

# Changes in shipping routes and speed as piracy declines in the Western Indian Ocean

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With the decline of piracy incidents in the Western Indian Ocean, vessels have gradually returned to travelling along the shortest route, closer to Somalia, and to sailing again at normal speed, according to a report by the European Commission's in-house science service, the Joint Research Cervice (JRC). This also has a positive impact on fuel consumption and maritime transport costs.

The report provides a statistical analysis of the declining impact of [piracy](#) on maritime routes and vessel behaviors. For this analysis, the JRC used historical Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) data of States participating in the EU LRIT Cooperative Data Centre provided through the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). It is the first time that LRIT data have been used and analysed to demonstrate that routes and speed have changed. This innovative approach has thereby proven the effectiveness of measures undertaken by the international community in a region which has been affected by piracy for years. The period covers July 2009 to July 2014, which saw a peak and a subsequent decline of piracy attacks in the region.

Navigation in piracy high-risk areas extending over the Somali Basin was avoided by most of the ships, extending the average length of the North-South route to about 450 nautical miles. In addition, ships proceeded at full sea speed in order to try to outrun attackers and make it difficult for them to board. Due to countermeasures such as EU Naval Force Atalanta and industry applying Best Management Practices (BMPs), piracy incidents started to decline.

The findings of this report can be used by policy and decision makers to understand the impact of geopolitical issues to maritime trade routes and provides a basis for estimating the financial implications and evaluating the efforts put in place in the fight against piracy in the Western Indian Ocean.

## Background information

For the first time, the JRC applied spatial data mining to LRIT data to discover half-year variations of traffic. Access to the data was granted by the national competent authorities of States participating in the EU LRIT Cooperative Data Centre through the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). The advantage of using LRIT data is that it continues to provide uninterrupted position reports to authorities, unlike other positioning systems such as the Automatic Identification System (AIS), which was commonly switched off in the area in order to reduce the vessel vulnerability of being tracked by pirates.

**More information:** "The declining impact of piracy on maritime transport in the Indian Ocean: Statistical analysis of 5-year vessel tracking data," *Marine Policy*, Volume 59, September 2015, Pages 9-15, ISSN 0308-597X [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2015.04.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2015.04.018)

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