



security

Modern piracy:

what the experts say

THE AGENZIA INVESTIGATIVA
MARCO VALDETTARO'S
OPINION.

Superyacht international, spring 2009

Nowadays, pirates use fast motor launches with multiple outboard engines and are armed with daggers, Kalashnikovs, semiautomatic pistols and grapnels. The proceedings are always the same, the vessel under attack tries to flee, the pirate craft draws close enough to launch its grapnels and the attack takes its course. Pirates are now to be found in various parts of the world, especially where they have always existed historically and continue to proliferate and launch attacks in more numerous areas than before. Normally these areas are: natural paradises which represent yachtsmen and mariners' favoured routes or seas with an intense traffic of large merchant ships. Modern pirates have always operated, however over the past 20 years they have sadly become more famous probably because they shifted their attention from small yachts to larger ships. Undoubtedly, the ships' commercial and strategic importance attracts the press. Historically, the only and most efficient anti pirate unit, is a French one, that has been operating, for some time now, in

areas considered at risk with a small but efficient fleet.

The unit, comprising especially trained men and adequate aero-naval support, is stationed according to the hot zones in an attempt to contain the phenomena. Recently, Russia and China and other nations, possibly induced by acts of piracy also hitting merchant shipping have also deployed small fleets in high-risk areas. However, getting back to the 'close at heart' yachting world, piracy has never ceased for this sector since the times of the privateers in the Caribbean or of those in Malaysia and in South-East Asia. There have been scores of attacks on peaceful mariners and many ended happily, maybe with a little fright and a small or large loss of money and belongings on endured by the victims. Others, however ended tragically, the most recent episode dates back to 2006 with the killing of an Italian skipper in the Caribbean Sea between Tobago and Trinidad. Nor can one forget the assassination of the famous skipper, Sir Peter Blake. A map of where piracy hits yachtsmen is easily outlined: off Columbia, the North coast of Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Madagascar, The Malaccan Islands, Islands of the Mekong Delta, the Gulf of Aden etc.etc. We would however prefer to indicate the scenarios that could be at risk: a sea that is easily crossed or at least with medium difficulty, a beautiful sea and coastline, a nation which has a very poor coastline with little coastal control by either the police or the coast guard, a highly attractive spot frequented by yachtsmen that are usually drawn to it by its natural beauty or because an area is on course of another of greater renown, an area that is so large that the likelihood of crossings or encounters with

other mariners are remote. Amid the various services we have been offering yachtsmen for years there's an anti pirate consultancy service. We've matured a long experience in researching real attacks, examining and conducting statistical cross checks on the modes of assault and their specifics which are continually updated with, places, nationality, habits, and weapons. Finally, we can also boast our personal experience in performing our duty in hot zones on behalf of our clients. On the strength of this, we would like to offer our advice to seamen who may not be particularly appetizing preys to be held at ransom due to their professional ties or financial standing. (Such clients are codified into class A of our protocol.)

- 1) Cruise at least 30 to 40 miles away from the coastline at risk.
- 2) If for nautical reasons, like strong contrary currents and sea, one has to head inland, it is preferable to do so at night time.
- 3) At night, don't activate the transponder, the radar or the navigation lights to avoid being detected.

4) Avoid transmitting with VHF or SSB radios.

5) To avoid collision when navigating without lights be aware of other vessels that might be doing the same thing and be very wary of cargos that could cross your course because they will be unable to see you in such conditions.

6) When cruising in conditions under points 2,3,4, and 5 cargos must be recognised as such and be certain of their kind of ship, at that point, so as to be visible, navigating lights may be switched on. If uncertain, it is best to alter course and slip away in the dark.

7) Keep little money aboard hidden but easily findable for possible intruders, maybe even some fake watch replicas that can be readily mistaken and slipped off for the intruders' benefit. Pirates, look for money, gold, jewellery, watches and electronics and they rarely seize the yacht. Should they not find anything aboard, then they are capable of becoming very violent.

8) Never drop anchor in hot spots or in areas one is not sure of. If it's indispensable, it would be more advisable to do so in proximity of other yachts, provided that these are recreational yachts as well.

9) Ashore, never be ostentatious with money when touring or merely shopping. Women should refrain from wearing precious jewelry and should avoid appearing sexy. In hot zones it is always best to haggle about prices even when not very high.

10) Never discuss or let on about departure times or course chosen nor of how many people are on board or other information that could be useful to pirates.

