

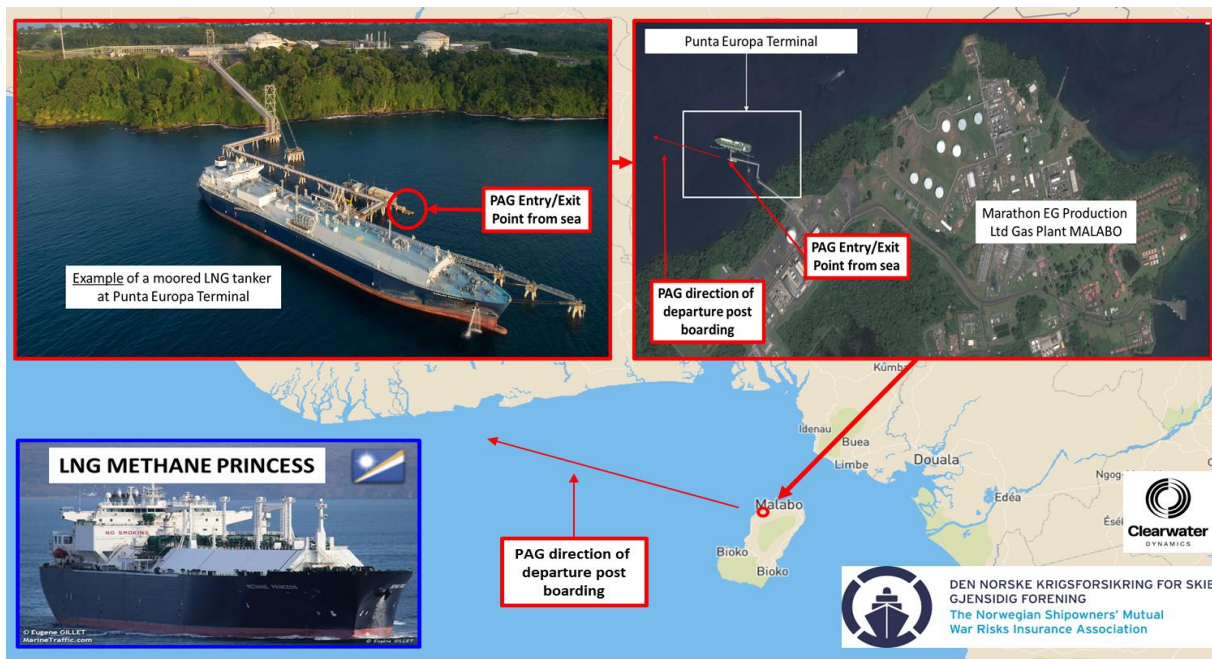


Oslo, 27.11.2020

DNK IOC INTELLIGENCE REPORT (INTREP) – METHANE PRINCESS K&R ATTACK

Executive Summary

- On 17 October 2020 between 04:39 and 04:44 LT, the moored LNG tanker METHANE PRINCESS was boarded by Nigerian pirates while at berth at the Punta Europa Terminal at Malabo (Equatorial Guinea). One Philippine crew member was kidnapped from the LNG tanker and subsequently taken to a prepared Hostage Holding Area (HHA) in the Niger Delta. The victim was successfully released on 10 November 2020 with no physical injuries.
- The attack on the LNG tanker was **LIKELY** pre-planned by the pirates, who were entirely financially motivated (traditional Kidnap-for-Ransom - K&R), appeared very experienced and professional and have **HIGHLY LIKELY** been involved in previous K&R operations.
- *The threat from PIRATES (K&R) towards merchant vessels in the CENTRAL PART OF THE GULF OF GUINEA from out to 200 nm off Lome (Togo) to 200 nm off Douala (Cameroon) is HIGH.*
- *The threat from PIRATES (K&R) towards merchant vessels in the GULF OF GUINEA except THE CENTRAL PART out to 200 nm off Tema (Ghana) and off Libreville (Gabon) is MODERATE.*
- *The threat from PIRATES (Cargo Theft) towards merchant vessels in the GULF OF GUINEA out to 200 nm off Tema (Ghana) and off Libreville (Gabon) is LOW.* (See map on page 6.)



