

WEEKLY REPORT



24/04/24

Maritime Security | Underwater Services | Operations Support | Agency Services

London | Lomé | Cotonou | Lagos | Port Harcourt



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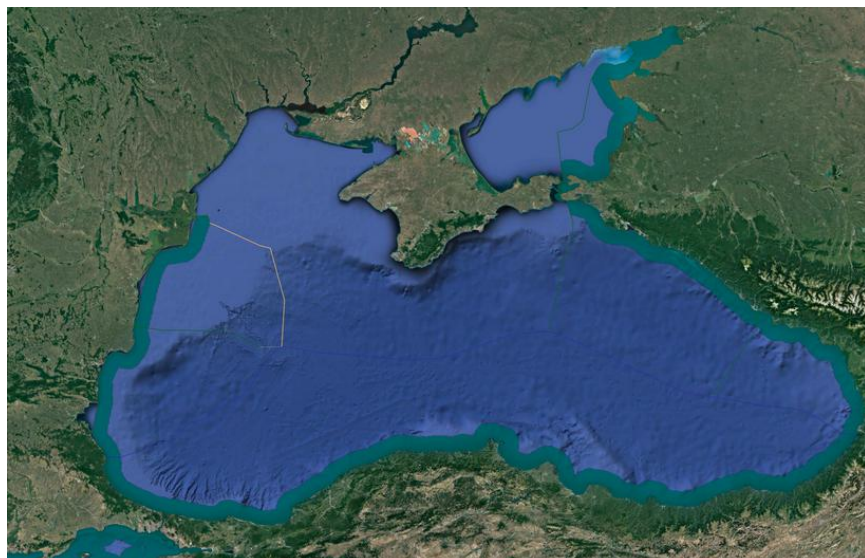
About Africa Risk Compliance

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

Black Sea

Drones: **MEDIUM**

Missiles: **MEDIUM**

Mines: **HIGH**

Electronic Interference: **HIGH**

Sea of Azov

Drones: **MEDIUM**

Missiles: **MEDIUM**

Mines: **HIGH**

Electronic Interference: **HIGH**

Black Sea Security Incidents

Security Incidents

Since start of 2024	2
Since start of 2023	26
Since February 2022	28

Casualties and Detentions

Injuries	2
Deaths	26
Crew detained	36

Incidents Involving Sea Mines

Since start of 2024	0
Since start of 2023	16
Since February 2022	21

Location of Sea Mine Incidents

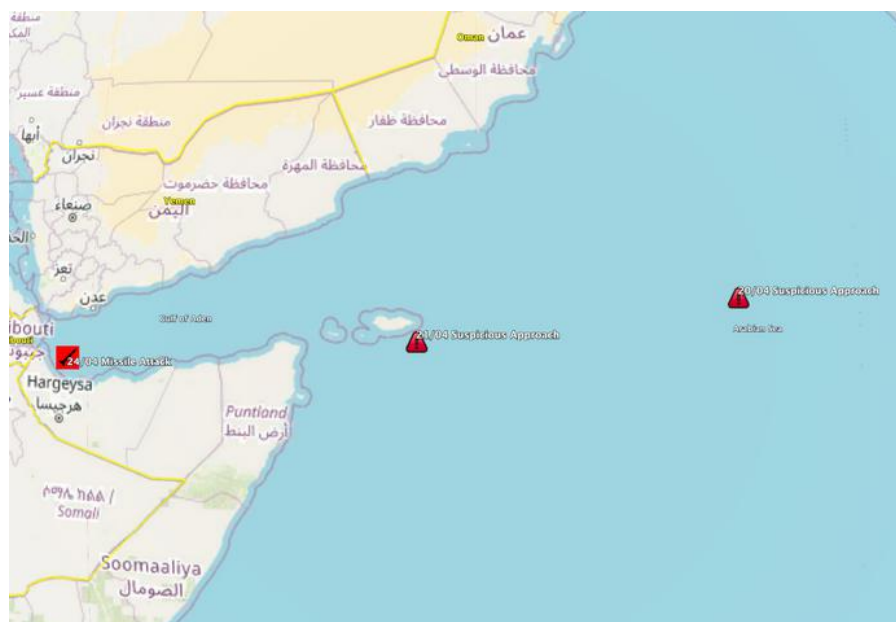
Ukraine	7
Romania	6
Bulgaria	3
Turkey	3
Georgia	1

Analysis

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, we have recorded 28 maritime security incidents in the Black Sea involving merchant vessels. These incidents include missile attacks, drone attacks, and vessel detentions. While some of the merchant vessels that have been hit by missiles or damaged during port attacks were victims of collateral damage, many vessels have directly been targeted by Russian armed forces since the start of the war. We have recorded five incidents where the Russian military has intercepted and detained merchant vessels they suspect of involvement with Ukraine.

