

WEEKLY REPORT



27/12/23

Maritime Security | Underwater Services | Operations Support | Agency Services

London | Lomé | Cotonou | Lagos | Port Harcourt



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About Africa Risk Compliance

Headquartered in Exeter and London, UK and with branch offices in Lomé, Togo, Cotonou, Benin and Lagos and Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Africa Risk Compliance Limited (ARC) was established to bring together a team of Africa and maritime security experts to address challenges faced by those operating in Africa. With roots in the security sector, our key service offering is the management and arrangement of security in the complex jurisdictions of the nations around the Gulf of Guinea.

In 2021, ARC expanded its service offering to provide a management service to arrange embarked armed guards in the Indian Ocean, and since 2021, risk management services to counter the threat of drug smuggling on merchant vessels, and journey management and on-shore vehicle services in Nigeria.

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Current Threat Levels

Piracy

Red Sea: **LOW**

IRTC: **LOW**

Arabian Sea: **MEDIUM**

Conflict

Persian Gulf: **HIGH**

Gulf of Oman: **HIGH**

Gulf of Aden: **HIGH**

Red Sea: **HIGH**

Reports 21 - 27 December 2023

- **22 December 2023. Piracy. 13km off Eyl, Somalia.** A dhow was hijacked by an unconfirmed number of heavily armed suspects. The vessel has since been seen in the Red Sea moving north along the Yemeni coastline. Reports indicate that the dhow may be used in future piracy attacks.
- **23 December 2023. Drone Attack. 200nm SW of Veraval, India.** A chemical tanker was hit by an aerial drone while transiting through the northern Arabian Sea. The attack caused a fire onboard but no casualties were reported. Military sources stated that the drone was fired from Iran.
- **23 December 2023. UAV Incident. 45nm SW of Saleef, Yemen.** UKMTO reported that a vessel was targeted by a UAV. No casualties or damage were reported.
- **23 December 2023. Drone Attack. 50nm W of Hodeidah, Yemen.** UKMTO reported that UAVs were sighted flying low near vessels before exploding about 1.5nm from a vessel.
- **26 December 2023. UAV Incident. 50nm W of Hodeidah, Yemen.** Two UAV sightings were reported and two explosions occurred 15 mins after sighting. The targeted vessel continued its voyage and no casualties or damage was reported.
- **26 December 2023. Missile Attack. 60nm W of Hodeidah, Yemen.** Explosions were reported and missiles were sighted 4nm from a container ship. A further explosion was sighted approximately 0.5nm from the vessel in the sea. No damage or casualties were reported.



Analysis

Since 2021, Iran has seized or attempted to seize more than 20 merchant vessels. Such incidents are often followed by claims in Iranian media that the merchant vessel had committed a crime such as hitting an Iranian vessel or for fuel smuggling. These latest incidents, in particular the willingness of Iranian forces to open fire, show serious disregard for the safety of crew and the environment. US Navy and other allied forces will likely further increase their patrols in the area.

Houthi and Iranian forces have used air-borne weapons against vessels, which is an evolution from the mines and water-borne IEDs (WBIEDs) previously used. **These are still considered a threat as well.** The conflict in Yemen and the war between Israel and Hamas have led to a direct increase in risk to merchant vessels in the area, especially those vessels calling at Saudi and Yemeni ports. Vessels should maintain watches against any air-borne activity and report any incidents to regional authorities.

Overall, the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Aden is much reduced however reports of suspicious approaches against vessels sailing through the area do continue. After a long pause, three Somali piracy incidents have been reported since 22 November 2023, including the hijacking of a bulk carrier in the Arabian Sea. The incidents demonstrate that armed groups in Somalia are still willing and capable of pirate attacks. There is a high risk of robbery and theft at ports and anchorages in India and in ports on the East African coast. In ports in Africa, there is also a high risk of stowaways.

Heightened Threat in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait

On 14 November 2023, amid the current war between Israel and Hamas, Yemen's Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi, issued a warning that his forces could make further attacks on Israel and target Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Since the announcement we have reported on 26 related security incidents in the area, including suspicious approaches, calls to alter course, the hijacking of an Israel-linked commercial vessel in the Red Sea, and several missile and drone launches targeting commercial vessels in the area. Most of the incidents have occurred north of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait between the ports of Hodeidah and Mokha.

The pattern of action from the Houthis towards targeted vessels seems to be:

1. Contact a vessel by VHF ordering it to change course and sail towards a nearby port (likely Hodeidah), whilst claiming to be the "Yemeni Navy".
2. If vessel disobeys or ignores the order, in previous incidents Houthis have then launched either a drone or a missile against the vessel.
3. Such incidents are then followed by a large amount of local social media activity, resulting in an "official" statement from the Houthi spokesman confirming the incident and vessel name.

It is important to note that despite the Houthi leader's initial claim that the group would specifically target Israeli vessels, all vessels calling at ports in Yemen or transiting through the Red Sea are at risk of being targeted. Several of the vessels that have been targeted have had little or no links to Israel, and it seems that there is rather an effort to target some of the largest shipping lines in order to gain attention. These companies are part of a growing list of shipping lines have recently announced plans to reroute through South Africa's Cape of Good Hope or pause shipments through the Red Sea until further notice to protect crew and cargo.