Background

(DNK Sources) On 17 October 2020 between 04:39 and 04:44 LT, the moored and fully laden Marshall Island-flagged LNG tanker METHANE PRINCESS was boarded by five armed pirates while at berth at the Punta Europa Terminal at Malabo (Equatorial Guinea) and while involved in disconnecting operations.

(DNK Sources) The Pirate Action Group (PAG) consisted in total of nine pirates arriving from sea under cover of darkness in a black colored fiberglass skiff (10-11 meters in length) with two large outboard engines and a long aluminum ladder. The skiff was kept along a floating jetty/boat landing (see Entry/Exit point from sea at picture on page 1) below and at the end of the main terminal jetty during the boarding. An unlocked gangway took five of the pirates up to the main jetty. The five pirates were armed with one rusty and badly maintained double-magazine AK-47 assault rifle each and dressed in dark clothing (log sleeve jackets) all being bare-footed. The five pirates quickly took control of two unarmed port employees near the gangway bridge involved in the disconnecting operations. The pirates then entered the LNG tanker via this gangway with the two port employees. The five pirates later tried to enter the accommodation of the LNG tanker, but did not succeed as it was partly locked down.

(DNK Sources) Two minutes after the pirates having entered the LNG tanker, the onboard alarms were sounded and the five pirates panicked and made way for the gangway with in total three hostages, two being local port employees and one

LNG crew member of Philippine nationality being the upper deck security watch. While running down the narrow gangway towards the main jetty one of the port employees started to fight one of the pirates, resulting in the port employee jumping or falling off the gangway. The pirates left him behind and continued with now two hostages. The remaining crew onboard the LNG tanker continued with their lockdown procedure and calling local security for assistance. The five pirates left the LNG tanker less than five minutes after having entered the tanker.



(DNK Sources) When the five pirates with now two hostages arrived at the waiting skiff containing four more pirates onboard, they quickly embarked and headed for open water still under cover of darkness. As the PAG was departing the LNG terminal, the second of the port employees managed to jump out of the skiff and into the water and escaped. No shots were fired during the operation. The port employee jumping or falling off the gangway was quickly treated for his injuries inside the accommodation. The port employee jumping off the pirate skiff was treated for injuries by Equatorial Guinea security forces which arrived at the scene one hour and four minutes after the alarm was raised by the LNG tanker.

(DNK Sources) The LNG tanker departed according to plans and port approvals, the same day for her planned destination.

(DNK Sources) The PAG transited at high speed towards Nigeria partly during light hours with the abducted crew member laying down in the bottom of the skiff covered by a tarpaulin. The PAG stopped several times in the open water close to smaller fishing vessels, asking for the direction towards a coastal location in Rivers State (Nigeria). The PAG arrived in vicinity of this location three-four hours after departing the LNG Terminal.

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(DNK Source) The PAG then entered the river system and continued inland using smaller rivers/creeks throughout the first day and waited for darkness. After darkness a smaller skiff arrived, and the victim was transferred into this skiff with other pirates onboard, having a single engine and being seven-eight meters in length. Both skiffs continued for less than 30 minutes before arriving at a location which was prepared as a Hostage Holding Area (HHA).

(DNK Sources) The HHA was managed by a dedicated Guard force consisting of seven perpetrators, which rotated being 24/7 guards on duty (always two persons), fishing and resting. The Guard force, not being the same as the pirates conducted the abduction, had double-magazine AK 47 assault rifles of same poor standard as the PAG, and were more or less constantly abusing lighter drugs. In addition to the Guard force, the Gang leader and the pirate negotiator occasionally attended the HHA. There were no other hostages observed in the HHA during the abduction period. The victim was treated relatively well with access to food and water. The victim stayed in the same small house as the Guard force during his stay in the HHA. The victim was not exposed to violence.

(DNK Sources) On 10 November 2020, 24 days after being kidnapped, the victim was successfully released in Rivers State. The victim was later repatriated successfully to the Philippines.

