



WEEKLY REPORT



28/02/24

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: **MEDIUM**

Arabian Sea: **HIGH**

Conflict

Persian Gulf: **HIGH**

Gulf of Oman: **HIGH**

Gulf of Aden: **HIGH**

Red Sea: **HIGH**

Reports 22 - 28 February 2024

- **22 February 2024. Missile Attack. 70nm SE of Aden, Yemen.** A general cargo was hit by two missiles, which caused a fire onboard. The vessel sustained minor damage and crew were reported safe.
- **23 February 2024. Suspicious Vessel Report. 175nm E of Qalhat LNG Terminal, Oman.** A vessel sighted three small craft, each with three persons onboard, and one large craft in the Northern Arabian Sea off the coast of Oman. The sighting was assessed as suspicious.
- **24 February 2024. Missile Attack. 70nm E of Djibouti, Djibouti.** A Master of a tanker reported an explosion near the vessel. The crew were reported safe and the vessel proceeded to the next port of call. The Houthis have claimed responsibility for the attack.
- **25 February 2024. Suspicious Approach. 20nm E of Khor Fakkan, UAE.** UKMTO received a report of a small fast boat acting irregularly and following a vessel in the Gulf of Oman. The white, open-topped fast boat was powered by a single outboard motor. Two persons were seen onboard wearing military style, camouflage-type uniforms. The boat followed the reporting vessel at a range of 20-40m astern for more than half an hour before falling astern beyond a mile.
- **27 February 2024. Suspicious Approach. 90nm E of Ras al Misham, Saudi Arabia.** UKMTO received a report of three small boats, dark in colour, acting suspiciously in the Persian Gulf. Two people were seen onboard each boat, and no weapons or uniforms were seen. A Master reported that the small boats followed the vessel for one hour at less than 1nm distance. The vessel and crew have been reported safe.
- **27 February 2024. Missile Attack. 60nm W of Hodeidah, Yemen.** The Master of a tanker reported that a rocket was sighted on the starboard side of the vessel. The rocket exploded in the water 3-5nm from the port bow. The crew and vessel were reported safe and proceeded to next port of call.



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 airborne weapons against vessels, which is an evolution from the mines and waterborne 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 airborne activity and report any incidents to regional authorities.

Overall, the threat of Somalia-based piracy has substantially increased in the region. There have been 15 Somali piracy incidents reported since 22 November 2023, including the hijacking of a bulk carrier in the Arabian Sea and several attacks deep offshore. The incidents have followed a long pause in piracy activity in the region, demonstrating 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 at least 70 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, however there has recently been an increase of incidents reported in the Gulf of Aden.

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 the 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 that have 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.



There have also been several reports alleging that Iranian naval vessels have been stationed in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to support the Houthis with intelligence and target acquisition. It has been noted that the Behshad, a vessel identified as part of the Iranian Navy, has maintained a presence at the western end of the Gulf of Aden since 11 January 2024. These allegations have not been confirmed, but the uptick in incidents and the locations in which they have occurred suggests a possible link.

Due to the frequency and seriousness of the incidents that have occurred in the past 30 days, the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden 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.

It should also be noted that a number of security platforms have chosen to increase the cost of their services significantly over the past week due to the recently expanded High-Risk Area and associated rise in insurance costs, the reduced vessel traffic through the Red Sea.

International Naval Response

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. 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.

On the night of 11 January 2024, US and UK naval and air forces carried out missile strikes on Houthi positions in Yemen in response to the ongoing attacks on merchant shipping and, more recently, on naval vessels involved in Operation Prosperity Guardian in the Red Sea. US defence officials say that 60 targets were hit at 28 Houthi militant locations. Following these strikes, a Houthi spokesperson stated that the rebel group would retaliate and expand its targets to include US and UK-linked vessels. UK and US forces have since carried out three additional rounds of strikes in Yemen targeting Houthi positions.

