

Current and Future Counter Piracy operations in The Gulf of Aden of The Japan Self Defense Force

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Abstract

A collapse of politics, security and economy in Somalia forms the background of piracy activities in the Gulf of Aden (GOA). Even to this day, while the total cases of piracy in the GOA have decreased, the security situation in Somalia still remains inadequate. Thus, the possibility of piracy activities in GOA still remains.

To cope with piracy in the GOA, Combined Task Force 151(CTF151) and European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Somalia is operating under an international framework. On the other hand, there are some countries like China, Russia and India which conduct counter piracy activities individually. The process of CTF151 and EUNAVFOR Somalia activities emerged as a means of protecting merchant vessels from piracy. Then, as the frequency of piracy activity stabilized, their activities shifted to that of deterrence. Currently, those international frameworks are focusing on building of capacity of security sectors such as maritime law enforcement in Somalia and other countries in the vicinity. On the other hand, the individual countries deployed under their independent framework conduct their operations with regard to their own national strategy. In all cases, the actors of counter piracy activities in the GOA are contributing to a comprehensive approach in improving the security environment within Somalia and the GOA.

Japan's contributions also began as a protection role, which then subsequently shifted to deterrence. Currently, the Japanese government continues to provide support to Somalia and surrounding countries in the vicinity to assist in improving their security situation. Furthermore, the Japanese Self Defense Force (JSDF) continues to maintain operations to protect, deter and cooperate with other navies and international organizations.

Currently, the main problem with the maritime response is the inadequate capacity of Somalia to form a unified national government, and thereby the inability of the JSDF, and Japan at large, to provide direct support through activities such as capacity building.

Under these circumstances, it is considered that the best course of action of the JSDF would then be to contribute to building the capacity of Somalia to form a legitimate national body.

However, considering the legal and jurisdictional limitations and the ramifications of the ongoing security situation in-situ, the JSDF can anticipate

great difficulties in implementing such efforts. For these reasons, policy measures that fall within the current practicable legal framework must be considered.

It follows then, that as a measure by the JSDF in its maritime response in the Somali Coast and the GOA, the future contributions by the JSDF towards counter-piracy operations should maintain current deployment of vessels and aircrafts taking into consideration the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) and the trends of international communities, and the reconstructive state of Somalia to maintain public order. In addition, inviting Somali Coast Guard officers to Japanese vessels, patrol aircrafts or JSDF Djibouti base for observing and understudying will provide an effective option for capacity building. Bilateral exercises with Somali Coast Guard is also considered to be a feasible option when they have such capabilities in the future.

If the security situations in Somalia improve in the future, within Ministry of Defense (MOD)'s framework for capacity building and assistance, there is scope to possibly deploy JSDF units into Somalia in order to undertake Peace Keeping Operations or capacity building operations in assisting the Somali Army. Such activities would beneficially accelerate the improvement of Somalia in terms of security, and as a nation, at large.