11) We strongly recommend the absence of firearms unless carried by personnel trained in their handling, in personal defence including that of others too and in the tactics to be deployed in case of attack. In many cases strikes turned sour because the crew or a single member had a hostile reaction.

In short we advise caution and a lot of care. To those owners, in the A category we strongly recommend to turn to professional help before embarking. To plan everything out in detail and to weigh up the possibilities of coming out unscathed. The presence of professionals aboard, with their experience, their equipment and training and eventually even with their weapons can guarantee pleasant cruising in wonderful places. For customers in this bracket we operate as follows:

- 1) We study the set course to verify its risks and evaluate the degree of peril.
- 2) We inform our client of zones at risk and what these entail and where necessary we suggest alternative courses to reduce risks to the minimum. On the strength of our years of research on the zones at risk we identify the times of lesser danger for safer passages.
- 3) Through investigative channels, we seek to find other yachtsmen who wish to transit at the same time of passage. Touristy areas are frequently visited and since two or three yachts are a deterrent to pirate raids, the chances of other boats wanting to steer the same course are multiple.
- 4) The personnel embarked carries weapons and is trained specifically in handling pirate attacks. The staff is also capable of sailing a motor or sailing vessel without auxiliary help and can therefore even be useful in "particular" cases.
- 5) Night vision equipment would be brought aboard to control cargos or other vessels' crossing course or to watch surrounding vessels when at anchor. On sailing vessels when under sail at night we even use acoustic sensors.
- 6) During such crossings we naturally apply the advice given before forehand to mariners in the non A category.

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SUPERYACHT'S SECURITY

Superyacht international, march 2006

We have often found ourselves talking to owners, shipyard staff involved in the construction of superyacht and brokers who work closely with buyers and who also use these vessels for professional reasons. On several occasions it has emerged that owners need to be able to rely on an effective security service, work that must be done by professionals capable of foreseeing and coping with most of the risks linked to using a yacht, irrespective of what it is being used for. In order to better understand what the security market offers and above all to understand if a specific sector is ready to meet the needs of these large yachts exists, we contacted the Marco Valdettaro Investigation Offices in La Spezia. At this stage, something has to be said about the location of the



office. The fact that the headquarters of this agency specialising in security services are in La Spezia, a city linked to the management and handling of boats and yachts in general, is of no surprise because our navy "marines" and so called "frogmen" are based right here in this Ligurian city. Neither is it by chance that part of the staff working in the office in La Spezia



and involved in the work aimed at these large crafts, comes from these sectors. The Marco Valdettaro Office has been working in the investigation and security business since 1997 and has continually taken on highly specialised staff who are constantly being updated. They come from the Navy and Merchant Navy, the field of nautical sports, investigation, security, electronic sectors and elite corps from the military and police forces. The staff is all experts in martial arts and fighting techniques, they hold a sailing licence for every kind of sailing and motor boat, are qualified radiotelephone operators for ships, hold an advanced scuba diving licence and U.L. M. pilot licence and BSL first aid qualifications. All this allows the Ligurian investigation office to offer a vast range of intelligence and security services, activities increasingly requested by fleet owners or individual boats, both for their personal safety or that of their family and company, as well as for the craft itself even when it is not in use. Obviously, considering the size of the office, the work carried out for the yachting industry is only a part of what they do for organisations, companies, individuals and law firms on a daily basis, but the advantage of this is that it has access to a tight knit international network that it can make use of to produce the best results. The nautical and maritime experience of the team

members means they can act efficiently to solve problems that may not even be strictly related to security, like for example, the substitution of a crew, if necessary. To guarantee an effective active and passive security service, the work done by the group in La Spezia ranges from the analysis of on board safety from a technical point of view, prevention of criminal activity that could harm the owner and crew, planning alternate routes to avoid unsafe waters, infiltrate the crew undercover to get an idea of their intentions and constantly monitor their work, ascertain the integrity and morality of a new member of staff and anti-sabotage controls. These kind of services are aimed mainly at owners with or without crew, who need to reassure themselves, their family or guests that they have acquired a certain level of safety needed for formal meetings or cruises. They are also aimed at those wishing to hire a super-yacht when they are unfamiliar with both the boat and crew being provided. As well as the services mentioned above, the Marco Valdettaro Investigation Office remove phone and room tapping, deal with industrial counter-espionage, provide anti-kidnapping consulting, methods for preventing and handling situations such as bribery and harassment, investigative services for the safety of company assets and personal safety, underwater research and safety inspections on hulls. They also supply temporary crews, carry out undercover investigation both to check on the services provided by the company itself and to ascertain the disloyalty of members and workers and numerous other activities that include the research and gathering of material evidence or insurance and accident investigations. The protocols adopted by the firm in La Spezia in offering its services are constantly updated, according to the kind of client and their specific needs as well as changes to the situation; in other words, security is identified as a dynamic aim that requires constant work in order to achieve it and especially in order to maintain it. The potential preventative risk analysis allows them to identify the weak links in the chain set up to guarantee security, intervening where necessary and including new standards, but we have to point out that all this can only effectively be put into practice by professionals in the business and not by amateurs. This kind of professional activity undoubtedly attracts the interest of the super-yacht industry, but we have discovered that all too often people turn to structures that do not specialise in the yachting business, an area that requires specialist skills that cannot be disregarded.