Though all merchant vessels are currently at risk in the Red Sea, the threat from the Houthis is now heightened for all Israeli, US and UK-linked vessels sailing through the Gulf of Aden, Bab el-Mandeb and Southern Red Sea.

Yemeni Ports and HRA Floating Armoury Updates



Yemeni Ports status' as of 28 February 2024

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

The MV ATLANTIC DREAM has relocated to 11° 00.0'N, 064° 00.0'E. Due to the increased risk associated with transit through the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, most platforms and PMSCs have requested that clients inform them of any Israeli links to their vessels.



Drug Smuggling from Latin America

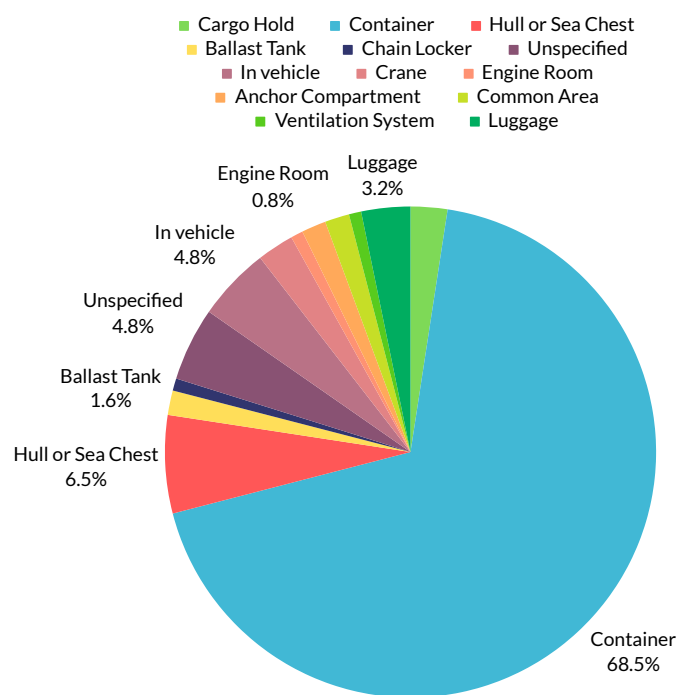
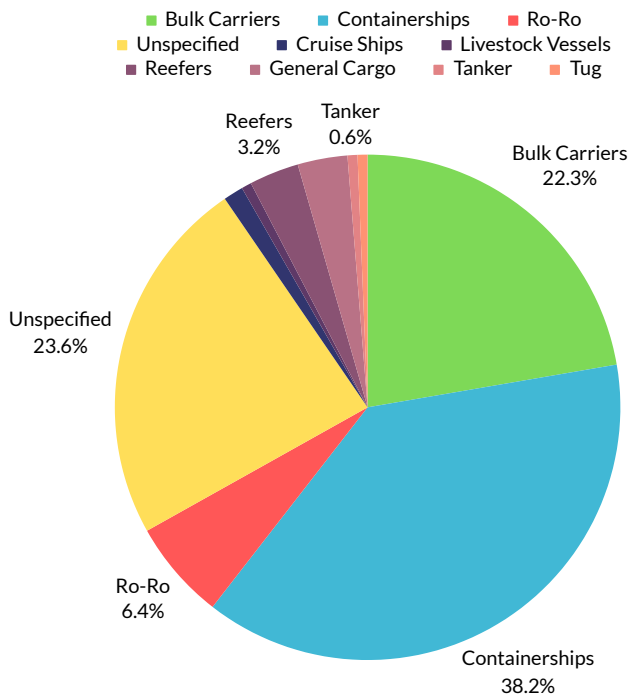


