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Fighting Piracy on the World Ocean: Goals and Methods

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Abstract. The author reviews the issue of fighting piracy on the main navigable waterways on the World Ocean. He offers tactical methods and techniques to counter pirates' actions, as well as measures for preparing Russia's Navy warships to resolve tasks of protecting navigation from pirates.

Keywords: piracy, ensuring navigation safety, methods and techniques of actions, specialized units, early training, hands-on training.

The naval piracy issue remains one of the most critical ones for the international community, as most countries' economies depend on the World Ocean's main navigable waterways functioning continually.

When the Russian Navy started carrying out tasks to provide navigation safety and to fight pirates in the Horn of Africa area, it encountered difficulties, **caused by lack of a normative base to regulate preparing and using warships for carrying these tasks out.**¹

The Navy's action mode can be defined basing on analyzing and forecasting the expectable actions by the adversary, physical and geographical conditions, as well as international law stipulations for the area, and also composition of forces and assets, engaged to ensure navigation security. In connection with this, goals and tasks for the opposing sides need to be defined.

For the pirates, the goal is raiding vessels in order to gain illicit profits, so they seek vessels and determine those suitable for capture; then they capture the vessel using violence or threat to use it, take control over this vessel by attacking it, seize other people's belongings (money, crew's and passengers' valuables or the vessel's cargo) or take hostages and formulate ransom demands for these hostages or the vessel. The latter becomes the most widespread in recent years, especially in the Horn of Africa area. Hereupon, it is possible to assert that *the line between pirates and terrorists wipes off.*²

The goals set before the Navy warships are: preventing capture of vessels to be escorted, detecting and arresting pirate craft; preventing (restraining) terrorist acts at sea and illegal seaborne traffic. At that, the following tasks are resolved: guarding and protecting warships and auxiliary vessels, belonging to the warship's unit (WSU), as applicable to surface conditions and peculiarities in

pirates' tactics; escorting commercial vessels' convoys; inspecting suspicious craft; timely preventing vessels' capture and arresting pirates; assault actions to release captured warships, interacting with foreign navies on organizing counterpirate actions.³

To resolve these tasks and taking into account the experience of employing the Navy forces in the Horn of Africa area, the following ways to use tactical groups (separate ships) can be singled out, namely: convoy, cover, and patrolling.

Convoy previews the WSU directly guarding civilian vessels within joint orders (formations) with warships and also organizing all the defense types, as applicable to the existing threat (pirates' tactics). This method is used when ensuring navigation safety in coastal areas, with many small-size commercial and fishing boats present, when the pirates' attack is equally possible from any direction. Transferring *guard groups* on board convoy ships allows a warship to leave the formation, in order to assist a solitary vessel attacked by pirates.

Cover means escorting solitary (or groups of) civilian vessels by warships, moved away from them to known (supposed) directions under threat, for a distance, determined by possibility to intercept (arrest, destroy) pirates before they board vessels attacked (come right up to them).

Patrolling consists in actions by solitary ships / tactical groups in a set area (on the border, along a transition route) with the aim to suppress actions by organized formations, engaged in naval piracy. When a signal about an attack or pirate detection is received from a merchant vessel, measures to prevent its capture are undertaken and suspicious craft are inspected.⁴

Partitioning the aforementioned methods by splitting goals (tasks) into particular ones⁵ allows selecting the following techniques for the ships' and *task units*' (*groups*') actions:

- **guarding an asset** – boarding guard groups to convoy vessels, guarding and protecting the vessels' escort;
- **interception** – timely detecting and preventing hostile actions by pirate craft before they reach their target completion line (using weapons against vessels (ships), coming close to guarded vessels in order to capture them);
- **blocking** – a warship, task units on patrol boats, and helicopters establishing control over a craft suspected of illegal operations, and preventing any unsanctioned actions by its crew;
- **inspection** – sending an inspection party aboard a craft to fulfill the necessary actions;
- **arrest** – short-term deprivation of liberty for the persons suspected of piracy and terrorism, until clarifying the circumstances related to their activities;
- **airdrop & assault actions** – releasing vessels captured by pirates or preventing (suppressing) their capture.

After determining tactical methods and techniques for warships' and task units' (groups') actions, a model of actions for ensuring navigation safety in pirate threatening areas can be formalized (see Figure 1).

In order to carry out the aforementioned methods and techniques, the warship's unit must include the following groups (hereinafter – task units): counterterrorist and antipirate groups (CTAPG), inspection, convoy vessels protection, aerial reconnaissance and fire, airdrop & assault, and underwater reconnaissance groups.

The *counterterrorist and antipirate groups* are intended to guard and protect the warships unit's vessels, as well as to provide fire support to inspection and airdrop & assault groups. These groups are staffed with allocated marines, and when carrying out other tasks (for example, guarding convoy vessels), the ships' staff is attached to these groups.

