

## Somali pirates seize more vessels

**Somali pirates have seized a British-owned cargo ship and a Taiwanese ship, maritime officials say, after capturing three other vessels over the weekend.**

The UK-owned Malaspina Castle was boarded in the Gulf of Aden, while the Taiwanese ship was seized near the Seychelles, according to reports.

A French yacht, a Yemeni tugboat and a German ship were also captured in the pirate-plagued waterway at the weekend.

The region is heavily patrolled by a growing international naval coalition.

But correspondents say the pirates have been venturing further off coastal areas to evade the warships from more than a dozen nations patrolling the area in an attempt to deter the gangs.

The 32,000-tonne Malaspina Castle, which was carrying a cargo of iron, was seized on Monday morning.

The vessel, which flies a Panamanian flag, has a crew of 24 - from Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine and Philippines.

Andrew Mwangura, of the Mombasa-based East African Seafarers' Assistance Programme, told Reuters news agency it is UK-owned but operated by Italians.

The Taiwanese fishing boat, with a crew of 29, was hijacked 260km (160 miles) from the Seychelles.

The French yacht, with four crew, was seized on Saturday off north-east Somalia.

It was being sailed by the pirates towards the Somali Puntland coast, said Kenya-based non-governmental organisation Ecoterra International, which monitors piracy.

The Yemeni tugboat was captured on Sunday, a day after the 20,000-tonne German container vessel, the **Hansa Stavanger**, was seized.

More than 130 pirates attacks, including close to 50 successful hijackings, were reported in 2008, threatening one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.



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