



## **Building Somali Maritime Capacity for Self-Defence and Reliance**

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Piracy cannot be brought to an end by naval blockade alone – the fight needs to be taken to the ground, and this should be done by Somali forces. Within this backdrop, the building of a functional Somali National Coast Guard (SNCG) is important in order to ensure safety and security of marine transport and coastal activities. To realize an effective SNCG, there is a strong need for well-co-ordinated efforts in the field of capacity-building by involved stakeholders, in close cooperation with Somalia, the region, and the wider international community.

The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) has recognized the importance of securing Somalia's territorial integrity and so much effort has been placed on building Somalia's national security forces, both military and police. However, there is also a serious need to turn attention to the area of maritime security and to the threats at sea. Indeed, Somalia's maritime borders are as important as its land boundaries. With the TFG, there has been a steady commitment to support the speedy eradication of piracy in Somali waters. There has in fact also been a keen commitment to address growing human trafficking, drug smuggling, and illegal trading, all activities that harm Somalia's reputation and hinder the growth of its economy. There is also a dire need to prevent the plundering of Somali fishing stocks by illegal fishing and to stop the dumping of toxic waste in Somali waters.

Achieving these goals rests on the ability of Somalia to secure and control its territorial waters, protect its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and manage its extended continental shelf in appropriate ways which emphasize the need to rebuild a Somali naval capability and in particular the (SNCG). Placed under the Ministry of Defence, the SNCG will be an integral part of the national security apparatus and will have land, sea, and air components. Once equipped with the necessary capabilities, SNCG will be able to work in close cooperation with the international naval operations already active. The establishment of a maritime operations centre in Mogadishu



will enable SNCG to coordinate intelligence, planning, and operations of its own forces as well as provide support to those of the international community. The primary goals of the SNCG will be to: Effectively enforce national jurisdiction over territorial waters; Provide law enforcement to ensure maritime resources are exploited only under license and to those with legal permissibility; Monitor the ecological environment in support of wider activities to protect the marine environment, and; Secure navigation of territorial waters.

Yet, there are a range of inherent challenges that impede the rebuilding of the SNCG, from financial constraints, to a lack of political consensus between power players inside Somalia, and growing suspicions at the grass-roots level on what are seen as hidden agendas of foreign navies conducting counter-piracy operations. There is a recognized need for assistance from the international community to the Somali state in order to build the necessary institutional capacity that will enable Somalia to address the piracy problem through an effective, long-term approach. Amongst experts on the problem of piracy off the coast of Somalia there is shared recognition on the key future role the SNCG must play in long-term counter-piracy efforts.

A lack of resources, institutional capacity, and expertise in modern coast guard operations inside Somalia – a set of challenges that are exacerbated by the long coastline of Somalia – show that the need for a focused and unified commitment from the international community to help Somalia rebuild the SNCG is obvious. However, international support for rebuilding SNCG has lacked the commitment and urgency required. Indeed, the political fragmentation within Somalia has created hurdles in achieving the national consensus and policy necessary to address national challenges, of which piracy is an important one.

The political fragmentation of Somalia makes any attempts to oppose the piracy phenomenon at a national level unsuccessful. In fact, many Somalis are suspicious of the international response to piracy of their coast, seeing hidden agendas and a potential threat to their sovereignty. For example, coastal communities in Somalia would like to see the eradication of piracy *alongside* illegal fishing and the dumping of toxic waste. However, as part of the international response, many countries have sent navies to protect illegal fishing vessels – so there is a belief these



countries do not want to see an effective SNCG emerge. Also, there are many foreign organizations, companies, and individuals that are benefiting from Somali piracy, many of whom also would not like to see the emergence of an effective SNCG. These misunderstandings can be offset by closer cooperation that supports Somalia in building the institutional capacity with which it can address the root causes and practical dimensions of the piracy problem.

### **Organizing the SNCG**

Somali Army Naval Forces (SANF) were established in 1965, but disappeared in the 1990s during the civil war - along with the other regular national forces of Somalia. Prior to their dissolution, however, the SANF were regarded as one of the strongest in the region, and had proved themselves capable of safeguarding a long coastline, protecting territorial waters, and ensuring international navigation along Somali waters. The former SANF were equipped with: Two Soviet-built Osa-II missile-armed fast attack craft; Four Soviet-built MoI PFT torpedo-armed fast attack craft; Several patrol crafts; One Soviet-built Polnocny-class landing ship capable of carrying five tanks and 120 soldiers; Four smaller mechanized landing craft; Two coastal battery artillery, and; Numerous patrol crafts. Different sites along the coast also housed radar and radio communication facilities, and functioned as observation posts.

Coastguard forces have multiple security functions, and the SNCG would operate to keep order along the Somali coast and within its territorial waters by launching patrols to combat piracy, illegal fishing, drugs and human trafficking, as well as other illegal activities at sea. The SNCG would also be involved in monitoring and protecting the marine environment, and leading search and rescue (SAR) activities in times of emergency.

A future SNCG is likely to require 3,000 personnel. In terms of operating platforms, the nature of the current and emerging operating environment and the range of missions the SNCG would need to execute, the following are judged to be necessary: Two offshore patrol vessels (85 meters), with integrated radar; Six coastal patrol vessels (38 meters), with integrated radar; Twelve fast patrol boats (16 meters), with integrated radar; Thirty rigid inflatable boats; Two search and rescue helicopters; Two search and rescue fixed-wing aircraft, and; Fifty 50 4X4



trucks. Additional systems would be designed to obtain an effective coastal surveillance capability to around 50km into sea. A modern command and control infrastructure would need to be built allowing headquarters to communicate with units and outposts, as well as allowing units and outposts to communicate with each other; all of this equipment will also require staff training for their accurate operation.

Additionally to the development of the SNCG, Somalia needs assistance with its intelligence capabilities – which will lend important support to counter-piracy operations that are heavily intelligence-driven. Somalia needs training assistance in the area of human intelligence techniques, from source debriefing through to cultivation and recruitment operations, and basic agent handling techniques. The intelligence support for SNCG operations could be an internal branch, or an external one to the organization.

## **Conclusion**

Due to the nature and magnitude of the piracy problem, the Somali government requires assistance in its own efforts to contain and reverse this phenomenon. Through international assistance and greater collaboration, Somalia would be able to reconstitute an effective national coast guard to conduct counter-piracy operations alongside other missions that are related to the root causes of piracy, such as countering illegal fishing activities, criminal gangs active in drugs smuggling and human trafficking, as well as waste dumping. Before its collapse, the Somali Army Naval Forces were regarded as a professional and effective force in the region. Building on this history, through international support Somalia can once again bring its territorial waters under jurisdiction and control to the benefit of itself, the region, and the wider international community suffering from Somali piracy.

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