Inspection groups examine vessels suspected of piracy. They can be formed, depending on the situation, with the personnel both from the ships' crews and from the allocated staff. Two such groups (main and auxiliary) must be prepared at least.

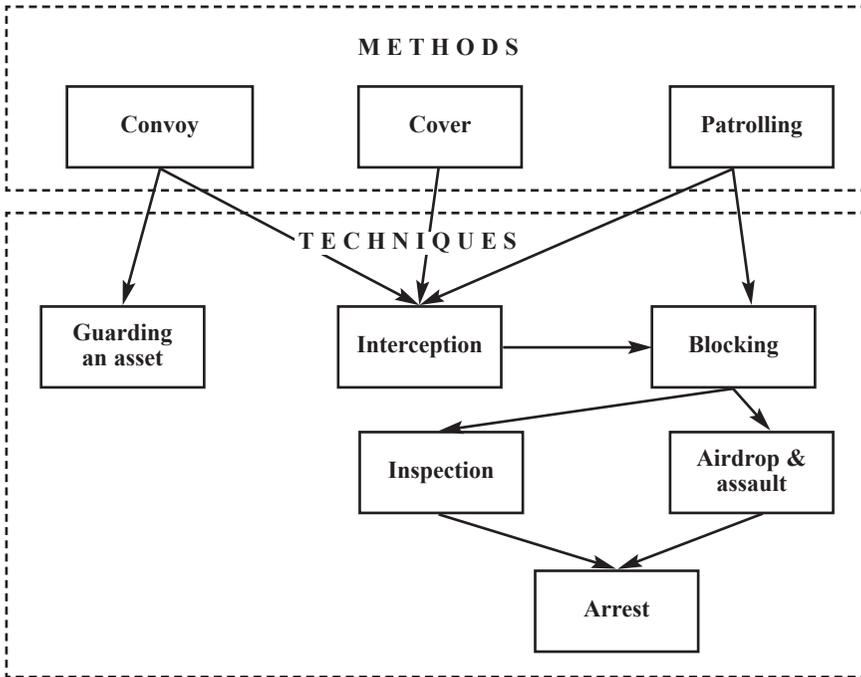


Fig. 1. Model of actions for ensuring navigation safety

Protection groups repel pirate attacks on escorted vessels. The optimum unit lineup includes six marines, guaranteeing, at two-shift watch, reliable control over the vessel's safety for several days. When escorting big convoys, additional protection groups must be formed from the ships' staff crews.

Aerial reconnaissance & fire groups conduct the search and arrest of craft, engaged in piracy or suspected of it, and also prevent attacks against civilian vessels. They are deployed on Ka-27ps (NATO designation – "Helix") helicopters: two to three persons armed with PKM, Dragunov sniper rifles, RPK, and other firearms. It is expedient to form these groups by allocated servicemen, who passed special training.

Airdrop & assault groups are intended to arrest (suppress attacks by) pirates' craft as well as to assault the captured vessels. Judging from the experience of liberating the *Moskovskiy Universitet* tanker by the *Marshal Shaposhnikov* big antisubmarine ship, there must be no less than three such groups. These groups are staffed with personnel trained to act both from Ka-27ps helicopters and from ships' craft. The group's composition (six to eight persons) is determined by its carrier's capacity.

Underwater reconnaissance group carries out search for caches and lifts piracy tools to the surface, inspects the craft' (vessels') underwater parts, carries out preventive actions to ensure the warship unit's anchorage water area. It is formed by ship's (vessel's) freelance light divers.

Foreign experience proves the necessity to specially train forces, intended to counter piracy at sea. Its organization is based on the *EXTAC 1012 Techniques and methods for a Navy unit to conduct operations for isolating an area from the sea* and *EXTAC 1013 Navy operations on regional shipping control* manuals. **Navy intervention forms are notable for significant diversity and strict regulation for captains' actions at all levels (together with granting them more independence)** when suppressing any criminal acts. A NATO training center instructing the leadership (staff) and forces to carry out naval inspection operations and actions on countering terrorism and naval piracy, is functioning on the Crete Island since 2008.⁶

The Russian Federation Armed Forces have accumulated a certain experience and have developed combat tactics against illegal paramilitary groups, including those at sea, that are deemed possible and necessary to use when organizing antipiracy actions. Unit and group training methods to prepare and to realize strike & assault actions, and also combat groups' tactics when blocking and destroying small subversive and terrorist units, deserve consideration.⁷

When generalizing this experience, it is expedient to start preparing forces in advance (see Figure 2). Working off *element 1* requires to organize gathering, processing, and analyzing the information on pirate activity areas, ships that fell victims to illegal acts in a given area; determine quantitative and qualitative composition and main activities to train field headquarters (HQ), task units from the

Navy arms of the service, necessary to resolve the upcoming tasks, submit them to the Navy Commander for his approval.

