



Nexus Consulting Group

Securing Your Future Throughout the World

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Vetting Armed Maritime Security Firms 2.0 More questions to ask maritime security firms

In July 2011, when firms offering maritime security (MARSEC) services were rapidly emerging, we authored a paper called "*Vetting an Armed Maritime Security Firm - 10 questions to ask any potential security firm, from a security firm*" (<http://gcaptain.com/nexus-consulting-notes-troubling/>) and Nexus received tremendous positive feedback on the paper. As a matter of course, it helped launch a number of industry standards like GUARDCON, Rules on the Use of Force (RUF), and many others.

Although the MARSEC world has successfully diminished threats posed by Somali piracy, the threat still hasn't been eliminated two years later - and worse, it has proliferated in areas like the Gulf of Guinea and S.E. Asia. Just last week, insurers of Greek owned MV Blida, seized Jan 2011, paid a ransom of between \$2.5-3.5 million USD for her release.¹

Piracy isn't going away anytime soon. Nexus has espoused time and time again, "As long as merchants have and will take to the high-seas, so too will pirates." The adjective preceding "pirate" may change ("Viking", "Wokou", "Caribbean", "Barbary", "Somali", "Nigerian"), but piracy will transcend.

That shouldn't be daunting to ship owners and operators. Piracy and maritime crimes are risks which are identifiable and can be mitigated. I will note this again:

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Working with an accredited MARSEC firm will help you identify and mitigate these maritime risks and threats.

The question at hand is "How do we tell what an accredited MARSEC firm is verses the number of fly-by night firms?" These questions should help you in validating your MARSEC firm.

¹ http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/post/1973/MV_Blida_Pirates_Fight_Over_Ransom

Questions to Ask Armed Maritime Security Firms

1. Are you ISO 9001:2008 Certified?

"We have a number of certificates... (which we created and printed ourselves!)"

- If it doesn't say "ISO 9001:2008 certified", they aren't. A number of firms are popping up with various certificates and compliance statements. There is only one ISO standard which is conveyed to Accredited Certification Bodies (CB's) who are authorized to issue compliance certificates.

Here is an exemplar of an organization promoting unaccredited "certifications":



Firms using fraudulent or unaccredited "certifications" should be your first warning flag when working with a MARSEC firm. There are only a few MARSEC firms who are ISO 9001:2008 certified, make sure yours is one of them!

Later this year we will see the launch of ISO 28007 certification. This will be the actual ISO standard for Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs), but it doesn't exist yet. Any MARSEC firm who tries to sell you on being ISO 28007 certified is outright lying. At this point PMSCs can obtain ISO 28000 certification and *ISO 28007 compliance*. **There are no CB's at this point certifying PMSCs in ISO 28007.**

2. Does the security company protect any vessels from their own flag state?

"We don't focus on our flag-state vessels because insurance is too high and there just aren't enough vessels."

- If you're being contacted by a US security company that doesn't provide armed details to any US firms, there should be a huge red flag raised. Remember that all legal authorities for a security firm originate within their home country. If a security firm can't get work in their own country, a shipping firm should be hesitant to do business with that organization.

3. How do they procure and export their weapons?

"We use a third party exporter overseas for "ease" of operations."

- If your security provider can't obtain weapons export licenses within their own state, be cautious. You could be unintentionally breaking international law by facilitating an illegal transaction. Firms using "Floating Armories (FA)" and "Operator Support Vessels (OSV)" should be heavily scrutinized. Most use these because they cannot obtain proper licensing.

4. Which P&I clubs have vetted them?

"We have all the insurance you need."

- And they may, but if your P&I club hasn't vetted or at least accepts reciprocity from other P&I clubs, none of the insurance may matter. Moreover, many firms have been black-listed by various P&I clubs.

5. Most importantly, ask for prior CSO's from firms they have covered and contact them.

"We've covered hundreds of vessels already."

"Great, can you put me in touch with those CSOs so we can verify?"

"Oh, ahhh, well, ya see..."

- Ask for references and contact them. Don't just take anyone's word for their experiences. If a CSO isn't willing to speak to another CSO about their satisfaction with a particular security provider, it's most likely because there isn't satisfaction or worse, never even a team on those vessels.

Nexus Consulting Group of Alexandria (Nexus Consulting), a veteran-owned, private security company based in the Washington, DC area. Nexus Consulting currently provides full-scope supply-chain security services to U.S. and international ship owners and ship management firms.

Flag-state Authorizations



Biographical for Kevin Doherty, President, Nexus Consulting

A former US Marine and Special Agent within the US intelligence community, Kevin currently owns and runs Nexus Consulting Group - a veteran-owned, full scope security firm.

Mr. Doherty's career has focused on maritime security, anti-terrorism operations, intelligence, and nuclear non-proliferation. Mr. Doherty has served as personal security detail to a number of senior US officials and high-profile politicians including Secretary of Energy Dr. Samuel Bodman and Spencer Abraham, US Ambassador to Iraq and the UN Zalmay Khalilzad, and Governor Mitt Romney.

Mr. Doherty has held the highest clearances in the US government and is one of only a handful of Special Agents that has been assigned to the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Special Operations (OSO).

Mr. Doherty has testified before a number of congressional hearings and sub-committees on security and piracy matters, has been featured on a number of blogs and interviews, and has been a guest on the Fox News "Neil Cavuto" show.

Born in Massachusetts, Mr. Doherty attended Bridgewater State University for undergraduate studies, the University of Tennessee in Knoxville for graduate studies, and was issued his first US Coast Guard Z-card in 1989.



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