

## Somali police force inaugurates new counter-piracy centre

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Somalia has launched what it described as a “state-of-the-art facility” for the Somali Police Force (SPF) Department of Coast Guard.

The new \$3m facility, funded by the EU and developed by the UN has been designed to help SPF become more effective in combating piracy in Indian Ocean waters. Somalia said that the pirate threat remained alive, despite a long trend of suppression of attacks.

Anita Kiki Gbeho, UN Secretary-General’s deputy special representative for Somalia, said that “in recent years Somalia has expanded its maritime law enforcement capability, allowing the SPF to deliver safety and security around Mogadishu Port and along Somalia’s coastline. This furnished and equipped base will allow the SPF to become increasingly more effective”.

The facility will provide an operational base for SPF to enhance surveillance of pirate threats along international shipping routes, and it will also help the country expand its blue economy. Somalia has a coastline that is 1,800nm in length.

Somalia’s shores were during the earlier part of this century considered the source of the most dangerous area of the world for mariners. Attacks attributed to Somali pirates peaked in 2011, when 237 incidents were recorded, but international and private security responses saw this fall dramatically to just 14 between 2015 and 2020. Maritime piracy in the area is currently near to zero.

Although piracy and armed robbery along the Somali coastline have largely been contained, Somalia claims that active piracy cells and networks in the country continued to pose real threats to the shipping industry. With Somalia currently embroiled in political turmoil, there were concerns that active piracy cells could return.

The new facility forms part of the UN to support initiatives of states countering piracy off the coast of Somalia in the areas of capacity-building, regional prosecution, maritime law enforcement and maritime governance through a \$15 million trust fund.

The facility consists of a furnished headquarters block with information technology equipment, a detention facility, a floating jetty and boat ramp and an accommodation unit.

In addition, 60 police officers have been provided with training and workshops on maritime law enforcement, marine engineering and maritime communications.

“The SPF maritime law enforcement component will have a much, much more effective ability to operate and interact offshore and within the coastal areas of Somalia, to ensure maritime crime is reduced and effectively work forward on that,” said Tim Lardner, UN Office for Project Services Country Director for Somalia.