DNK IOC Comment

(Open Sources/Vesseltracker - AIS) The Punta Europa LNG terminal is only visited by LNG tankers that export Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Since the beginning of April 2020, in average one LNG tanker has been moored at the LNG terminal every 12-13 day for loading operations, which lasted up to 48 hours depending on the size of the LNG tanker. This means that the LNG terminal has had a moored tanker for LNG loading maximum 14 % of an average month since April 2020.

(DNK Source) The LNG terminal was fully illuminated, and the two terminal employees were busy disconnecting hoses, as the loading had been completed. At the time of the attack, there were no security boats next to the LNG terminal nor any security personnel present at the jetty. And according to terminal regulations, the LNG tanker's radars were not operational during the loading operation.

(DNK Source) The two terminal employees managed to alert the EG LNG control (Duty Watch) of what was happening when the PAG arrived at the Entry Point at the jetty, about two minutes before the pirates embarked the tanker. However, the tanker was not alerted quickly enough by the EG LNG Control, as VHF towards the LNG tanker was not a sufficient means of communications at that time.

DNK IOC Assessment

The perpetrators' motives

As there were no mentioning of any political claims, statements or interest by any of the pirates, they are **HIGHLY UNLIKELY** to be linked directly to any militant branches (Insurgent Groups) that exists in the Niger Delta region, which are focusing on getting a more local involvement in the export and production of hydrocarbons, according to their perception that Nigeria is being looted of its wealth by foreign companies.

The motives of the pirates were entirely financially related and is therefore categorized as traditional GoG Piracy; Kidnap-for-Ransom (K&R).

The perpetrators' organization, capabilities and Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTP)

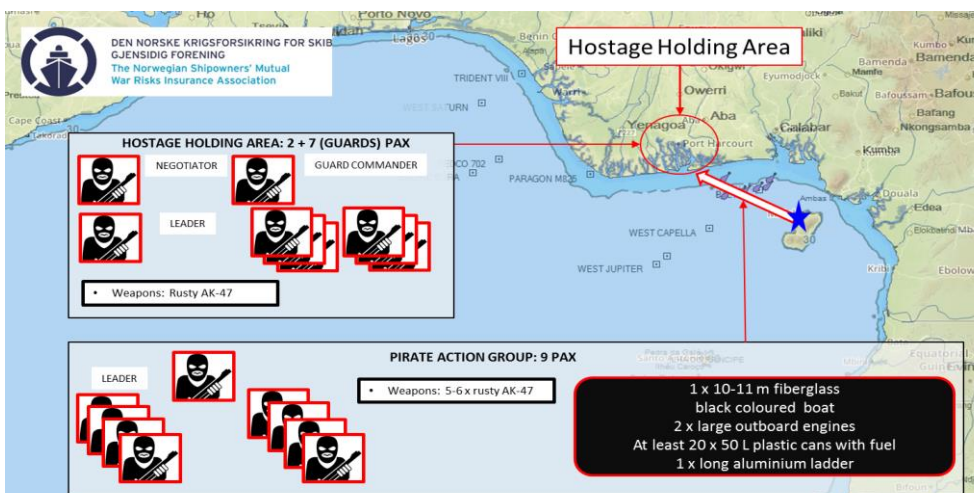
The pirates involved in the LNG tanker K&R operation, were divided into two gangs; one gang (the PAG) conducting the kidnap consisting of nine pirates, and one separate gang consisting of seven pirates organizing the Hostage Holding Area (HHA) in the Niger Delta. In addition, a leader and a negotiator were part of the set up. Specialized and loosely connected individuals and gangs “buying services” from each other, is increasingly common within the Niger Delta piracy networks and the Nigerian maritime K&R model.

