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Research project on piracy and maritime terrorism starts

The joint research project “Piracy and Maritime Terrorism as a Challenge for Maritime Trade Security: Indicators, Perceptions and Options for Action” (PiraT) started in April. Alongside the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), which is leading the project, the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), the Hamburg-Harburg University of Technology (TuHH) and the Bucerius Law School (BLS) are involved; The Institute for Strategic Future-Analysis (ISZA) of the Carl-Friedrich-von-Weizsäcker Foundation has been granted a sub-contract. Associated partners are i.a. the German Shipowners' Association (VDR), the German Insurance Association, the JWA Marine Ltd, the German section of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the German Federal Criminal Police Office (KI-BKA) as well as the trade union of the German Federal Police (GDP).

The Federal Ministry of Research and Education (BMBF) granted just under one million Euros for the project group within the framework of the German government research program for civil security “Securing the Commodity Chain” (<http://www.bmbf.de/en/6293.php>). The project, the largest of the IFSH to date, has a running time of 33 months. During the course of PiraT, multiple workshops, publications and a closing conference are planned.

Increased numbers of attacks by pirates, as well as the latent danger of international terrorism, have, more and more, moved questions of maritime security into the public consciousness. The threat to maritime trade from non-governmental actors has become even more highly charged, considering the piracy on Somalia's coast. The German economy is particularly affected by it, as the majority of German trade is done by sea. Furthermore, German shipowners have the largest container fleet in the world, and suffer the highest number of attacks by pirates.

In this context, the goal of the project network PiraT is, on the one hand, to provide a discussion forum on maritime trade security for representatives of politics, business and academia to identify the needs and expectations of all involved and to increase the general understanding for the significance of maritime trade security. The project will, on the other hand, also draw up a catalogue of non-military options that will enable a coordinated response.

Scientists from the areas of security studies, economics, security-technology and jurisprudence are thereby working together in a tight network. As a first step, a risk model will be compiled to measure the level of insecurity. In addition, the coordination between the actors involved will be analyzed, based on the concept of “Security Governance”. Complementary to this, the distribution of damages to the German economy will be identified according to its diverse branches, which is especially important for logistic firms and the insurance industry. Already existing security technologies will be studied for their effectiveness in reducing vulnerabilities, and built into a cost-benefit analysis. An analysis of the existing international-, European-, and national legal framework should reveal gaps and deficits in steering capacities. The courses of action and packages of measures to be developed will thus be legally incorporated.

PiraT seeks to bring together political science risk analysis, technological security solutions, and legal and economic approaches with the goal of developing interdepartmental options for action that will enable the state to implement non-military measures to strengthen maritime trade security – now and in the future.

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