

[Stephen Hammond MP](#)

Progress has been made in improving UK maritime security through strong working partnerships between the maritime sector and government.



Thank you for that kind introduction.

And thank you to the [Security in Complex Environments Group](#) (SCEG) for inviting me to speak to you today (14 May 2014) at your annual conference again this year.

When we met last year I said that operating at sea is perhaps the most complex and challenging environment of all.

People and firms face challenges as variable as the weather.

Legal, security and political issues on a daily basis that can be as unpredictable and complex as the sea itself.

As an island nation we rely on the shipping industry everyday and in everything we do from the food on our plates to the energy needed to light and heat our homes and for our economic prosperity.

So the work of the members of the Security in Complex Environments Group at sea is absolutely vital and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution over the past year.

Because, in preparing to speak to you today I had a look back over what I spoke about when we met last time. The 2 words that struck me looking back at what has been achieved over the past year are 'progress' and 'partnership'.

I think on many of the challenges we discussed we are making progress.

And that where this is happening it is based on a genuine partnership between industry and government. So I'd like to just mention a few areas of particular relevance today.

One of the most visible threats the shipping industry faces is [piracy](#) – a threat which the Prime Minister has described as 'a complete stain on our world'. There's the financial cost to industry but, perhaps more importantly, the human cost to those who suffer from an attack.

In 2010 47 vessels were hijacked in the waters off the Coast of Somalia. 174 attacks took place that year and 176 the following year. I am proud the UK is at the centre of the

international effort to combat this threat. And – together – we are making progress. There have been no successful hijackings for well over a year.

However, as you know, there is no room for complacency here. While the capacity is there and the will remains on the part of the pirate action groups. Our resolution must continue to be its equal. So we will continue to support the 3 pronged approach:

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

Together with work on the ground in Somalia to promote and increase stability.

The [Department for Transport armed guards policy](#) has been in place for well over 2 years now and our focus must now be on ensuring that work is carried out to the highest possible standard.

The publication of the '[ISO publically available specification](#)' (PAS) 28007 marked an important step in promoting high industry standards. As you may recall, I have been an advocate of this standard from the outset because I believe that raising standards will benefit us all.

It increases government's confidence in the maritime security industry.

Shipping companies have access to the high quality protection they need.

And [British PMSCs](#) will continue to be the world leaders in the field, both in terms of market share and in being at the forefront of raising standards.

I am delighted the past year has seen the significant progress we all hoped for.

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service pilot was completed and British firms are now able to achieve accredited third party certification to the ISO PAS 28007. You as an industry have demonstrated your absolute commitment to providing your services to a high standard and it is quite right that there is global recognition of that fact. ISO have submitted a paper on the progress of the PAS to the IMO Maritime Safety Committee which takes place over 10 days starting tomorrow. That paper goes into detail about the UK pilot and highlights how the UK is at the forefront of this work.

I know that supporting this industry and the work you do is not just about the big policy picture, it's about the nuts and bolts too.

Last year I assured you that we were committed to finding a resolution to the issue of floating armouries and that, the government, wanted to stand behind British industry.

I think it is a testament to the strength of the partnership between the industry and the government that as of July last year British companies were able to lawfully use floating armouries flagged to states other than the UK.

I hope this demonstrates my personal and the government's commitment to the industry and the work that is being done to secure our nation's shipping.

I know that the [Home Office](#) Minister [Norman Baker](#) spoke this morning about the Home Office project piloting the use of UK flagged floating armouries.

My officials are fully engaged in the pilot and will remain so and I am pleased that the Home Office has moved so swiftly to bring this forward.

This is not a simple issue with a simple answer but we are not afraid to ask the questions and see what works.

Last year I told you that the [MCA](#), with the assistance of SCEG were undertaking work so that armed guards did not have to undertake training twice by completing courses required by the armed guard industry and the shipping industry. I am pleased to report that this work has been completed and armed guards who have undertaken the maritime security operatives course under the auspices of City and Guilds do not have to undertake the shipping industry person with designated security duties course when on UK ships.

To further assist the armed guards industry, I also agreed with MCA that the arrangement would be circulated to all countries through the IMO.

Finally, I just want to briefly mention how we are reforming the overarching strategic approach to maritime security.

Yesterday I had the great privilege of taking part in the launch of the [national strategy for maritime security](#) at the UK Chamber of Shipping, speaking alongside the [Minister for the Armed Forces](#).

It is the first time the UK has had a single national strategy setting out how we will protect our vital maritime interests and I would like to thank the SCEG for your support developing the strategy.

It has greatly benefitted from the experience and knowledge of many of the people in this room. One of the most important parts of the strategy is the new Industry National Maritime Security Committee. It represents a unique partnership between industry and government to improve the security of our seas. I was very pleased that the chairmanship will be held by Gavin Simmonds from the UK Chamber of Shipping. The committee has also invited Paul Gibson to represent the SCEG on the committee and I am pleased he has accepted.

The SCEG is an incredibly important group and I want you to play a full part in protecting the country's maritime interests and infrastructure.

To sum up, the most important message I wanted to get across this time last year was that we were listening and we wouldn't shy away from the hard or the difficult issues.

I hope that we've shown over the past year progress is possible and has been made and that where we have done so, it has been in partnership.

Over the coming year we will continue to listen and to talk to discuss with you about the changing challenges you face and how we can better support you.

I am immensely grateful to all of you for being part of that conversation.

Thank you for listening today. I look forward to working with you over the coming months to improve the security of our seas.

Thank you.