

## Jolly Roger in the Littorals by Maj Douglas J. MacIntyre

### Background

You are the battalion landing team (BLT) operations officer within 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (31st MEU(SOC)). The MEU is currently part of a three-ship amphibious ready group (ARG) consisting of an amphibious assault ship, amphibious transport dock, and deck landing ship and has a standard table of organization of BLT, aviation combat element, and MEU service support group assets.

According to the International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Bureau, attacks on shipping near Kulanesia have increased in recent months. The worst case was last week's attack on the American-flagged general cargo ship *Christina V* that left five foreign crewmen dead, the ship aground near the small fishing village of Pulau Karaj, and cargo worth an estimated \$6 million missing. No pirates or suspects were captured by government officials investigating the incident. In response to this act of piracy, the threat to international shipping lanes, and growing concern over an increasing level of extremist activity in the area, the ARG has been directed to make its way to the waters off Kulanesia.

Recent reports have identified the terrorist group al-Jibda as operating in the area and funding their operations from the sale of captured cargo and crew ransom. Two days ago, Dvar Yasin, al-Jibda's leader, declared succession from Kulanesia and a jihad against the government and Western influences within the country. He has threatened to attack all international shipping near his territory, promising "spectacular defeat of all enemies of al-Jibda."

It is estimated that al-Jibda has several thousand followers in the Pulau Karaj area and is using the town as a base for paramilitary operations against the weak central government. Last week marked the group's first major attempt to disrupt shipping in the area. Armed with several small, fast motorboats and heavy weapons, Yasin and his followers have been involved in three additional violent attacks on commercial ships since declaring their intentions. Unchallenged by government forces, it is feared that he will soon launch a major attack against nearby foreign-owned offshore oil platforms to send a message to the international community.

In response to the attack on the *Christina V* and threat to American interests, the ARG has received a warning order to patrol and interdict terrorist forces in the waters off Pulau Karaj, reinforce a nearby American-owned oil platform directly offshore, and prepare to capture or destroy Yasin and his followers if they initiate attacks on U.S. interests or property.

### Situation

Currently an estimated 12 hours sailing from the coast, planning within the ARG has centered on securing the oil platform, patrolling the nearby shipping lanes, and contingency planning. New intelligence reports Yasin, 50 of his followers, and 7 small boats near the wreck of the *Christina V* approximately 2 hours ago. Three medium-sized trucks were seen moving north along the beach from Pulau Karaj toward their location. Additionally, human intelligence sources within the town have reported that al-Jibda members have been telling followers to look for "fire in the western sky."

As the crisis action team is assembled, a message from the oil platform reports that they have been attacked by several small boats, and they estimate that there are 10 to 15 terrorists on the site. While planning commences for forces to retake the oil platform, the MEU commanding officer tells his commanders to give him a plan of action to "attack identified terrorist forces at the wreck to disrupt their ability to reinforce the platform and isolate that town. We may have to go in there as a follow-on mission."

### Requirement

Within a time limit of 20 minutes, develop a course of action (COA) and provide a diagram using the map to illustrate your plan. Discuss your assumptions, mission, intent, and rationale for the COA as well as any additional information requirements needed to launch these forces within the next 6 hours.