Due to the frequency and seriousness of the incidents that have occurred in the past 30 days, the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait are “high risk” and the threat is considered high to all vessels. Crew should take precautions prior to entering the area so that they are ready to respond appropriately to any threat and emergency and should operate at MARSEC Level 3 whilst transiting through the area. The threat in ports in the Red Sea has also increased because they are located in the affected area and in range of Houthi missiles, but the threat in these ports is lower landside.

As this threat pertains to a wider geopolitical conflict and not piracy, embarked armed guards may not be able to counter all attacks by Houthi forces. If the vessel has embarked armed guards, they will be able to counter attempts to stop the vessel by a small craft. However, when facing overwhelming force by an aggressor such as multiple naval-style vessels or helicopters, the embarked team should stand down for the following reasons:

- Any action by an armed team onboard may be met with an overwhelming force from a helicopter or naval vessels, which would greatly endanger the safety of the crew.
- Attempts to engage with the boarding force may be seen as provocative and may result in poorer treatment of the armed guards and crew after the boarding force has taken control of the vessel.

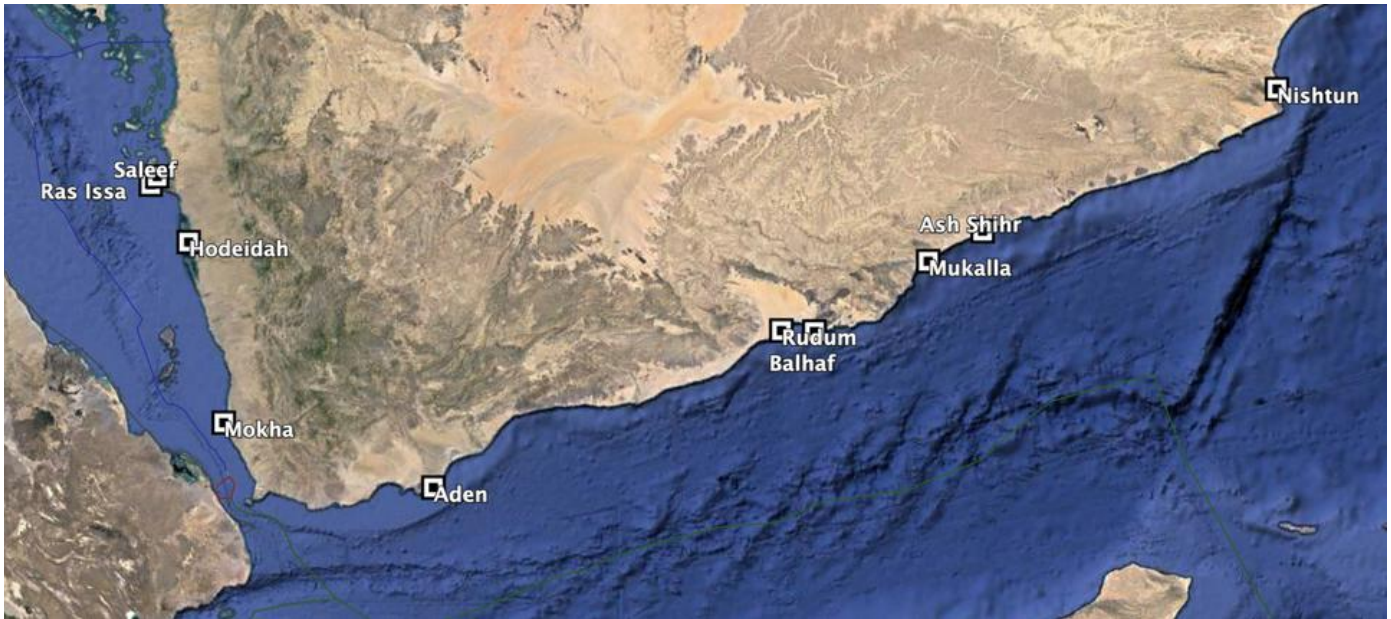
On December 19 2023, the US Defence Secretary announced the establishment of Operation Prosperity Guardian, a coalition of more than 20 countries with the aim to secure the southern Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait for commercial vessels. This initiative is still in its very early stages, so it remains to be seen what level of involvement each country will have and what the scope and effect of this project will be. Naval vessels are currently present in the area, but they are likely unable to defend against every attack or render assistance to all vessels targeted by the Houthis.

