Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS)
Working Group on Public Diplomacy

Proposed Communication Strategy

Situation

The intensification of piracy off the coast of Somalia is a direct consequence of the lack of an effective central government since 1991. Chronic insecurity, often violent competition among clans, a collapsed economic system, ineffective judicial and law enforcement institutions, and a corresponding lack of legitimate income-generation opportunities have driven Somalis to hijack international shipping for ransom and to do so until recently with impunity. Nevertheless, today's piracy is only symptom of a millennia-old legacy deeply rooted in Somali culture.

The world trading system depends largely on the security of vital sea trade routes and freedom of navigation. Multinational naval detachments now patrol East African waters as a direct result of the increased piracy off Somalia. It is important, to remember that piracy and the threat to maritime security are not unique to Somalia; West Africa and the Straits of Malacca also suffer problems of insecurity. What makes Somalia different, however, is that it is a weakly governed nation sitting astride the world's major shipping lane through the Gulf of Aden. Consequently, major trading nations, regional states, leading flag states (Liberia, Panama, Cyprus, Marshall Islands, etc.), and countries with seafaring populations and vessels have major stakes in eliminating piracy and maintaining security in the Gulf of Aden.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to provide guidance and the focal point for future coordination of communications activity that supports action by the international community, including the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. This paper outlines the goals, the various audiences that will need to be reached and the ways and means of getting messages across to them. The intent is to deliver messages that different audience's can both understand and, where possible, respond to. The delivery of these messages will need to be coordinated with activity developed in the other work streams.

Goals

The key goals of this communications strategy are to:

--Inform and coordinate with the international maritime community of potential risks and provide information to manage/reduce risk.

--Deter and dissuade Somali participation and support to piracy.

--Create international support for and legitimacy of international counter-piracy operations to include participation and/or funding of counter-piracy operations.

- Ensure all recognize the international community's role in deterring piracy and simultaneously addressing the causes of piracy, including offering realistic long term solutions

Audience

Audiences discussed below include Somalis in Somalia and the wider Diaspora, the region and also the wider international community affected by the continued activity off Somalia. Some of the audiences that need to be reached can also act as conduits for the delivery of specific messages.

-- Somalis

In Somalia, the important audiences are youth and influential opinion moulders – teachers, journalists, imams, business people, and clan leaders. Equally important is the audience outside Somalia itself, the large, but divided, Diaspora. This Diaspora maintains active communication links with Somalia, remits money in support to Somali relatives each year, and offers a potential well of credible voices in advice and opinion.

Regional audiences

--Middle East. Somalia is covered extensively by Arabic-language media, especially on the Arabian peninsula and in the Gulf states that are most affected by piracy. It is important to reach young people and influential decision-makers to explain simply and clearly why piracy is counter to their interests, and why the international community is united in acting against it, both directly and by addressing its underlying causes – the more coverage we can give to the latter the better.

Many states and small businesses in the region are dependent on security in the maritime environment either for fishing or remittances paid by multinationals en route or for other trade purposes. With the linguistic and cultural ties the region has in and with Somalia, these conduits would be credible,

International audiences

--Western Europe. The European Union has a major commercial stake in secure trade lanes, and has contributed significantly to the multi-national naval task force, and intends to establish other maritime security assistance programs. Large Somali populations reside in the UK, Italy, Sweden and Norway.

-- Asia/Russia. India, China, Japan, Russia, and a several smaller nations have major interests at stake and are contributing to the multinational naval task forces or operating in coordination with them. The story offers an opportunity to highlight multinational cooperation.

Messages

Below are key messages that can be delivered to specific audiences; these messages will be reviewed on at least a quarterly basis if not sooner to reflect changes in the audiences understanding and willingness to combat piracy.

There is no reference in here to facilitators outside of Somalia; it is assumed that they exist and that they also need to be dissuaded of their immunity to prosecution.

-- Somalis
Somalis may need dividing into those that are or directly support and facilitate piracy and those who unwittingly support piracy or benefit from it. As the clan structure suggests, the distribution of proceeds of this criminal activity may end up in "legitimate" businesses or with those that unknowingly receive money from it. Also the Diaspora and Somalis in country are likely to see piracy differently (especially with 2nd/3rd generation immigrants).

(1) Military, Coastguard and legal action to counter piracy is not aggression by the West against Islam. Piracy is unlawful. [And it is against the teachings of Islam.]
(2) Somalia deserves security, stability, development, control over its natural resources, and a functioning transparent government, but abetting wholesale piracy undermines these.
(3) Piracy diminishes the view of Somalis as a people in the eyes of the world community and discourages support for the important task of rebuilding the nation.
(4) Piracy not only is a symptom of the country's economic and political chaos, but also feeds it by thriving in a lawless culture of violence that enriches the few and robs the many of opportunity.
(5) Piracy has a long been recognized as destructive which is why nations including Somalia united to create international legal standards to ban it.

- The real victims of piracy are the majority of Somali people, who continue to suffer disorder, violence, a breakdown in rule of law, and disrupted business opportunities.

- Piracy threatens vital humanitarian aid shipments to Somalia and The Horn of Africa

- Piracy threatens trade in the entire east Africa region.

- No country can develop without rule of law, including adherence to international norms such as the ban on piracy.

- No economy can grow without a measure of security in its shipping lanes.

- We recognize the legitimate interests of the people of Somalia to ensure their maritime resources, particularly fisheries, are protected and available for their benefit.

- We would welcome and support development of peaceful means for Somalis to protect those interests.

- The international community will work with the maritime industry to provide career opportunities for Somalis in the maritime sector and other legitimate alternatives to piracy.

