

Maritime crime and security resources online

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This section of the Journal is designed to provide readers of IJMCS with an overview of the increasing number of diverse resources internationally available online, covering a range of pertinent and related topics about maritime crime and security. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but is designed to provide a synopsis of the rich seams of useful information that can be accessed via the internet. These sources are of particular interest to seafarers around the world, either at sea or ashore, who are unable to access hard copies.

In this short article we look at a YouTube channel; “**What is going on with shipping**” where an experienced seafarer and accomplished academic deftly describes how and why the maritime industry (shipping, ports, and the economics of shipping) does what it does and why. The commentator provides invaluable insight in an easily consumable format for newcomers and experienced practitioners alike. We also offer a short list of some of the news sources for the maritime industry (both free and subscription-based) that can help any student get a better understanding of the industry and some of the uniquely complex issues the industry confronts daily. This list is a snapshot, we would appreciate any suggestions that readers may have identified that we can add to the list.

Netflix, the global production, and streaming service, seem to have grasped the idea that the 21st century has been labelled, by some, as the maritime century. They offer a variety of television programmes and documentaries that provide a range of views and versions of maritime security and crime issues from romantic piracy stories to the much grittier side of modern hostage negotiation with Somali pirates and a slightly different perspective on Sea Power described in a French documentary.

We look at an Instagram page on piracy, in which an academic, who has conducted some detailed forensic research, dispels some of the myths and legends about pirates and piracy by piecing together incident research and melding it with the sociological background of the time to give the characters and events greater authenticity. We have also discovered a new Australian navy digital platform that allows fledgling thinkers to submit articles and established thought leaders to share their thoughts on naval doctrine and tactics in articles and podcasts.

In conversation with several academics who are now beginning to focus on maritime crime and security, specifically those looking at it from the commercial perspective, I have been told that it is difficult to understand how the maritime industry works and how difficult they find it to “break in” to the industry. Despite the critical importance of seaborne trade to the global economy, the shipping and maritime community is relatively small compared to many others. There are only about 1.6 million seafarers¹ who crew almost 100,000 ships², with up to two-thirds of them at sea at any one time, meaning they are scarce at best. Whilst some seafarers now work ashore, they often work in related industries; ship-owning companies or ship management companies, flag States (open or national), or maritime law. The costs of a shipping company’s office and the employees managing the fleet are operational costs, consequently, their roles are optimised. As a result, on average, just two or three people support each ship ashore. Most ship brokers,

¹ <https://www.ics-shipping.org/shipping-fact/shipping-and-world-trade-global-supply-and-demand-for-seafarers/> as a comparison there are 6.6 million Americans employed in the Financial Services and Insurance industry in the USA <https://www.zippia.com/advice/financial-services-industry-statistics>

² UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport 2021 p30

marine insurers (brokers and underwriters) and maritime lawyers will be based in the financial centres of the world like London, New York and Singapore and exist in a relatively small and exclusive segment of the city community. It is therefore easy to understand why students and researchers find this community and industry difficult to access.

Help is on hand; when the *MV Ever Given* ran aground in the Suez Canal on 23 March 2021, a former US seafarer and Associate Professor of History at Campbell University, North Carolina USA, called Dr Sal Mercogliano was interviewed by BBC World, which prompted a frenzy of other interviews with various international media platforms. Having already dabbled in producing a few YouTube videos and already established a reputation in the US for being a shipping expert by media stations etc, as somebody who is able to explain the complexities of commercial shipping³ he took the initiative and started daily videos called "What's going on in Suez?". His viewing figures exploded from just 3 to over 300, his reports were knowledgeable, credible, and authoritative. This popularity persuaded Sal to establish regular short YouTube videos about "**What is going on with shipping**". He now posts between 3-4 videos per week between 12-30 minutes long, that cover either a range of topical stories from the industry that have created interest during the week, or he focuses on specific incidents or events that he thinks to require explanation or further analysis. His recent coverage of the ongoing situations in the Black Sea has been excellent and demonstrates the array of factors that impact commercial shipping in a time of tension. In total, Sal has posted over 350 videos. His motivation is to inform and educate people about the shipping industry, because as he explained when the author contacted him, "too often all that is told [about the shipping industry] is the bad and the dark side of the industry." He went on to say, "too many in the industry cannot communicate with those outside or tell their story well ...so I aim to communicate what shipping is all about." As part of the videos, Sal will often refer to media articles from reputable industry platforms including *G Captain* and *Maritime Executive* (see below) and if there are useful websites that can supplement the video with additional authoritative information, he provides the links. Some of the videos can be US-focused and Sal is sometimes subjective with his opinions³ on some stories, but this tends to add authenticity rather than detracting from the point. This is a tremendous resource for students in this new area of study and an excellent way for newcomers to become familiar with some of the competing demands within the maritime industry and get a better understanding of how it works. This is a free resource but for those who visit the channel regularly, there is an option for contributing to the page to ensure this insightful service continues. <https://www.youtube.com/user/salmercogliano>

