

Press release: UK Hydrographic Office works with Seychelles government to help tackle piracy in the Indian Ocean

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has carried out a programme of Security of Navigation, Stabilisation Advice and Training (SONSAT) activities in the Seychelles to support maritime security in the Indian ocean.

Piracy at sea can threaten the security of trade routes, costing the international economy an estimated US \$7 to \$12 billion annually. And with some of the world's busiest trade routes passing through their waters, the threat of piracy is of huge concern to both the Seychelles and its neighbours. In tackling these issues, it's vital that authorities understand their responsibilities when broadcasting maritime safety information, so they can notify ships in the area of issues that could threaten their safety.

To achieve this aim, UKHO experts presented a series of maritime security capability development seminars and intelligence briefs to government officials to help them share this vital maritime safety information with ships and partners in the region.

One area of focus included raising awareness of existing infrastructure and services, such as the World-Wide Navigational Warning Service (WWNWS) and Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs), that could help them to circulate vital security information in the region. UKHO delegates provided advice and guidance on how to coordinate operations between these services effectively and in line with the legal framework.

This training has been funded by the UK government's Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and carried out on behalf of the Foreign Commonwealth Office. It forms part of the UK government's effort to improve maritime capability and security in the Indian Ocean region and support the newly-established Regional Centre for Operation Coordination (RCOC) in Victoria, the capital of the Seychelles.

Paul Merchant, SONSAT Capability Development Manager at UKHO, commented:

As an island state that is hugely reliant on a buoyant tourism industry, the threat of piracy and illegal and unregulated fishing in the Indian Ocean is of huge concern to the Seychelles and its neighbours. From a UK perspective, we also have a huge amount of trade that passes through these waters.

By working together with the Seychelles to improve Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in the region, and by building awareness of the legalities and obligations placed upon nations when broadcasting maritime safety information, we can help tackle the issues that

threaten the safety of our merchant mariners.

He added:

The training that the UKHO's SONSAT capability delivers is specifically tailored to the needs of the state or region, depending on their existing knowledge and capabilities. In addition to our work in the Seychelles, we have supported the FCO with its Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme, providing advice and guidance on maritime safety and security to Cyprus, Gibraltar, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and Ascension Islands.

Our work in the Seychelles is a reflection of the breadth of capabilities the UKHO has under one roof, and the world-class services we can offer as a world-leading marine geospatial agency and the UK's hydrographic authority.