



PIRACY'S EFFECTS ON SEAFARERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

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Report of the Roundtable Discussion

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INTRODUCTION

On December 8, 2009, the Seamen's Church Institute of NY & NJ (SCI) convened a roundtable discussion of caring for seafarers and their families who have been affected by piracy. The purpose of the roundtable was to obtain the experiences of maritime stake-holders on providing for the needs of seafarers and their families for the benefit of SCI's initiatives of preparing recommendations for caring for seafarers and their families and its clinical study of "The Effects of Piracy on Seafarers: Assessment and Intervention." The Reverend David M. Rider, President and Executive Director of SCI, moderated the discussion. Representatives from SCI, trade unions, flag states, labor supplying states, shipping companies, ship management companies, crew management companies, maritime security companies, maritime insurance companies, maritime law firms, and mental health professionals participated in the discussions.

The maritime industry has devoted considerable effort to preventing and suppressing pirate attacks. Guidelines and recommendations on preventing and suppressing pirate attacks have been published for ship operators, seafarers, and flag states. Although various segments of the maritime industry have gained experience on providing for the needs of seafarers and families affected by piracy, no comprehensive knowledge collection has occurred on post-piracy care for seafarers and their families. Responding to this information gap, SCI has undertaken a clinical study of the effects of piracy on seafarers and is preparing guidelines on caring for those impacted by piracy. The roundtable participants provided invaluable contributions toward developing practical and workable recommendations.

ISSUES DISCUSSED

The following issues emerged at the roundtable, with no attempt to arrange the issues in order of importance or priority. Unless otherwise indicated, they do not reflect agreement by the roundtable participants. All points are recorded without attribution.

Before a Piracy Incident

1. Develop contingency plans to address responding to seafarers' and their families' needs. Plans could include the following:
 - a. Senior management setting a tone that doing the right thing for seafarers and their families is more important than costs (people come first, costs are secondary);
 - b. Making arrangements for families to travel to corporate headquarters or some other central location, such as crew management offices, where they might receive up-to-date briefings, counseling and other care;
 - c. Having trauma counselors or other mental health caregivers available to families and seafarers;
 - a. Ensuring that families receive pay and other entitlements throughout any hostage situation;
 - b. Designating a welfare officer to serve as a link between management and families, with responsibility for and authority to implement plans;
 - c. Understanding crewmembers' cultural differences and adapting responses to crewmembers' individual cultural needs is critical. For example, Northern European seafarers might take advantage of assistance from psychological health institutions, while some other nationalities might prefer getting help from clergy and religious resources.
2. Create a mental health team that can monitor mental health of crews during normal operations and also respond to a crisis situation.
3. Conduct training and drills that realistically reflect piracy's risks. Such drills would not only prepare seafarers to respond to piracy attacks and hostage situations, but also offer psychological preparation. Anticipatory guidance and preparation training can offer effective ways of helping crews respond well in adverse situations. In addition, training and drills can bolster crewmembers' reassurance and confidence.
4. Operators and crewmembers should be prepared for pirates treating crewmembers differently based on various factors including race and religion. Knowing how pirates act and certain aspects of their culture can help prepare crews for a worse case scenario.
5. Up to now, Somali pirates have not proven to be fanatics – they simply want money. There is concern, however, that the level of violence will increase in Somali piracy incidents.
6. Seafarers should have the opportunity to make an informed choice of whether to sail on a vessel through high risk areas. There should be no adverse consequences for those opting

out. Seafarers who have some control over their situation, such as willingly sailing on a ship through high risk areas, are better prepared to respond to piracy incidents.

7. Ship operators should reassure crews that they are not expected to fight pirates or put themselves at risk. They should be told that surrendering to pirates is more acceptable than violent responses that might put them at risk. They should know that they can surrender without feeling guilty.
8. Ship operators should review their insurance coverage. Piracy incidents present very complicated claims with implications for hull and P&I cover. Cover for paying ransoms is evolving in the insurance industry. Ship operators should consider purchasing kidnap and ransom insurance.
9. Flag states and shipowners would benefit from guidance on when professional psychological help should be provided to crew. Flag states, which up to now have generally become involved after crews are released, would like to have guidance on actions they can take at all stages of a piracy incident.
10. Seafarers should receive better pre-voyage psychological evaluations. Seafarers should be taught how to recognize psychological symptoms as well as ways to cope with stress and problems (providing them with a “psychological tool kit”). Creating a culture of psychological health as well as physical health will help seafarers prevent psychological problems and reduce cultural stigmas associated with getting psychological help. Preventative care can be more effective (as well as more cost-effective) than providing professional psychological care to injured crew.
11. Psychological first aid could translate into self-care during hostage situations. A primary aspect is social support, including training people to stick together, having “emotional buddies” during a hostage situation. The military’s ‘survive, escape, resist, evade’ procedures (SERE) could be adapted for merchant mariner use.