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Regional

- Keeping shipping lanes open is critical to the countries of the region. The port of Mombasa is a trade lifeline for inland countries such as Uganda and Rwanda. It is thus imperative that this shipping lane be adequately protected and freedom of navigation maintained. Piracy threatens the economies of the countries of the region and the everyday lives of their people.
- Military, Coastguard and legal action to counter piracy is not aggression by the West against Islam or Africa. Piracy is unlawful and harmful.

--**International**

(1) Piracy is recognized by all as illegal.
(2) All nations must work together to maintain secure shipping lanes and promote freedom of navigation.
 (3) All nations, as well as the maritime industry, have an interest not only in suppressing piracy, but to support Somalis to establish security on land, that allows the development and sustainability of alternative livelihoods to Somalis in the maritime and maritime support sector sector.

- International law recognizes that piracy is illegal.   It was the threat to world trade that moved nations to come together in their mutual interest to ban and police.   All nations continue to have an interest in secure shipping lanes, and must work together to keep them safe.

- The ultimate solution to piracy in the Horn of Africa is peace, stability, and the rebuilding of institutions in Somalia-- to which the international community must commit greater resources.

- Not every country can provide naval resources to stop the pirates, but there are many other ways to contribute such as supporting the capability and capacity of others better placed to support such as assisting in the prosecution of suspected pirates or supporting other efforts in the region to suppress and prevent piracy.

- We recognize that the dearth of legitimate opportunities may play a role in enticing many young Somalis into piracy. Therefore, the international community will work together to provide legitimate career opportunities in the maritime and associated industries.

Ways and means of delivering the messages

All ways and means of delivering these messages should be considered; it should not fall entirely with media or Public Information experts. All engaged with Somalia and the region should understand and recognize the role they have to play in delivering this strategy. Areas of expertise may be required to support the delivery of the messages, including; multi media (i.e. radio, TV, mobile phone, internet including blogs websites), Public Information, promotional material (including clothing/fishing equipment etc), outreach activity, engagement at various levels from strategic to local (diplomatic including military diplomacy, business, charitable sectors etc).

Messages to the Somali population are likely to have more resonance as and when Somalis deliver them; again the format of delivery may vary from statements to more popular media that resonate with Somalis.. With low literacy levels in Somalia the use of film, cartoons, plays and images etc may have greater appeal.

Media

-- Somalia

Radio remains the most important source of information in Somalia. Commercial stations operate inside the country. International broadcasting, including short wave, plays a major role. BBC (both English and Somali services) is the most popular. The Voice of America's Somali service, launched in February 2007, has quickly built an audience; it is the USG's most chief public diplomacy tool available to reach Somalis. In addition, there are currently 16 private radio stations in Mogadishu.

Internet is the other important source of information. Somalis, especially young people, frequent Internet cafes throughout the country. They access Somali, English, Italian, and Arabic language websites and contribute to numerous blogs that focus on Somali concerns. There are numerous Somali websites that could be tapped to disseminate messages regarding the destructive impact of piracy on the country's image and future.

Text messaging has proliferated; cellular telephones reach the entire country and coverage has never broken down. Texting and radio are the preferred media used by advertisers to promote products and ideas (Coca-Cola, for example, operates successfully).

T-shirts, as in most of Africa, are notably popular with young people and can serve as potent messaging devices.

-- Middle East

Television: Al Jazeera especially should be granted priority access to information, interviews, and photo opportunities.

Radio: International radio services in Arabic, including BBC, VOA, Deutsche Welle and Radio France International, as well as selected Arab broadcasters.

Internet: Identify key sites to reach young people.

Proposed Activities

--Somalia

Credible Voice grants to international and local Somali NGOs to develop and support surrogates of Somalis to speak out against piracy and to warn of the risks of being a pirate eg prosecution and imprisonment.

Somali celebrity PSAs to draw attention to the harm to Somalis caused by piracy. Celebrity status can include poets, singers.

Radio and TV reporting that communicate the dangers of piracy to Somalis. (BBC, VOA, Al Jazeera)

Regional web engagement (discussion fora, blogs, podcasts) on the theme of piracy.

Multilateral public affairs outreach to encourage other governments and regional and international organizations to speak out against piracy. (EU, China, India, Russia, Brazil, Arab League, African Union)

Anti-piracy cartoon project to develop and distribute cartoons through effective communication channels (internet, print media, t-shirts)

Somalia cell phone project to produce anti-piracy cell phone messages, pictures, and video. This could include updates on latest arrests, trial results etc, as well as positive news on money being given by the international community to Somalia etc. UNPOS might oversee this messaging.

--International

Radio and TV reporting that communicate the dangers of piracy to regional interests (Al Jazeera, VOA, BBC, RFI)

Regional web engagement (discussion fora, blogs, podcasts) on the theme of piracy.

Multilateral public affairs outreach to encourage other governments and regional and international organizations to speak out against piracy. (EU, China, India, Russia, Brazil, Arab League, African Union)W

Regional web engagement (discussion fora, blogs, social networking) on the theme of piracy.

Urge other governments to speak to Americans on support for the international community's cooperative approach to fighting piracy and the US role in it.

Recruit a celebrity to take on the anti-piracy cause to attraction broad international attention and to influence the film industry to depict piracy more as a crime and threat than as an adventure.

Recruit the maritime industry to provide legitimate career alternatives to piracy such as careers as seafarers, etc. This would allow Somalis a legitimate outlet for their seafaring talents and provide the industry with the manpower that it says it needs.

Urge the international community not only to commit resources to fighting piracy, but also to addressing the root causes of piracy.