Yemeni Ports and HRA Floating Armoury Updates



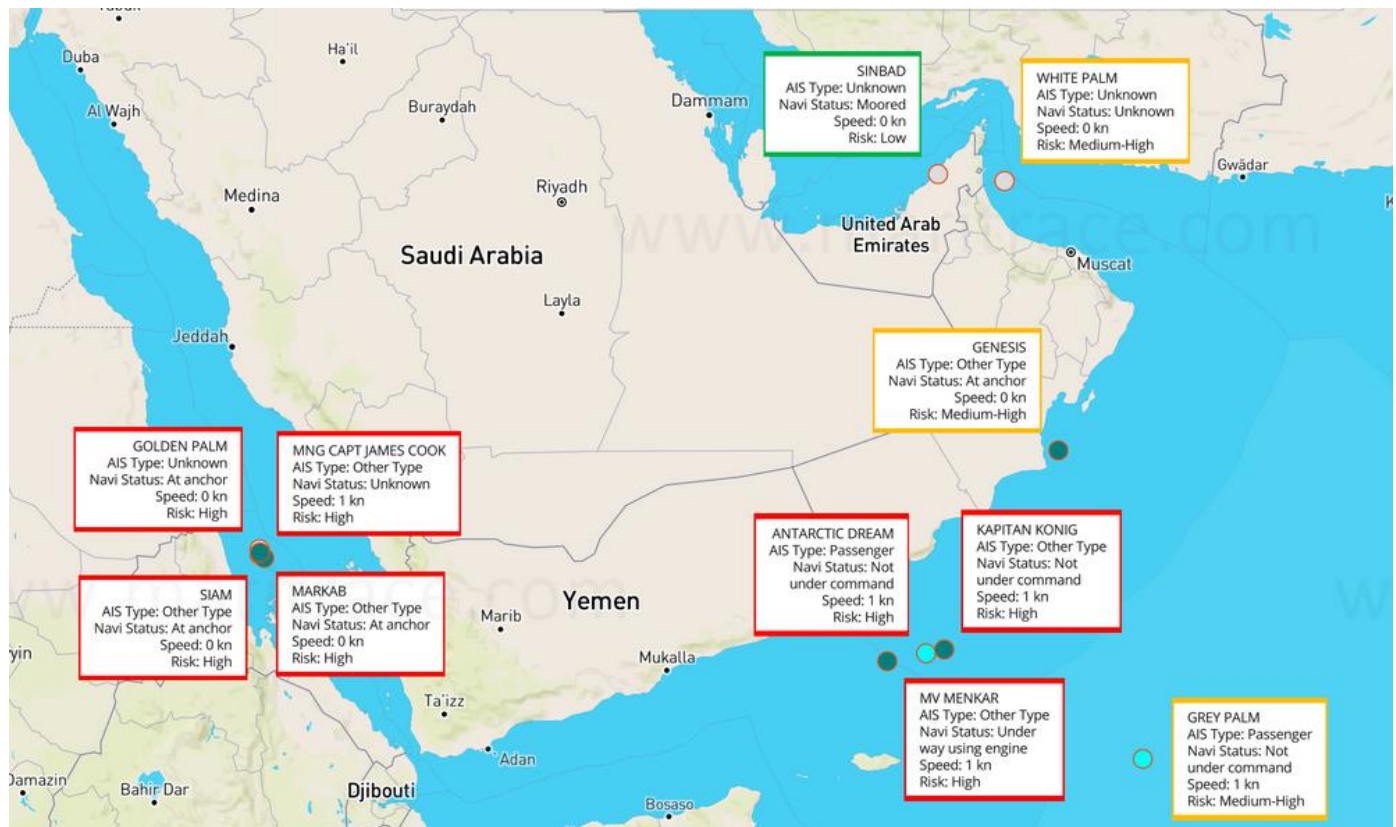
Yemeni Ports status' as of 27 December 2023

Gulf of Aden Ports	Status	Red Sea Ports	Status
Ash Shihr	Operational	Mokha	Closed
Mukalla	Operational	Hodiedah	Operational
Nishtun	Operational	Saleef	Operational
Balhaf	Closed	Ras Isa (shore tanks)	Operational
Rudhum	Operational	Ras Isa (SPM)	Closed
Aden	Operational		



HRA Floating Armoury Updates

In response to the increased risk in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait, most platforms and PMSCs have requested that clients inform them of any Israeli links to their vessels.



