

Common Sense

Piracy is a problem that inflicts huge expenses and losses, billions of dollars a year on the maritime industry. Most of the targets are commercial shipping, but the threat to yachts is real, and there are regions where the threat to commerce and yacht traffic overlaps. Reported incidents have increased in the last year and attacks still continue. Early April, for instance, pirates seized control of the French charter yacht *Le Ponant* off the coast of Somalia. Attackers boarded the 88m yacht as she was returning without passengers from the Seychelles. The 850t sailing yacht was carrying about thirty mostly French crew when she was boarded on the high seas in the Gulf of Aden. Pirate attacks are frequent off Somalia's coastline, but this is thought to be the first time such a large luxury yacht has been attacked. According to an in-depth research on the yacht piracy phenomenon by Klaus Hympehdahl, author of 'Pirates Aboard', about eighty yachts were attacked and another twenty yachts are missing since 1996. Strangely enough, not many sailors believe in authorities being of help so they don't bother to inform the Police or the Coast Guard. Other skippers and crew suffer from traumatic experiences and are not willing to talk about their close encounter with pirates. In addition there is quite a number of yachts that have completely vanished and nobody knows what has happened. The estimated number of unreported cases is believed to be equally high. This means that since 1996 the total number of yachts being attacked is approximately 200.

As a true believer that the right to self-defence is a basic human right, the question arises if carrying fire arms on board is justified to fend off piracy. Perhaps prevention is better than cure. I am sure that many of the reported incidents could have been avoided with some foresight and a large dose of caution. Most dangerous situations can be avoided by taking some simple precautions, cruising can be just as safe, if not actually safer, then living on land. Maybe the best solution might be not to sail around dangerous waters frequented by pirates... also known as the common sense approach.



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i n d u s t r y

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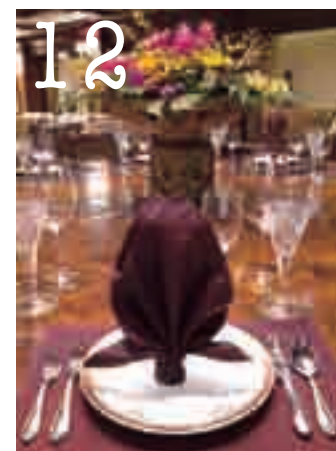
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Front Cover: View of the covered aft deck of Mine Games
(Photo courtesy of Trinity Yachts).

Left Page: The M/Cat 88 Bradley offers
the 'best of both worlds'

(Photo courtesy of H2X Ships & Yachts).