As mentioned above, there are a range of daily/weekly/monthly digital news feeds that can be signed up to free of charge which provide a selection of articles on a regular basis from across the maritime industry. In addition to incident and event reports, there are also opinion pieces, some of which are interlinked with other digital resources (CIMCEC, Stable Seas) that we have covered in previous issues of the journal. Good sources for information are as follows:

- <https://gcaptain.com/> GCaptain provides daily news coverage from across the shipping industry. The website allows visitors to dip into specific shipping areas including shipping, ports, shipbuilding, defence, accidents, and piracy. Subscription is free.
- <https://www.maritime-executive.com/> Maritime Executive is also a free daily maritime news platform. The website is configured slightly differently, but equally as informative and easy to use.
- <http://www.insurancemarinenews.com/> Marine insurance is a key factor that shapes commercial shipping activities. This website provides stories from the marine insurance perspective, which can provide very important context to events and incidents. This weekly stream is free of charge.

³ See Additional Maritime Crime & Security Resources online Vol 1 Issue 2 and podcasts 159 & 194 with CIMSEC.

- <https://lloydslist.maritimeintelligence.informa.com/> Lloyd's List was the first newspaper to be published in 1734, by Edward Lloyd the owner of the coffee house which became the first epicentre for marine insurance in the City of London. The paper provided shipping news to the financial centre of London. In 2013 Lloyd's List moved from paper and digital to just a digital publication. Lloyd's List has an outstanding pedigree as an excellent source of news about the maritime industry, but the subscription can be daunting for individual students and is designed more for industry members. University libraries of ten have subscriptions that students can access.

- <https://www.tradewindsnews.com/> Tradewinds is an excellent alternative to Lloyd's List, it is a Norwegian-based publication that has continued to publish hard copy papers and is competitively priced with Lloyd's List.

This list is not exhaustive by any means, but it is a starting point for newcomers and students to find some industry orientation points and begin to understand the fundamentals of this complex and diverse global industry. Many opinion pieces will have links to other resources, which allows readers to explore the industry thoroughly.

Netflix⁴ has released several interesting documentaries and programmes about maritime security topics including:

- **Lost Pirate Kingdom** – a six-part docuseries that covers the period of piracy along the eastern seaboard of North America and the Caribbean. The series opens around 1715, after the War of the Spanish Succession, a war between a European coalition including Great Britain, and Spain when privateering was actively used by many nations to supplement their maritime aspirations and was much more economically effective than funding a naval force. The programmes are a mixture of fact, legend and fiction, based on a range of sources including books like *The History of Piracy* (Gosse, 1932), *A General History of the Robberies & Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates* (Johnson, 1724 – although re-published several times when piracy has gained traction in public interest and popularity) that were written to entertain the reading audience rather than provide an accurate, factual record of events. The programmes are narrated by the actor Derek Jacobi, interspersed with comments and observations by a range of piracy book authors and respected academics, providing some authoritative support to elements of popular piracy myth and legend. If you are happy to accept a bit of artistic licence over factual accounts (which are limited and rarely corroborated) you are likely to enjoy this entertaining yarn.

- **"Black Sails"** is described as a historical adventure television series, produced by Stars in 2014 and was initially available on YouTube. The Black Sails series has comprised four seasons and a total of 38 programmes all now available on Netflix. This fictitious story is advertised as the prequel to Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* with the principal character being Captain Flint, a notorious pirate, who haunts the story of *Treasure Island* as a potential threat. For those who enjoy a buccaneering ride through the golden age of piracy, this could be a binge-worthy opportunity to get a piracy fix.

- In complete contrast to the two previous programmes **"Negotiators"** is a four-part docuseries that looks at the factual, cold, and sometimes brutal process of hostage negotiations. Each of the four programmes explores very different scenarios, Pirate Hijack, Taipei Hostage Crisis, Sydney Siege, and Embassy under Siege. Of particular interest to this Journal is, "Pirate Hijack", the first programme in the series, which covers the very long and drawn-out process of negotiation to release the crew of the *Naham 3*, a Taiwanese fishing vessel, Omani flagged with a crew of 29 from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan Province of China, and Vietnam. The vessel was hijacked by Somali pirates on 26 March 2012, 65

⁴ The author is based in Melbourne, Australia and therefore views programmes selected for an Australian audience, some of the programmes reviewed may not be available in all other regions.