Number of Drug Smuggling Incidents from Ports in Latin America from 2023

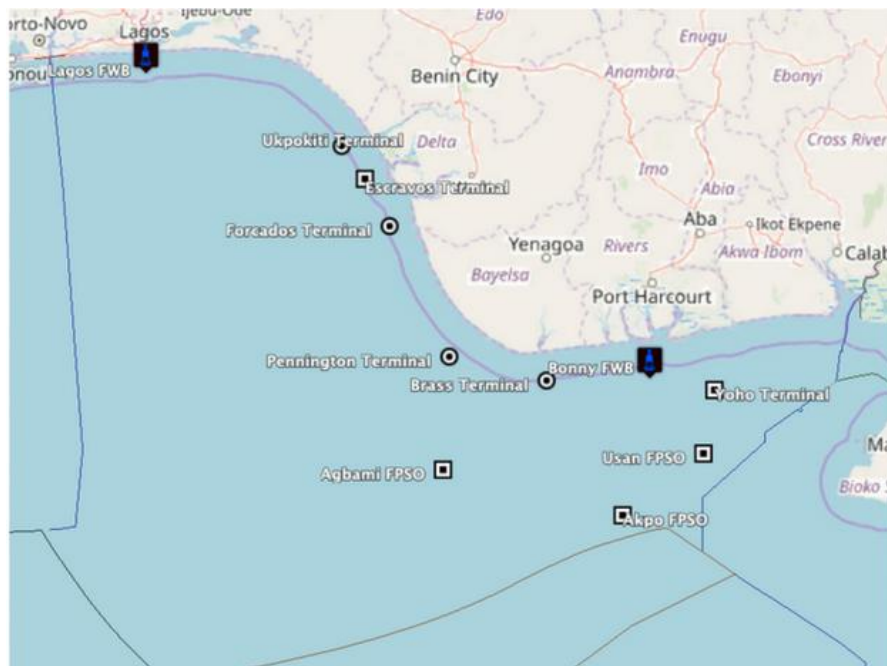
Brazil		Panama		Costa Rica	
Santos	46	Colon	2	Unspecified	2
Paranagua	8	Almirante	1	Chile	
Itaguaí	3	Unspecified	1	Arica	1
Natal	2	Peru		Unspecified	1
Imbituba	3	Callao	2	Dominican Republic	
Rio de Janeiro	4	Paita	2	Caucedo	1
San Sebastiao	1	Unspecified	2	Haina	1
Rio Grande	1	Colombia		Unspecified	4
Vitoria	1	Cartagena	5	Paraguay	
Navegantes	1	Puerto Bolivar	3	Unspecified	1
Unspecified	5	Barranquilla	2	Guyana	
Ecuador		Cienaga	1	Georgetown	1
Guayaquil	8	Santa Maria	1	Unspecified	1
Quito	1	Unspecified	6	Trinidad and Tobago	
Puerto Bolivar	1	Argentina		Pointe Lisas	1
Unspecified	8	San Lorenzo	1	Haiti	
Mexico		Zarate	1	Unspecified	1
Veracruz	3	Unspecified	1	Nicaragua	
Manzanillo	1	Guatemala		Corinto	1
Unspecified	1	Puerto Quetzal	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

- 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 22 - 28 February 2024

Nothing to report.