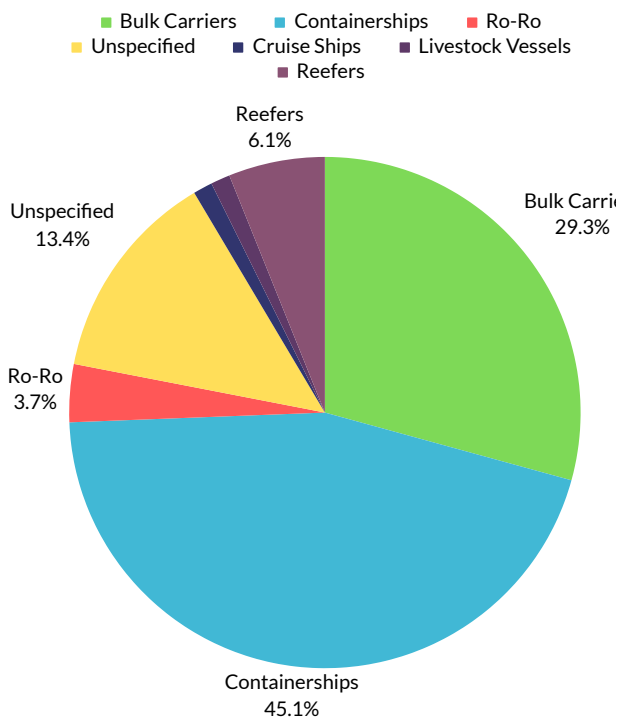
Drug Smuggling from Latin America



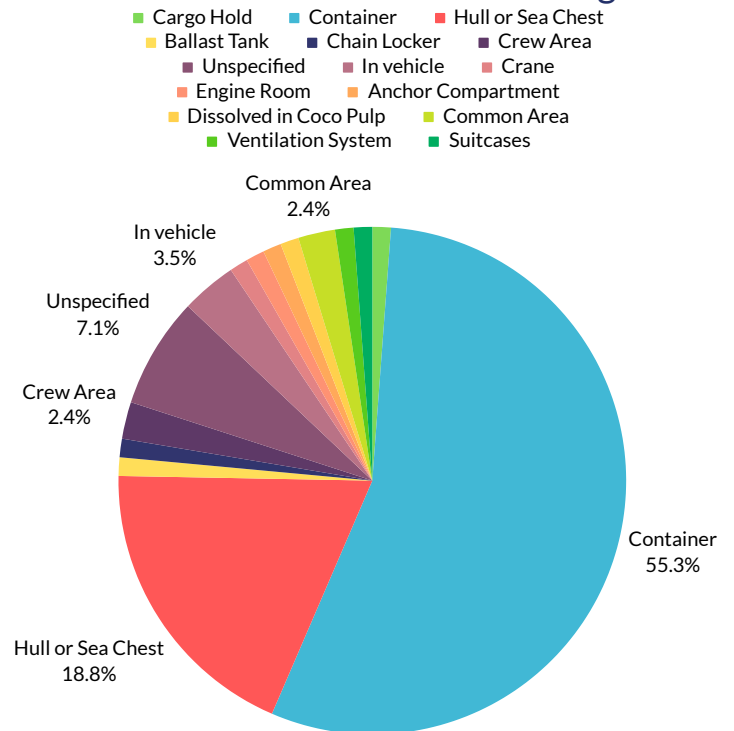
Number of Drug Smuggling Incidents from Ports in Latin America in 2023

Brazil		Colombia	
Santos	16	Cartagena	2
Imbituba	2	Puerto Bolivar	2
Paranagua	5	Unspecified	3
Rio Grande	1	Argentina	
Rio de Janeiro	1	San Lorenzo	1
Vitoria	1	Unspecified	1
Navegantes	1	Guatemala	
Unspecified	3	Unspecified	1
Ecuador		Costa Rica	
Guayaquil	3	Moin Port	1
Quito	1	Unspecified	2
Unspecified	6	Chile	
Mexico		Arica	1
Veracruz	3	Dominican Republic	
Manzanillo	1	Caucedo	1
Unspecified	1	Unspecified	2
Panama		Guyana	
Almirante	1	Unspecified	1
Colon	1	Haiti	
Paita	1	Unspecified	1
Peru		Paraguay	
Callao	2	Unspecified	1
Unspecified	1		

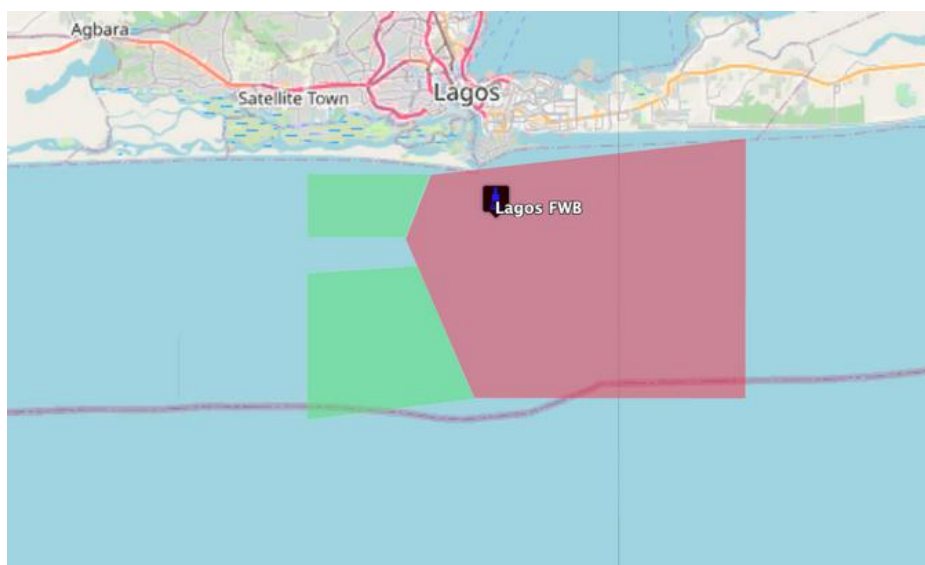
Vessels implicated in drug smuggling



Areas of vessel used to hide drugs



N.B. Figures are based on current information at time of publication of this report, and may change over time as further information on previous incidents is received. The figures represent the number of incidents of drug smuggling/trafficking on merchant vessels from ports in Latin America to ports globally.