The skiff used by the PAG had two big Yamaha engines and had at least 20 plastic cans of petrol sized 50 liters onboard. The majority of previous attacks in the GoG have been conducted by one skiff powered by one 3 cyl engine of around 70-80 bhp and a one V6 engine 150-200 bhp **LIKELY** acting as a booster for increased speed when required. The skiff used in the LNG tanker attack had a different engine configuration, indicating that this PAG **LIKELY** was aiming to kidnap a higher number of crew, and still have the capability to travel at high speed for a prolonged time/distance. The skiff used is **LIKELY** the same skiff that was used during the attack on SENDJE BERGE on 2 July 2020, and thereof the same PAG.

The extraction from the terminal and voyage towards the Rivers State took place at high speed and in an aimed straight line. In previous GoG K&R cases the pirates have used a hand-held Thuraya satcom as a navigation aid. During this extraction voyage no such device was used. The pirates had one individual sitting up front scouting for potential Navy or security vessels, and they only stopped close to smaller fishing vessels asking for direction for a known land feature in Rivers State. They made no attempt to steal anything from the smaller fishing vessels like fuel or valuables, so they **HIGHLY LIKELY** knew the distance, and that they had calculated that they had enough fuel. The PAG was further **HIGHLY LIKELY** aiming to maintain a low-key posture, and not attract further attention towards themselves in waters with numerous security vessels.

The Commander of the Hostage Holding Area (HHA) and the negotiator are **LIKELY** well-established characters in the Niger Delta piracy networks and were **LIKELY** involved in the SENDJE BERGE case in July 2020 amongst other cases throughout 2019 and 2020. The area the HHA was located within, has **HIGHLY LIKELY** also previously been used to organize HHAs both for holding hostages from maritime K&R operations, but also for holding hostages from land-based K&R operations. Hence an experienced and professional Nigerian K&R network with operational roots from a well-established pirate sanctuary in Rivers State, was **HIGHLY LIKELY** behind the LNG tanker K&R attack on 17 October 2020.

Both the PAG that conducted the boarding and abduction of the crew from the LNG tanker, and the pirates organizing the HHA, appeared very experienced and professional and have HIGHLY LIKELY been involved in previous K&R operations.



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The perpetrators' targeting process

As potential targets for pirates on the LNG terminal only have been available maximum 14 % of an average month since April 2020, leaves a K&R operation - by chance/ad hoc basis - towards the LNG terminal with a 86 % probability of failure - only taking lack of targets in to consideration and not considering impact by local security measures increasing the probability of failure further.

Nigerian PAGs have previously been very adaptable to counter local security measures. On 9 May 2019 around 03:00 LT, the Comoros-flagged general cargo vessel RIO MITTONG was attacked by a PAG at Malabo anchorage only 3 nm (5,5 km) from the Punta Europa LNG Terminal, and this location was even closer to the security vessels that are based in Malabo port. During this incident two crewmembers were kidnapped by five perpetrators that boarded RIO MITTONG.

In previous successful maritime K&R attacks towards merchant vessels in GoG, a ladder has been used for boarding the target vessel. During the LNG terminal attack no ladder was used, despite one long aluminum ladder was carried in the skiff, **LIKELY** because the ladder was a reserve boarding option.