nautical miles off the coast of Seychelles. The 45-minute programme follows the often-tortuous process of hostage negotiation by a team of three; Leslie Edwards – an experienced kidnap negotiator who worked on ship hijack cases throughout the period of Somali piracy, John Steed a former British Army Colonel and response coordinator for the Hostage Support Partnership and George Lamplough, partner with Holman Fenwick Willan (maritime law firm) and part of the Hostage Support Partnership. This team worked tirelessly over a period of four years, with minimal funding to secure the release of most of the crew. The programme goes through many of the trials and tribulations of the negotiation process which was not straightforward. Initially, the crew were kept onboard the fishing vessel, but when it ran aground, they moved ashore into Somalia, altering the dynamic of the negotiations markedly. The programme is confronting and brings out some of the harsh realities of modern piracy, John Steed dispels any romantic images by commenting “Somalis, I am afraid to say, treated the hostages like they treat their goats.” And when reflecting on the process for being able to negotiate effectively said, “[with the Somalis] you need to think of piracy as a business.” The programme goes through 53 months of negotiation outlining some of the harsh conversations carried out with the negotiator and the psychological torture used by the pirates against the hostages. Whilst experience is invaluable each negotiation scenario is unique prompting Edwards to comment “You have to take some risks; you have to break some rules otherwise you would never get a result.” Tragically, the captain of the vessel was killed by the pirates and two of the crew died during the period of captivity. When the ransom was agreed upon and the release eventually secured the complex process of payment delivery and the handover procedure of the hostages had to be arranged with meticulous planning and the greatest care to ensure the pirates were not spooked into aborting the exchange, renegeing on the deal or killing any of the hostages. Except for the terrifying violence of the hijacking, the release of the crew is the riskiest part of the evolution. Thankfully the operation was satisfactory, the money was paid, and all living crew were released. This programme provides an important insight into the invisible and nerve-racking activities of the negotiators and the team that supports them. These are some of the unseen and unsung heroes that worked extremely hard to ensure the safe release of thousands of innocent seafarers throughout the period of Somali piracy. For those who prefer to read about the events, the story is also told in a book by Colin Freeman titled “The mission to rescue the hostages the world forgot: “Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea”.

- The French television documentaries **Sea Power**, translated into English, gives a slightly different perspective on naval warfare that is incisive and interesting. The four programmes cover important naval platforms including Battleships, Submarines and Aircraft Carriers and chart their concurrent development during the 20th century. Some of the footage is new and several commentators offer new perspectives, which makes these programmes complementary to other programmes available.

An alternative way to get your piracy fix is to visit the voluminous “*piracyinpictures*” pages on Instagram. The page was set up by Dr Sarah Craze, from the University of Melbourne, Australia in June 2021. Initially, Sarah wanted to promote her book “Atlantic Piracy in the Early Nineteenth Century” and share her objective and factual view of maritime piracy. On the Instagram pages, she has followed several themes including, pirates of southeast Asia, pirate escapees, pirate myths and privateers of the world. She treats each theme with her detective-like inquisitiveness, providing pithy passages that are fun and interesting to read. Craze started writing a blog in 2018 (www.somalipiracy.net/blog-1), focused on Somali piracy, with a number of well researched pieces on specific piracy attacks and incidents in the Indian Ocean. She purposely avoided the so-called Golden Age of Piracy which she believed was already covered in a multitude of other websites. This blog now effectively duplicates her Instagram content. Her writing is refreshingly concise, factual, and entertaining. It dispels many of the sensationalised exaggerated stories told of pirates on the high seas. Over the last 15 months, she has posted around 200 short accounts and has

a respectable following. Her fascinating book “Atlantic Piracy in the Early Nineteenth Century” will be reviewed in the next issue of the Journal.

Finally, the author has recently discovered a fascinating Australian podcast “**Juene École: pod & pen**” (<https://jeuneecole.com/>). Juene École is designed to provide an opportunity for emerging and established thinkers on maritime security, naval strategy and global affairs to explore, share and discuss evolving military and naval doctrine, concepts and ideas and how they apply in the modern maritime domain. Juene École (Young School) is named after a French initiative born at the turn of the 19/20th centuries, to develop innovative strategic naval concepts, exploiting the new naval technologies (steam power, armoured ships, torpedos etc) to prevent British naval dominance. The French colonial interests, at the time, were as globally extensive as the British, and subserviency to the Royal Navy was understandably counter-intuitive for the *Marine Nationale* hence their desire to exploit innovative ideas to re-establish some mutual respect between the two fleets.

The digital platform was created by an inspiring group of Australian naval officers who wanted to provide a public platform where they could link up with respected academic and industry leaders to explore established ideas and encourage younger naval officers to engage in the process of concept development. There are six written articles, mostly on naval history and strategy, from some distinguished authors. There are also eleven podcasts that again largely cover naval/military subjects but do reflect a desire to open the aperture to include a more diverse range of maritime subjects. The podcasts are hosted by “Lucy” (pseudonym), an impressive young lady whom the author first noticed when she was a young sailor in the Royal Australian Navy and gave an impressive presentation at the Pacific 2019 international Sea power Conference in Sydney, Australia. She is now a commissioned officer bursting with energy and ideas and effectively manages her guests through each episode of the podcast.

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