For further information, please contact Agenzia Investigativa Marco Valdettaro;



SKIPPER Alessandro Bertagna; da lui è nata l'idea
 dell'agenzia per la protezione dei vip dei maxi yacht

NAUTICA Uno 007 spezzino ha creato un'agenzia per la protezione degli armatori o di chi noleggia maxi yacht

Investigatori privati al servizio dei vip

LA SPEZIA — Un body guard professionale, pronto a setacciare e ispezionare un ambiente prima che il suo protetto entri, ma anche a prendere il comando di un panfilo, se qualcosa non andasse per il verso giusto, riportandolo a terra sano e salvo: è il nuovo servizio offerto da un'agenzia investigativa spezzina per gli industriali e i grandi nomi della moda e dello spettacolo che arrivano in vacanza nel golfo ligure e noleggiavano insieme allo yacht anche l'equipaggio.

L'agenzia offre un servizio di sicurezza completo a terra e sul mare: qualcosa di più del semplice forzuto preparato in anali-

Body guard «arruolati» sotto copertura

Sembrano ospiti o uomini di fatica

ma invece vigilano sulla sicurezza

dei personaggi imbarcati. Tutti hanno seguito

i corsi di sopravvivenza di Sail Adventure

si investigativa. Piuttosto un lupo di mare con specifica preparazione, che viene inserito a bordo come uomo di fatica o come ospite, sotto copertura. Il nuovo nucleo professionale ha scelto come sigla la Wism, (World investigation security maritime group), ed è una emanazione di un investigatore storico spezzino, Marco Valdettaro.

In estate parecchi body guard di

mare sono stati "affittati" da grandi nomi dello spettacolo, sui quali vige tuttavia il massimo riserbo. Si tratta di giovani che uniscono velocità e prestanza atletica ad una formazione di analisi investigativa ed hanno frequentato in mare corsi di sopravvivenza e prevenzione promossi dalla Sail Adventure con la regia dello skipper Alessandro Bertagna, autore di studi mi-

racati alla resistenza dopo un naufragio. Il vip in vacanza vuole stare tranquillo. Fino ad oggi si era limitato al classico servizio di sicurezza. Con i tempi che corrono, non potendo contare su equipaggi di fiducia ma su personale arruolato all'ultimo momento, di diverse nazionalità, preferisce non correre rischi: e sapere di avere a bordo almeno un marittimo fidato, capace di interrompere un eventuale ammutinamento o tentativo di rapimento, e comunque di riportare il panfilo a terra, in tutta sicurezza, come comandante.

Pagina a cura
 di
Corrado Ricci

La Nazione, 04 ottobre 2005

Il Secolo XIX, 28.09.2005

Body guard in mare, professione che piace agli spezzini

Sempre più vip frequentano il golfo spezzino, noleggiando panfili con interi equipaggi a bordo. E fra le nuove professioni, nasce quella del body guard di mare: un professionista della sicurezza, pronto ad operare sotto copertura, come ospite, e a trasformarsi all'occasione in comandante del mezzo, e riportarlo a terra senza problemi. Anche in caso di difficoltà meteo marine. I nomi sono coperti dal riserbo. In estate, però, industriali e nomi noti dello spettacolo si sono affidati ai body guard spezzini della neonata Wism, world investigation security maritime group: una sorta di evoluzione marinara della tradizionale figura della guardia del corpo, nata come emanazione dello studio investigativo Marco Valdettaro.

