

Hijacked ARIS 13 Oil Tanker Rapidly Located with Pléiades Satellites

Case Study



Challenge

Relocate an oil tanker hijacked by pirates in emergency.

Solution and Results

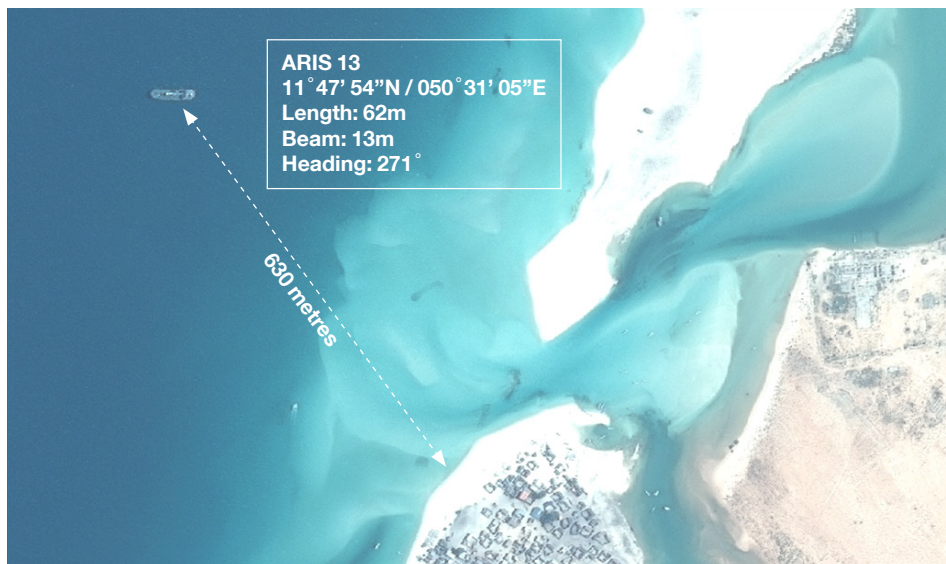
Combining the Automatic Identification System (SAT-AIS), Airbus' satellites rapid acquisition capacity and analysis expertise, ARIS 13 oil tanker was located in a few days.

Benefits

Support decision-making with actionable intelligence and understanding of the situation remotely.

“It is the willingness of Airbus to engage at speed and provide accurate and relevant output in times of stress that is helping shape our relationship. This valuable data, combined with other information sources, we share not only with our CSOs to better protect their crews, but the military as we work to develop a two-way dialogue with the CSOs of the merchant marine.”

Mark Sutcliffe, Director, CSO Alliance.



Challenge

On 13 March 2017, Somali pirates captured the ARIS 13 oil tanker and its eight Sri Lankan crew members.

The tanker was transporting bunker oil from Djibouti to Mogadishu when it was attacked by armed men aboard two skiffs. The vessel's capture was the first successful hijacking of a commercial vessel by Somali pirates since 2012.

Once onboard, the pirates cut off all communication and positioning equipment, including the AIS emitter that regularly transmits the vessel's identity, position and course.

When it lost the AIS signal from ARIS 13, CSO Alliance asked Airbus to programme the Pléiades satellites to find the vessel.

Solution and Results

The Pléiades satellites were programmed using the vessel's last known AIS positions. Reports suggested that the oil tanker had travelled west to east outside the MSPA corridor in the West Gulf of East Aden.

The first image was programmed on 14 March, the day CSO Alliance raised the alert, based on ARIS 13's last known positions. The image was made available on the next day – 15 March.

To obtain a satellite image in 24 hours, the Pléiades satellites are programmed in Premium One Day mode. The team of maritime experts at Airbus analysed the images trying to locate and identify the vessel. ARIS 13 was not identified on the image of 15 March 2017, indicating that it had been diverted to another port.

The satellites were therefore reprogrammed on other ports along the Somali coast. ARIS 13 was identified the next day on a new Pléiades image, north-west of the port of Abo. Its length, width and North-West shape matched the vessel's technical characteristics.

Solution Description

The Vessel Report Service provides ship information reports based on satellite imagery acquisitions, as one shot or on a regular basis. The basic level of information provided is a mere ship detection report; it can optionally be enriched with ship classification, identification and activity detection.

Organisation Involved

CSO Alliance Maritime is a global community, covering all maritime regions and sectors. They are mobilising an online community of over 400 Company Security Officers from more than 40 countries in a secure portal, allowing CSOs to connect, inform each other of risks they face, and through structured information exchange. This organisation gathers key stakeholder and the military, support their security planning and actions to more effectively counter maritime crime.



Benefits

The boat was relocated thanks to the Airbus maritime team who used AIS data and satellite imagery, as well as their maritime expertise to detect, classify and identify the boat.

Rapid tasking and acquisition of Pléiades satellites enabled CSO Alliance to inform its network quickly. This enabled the coastguards from Puntland to rapidly commence negotiations with the pirates and the vessel was freed during the night.

The quick delivery of the ship's detection report supported intervention, maximising resources and increasing efficiency.

Acting within the framework of Operation Atalanta, the French frigate Courbet established contact with the crew, providing medical assistance to one of the seamen. The frigate then escorted ARIS 13 to the Somali port of Bosaso.

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