale Migration in the Mediterranean⁵ has been explicitly stated⁶. Whether that be by using the ingress of migrants to camouflage their movements into Europe^{7,8,9} hijacking migrant boats¹⁰ or in order to specifically target commercial shipping and yachts¹¹

Map 1: "Routes and Migrant Heat-map"¹²



Map 2: "ISIS Advances in N Africa"



⁵ Allmode, *Best Management Practices for Large Scale Rescue Operations*, (March 2015)

⁶ Abu Arhim al-Libim (ISIS Supporter), *Libya: The Strategic Gateway for the Islamic State*, translated and published by Winter. C, *The Quilliam Foundation*, (Feb 2015)

⁷ Stavridis, Jim (Admiral) in, *The Sunday Times*, "Yachties at risk as Isis takes to the sea" (Feb 2015)

⁸ *The Telegraph*, "How Isil spread to Libya - and now has Europe in its sights", (Feb 2015)

⁹ *The Times*, "Isis uses people trafficking routes to get into Europe" (March 2015)

¹⁰ *The Independent*, "Isis plans to use immigrant boats from Libya to cause terror in Europe and close shipping routes", (Feb 2015)

¹¹ *The Telegraph*, "Islamic State 'planning to use Libya as gateway to Europe'", (Feb 2015)

¹² International Organisation for Migration, "Migrant Deaths on World Borders" (2015)

What precautions could be taken?

Increased information sharing amongst the firstly the European states and then the broader international community must be the key. Particular attention needs to be given to the numerous boats leaving the Libyan coast on a weekly basis. This could be done by developing a more integrated maritime surveillance system whereby timely data is shared amongst states most at risk and on the front line. Admittedly, Frontex have Eurosur, which is an information exchange system coordinated by National Coordination Centres. However, this is still being developed does not yet have great breadth or depth. Monitoring of the Libyan coast is crucial and any unusual activity should be alerted and information shared within the shipping community.

Training for security related issues should be paramount in the shipping industry for management, senior officers and crews. Security measures should be in place to react to any information received or unfolding situation.

Due to the nature of the terrorist and organised crime (people traffickers) related threat it is vital that shipowners and crews remain vigilant to the threat of political and crime related violence. Terrorists and people traffickers will be armed, violent and unscrupulous, and will not hesitate to use violence to achieve their aims (or as an end in itself)

Specialist training advice and support should be sought, including:

- Training
 - STCW PDS
 - STCW HELM
 - STCW Crowd Management
 - STCW Crisis Management And Human Behaviour
 - Conflict Management
 - Allmode Large Scale Rescue at Sea (LSRS) (Management/Officers/Crew)
 - Allmode Crew-Safe
- Expert advice and crisis management, on-board and ashore, to assist in the planning for, management of and conduct of emergency response in order to mitigate the potential human and financial impact on the vessel/company

Consideration may be given to embarking additional advisors for a transit via the southern Mediterranean. This embedded advisor should be a security specialist with training in dealing with maritime security threats and a high level of medical and first aid training including trauma.

He will be available to provide training and expert advice to the crew, and to assist in the event of any threatening act, conducting international liaison and providing advice to the master, enabling him to make the most informed and logical decision in a high-pressure and rapidly changing environment.

Table 2: Formal Security Training By Industry: Current Status and Potential for Improvement

Body	Course	Dur.	Passenger/Ro-Ro/Cruise	Commercial Yacht	Commercial Maritime	Private Yacht
 Allmode INTERNATIONAL SECURITY SERVICES	Large Scale Rescue at Sea (Management)	2 Day	CSO, Crisis management Team			
 Allmode INTERNATIONAL SECURITY SERVICES	Large Scale Rescue at Sea (Officers)	2 Day	Master, Deck Officers	Master, Deck Officers	Master, Deck Officers	Master, Deck Officers
 Allmode INTERNATIONAL SECURITY SERVICES	Large Scale Rescue at Sea (Crew)	1 Day	All Crew	All Crew	All Crew	All Crew
 IMO 	CSO	3 Day	CSO	CSO	CSO	CSO
 IMO 	SSO	3 Day	Master, SSO	Master, SSO	Master, SSO	Master, SSO
 IMO STCW	CM&HB	1 Day	All Crew	All Crew IF >12 Passengers	All Crew	All Crew
 IMO STCW	HELM(M)	5 Day	C/O, 2 nd E/O			
 IMO STCW	HELM (O)	5 Day	OOW	OOW	OOW	OOW
 IMO STCW	PDSD	1 Day	Designated Security Duties	Designated Security Duties	Designated Security Duties	Designated Security Duties
 IMO STCW	Crowd Management	1 Day	All Crew	All Crew IF >12 Passengers	All Crew	All Crew
 Allmode INTERNATIONAL SECURITY SERVICES	Crew Safe	1 day	All Crew	All Crew	All Crew	All Crew
Various Training Providers	Conflict Management	1-5 Day	All Crew	All Crew	All Crew	All Crew
 IMO STCW	First Aid (Master's)	4 Day	Master	Master	Master	Master
 IMO STCW	Basic First Aid	1 Day	All Crew	All Crew	All Crew	All Crew

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