«Si tratta di persone che hanno già una preparazione di base - sottolinea Valdettaro - e poi operano nello specifico. Ci sono diportisti particolari, che possono permettersi un certo tenore di vita, e non hanno difficoltà a prendere a noleggio una imbarcazione di diversi metri con tutto il personale a bordo. Viaggiare per mare senza poter contare su persone di fiducia può costituire un rischio. Ecco la necessità di avere accanto una persona che garantisca sicurezza

personale, ma sia pronta anche a mettere fine alla crociera, se serve, mettendosi ai comandi. E ad assicurare interventi rapidi di prevenzione».

Valdettaro precisa che in termini di legge non si forniscono guardie del corpo, ma personale di protezione preventiva: in pratica, si agisce prima che possa accadere qualcosa, e non quando è già accaduta. Compito, questo, delle forze di polizia.

Per i ragazzi spezzini interessati al settore, si è aperto un mestiere nuovo. Accanto alla formazione in termini penali, criminalistici, di analisi investigativa, i giovani hanno seguito un corso mirato sulla sicurezza in mare con il noto skipper lericino Alessandro Bertagna. «E' stata un'esperienza insolita - sottolinea Bertagna - ho fatto corsi di sopravvivenza in mare un po' dovunque, perfino su un'isola deserta, e in immersione, per testare come la condizione di naufrago agisca sul corpo e sulla psiche. Non avevo mai operato prima con professionisti della sicurezza. Credo che Spezia stia cambiando. Nella nautica, grazie all'Università, ai professionisti, a Porto Lotti che tira sempre di più, siamo diventati una Antibes del golfo».



S. C. Numerosi i professionisti della sicurezza sui grandi grandi yacht

GOLFO I mestieri di 'nicchia' che segnano lo sviluppo della nautica

Crociere, uno 007 privato per la sicurezza dei vip

LA SPEZIA — La dimostrazione dello sviluppo di un settore economico, al di là della crescita dell'occupazione e del denaro messo in circolazione, viene dai mestieri di «nicchia» che prendono forma all'interno del settore stesso. Insomma, prodotti e i servizi mirati come nuova frontiera della crescita di un comparto, cogliendo l'opportunità delle «domande» consolidate o in fieri che poggiano sull'utenza. Così è per la nautica da diporto alla Spezia, dove fra i segmenti più allettanti per l'economia locale c'è quello costituito dai vip che possono permettersi yacht da favola. Ebbene, sulla scia della carat-

terizzazione che sta assumendo il golfo nell'ospitare la costruzione e la permanenza di yacht a portata di armatori danarosi (per lo più personaggi di spicco dell'imprenditoria e della politica con bisogno di privacy e tranquillità) — attraverso le produzioni degli yacht di lusso (cantiere Baglietto), porticcioli *in* (Porto Lotti) e futura base delle barche d'epoca (Le Grazie) — c'è chi si è «inventato» l'offerta di una speciale prestazione, all'insegna della «security»: l'organizzazione di crociere in tutto il mondo col preventivo esame dei potenziali fattori di rischio in relazione alle mete dei viaggi (la Spezia com-

presa) e alle feste o ai meeting che si intendono effettuare a bordo. A mettere a punto l'offerta è un investigatore privato spezzino, saldando la sua grande esperienza professionale con la passione per il mare. Lui è Marco Valdettaro; coordina uno speciale gruppo d'intelligence nel quale sono presenti varie figure utili alla bisogna: dallo skipper di lungo corso chiamato a condurre lo yacht a vela o a motore, al sub potenzialmente utile ad effettuare i controlli esterni allo scafo per prevenire incursioni indesiderate e, ancora: esperti in arti marziali, piloti di elicottero (per la protezione e i trasferimenti rapidi via-aerea de-



YACHT Il panfilo del Re di Giordania a Porto Venere

gli armatori). Ad apprezzare il servizio reso è stato lo skipper spezzino Alessandro Bertagna, chiamato da un armatore a trovare soluzioni al bisogno di sicurezza durante una crociera ai Caraibi. «Posso dire che il pacchetto di servizi all'insegna della security messo a punto dallo studio di Marco Valdettaro risponde perfettamente alla domanda dei vip

che possiedono mega yacht». Quali vip hanno goduto delle prestazioni? Impossibile, ovviamente, saperlo da Bertagna e tanto meno da Valdettaro. Quest'ultimo una cosa però la dice: «Sì, fra le ragioni che spingono gli armatori a fare base alla Spezia per svernare o a prevedere una sosta nel golfo c'è anche l'offerta dei miei servizi...».

Corrado Ricci