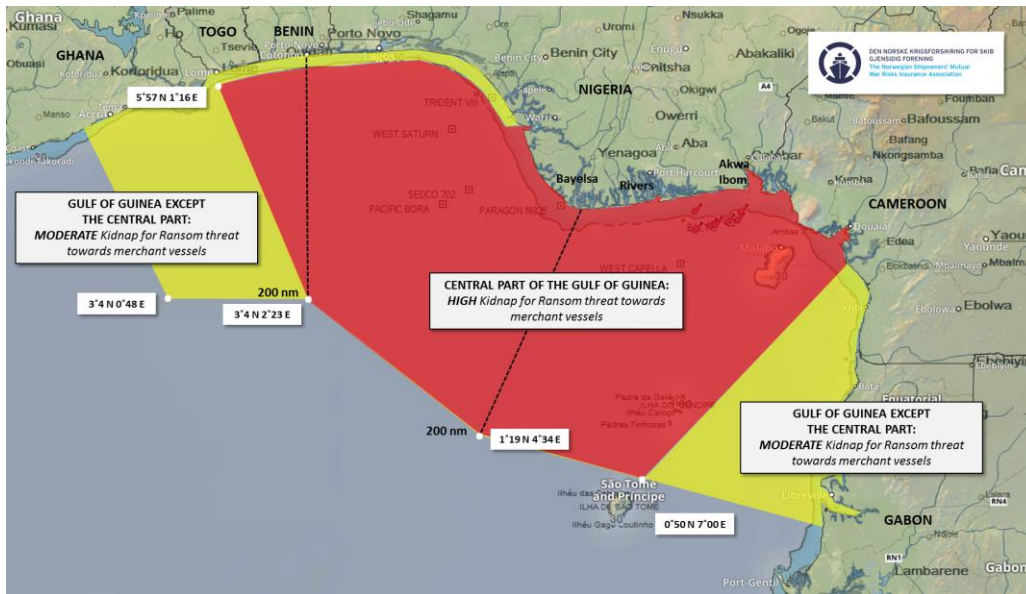
The facts that the whole operation from arrival to departure was completed very swiftly, that the terminal entry and exit happened during complete darkness, that a LNG terminal should be expected having tight security, that targets only are available 14 % of a month and that the attack occurred during loading (even if it occurred on the finale stage) when there usually are several people within reach for pirates on deck are combined strongly consistent with a hypothesis that this operation was pre-planned. It is therefore **LIKELY** that this PAG had intelligence on the LNG terminal and that a tanker was alongside for loading, and on routines, weaknesses and response time of the local security forces, either through eyes-on-target and/or other sources.

The attack on the LNG tanker was LIKELY pre-planned by the pirates.

Threat forecast

See also DNK IOC Monthly Threat Assessment December 2020 when distributed 30. November 2020:

- **The threat from PIRATES (K&R) towards merchant vessels in the CENTRAL PART OF THE GULF OF GUINEA from out to 200 nm off Lome (Togo) to out to 200 nm off Douala (Cameroon) is HIGH.**
- **The threat from PIRATES (K&R) towards merchant vessels in the GULF OF GUINEA except THE CENTRAL PART out to 200 nm off Tema (Ghana) and off Libreville (Gabon) is MODERATE.**
- **The threat from PIRATES (Cargo Theft) towards merchant vessels in the GULF OF GUINEA out to 200 nm off Tema (Ghana) and off Libreville (Gabon) is LOW.**



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Standardisation

The threat: The threat assessed by DNK IOC, is based on our understanding of known threat-actors' capabilities, hostile intentions and their opportunities to cause harm/hostility directly towards vessels/units and their crew today and in the future, limited to defined areas. The threat could also be of an indirect nature, caused as collateral damage when vessels/units plausibly could be affected by an attack by mistake or by coincidence.

Words of Estimative Probability (Confidence Levels): Words of estimative probability (WEP) are terms used to convey the likelihood/probability of a future event occurring. In this product, the following WEPs are used: **HIGHLY LIKELY - LIKELY – (EVEN CHANCE) - UNLIKELY - HIGHLY UNLIKELY**

Threat Levels: Threat levels are designed to conclude the assessment of each threat. In this product, the following Threat Levels are used (NATO and Norwegian standards) with the defined level of probability/confidence:

- **LOW** means attack against member vessel is **UNLIKELY**
- **MODERATE** means attack against member vessel is **LIKELY**
- **HIGH** means attack against member vessel is **HIGHLY LIKELY**
- **CRITICAL** means attack against member vessel is expected imminently

A Threat Assessment should not be mistaken as a Security Risk Assessment. DNK IOC does not consider each vessel and their vulnerabilities, nor risk mitigation measures taken or not taken by the member. The Threat Assessment should however, be understood as an input to our member's Security Risk Assessments processes.

The DNK IOC Threat Assessment is valid only from the date of dissemination and until a revised Threat Assessment is disseminated by DNK IOC. Out-dated Threat Assessments should never be used as inputs to Security Risk Assessments or as any kind of decision support on Security matters.

Specifications and Contact details

Information Cut-Off: 27. November 2020 0600 UCT

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