

International School Seychelles Starts Term 'Tech-Ready' IT Infrastructure Upgraded and donation from VCS

Following its recent purchase of a new software volume license from Microsoft's local partner Victoria Computer Services (VCS), the International School Seychelles (ISS) has completed a comprehensive Information Technology (IT) upgrade just as the new term begins.

This complete overhaul of its IT systems and a new link to the fibre broadband connection form part of a progressive plan by the school to ensure that its students are provided with the latest state-of-the-art products and tools for learning.

"This upgrade is just the start of a journey for our school to become a centre of excellence in 21st century learning" said new Headmaster Daniel Roberts. "One whereby the whole school community can thrive and meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving technological arena", he added proudly.

To assist the institution in its ongoing efforts to modernize its IT infrastructure, local company VCS last week donated some of the software applications under the Microsoft Enrollment for Education Solutions (EES) agreement. This included free



ISS students looking pleased with their new gadgets

Windows 7 Enterprise Upgrade licenses worth over SCR 10,000. Historically, VCS has made many important donations to educational institutions over the past two decades, including the first ever computer donation of 20 new systems made to the Seychelles Polytechnic School some 17 years ago.

"As a partner in learning, we congratulate the school in tak-

ing this important step to become fully compliant and look forward to working with other institutions in the future" said Aisha Leopold, VCS' Software Accounts Manager.

Concerning the school's new computer lab upgrade, ISS's Head of IT, Mr. Matt Marson said that this was a fantastic opportunity for staff, students and the wider community to benefit

from some of the best equipped facilities in Seychelles.

"We are already seeing the benefits of the volume licensing program and we look forward to working with VCS and Microsoft, to developing an 'innovative teacher's network' and a technology-rich learning environment for our students" he added.

The EES is part of Microsoft's

Academic and Campus licensing program whereby academic institutions are offered a cost-effective approach to acquire bulk licenses under a single contract and manage software across multiple devices, all based on one annual count of employees.

The EES agreement also brings benefits such as the flexibility to add additional products as needed, immediate access to

upgrades and valid software assurance and security updates.

In a digital modern universe where software is often pirated and given away for free, some computer users question the need to purchase authentic licensed software.

However, it is extremely important to use licensed software as it is simply illegal to use counterfeit software.

As Seychelles joins the World Trade Organization and continues to position itself as a major offshore centre of excellence, it is crucial that international copyright laws are respected by all local institutions and businesses.

If you would like more information about Microsoft Volume Licenses please contact VCS on 4676 000 or send an email to info@vcsinet.com



Indian Ocean maritime security business booms

In the Indian Ocean, home to some of the world's busiest shipping lanes, a war still rages between Somali pirates, who have attacked 800 ships and taken 3,400 hostages in the past four years, and private security firms, some run by Americans, that are deploying an increasing number of heavily armed guards aboard those ships.

For now, at least, the security firms and their armed guards appear to be winning the war - and earning millions.

Since June, there has not been one successful pirate attack in the waters off East Africa, marking the longest stretch of peaceful transit through the region since piracy began to mount a decade ago.

The reasons, according to observers, are the increased presence of international naval vessels - and the stepped-up use of armed guards, who have successfully rebuffed every attack launched against them.

"To date," said Assistant Secretary of State Andrew Shapiro, "not a single ship with privately contracted armed security personnel aboard has been pirated. Not one."

Shipping companies are now spending close to US\$1 billion dollars per year on private armed guards; up from a mere blip in 2008, according to Oceans Beyond Piracy, a project of Colorado-based non-profit One Earth Future Foundation. About 50 percent of commercial ships transiting across the Indian Ocean now have armed guards.

With so much money to be made, companies from all over the world, including the United States, are rushing into the anti-piracy business, often drawing

from the ranks of the military's special forces. But the use of armed guards is not without controversy, with critics questioning the introduction of yet more weaponry into an already violent region.

About a dozen of the private security firms now active in the region are American, including Trident Group, Inc., a Virginia Beach-based company named after the Navy SEAL symbol.

