

“Enhancing security in complex environments” - themed speech by Stephen Hammond. Originally given at Security in Complex Environments Group annual conference. This is the text of the speech as drafted, which may differ slightly from the delivered version.



Thank you Paul for that introduction and thank you to the SCEG for inviting me to speak today (8 May 2013) at the annual conference.

The theme of today (8 May 2013) is enhancing security in complex environments – operating on the sea is perhaps the most complex environment of all, with companies facing multifaceted legal, jurisdictional and political issues on a daily basis.

It is very important for us in government to work with industry to protect and safeguard British shipping.

Estimates of the direct contribution the maritime industry makes to the UK economy range from £8.7 billion to £13.8 billion and over 250,000 UK jobs are supported by this industry. In times of financial hardship such as these we as a government take very seriously any threat to this highly valued industry and will act in order to protect it.

There is a security risk to the global shipping industry which has existed for millennia, endangers seafarers and costs not only the UK economy but the global economy sums of monies running into the billions. I am of course talking about piracy.

You may hear reference to the 3 pronged approach to piracy off the coast of Somalia several times today (8 May 2013); they are:

- the work of naval forces in the region;
- industry’s use of best management practices; and
- use of high quality armed guards where necessary and appropriate

In addition to that, work on the ground in the region is taking place to promote and increase stability. This approach is clearly working. Last year the number of vessels attacked by pirates off the coast of Somalia fell to just 35, from a previous average of 175. To date no vessel carrying armed security personnel has been successfully hijacked. These are very encouraging statistics.

However, we need to remain vigilant and must avoid complacency, industry and government must continue to work together. In June 2011, we appointed SCEG as our partner in developing and implementing UK national standards for private security companies. I am extremely pleased to be here today (8 May 2013) reaffirming the strength of the partnership between the government and the SCEG and in particular the strong relationship which exists between the [Department for Transport](#) and the SCEG membership. SCEG members have provided the government with valuable advice and guidance on all of the issues I am talking about today (8

May 2013) and I and my department place enormous value on their views as they come from those on the ground operating in these complex and high risk environments.

The objectives of the SCEG are very clear - to ensure that UK-based companies are the most professional and high quality within the industry, with a commensurately high reputation. It is that 'high quality' objective that I want to focus on today (8 May 2013).

The UK was among the first flag states to recognise [armed guards as an option to protect our nation's shipping](#). We did not take that decision lightly and we did not do so without considering carefully all of the challenges that decision would bring with it. As a result, the UK is seen as a leader in this field – the international spotlight is on us. Our focus must be on ensuring that the UK companies operating in this field are doing so to the highest possible standards and accountability.

The publication of the [ISO Publicly Available Specification 28007](#) in December of last year marked an important step in promoting high industry standards. I would encourage those shipping companies attending today to insist on those high standards from Private Maritime Security Companies [PMSC's] and to use certification to ISO PAS 28007 as part of the selection criteria if the decision is made that armed guards are necessary and appropriate for a transit through the High Risk Area.

I'd like to take a few minutes now to speak about the specific issues we have faced over the past year and a half and how we have tackled those issues.

As you are all aware, one of the protections we as a government put in place when we changed the policy on armed guards was to require PMSCs operating on board UK flagged vessels to hold a Section 5 firearms authority. Last year you, the Private Maritime Security industry told us that the process for this was too complicated and simply taking too long. We listened. The Home Office put together a new procedure using [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) for vetting of applicants which was launched in January 2013. We are confident that this will reduce the time people need to wait for their clearances to be considered. I know that this has been welcomed by the private maritime security industry.

You also told us that you needed a way for weapons training to take place in the UK. We have received a paper from the SCEG detailing the requirements for weapons training. Again, we are listening. My department is currently working with officials from across Whitehall to see how we can potentially resolve this complex situation, taking into account industry's requests against the backdrop of the UK's wider and well-established policy and legislative framework on control and access to prohibited firearms. We will continue to work closely with SCEG and keep you updated as discussions progress.

You will appreciate the use of so-called 'floating armouries' presents a number of complex jurisdictional and security challenges. We are currently working closely with the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) and the [Department for Business Innovation and Skills](#) and I would like to assure you that we are committed to ensuring resolution as soon as possible.

Another example of good industry and government collaboration is the development of the Maritime Security Operative (MSO) qualification – the [MCA](#) have been working with SCEG to look at whether someone completing the MSO qualification could be in some way exempted from the seafarer's Proficiency in Designated Security Duties course, a current MCA requirement.

I am pleased to report that MCA has been able to find a direct crossover from the PDSD course to parts of the MSO course and is finalising the preparation of a 'general equivalence'. My officials will be informing the IMO of this with the intention that other member states will consider the qualification which should in turn lead to greater international recognition.

Finally, the DfT guidance – many of you in this room will have contributed your thoughts to the revised guidance and I am pleased to say publication is due imminently. The purpose of this revision was to look at whether the guidance was working for the shipping industry and is workable for the PMSCs and to make any necessary changes.

The key message we received was that the guidance is used and it works. I am also aware that the UK guidance is in the spotlight internationally and other states are looking to us as a leading example. The revisions are intended to update the guidance and provide clarity on what we as government require from companies operating in this complex field. As matters progress and new issues arise and are dealt with we will not shy away from reviewing and amending the guidance so that it is a robust, reliable and fair document which is practically effective in this constantly changing environment.

Finally, I would just to reiterate the fact that the government values the positive contribution that the private maritime security industry makes in countering piracy off the coast of Somalia and is grateful for the collaborative way in which the industry works with government

Thank you for the opportunity to address you all today (8 May 2013)