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## 'Malaysia a good place to track pirate attacks'

2011/04/17

By Adrian David  
news@nst.com.my

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Innovation Strategies International founding president Dr Harold J. Raveche says satellite images can detect pirate vessels within a minute

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's geographic location and political stability are ideal for the establishment of an international data-processing centre for maritime satellite tracking of piracy in the Gulf of Aden, said a leading expert.

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Innovation Strategies International founding president Dr Harold J. Raveche said Malaysia was already playing its crime-watch role with the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre and the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism, both of which were based here.

"Now, you can look a step further with the setting up of an international centre that provides high-resolution satellite data for maritime tracking of piracy in the Gulf of Aden, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

"This facility will greatly boost international efforts to combat the menace which is threatening the global commercial shipping industry and the lives of many mariners," he said during a presentation at the Armed Forces Defence College here recently.

He added that advanced high-resolution satellite imagery and radar technology, with improved sensors and new algorithms for signal processing, could relay vital information for enforcement agencies to detect pirate vessels, called skiffs, within one minute as compared with the present 30 minutes.

"We understand that defence technology is being limited in view of security and safety concerns, but the time has come for a unified global effort for non-sensitive commercial applications to safeguard maritime cargo vessels and for disaster-relief humanitarian operations."

Raveche revealed that there were 445 pirate attacks reported worldwide last year, a 10 per cent increase from the previous year.

On the figures, he said 53 vessels were attacked with 1,181 hostages taken. He said presently, 31 vessels and 703 crew were being held in Somalia.

Raveche called for inter-governmental agreements on the use of high-resolution defence satellite images, which could be used for early detection of pirate skiffs in Arabian waters.

"These agreements can enhance research collaboration on improved sensors, signal processing algorithms and modelling of littoral waters.

"They can offer master's and doctorate-level engineering and science education programmes in cyber security, computer science, data application, data compression, data mining and cryptography for enforcement agencies so that the best technology and talent are harnessed to stay ahead of the culprits."

The skiffs, he added, were very effective in carrying waterborne improvised explosive devices.

They were used as a platform for piracy and terrorist attacks, and as a conveyance for human trafficking and smuggling narcotics.

Raveche said international collaboration was also vital to identify, track and capture self-propelled semi-submersible (SPSS) vessels used by drug traffickers.

"There are about 4.5 million drug users in Europe. The figures for the rest of the world are more alarming."

He said the well-equipped SPSS vessels had stealth capability and were 20m long. They could travel as fast as 13 knots and carry a crew of five up to 5,000 nautical miles with a payload of 10 metric tonnes.

Raveche said satellites in space provided the "eyes and ears" for reconnaissance, communications and navigation, and currently, there were more than 550 of them transmitting huge amounts of data and information, with the United States being the main user among 29 countries.

Malaysia, on its own, had launched its second remote-sensing satellite named RazakSAT last year, after TiungSAT-1.

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