Tom Rothrauff, president of Trident, is a former Navy SEAL - and so are all of the armed guards who work for him. At their home base in Virginia Beach, Rothrauff has his men train on a full mock-up of a ship that is complete with warning sirens, lights and the ladders pirates use to board.

He takes his recruits out on the water in the Atlantic to make sure their shooting skills are sharp. Rothrauff said not only

just a form of taxation.

"We catch a ship, tax some taxes, and then release them without harming or killing them," he said. "There's nothing wrong with that."

But that's not true. Many pirate hostages are brutalized, starved, forced to undergo amputations and some are killed.

"I want Americans to know that it's out there, it's real," said former Marine Joe Alvarado, now

AK-47," he said. "We're certainly starting to see 10 to 15 skiffs approaching ships now with 10 to 15 armed pirates with AKs and RPGs."

But Rothrauff of Trident points out that Somali pirates have never successfully hijacked a ship protected by armed guards, which he said makes the pirates furious.

"They are actively trying to work out different options and

officials at the U.S. Department of State said, "The United States supports the shipping industry's responsible use of privately contracted armed security personnel, along with the broad use of industry-developed best management practices. We will continue to closely follow developments in this growing field and actively engage with industry to enact strong industry-wide standards of professional conduct for privately contracted armed security personnel safeguarding commercial shipping."

But the members of the U.N.'s Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea sent a letter to the U.N. Security Council in June expressing concern that the private companies were flooding the Horn of Africa with weapons.

"The unmonitored and largely unregulated activities of Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs) off the coast of Somalia," said the letter "may represent a new potential channel for the flow of arms and ammunition into the region."

The Monitoring Group said the firms had already expanded their business to include the leasing of arms, and with 7,000 new weapons brought into the area, needed to be subject to international regulations.

Doherty of Nexus Consulting said he still hopes for more answers and transparency in the maritime security world.

"Life is precious and if there are folks out there using excessive force they need to be known, they need to be accountable," he said. "It would be nice for a government agency to step up and review this and say this is just or isn't. Thus far we haven't seen that happen."



A screen grab from the video taken aboard the Avocet

In a video shot by Trident on 25 March, 2011, Somali pirates are seen racing across the surface of the Indian Ocean to the Avocet, an American shipping vessel. As the pirates approach, Trident armed guards are told to fire warning shots. A massive burst of gunfire erupts. The skiff, its driver perhaps hit or killed, crashes into the side of the Avocet. A second skiff approaches the ship, and the firing continues. By the time the incident ends, an unknown number of pirates may have been injured or killed.

are the Somali pirates' arsenals "very sophisticated," with rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and AK-47 machine guns, "they're getting better."

"They can terrorize the crew into complete submission," he said. "They are good at what they do. They are skilled and they're getting trained so it's not a cake walk. It's not a joke."

Somalia is impoverished, and job opportunities are almost nonexistent, which is why so many young men turn to piracy. One incarcerated pirate recently told the BBC that the practice is



Commercial ships seeking protection from pirates pay heavily for security

a team leader for ESPADA Logistics and Security Group, Inc., a San Antonio-based company that trains its anti-piracy recruits off the coast of Miami. "It's not pirates of the Caribbean. It's no longer guys with sabers. It's real life. It's a real threat."

Kevin Doherty, head of Nexus Consulting, an Alexandria, Virginia-based armed guard company, said Somali pirate groups have over \$400 million invested in their operations.

"In 2009, we would see a skiff with one engine, three or four pirates, and they may have an

different ways of getting around guys like us," he said.

While the U.S. Coast Guard has guidelines for the use of force by American ships, there are no international laws or set standards that govern the maritime security industry in terms of reporting incidents and use of force.

"There is regulation," said Rothrauff. "Mostly for Americans, it's self-regulation."

One U.S. official, who asked not to be named, called some of these security firms "rogue companies" that are hard to govern overseas. In a statement to ABC News,