

Pléiades Helped Locating Hijacked Aris 13 Oil Tanker



Pleiades, Somalia, 17 March 2017

THE CHALLENGE

On 13 March 2017, Somali pirates hijacked the Aris 13 oil tanker along with its eight Sri-Lankan crew members, whilst transporting bunker oil from Djibouti to Mogadishu. Once on-board, the armed pirates cut off all the communication and positioning equipment including the Automatic Identification System (AIS) emitter, which regularly transmits the vessel's identity, position and course. When the CSO Alliance (a maritime community countering maritime crime on a global scale) lost Aris 13's AIS signal they needed immediate high-resolution imagery to identify the vessel's location.

The high-resolution Pléiades sensor was charged, with the OneDay tasking option, to obtain high-priority satellite images within 24 hours.

SOLUTION & RESULTS

The high-resolution Pléiades sensor was charged, with the OneDay tasking option, to obtain high-priority satellite images within 24 hours. The first image was taken near the port of Alula, on the north coast of Puntland. The ship was expected there due to the European counter-piracy operation EU NAVFOR (Op Atalanta), which initially indicated that pirates had hijacked the vessel. However, it was not possible to identify Aris 13 in the image taken on the 15 March 2017. A new acquisition was tasked with OneDay to capture the north west of the Port of Abo, in which Aris 13 was visible the next day. The detailed image allowed clear identification of the tanker's length, width, shape and technical characteristics, and the crane on the middle deck.

BENEFITS

- **Very simple and fast** satellite tasking process and imagery delivery through the online GeoStore
- Satellite images **saved time and cost**, whilst providing timely visibility of the remote and dangerous area
- **High-resolution imagery** enabled clear remote identification

CONCLUSION

The same night that the images were delivered, the Puntland coastguards began negotiations with the pirates and the vessel was released.