During a Piracy Incident

12. Ship operators should concentrate on taking care of crewmembers and their families rather than worry about legal liability. Insurance will cover most financial losses. Management can therefore devote full attention to crew and their families. Doing the right thing for crew and family is much more important than possible legal liability. Lawyers’ visibility in piracy cases, especially in the press and with families, should be carefully considered so as not to give the impression that legal liability concerns are driving actions.
13. The biggest concern for many seafarers held hostage is often their families’ welfare. Seafarer hostages’ knowledge that their families are being taken care of will help them take better care of themselves. Therefore, companies should continue to provide for family needs, especially continuing pay and allowances.
14. Management must establish families’ trust by communicating that they will do absolutely everything they can to ensure crew’s safety first and gain the speedy recovery of the crew second. Families must receive frequent and honest updates.
15. Creating a password-protected website exclusively for families to provide a link between families, management and each other can serve as an effective communication tool.
16. Taking care of logistics for families in stressful situations is very important; cost comes second. Arrangements should be made for families to travel to shipping company or

crewing agency main office where information and services are available. Families should also have options: do they want to fly to the ship; the port; or the shipping offices?

17. Shipping company senior management should have direct contact with families. Face-to-face communication between top management and families help families cope.
18. Operators must temper their impulse to provide reassurance to families. Setting deadlines can create considerable tension if they are not met. Example: telling families that typical hostage cases last 60 days might create the impression that crews will be released in 60 days, undermining the families' trust if the case extends beyond 60 days. Avoid telling families what they want to hear; be honest and frank. It is important to prepare families for the long haul.

After a Piracy Incident

19. Each crewmember should have an individual evaluation and receive care appropriate to his or her needs, understanding that people respond differently to the same traumatic incident. Cultural differences must be taken into consideration when assessing after-care for crew. The most vulnerable crew should get the most attention.
20. When a ship first arrives in port after a piracy incident, ship operators should carefully consider who first meets the crew. Including medical professionals, chaplains and union representatives in the initial group of people who meet the ship sends a clear message of the importance the company places on its crew's welfare and well-being.
21. Ship operators should provide seafarers free telephone calls to their families.
22. When governmental authorities interview the crew to gain military intelligence or evidence for possible prosecution, it is helpful for crew to have psychological professionals available. This provides an interaction focused on listening to them therapeutically rather than on listening to gather information.
23. Crew should have the chance to absorb what has happened to them at their own pace. Talking too much or too soon about what has happened to them can cause retraumatization.
24. Psychological assessments can be conducted in the course of a routine medical examination following an attack or hostage release, provided the medical personnel have training in assessing psychological health.
25. After a hostage situation, it is important to provide released crewmembers some semblance of control over their situation. Maintaining ship's hierarchy and duties is one way to do this. It can be helpful for crew to continue with their jobs of taking care of the ship while waiting for a replacement crew.
26. Provide crew with a handout listing concrete resources (e.g. spirituality) to alert them to ways in which they can take control of their emotions. With repeated prompting, these coping mechanisms enter into seafarers' muscle memory and equip them to respond favorably to future adverse situations.
27. Dealings with the press can prove very stressful for families and crew. Families and crewmembers should be briefed on what to expect from the press. For example, they should understand that a journalist's job is to get a story. They are not there to help with

crew or family problems. Crews and their families should have privacy, but they should be allowed to speak to the press if they wish.

28. Assuring crewmembers of the confidentiality of their communications with physicians or psychologists can help them open up for their own care and to identify others who need care.
29. Even if done previously, provide crew with information about typical symptoms following traumatic incidents (such as insomnia and irritability) and teach them coping mechanisms. Expect that symptoms often increase in proportion to the length or violence of an incident.
30. Treatment plans for seafarers should include families. Seafarers' family members might require their own treatment independent from the seafarer. Family members may suffer greater trauma than the seafarers themselves.

SCI Piracy Clinical Study

31. The Seamen's Church Institute has initiated the first-ever psychological study of the effects of piracy on seafarers. Dr. Michael Garfinkle is leading the study, which will involve semi-structured interviews with seafarers. It will be conducted with informed consent, anonymous participation, and be subject to peer review.
32. No published studies of the effects of trauma on seafarers exist. Research into psychological effects of other traumatic incidents, like airjackings or violent crime, has been explored, but is not directly relevant to the study of piracy-related trauma.
33. Because no literature on the study's topics is available, very few assumptions will be made going into the study. As the many different nationalities comprise the seafaring population, the study will necessarily be international and multi-culturally applicable.
34. To achieve the desired success, the study needs support and collaboration from all sectors of the maritime industry. Access to seafarer subjects is a critical element of the study.
35. If appropriate, a questionnaire or survey could augment the study. Several participants volunteered to circulate one if needed.
36. As a product of the study, SCI will prepare international guidelines on procedures for dealing with piracy's effects on crewmembers and their families, the need for follow-up care, and the need to integrate families into the healing process.
37. In advance of completing the study, SCI has drawn from psychological literature from other industries and has prepared draft guidelines. Psychological health professionals are vetting the guidelines. Comments to the guidelines from maritime industry will be greatly appreciated. SCI intends to make guidelines available to maritime industry, international organizations, governments and others shortly after the peer review has been completed.
38. The study should include seafarers' families because families often suffer more than the seafarers themselves.