Current Threat Levels

Theft, Robbery & Stowaway
STS and NPA Anchorage: **HIGH**
Port Area: **HIGH**

Piracy & Kidnap for Ransom
STS and NPA Anchorage:
MEDIUM
Port Area: **LOW**

Reports 21 - 27 December 2023

Nothing to report.

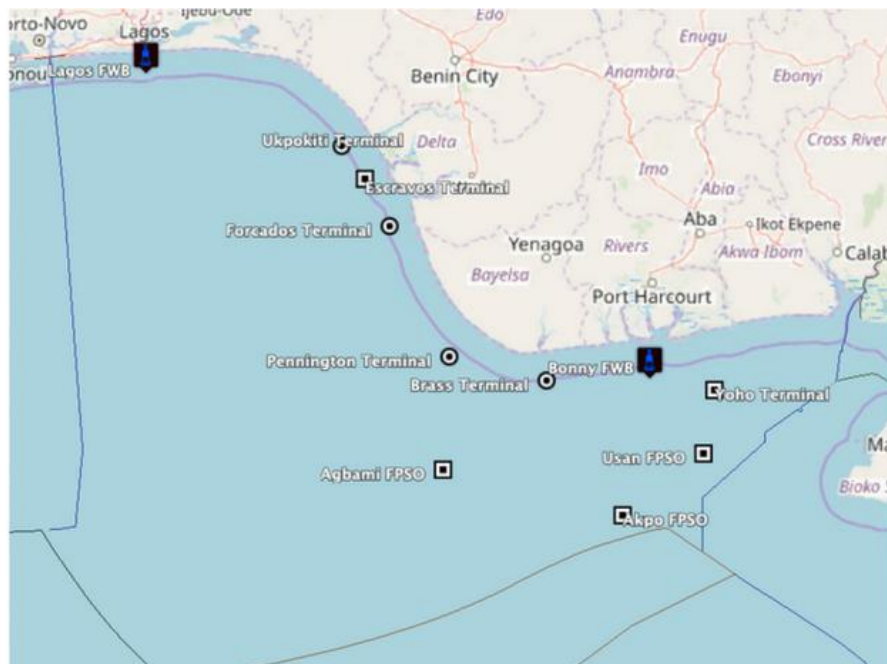
Analysis

Lagos has seen a high number of stowaway incidents on vessels in anchorage and at berth. All vessels should carry out stowaway searches prior to departure and watch out for small boats around the rear of the vessel.

There remains a high risk of armed robbery and theft at all Lagos anchorages and across the port area. If spotted by crew and alarm raised, thieves and robbers will usually flee without altercation or threat to crew. Terminals inside the port have poor security infrastructure, so vessels at berth are easy targets for thieves, robbers and stowaways. It is recommended that vessels maintain a vigilant watch, especially at night and dawn and dusk, when visibility is poor. Ships should also stow and lock away any tools, ropes and valuables on deck.

Last Incident

- **11 September 2023. Armed Robbery (successful). Terminal D, Berth 10, Lagos port, Nigeria.** Robbers boarded a vessel whilst alongside in Lagos port. They stole a high pressure machine and a hose. The incident was reported to authorities. All on board reported as safe.



Current Threat Levels

Delta Creeks and Rivers: **HIGH**

Bonny River: **HIGH**

Escravos/Forcados: **HIGH**

Calabar River: **HIGH**

Offshore Brass: **HIGH**

Offshore Bonny: **HIGH**

Deep Offshore Bonny: **HIGH**

Deep Offshore Lagos: **HIGH**

Reports 21 - 27 December 2023

Nothing to report.

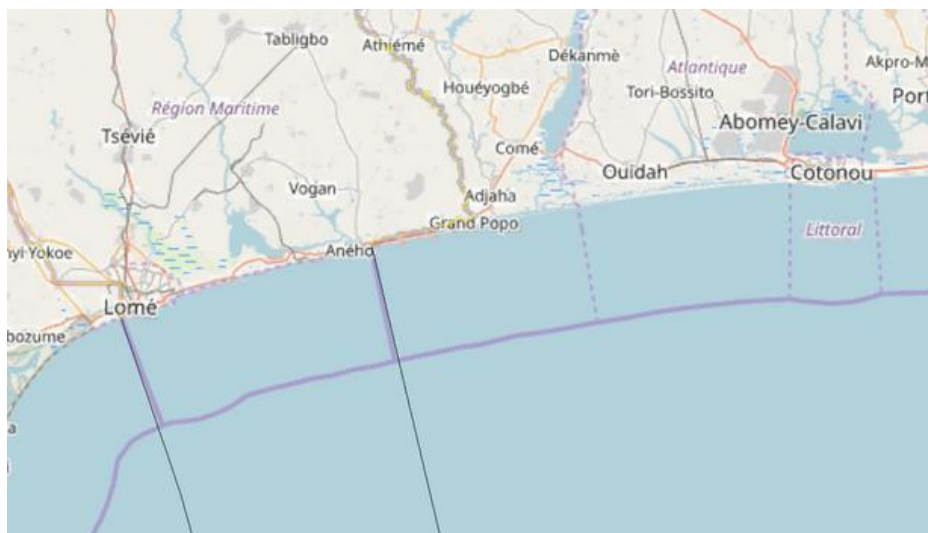
Analysis

The threat level across the Nigeria EEZ is still considered high.

