S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
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RSIS COMMENTARIES

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ANTI-PIRACY IN SOMALIA:
Models for Maritime Security Institutions

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There is an emerging consensus on how to deal with piracy off Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden: improve security on land and establish a strong national security apparatus in Somalia. Can the "Malacca Strait" approach be a model?

THE KUALA LUMPUR International Conference on Piracy and Crimes at Sea was convened on 18-19 May 2009, organised by the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was attended by government officials, as well as experts from inter-governmental organisations, shipping and insurance industries, and academics. The conference was to provide an update on the situation concerning piracy and armed robbery against ships off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden.

Chairman's Statement

The Chairman's Statement that was issued would be transmitted to the United Nations, the International Maritime Organisation, and other appropriate international organisations. The statement noted the crucial importance of international efforts to assist the littoral states to build their capacities to handle this problem. Significantly, the statement also noted "that there are lessons to be learned from other regions, particularly the mechanisms established by the littoral states of the Straits of Malacca".

At the conference, two officials from Somalia reiterated the need for international support for the efforts of the coalition led by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia. They urged more international support for Somalia to build up its security establishment to ensure order on land as well as good order at sea. If indeed there is a will to build up the maritime security institutions in Somalia, then some of the security measures and institutions established by the littoral states along the Malacca Strait could be used as models.

Indonesia

The Indonesian government has upgraded the legal status of the Indonesian Maritime Security

Coordination Board (IMSCB or BAKORKAMLA) to a proper national institution since 2005. BAKORKAMLA will create an integrated security, safety and law enforcement regime within Indonesia's waters. BAKORKAMLA is an agency under the Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security. It determines general policy and enhances coordination among the various government institutions in the field of sea security, including the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL), Marine Police, National Search and Rescue Agency, Directorate General of Sea Transportation (both under the Department of Transportation), Directorate General of Maritime and Fisheries Resources Control (Department of Fisheries), and the Customs and Excise Department (Department of Finance). Indeed, the status of BAKORKAMLA has been upgraded as it now has ten senior members with ministerial rank compared to the previous five.

The missions of BAKORKAMLA include formulating general policy in the maritime security sector; coordination of activities and maritime security operations within Indonesian's waters; formulating decisions and overseeing the implementation of technical and administrative support in the maritime security sector. Other tasks include developing the institutions in the maritime security sector; and stimulating people's participation in the maritime security sector.

In addition, BAKORKAMLA will also coordinate and implement policy relating to an integrated maritime security operation. Its activities will include monitoring, surveillance, protection and law enforcement as well as securing the voyage and activities of the people and government in Indonesia's waters.

Malaysia

Whilst Indonesia has at one stroke adopted both a centralised as well as a coordinating approach, Malaysia has decided to adopt a more centralised approach to inter-agency coordination. This centralisation is achieved through the setting up of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) -- the equivalent of a coast guard -- in November 2005.

The MMEA is charged with maintaining law and order; preserving peace, safety and security; preventing and detecting crime; apprehending and prosecuting offenders and collecting security intelligence within the Malaysian Maritime Zone. This zone encompasses the internal waters, territorial sea, continental shelf, exclusive economic zone and the Malaysian fisheries waters, including the air space over the zone. The MMEA is also involved in enforcement duties and search and rescue missions.

The MMEA brings together several existing maritime enforcement agencies such as the Royal Malaysian Marine Police, the Fisheries Department, Immigrations Department, Customs Department, and Marine Department. The consolidation of maritime-related agencies into a single command of the MMEA tightens the focus and enhances Malaysia's ability to deal with maritime-related offences.

Singapore

In Singapore's case, the Republic has chosen to adopt a coordinating approach to manage inter-agency actions. Singapore has set up the Maritime Security Task Force (MSTF) to coordinate the activities of the three agencies of the Maritime and Port Authority (MPA), the Police Coast Guard (PCG) and the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN). The MSTF is tasked to look into further ways of enhancing maritime security and of promoting Singapore's broader maritime interests.

Singapore has also set up the Changi Command and Control (C2) Centre in May 2009 which coordinates local, regional and international efforts against maritime threats. The C2 Centre comprises the Singapore Maritime Security Centre (SMSC), the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) and the Multinational Operations and Exercise Centre (MOEC). The SMSC, made up of the navy's

Maritime Security Task Force and personnel from the Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) and Police Coast Guard, will jointly monitor and respond to crisis in and around Singapore waters.

The IFC will foster information-sharing between regional navies and security agencies, enabling each country to respond quickly to potential threats. Lastly, the MOEC will help conduct bilateral and multilateral exercises, such as those held annually under the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA).

Models from the Malacca Strait

There is an emerging consensus that to deal with the piracy situation off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, the security conditions on land itself, besides that of the sea, would need to be addressed. In this case, improving the security conditions on land has to be a priority. Stabilising the current Transitional Federal Government is more pressing at present.

However, a plan to establish strong and stable national security apparatus in Somalia, probably with external funding, training and transfer of knowledge, is also required. In this regard, existing models in other parts of the world could be used to develop these establishments. The national security institutions established by the littoral states of the Malacca Strait and the associated inter-agency processes could be such a model.

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