It is necessary to preview providing ships and task units with weapons, equipment, and hardware at the technical preparation stage (*element 2*), taking into account the character and specifics of the upcoming tasks.

When *the direct* preparation starts, the field HQ analyzes the situation in the upcoming theater of operations, determines how to organize the interaction, support, and control over own forces, defines the specifics for interacting with the coalition groups' ships and foreign navies. The necessary documentation to regulate the field headquarters' and forces' actions is developed, it is prepared in accordance with the approved plans.

When working out *element 3*, classes, training sessions, exercises, group drills, tactical briefings are organized with the task units' personnel involved.

The workshops should be aimed at studying: pirate groups' composition, their stationing, tactics and capabilities; foreign countries' Navy forces' tactics on ensuring navigation safety; organizing warships' escorts; carrying out inspections and arresting suspicious craft.

A particular attention should be paid to task units carrying out firing practice (from helicopter, small-scale craft at rough sea, in the dark, using noctovisors and

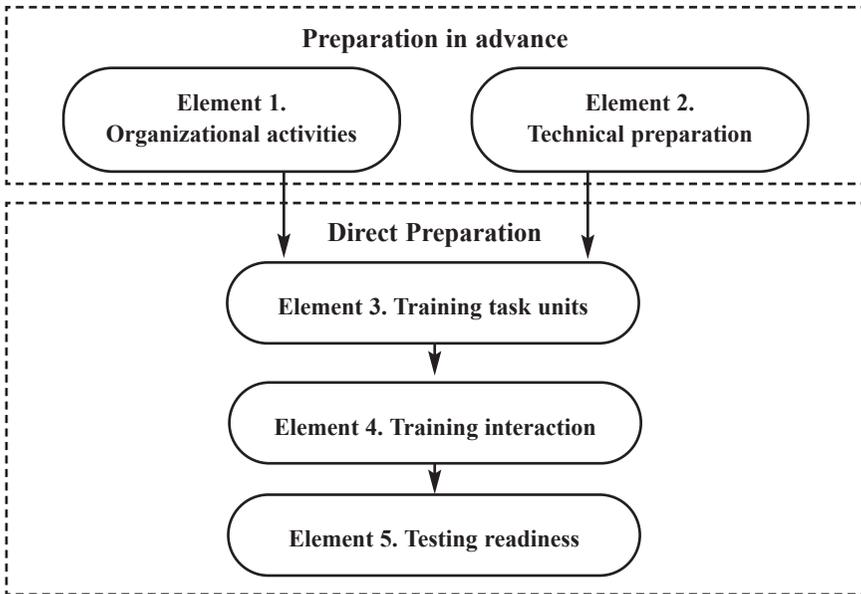


Fig. 2. Structure of the warship units' preparation to counter pirate actions

night scopes), to improving actions in different conditions, to working out the interaction between reconnaissance & fire, airdrop & assault, as well as inspection groups. When preparing the two latter groups, primary importance should be applied to their training on boarding a ship from a helicopter using landing method, boarding from air by rescue winch and using mountaineering equipment, with later-on seizing control over the landing site and after it – the entire asset.

As the experience in freeing vessels captured by pirates shows, the airdrop & assault groups, climbing aboard vessels from ship craft, using their boarding tools, must be worked out.

Training task units from the Navy arms of the service must be carried out initially at their positioning areas (in specialized training centers) and later – aboard warships, together with their crews and task units, formed on their base.

When realizing *element 4* during warship combat exercises, it is necessary to work out the interaction between task units, warship unit's command post, command and outposts in repelling an attack by small-scale fast-moving targets against warships and escorted vessels, when searching for and arresting craft suspected of piracy, during inspections and actions to free a captured warship.

It is expedient to check the field headquarters' and the forces' readiness to resolve the tasks set during the *control exit*. The test tactical exercise must check the warship's unit readiness to protect the navigation. It includes firing practice by ships and task units (from aboard a ship, helicopter or craft), conducting a vessel (craft) inspection and assaulting an asset captured by simulated "pirates", from craft and helicopter under the warship's support.

In accordance with the situation, the decision elaborated during direct preparations, and other combat actions documents are specified, an aggregate warship's unit is formed, the forces' combat coordination (final preparation) is conducted in the set target completion area.

In conclusion, it must be noted that at present the forces are trained at fleets basing on the acquired experience. This fact justifies different preparation levels and peculiarities in approaches to resolving single tasks, causing troubles at combat actions coordination for an aggregate warship's unit from different fleets. The necessity has, therefore, become imminent to develop unified documents, regulating training and applying Navy arms of the service to guarantee navigation safety in peacetime. This would promote increasing the efficiency in countering piracy and terrorism at sea.

NOTES:

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