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Espada extends security operations into the Gulf of Aden

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Espada Logistics and Security Group has expanded its operations to include the Gulf of Aden, as the number of pirate attacks on ships continues to rise.

The Gulf of Aden, which extends about 700 miles, connects the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean between Yemen and Somalia.

“Despite the increase in military patrols ... Somali pirates have increased their attacks against the ships that transit this region,” says Jim Jorrie, president of San Antonio-based Espada.

Espada provides security services for the merchant marine and offshore industries. Merchant marines are the officers and crews on ships in the commercial shipping industry. Espada contracts with both commercial firms and governments of countries who use the Gulf of Aden to transport goods from port to port.

Espada typically has contract teams made up of between three and 10 people that provide armed protection for its clients. The company recently inked a pair of contracts in the Gulf of Aden and is working on finalizing several more.

Jorrie declined to say how many teams the company has. Most of the members of Espada’s team are former military veterans.

According to the International Maritime Bureau, there were over two dozen actual and attempted acts of piracy in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia in 2007.

The International Maritime Bureau is a department of the International Chamber of Commerce. The IMB is responsible for investigating crimes related to maritime trade and transportation, specifically piracy and commercial fraud.

Jorrie says the Gulf of Aden expansion is a natural fit for the company, which has provided similar security services in South America for the past five years, protecting oil and gas exploration teams from insurgent fighters.



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Jim Jorrie, president of Espada Logistics and Security Group, is now providing security for ships traveling through the Gulf of Aden, near Somalia.



“We already had a large roster of ex-Special Forces personnel with anti-piracy and anti-insurgent operations experience,” Jorrie says. “Like our work in South America, our security teams ... have access to a vast information network that allows them to get the latest intelligence and threat assessments for our maritime customers.”

High tech

While the company is expanding its reach in the world, Espada is also embracing new technologies to keep the company as efficient as possible.

Robert Schorr, technical adviser for Espada, says the company will soon add a technical piece to the operations to allow Jorrie to track what his crews are doing while working in both the Gulf of Aden and in South America. The new technology will provide another layer of security for crews working on ships.

“Technology is critical,” Schorr says.

Beginning next year, Espada will provide video surveillance on ships to track possible pirate attacks. Espada crews will also be able to communicate in real time with a control center either at a port in the Gulf of Aden or with a control center in San Antonio.

“Technology has a very big place (in this industry),” Schorr says. “(Espada) needs to be able to manage multiple sites.”

The new technology piece will allow Espada to deploy not only security teams to locations in the Gulf of Aden or in South Africa but deploy electronic security technology with those teams as well.

“This is a tremendous ... for (Espada’s) clients,” Schorr says.