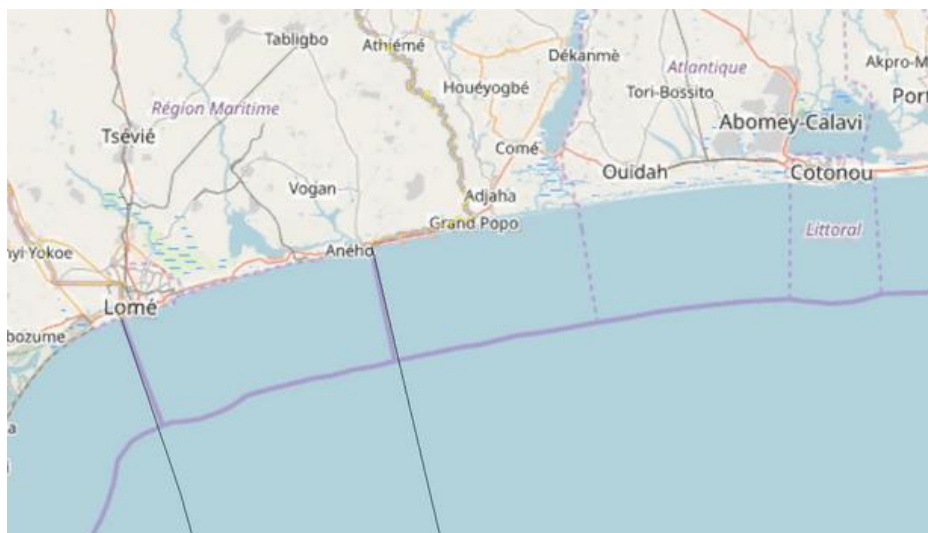
Analysis

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 22 - 28 February 2024

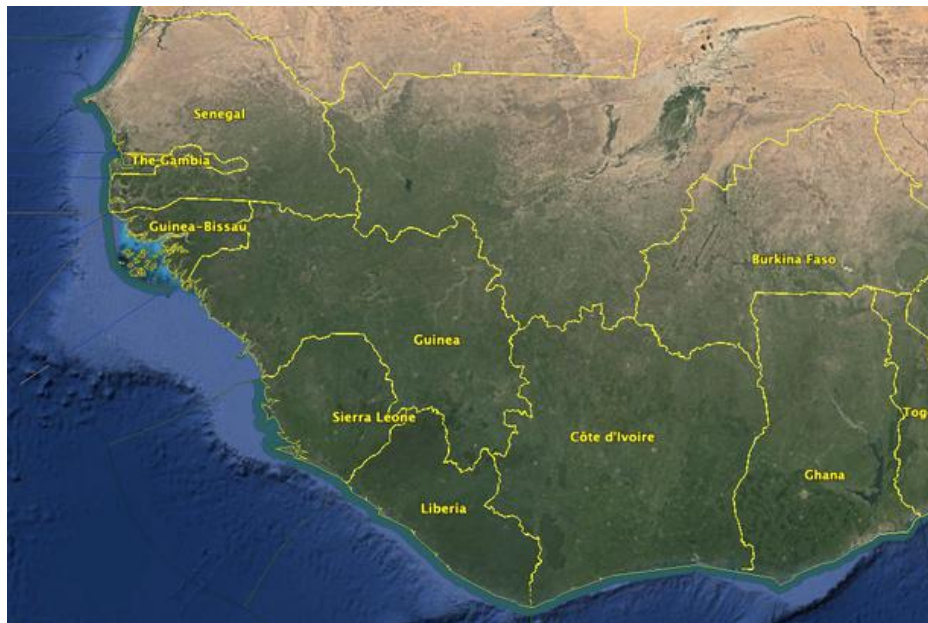
Nothing to report.

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 22 - 28 February 2024

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

- **16 February 2024. Theft (Successful). Monrovia Port, Liberia.** Sea robbers boarded a tanker while she was berthed at Monrovia Port. The perpetrators were not seen onboard the vessel, and the robbery was discovered after the vessel left the port.



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 22 - 28 February 2024

Nothing to report.