Pirate attacks have demonstrated that the pirates have an excellent understanding of the geographical limits of security escorts and local Naval forces, and they have the ability to board vessels sailing at good speed using light-weight aluminium ladders. There remains a significant threat to all vessels up to 250nm from the coast of Nigeria. Merchant vessels avoiding Nigerian waters should still remain extremely vigilant as pirates have shown themselves capable of operating at significant distances from the shore, including outside of Nigerian waters.

Last Incident

- **2 December 2023. Armed Robbery. Near Brass, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.** Armed suspects reportedly attacked an unconfirmed number of fishing vessels off the coast of Brass. One fisherman was killed, another was wounded, and four others were kidnapped during the incident. Reports say the assailants also stole the engines and fishing gear from the vessels before fleeing the scene.



Current Threat Levels

Theft, Robbery & Stowaway

Lomé: **MEDIUM**

Cotonou: **MEDIUM**

Piracy & Kidnap for Ransom

Lomé: **MEDIUM**

Offshore Togo: **HIGH**

Cotonou: **MEDIUM**

Offshore Benin: **HIGH**

Reports 21 - 27 December 2023

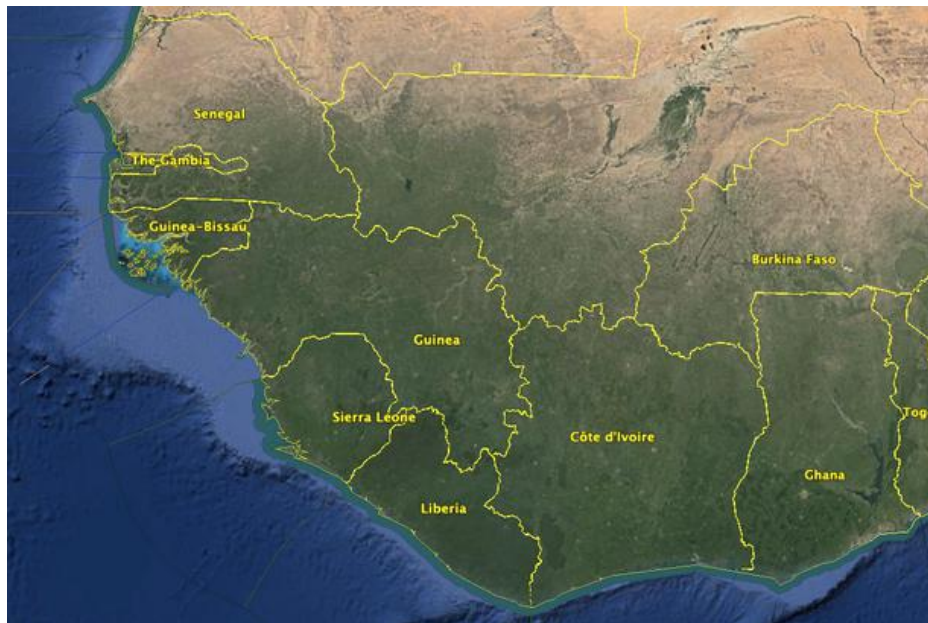
Nothing to report.

Analysis

There remains a high threat in the waters offshore Benin and Togo, where vessels often drift awaiting berthing instructions, or carry out STS bunker operations. The area deep offshore Benin should be considered one of the most dangerous areas in the Gulf of Guinea, as there are minimal options for security services or effective response in the event of an incident offshore. Vessels should move further south and west to avoid this area, or move straight into anchorages where there is a greater Navy presence and maritime security services available.

Last Incident

- **3 April 2022. Illegal Boarding. 275nm S of Lomé, International Waters.** A bulk carrier sailing deep offshore in international waters was boarded by pirates armed with firearms. The crew moved to citadel after raising the alarm. The Italian Navy vessel Rizzo Luigi Rizzo (P595) arrived on scene and a Navy boarding team boarded the bulk carrier. It was confirmed that all 19 crew members reached the citadel safely. The pirates damaged navigation equipment on the bridge, but with the support from the Italian Navy the steering and propulsion systems were repaired. The vessel sailed under escort with the Italian Navy vessel towards Nigerian waters and then continued its sail to Lagos escorted by a Nigerian security vessel.



Current Threat Levels

Senegal: **LOW**

Guinea: **MEDIUM**

Sierra Leone: **MEDIUM**

Liberia: **LOW**

Cote d'Ivoire: **MEDIUM**

Ghana: **MEDIUM**

Reports 21 - 27 December 2023

Nothing to report.

