

Piracy and vessel security in the Gulf of Guinea – an update

In recent months there has been an alarming increase in levels of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The Security Committee would like to ensure that our members are properly informed about developments in the Gulf of Guinea, so that members who have business there are able to make appropriate preparations.

This Information Note takes the form of links to public domain information, and some summarised information from sources not in the public domain, available to members of the security committee.

Just two examples of recent attacks on vessels are given here by <https://safety4sea.com/>:

- [Pirates attack vessel off Sao Tome](#)
- [Tanker thwarts piracy attack off Port Gentil](#)

Further news articles:

- [Bloomberg, 19/1/21 - Piracy Pays in Africa's Gulf of Guinea](#)
- [Maritime Executive, 10/2/21 - IMB: Gulf of Guinea Attacks Drive Increase in Global Piracy Numbers](#)

Some reliable background information here from the *Economist*, published in 2019: [Crime waves - The Gulf of Guinea is now the world's worst piracy hotspot | International | The Economist](#)

What is happening is an increase in Kidnap-for-Ransom (K&R) attempts in the Gulf of Guinea. Pirates are increasingly using “mother vessels”. They are endeavouring to avoid Nigerian waters which may be better secured owing to oil and gas activities. Security in other territorial waters may be much worse and even in some cases with no local state security at all.

During January 2021 a total of 17 crew members have been released after captivity and another 15 crew members have been kidnapped. Several different pirate groups are operating over a widespread area. There has been an increase in violent attacks with pirates firing small arms towards the target vessel superstructure during the attack.

There remains a significant threat of kidnap-for-ransom (K&R) piracy towards merchant vessels in the Gulf of Guinea. The use of vessel onboard citadels as part of the *Best Management Practices to deter piracy – West Africa* (BMP5) – see link below - is recommended as far as practical.

Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG) is a co-operation between the UK and French Navies, co-ordinated with local navies. MDAT-GoG maintains coherent maritime situational awareness in the Gulf of Guinea area, informs and supports industry, and contributes to the safety and security of seafarers in the region. For the best response, members operating vessels in this area are encouraged to register and provide their position to **MDAT-GoG** and also follow the advice in BMP West Africa (see link below).

From the Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF) the following useful material may be downloaded:

- [OCIMF - Oil Companies International Marine Forum - BMP West Africa](#)
- [OCIMF - Oil Companies International Marine Forum - Gulf of Guinea Bridge cards](#)

For more information, please contact nick.hough@imca-int.com or OCIMF's Security Adviser, Russell Pegg at russell.pegg@ocimf.org

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