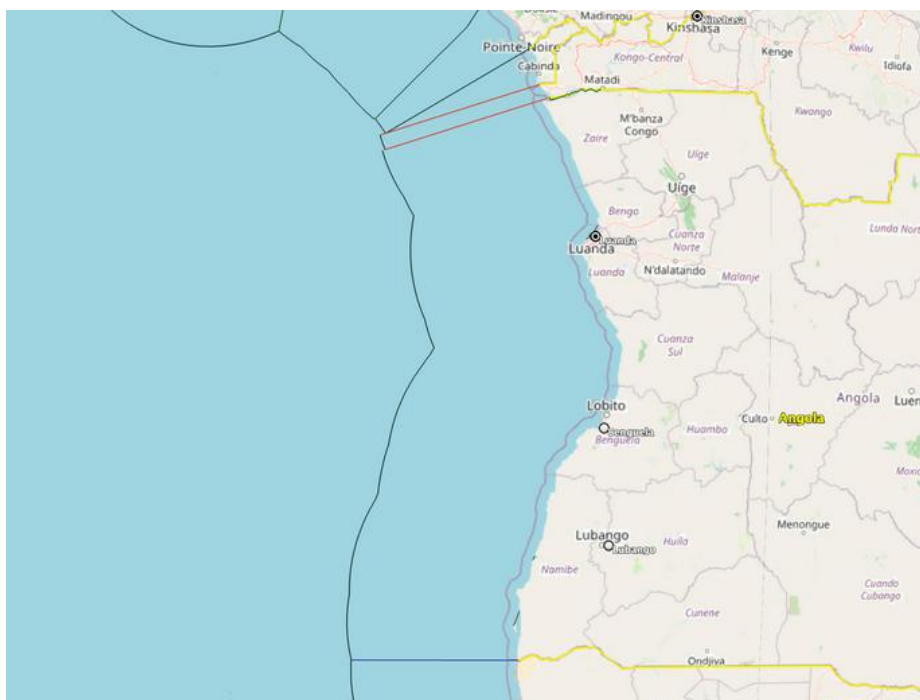
Analysis

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

- **1 January 2024. Kidnap for Ransom. 30nm S of Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.** A chemical tanker was reportedly boarded by pirates in Equatorial Guinea's EEZ while en route to Douala from Abidjan. The tanker carried out evasive manoeuvres, but the pirates were able to make the vessel reduce its speed in order to board. Nine crew members were kidnapped, including the Master, chief engineer, and all other deck officers. A crew member took control of the vessel after the incident and sailed to Douala, where the vessel arrived the following morning and reported the attack. The kidnapped crew members were released on 30 January 2024.



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 22 - 28 February 2024

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

- **24 January 2024. Theft (Successful). Luanda Anchorage, Angola.** A supply vessel reported a robbery after a small canoe was sighted moving away from the vessel at about 20m. Two mooring ropes were found to be missing after a search. The crew was reported safe.

Maritime Security - Recent History and Trends



Gulf of Guinea Port Security Statistics

Number of incidents in last 6 months

Takoradi	1
Luanda	6
Lagos	3
Soyo	1
Monrovia	1

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

Luanda Anchorage	6
Soyo Anchorage	1
Takoradi Anchorage	1
Apapa, Lagos	1
GDNL Berth 19, Lagos Port	1
Terminal D, Berth 10, Lagos Port	1
Monrovia Port	1

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

	Last 3 months	Last 6 months	Last 12 months
Lagos	6	12	18
Port Harcourt	1	1	1
Lomé	1	1	2
Cotonou	1	1	1
Abidjan	0	0	1
Douala	0	0	1
Dakar	1	2	2
Matadi	0	0	1
Takoradi	0	0	1
San Pedro	1	1	1

Gulf of Guinea Piracy Statistics

Security Incidents

This month (last 30 days)	5
Since start of 2024	11
Since start of 2023	53

Crew & Passengers Kidnapped

This month (last 30 days)	9
Since start of 2024	9
Since start of 2023	53

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	19	8	42.11%
2023	20	6	30%
2024	1	0	0%

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



A coalition of Nigerian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have asked President Bola Tinubu to urgently halt the plan by Shell to divest from the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) in the Niger Delta region of the country after decades of environmental degradation. The coalition also urged President Tinubu and National Assembly to put necessary regulatory and legislative mechanisms in place to ensure that Multinational Companies/IOCs operating in the country give account of their stewardship before existing or divesting their investments. The involved organisations state that the Niger Delta has borne the brunt of environmental degradation and social injustices for decades as a direct consequence of the oil exploration and production activities in the region and without a comprehensive resolution of these long-standing issues, the planned divestment by Shell poses an unacceptable risk to the region's ecological integrity and the well-being of the consortium itself. A petition has been sent to President Tinubu, the senate president, and the speaker of the House of Representatives for review. (Source: Leadership News)



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