Analysis

Takoradi has a consistent record of security incidents at anchorage, with robbers and thieves targeting vessels for opportunistic theft of valuable items. Most flee once alarm has been raised and they are aware they have been spotted by the crew. All incidents should be reported to local authorities.

There have been a number of security incidents against local fishing vessels in this area in the last few months. Local reporting and type of attacks suggest either fishing disputes or the involvement of drug smuggling gangs, with some vessels involved in these attacks previously being detained for drug smuggling.

The threat of piracy is higher in the eastern half of Ghana waters. There is a high risk of theft, robbery and stowaways at all ports in West Africa. Guinea in particular has a history of violent robbery incidents.

Last Incident

- **2 October 2023. Theft (successful). Takoradi Anchorage, Ghana.** Two robbers boarded a containership at anchorage, whilst two other accomplices remained in a canoe alongside. Once spotted, the crew raised the alarm onboard which led the robbers to flee the vessel. They had stolen 15-20m of wire rope and the cover of a hawsepipe. Local authorities were informed and a security vessel came to the vessel about half an hour later.



Current Threat Levels

Theft, Robbery & Stowaway

Cameroon: **MEDIUM**

Eq Guinea: **LOW**

Sao Tome & Principe: **LOW**

Gabon: **MEDIUM**

Piracy & Kidnap for Ransom

Cameroon: **HIGH**

Eq Guinea: **HIGH**

Sao Tome & Principe: **HIGH**

Gabon: **HIGH**

Reports 21 - 27 December 2023

Nothing to report.

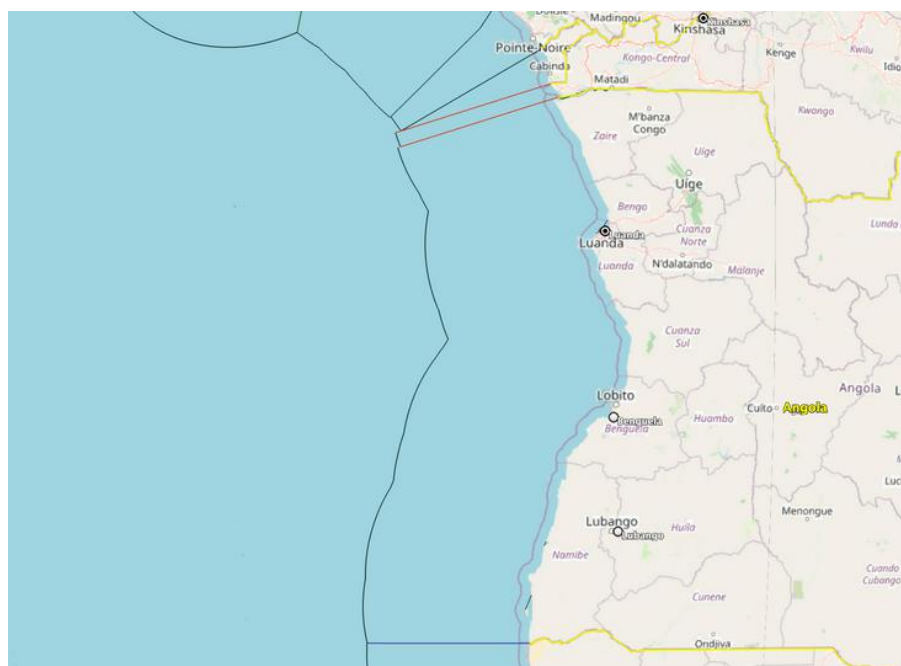
Analysis

The threat at anchorages in countries aside from Nigeria should be considered high, as pirates target alternative locations and vessels should remain extremely vigilant. It is likely that a pirate group based on out Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria is carrying out these attacks.

There remains a high risk of piracy attack and kidnap in the waters of countries outside of Nigeria, especially Cameroon, Sao Tome and Principe and Equatorial Guinea. In recent attacks, pirates have demonstrated their reach - outside of the EEZ and out of the reach of Naval forces and commercial security services. Vessels should avoid "no-mans-land" areas where security is very thin.

Last Incident

- **30 June 2023, 2345hrs, Kidnap for Ransom. Wouri River, Douala, Cameroon.** A cargo vessel anchored at Douala anchorage was boarded by gunmen. 5 crew were reported as abducted (2 Moroccans and 3 Ivorians). Valuables and cash were also stolen. The attack lasted about 20 minutes before the attackers left with the kidnapped crew. Vessel was escorted by Navy to Douala port. It was also reported that Cameroon Navy chased the pirates, during which 1 pirate was killed and another injured. Later, a woman suspected of involvement was arrested.



Current Threat Levels

Theft, Robbery & Stowaway

Rep of Congo: **MEDIUM**

DR of Congo: **MEDIUM**

Angola: **HIGH**

Piracy & Kidnap for Ransom

Rep of Congo: **MEDIUM**

DR of Congo: **MEDIUM**

Angola: **MEDIUM**

Reports 21 - 27 December 2023

Nothing to report.

Analysis

The threat across the region should be considered high now that pirates have demonstrated the capability to operate at significant distances offshore and away from the Niger Delta. In particular small product and bunker tankers should be extra vigilant, as they provide relatively low freeboard, cargo that is attractive for the black market and crew to kidnap. They also often spend a significant amount of time in the region, possibly allowing intelligence on the vessel to be collected by pirate group networks.

Thefts and robberies remain a consistent threat at anchorages in the region, especially Luanda, Soyo and Matadi.

Last Incident

- **1 November 2023. Theft (successful). Luanda Anchorage, Angola.** Two suspected sea robbers boarded a fast crew vessel at anchorage in Luanda. An alarm was raised and the suspects escaped. Following a search of the vessel, it was discovered that some paint boxes had been stolen. Local authorities were informed.

Maritime Security - Recent History and Trends



Gulf of Guinea Port Security Statistics

Number of incidents in last 6 months

Takoradi	5
Douala	3
Luanda	2
Lagos	2
Soyo	0
San Pedro	0
Conakry	2
Owendo	1
Matadi	1

Terminals and Anchorages with highest number of incidents in last 6 months

Takoradi Anchorage	5
Douala Anchorage	3
Luanda Anchorage	3
Conakry Anchorage	1
Kirikiri Jetty, Lagos	1
Owendo Anchorage	1
Terminal D, Berth 10, Lagos Port	1

Stowaway Statistics - Number of Incidents (based on IMO and local reports)

	Last 3 months	Last 6 months	Last 12 months
Lagos	7	12	17
Lomé	1	2	3
Port Harcourt	0	0	0
Abidjan	0	1	2
Douala	0	1	1
Monrovia	0	0	0
Dakar	0	0	2
Matadi	0	1	1
Takoradi	0	1	1
Banjul	1	1	1

Gulf of Guinea Piracy Statistics

Security Incidents

This month (last 30 days)	1
Since start of 2023	42
Since start of 2022	86

Crew & Passengers Kidnapped

This month (last 30 days)	4
Since start of 2023	44
Since start of 2022	99

Incidents involving security forces and merchant vessels since start of 2021

Embarked Navy Guards	22	Success Rate of Protecting Vessel	94%
Armed Escort Vessel	8	Success Rate of Protecting Vessel	100%

Attack success rate since 2020 (no crew kidnapped and vessel not hijacked)

Year	Total No. of Attacks	Vessel Escaped	Attack failure rate
2020	80	54	67.5%
2021	32	19	59.38%
2022	5	3	60%
2023	9	3	33.33%

N.B. Figures show total number of piracy attacks (not armed robbery/theft), total number of incidents where vessel escaped (no crew kidnapped or vessel hijacked) and the resulting failure rate of pirates' attacks. 2023 figures show rates as of publication date of this report.

Niger Delta Militancy, Community Conflict and Industrial Action



Militant Activity

Statements & Threats

Nothing to report.

Attacks

Nothing to report.

Community Conflict

There is a high level of cult- and gang-related violence in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states. This includes kidnapping, violence between rival gangs and vigilante actions by cults and community groups. Local military and law enforcement actions do not always improve the situation.

Industrial Action

Nothing to report.

Current Militant Threat Level: **MEDIUM**

Current Community Threat Level: **MEDIUM**

Current Strike/Industrial Action Threat Level: **HIGH**



Last week Nigeria's House of Representatives ordered an immediate investigation into the causes of conflict between the Nigeria Navy and private security outfits engaged by the NNPC Limited to protect oil installations in the Niger Delta. The investigation follows the adoption of a motion of urgent public importance introduced by Donald Ojogo, representative of Ilaye/Ese-Odo Federal Constituency in Ondo State, during a plenary session. Ojogo expressed concern about recent clashes between the Navy and some private security companies, stating that "The House is worried that if this trend continues, an unachievable oil output projection looms ahead of the 2024 fiscal year and that the implications of such development on the economy will be negative". The House has mandated the Special Committee on Oil Theft, which also comprises chairmen of joint Committees on Downstream, Midstream, Gas Resources, Ports and Harbours, Niger Delta and Environment, to investigate the causes of the conflict of operational responsibilities between the Nigerian Navy and concerned private security firms. (Source: Vanguard, Tribune Online)

Last week it was reported that Ghana and Togo are close to signing a Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement which will bring to an end the dispute over the boundary of the two countries in the ocean. The Ghana Boundary Commission reportedly met with a delegation from Togo in Accra to settle on dates for the signing of the agreement by the Presidents of both countries. Currently, fishing and other economic activities are prohibited in the transboundary or disputed area. The National Coordinator for the Ghana Boundary Commission, Major General Emmanuel Kotia, says once the agreement is signed, it will unlock economic opportunities in that part of the ocean for investors eagerly awaiting an amicable settlement. Ghana and Togo have been engaged in negotiations over their maritime boundary since 2018. (Source: MyJoyOnline)



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