The Black Sea continues to be a high-risk area for all vessels. The region is highly unpredictable, and the security situation can change at any time. Crew should operate at MARSEC Level 3 when transiting through the area, and ensure they are prepared to respond to any potential threats or emergencies. The threat in ports in Ukraine and Russia is also elevated as port cities – particularly those in Ukraine – are popular targets. Vessels calling at Ukraine's ports are especially vulnerable because following Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative in July 2023, the military claimed that any vessel leaving a Ukrainian port is a legitimate target.

Over the course of the conflict, Russian forces have planted hundreds of sea mines in Ukrainian waters that have since drifted, presenting a risk to merchant vessels across the Black Sea and civilians on the coasts. We have recorded 21 incidents involving sea mines since the start of the war, with most incidents occurring outside Ukraine. Vessels in the Black Sea should remain vigilant, avoiding floating objects, maintaining lookouts, and monitoring local navigation warnings.



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 18 - 24 April 2024

- **20 April 2024. Suspicious Approach. 595nm E of Socotra, Yemen.** A tanker was followed by a boat at 14kts for 30 minutes. The suspicious vessel was accompanied by three small boats. The tanker was unable to confirm if any weapons or ladders were present. No harm to crew or damage to the vessel reported.
- **21 April 2024. Suspicious Approach. 50nm SE of Socotra, Yemen.** A cargo ship reported a suspicious approach of 3 skiffs. The vessel raised the alarm and the armed security team was put in place. The 3 skiffs retreated and the vessel continued to its next port of call. No damage was reported.
- **24 April 2024. Missile Attack. 72nm ESE of Djibouti, Djibouti.** A Master reported an explosion in the water a distance from the vessel. The vessel and crew were reported safe.

Analysis

Somalia-Based Piracy

The threat of Somalia-based piracy in the region has recently increased from low to medium following a years-long pause in activity. Since 22 November 2023 there have been more than 20 Somali piracy incidents reported, including the hijacking of three bulk carriers and several fishing vessels. The incidents demonstrate that armed groups in Somalia are still willing and capable of pirate attacks. While many of the captured fishing vessels have since been released, reports indicate that at least six are still under pirate control and are likely being used as motherships for future attacks. Reports indicate that there may be several pirate action groups (PAGs) active on the coast of Somalia between Haafun and Garcad, with a hotspot of activity in and around the town of Eyl. In mid-April 2024, it was announced that pirates released the MV ABDULLAH and its 23-member crew following the payment of a \$5 million ransom. The Bangladeshi-owned vessel had been hijacked a month prior off the coast of Somalia. The payment of a ransom to pirates is likely to inspire additional attacks.

There is a medium risk of piracy for all merchant vessels transiting through the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. This risk applies deep offshore, as attacks have been reported as far as 600nm off Somalia's coast. Attacks in the Gulf of Aden cannot be ruled out due to recent reported incidents off Somalia's northern coast.



Iran and Wider Conflict Threats

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. When seizing vessels, Iranian forces are known to open fire and show serious disregard for the safety of crew and the environment. Iranian forces have also 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.

Iran's seizure of an Israel-linked vessel on 13 April 2024 occurred amid heightened tensions in the region due to the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict and followed the suspected Israeli strike targeting the Iranian Consulate in Syria on 1 April 2024. The incident, along with the Revolutionary Guard's recent threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, suggests Iran may continue to use the maritime space within the context of its conflict with Israel. Consequently, there is a risk to Israel-linked vessels transiting through or calling at ports in the Gulf of Oman, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Persian Gulf.

Heightened Threat in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, 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 more than 80 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. A missile attack on 6 March 2024 left three seafarers dead, marking the first fatalities reported since the attacks began. Most of the incidents have occurred north of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait between the ports of Hodeidah and Mokha, however, there has been an increase in incidents reported in the Gulf of Aden since the beginning of 2024.

In response to the attacks, several shipping lines 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. A number of security platforms have also chosen to increase the cost of their services significantly over the course of this conflict due to the recently expanded High-Risk Area, associated rise in insurance costs, and the reduced vessel traffic through the Red Sea.

Following retaliatory airstrikes by US and UK forces, the Houthis announced they would expand their targets to include US and UK-linked vessels. 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 few or no links to the specified countries, and some may have been targeted based on outdated or incorrect publicly available information.

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.



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, maintained a presence at the western end of the Gulf of Aden from 11 January to early April 2024. These allegations have not been confirmed, but the uptick in incidents during this time and the locations in which they have occurred suggest 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.

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 and UK forces have since carried out three additional rounds of strikes in Yemen targeting Houthi positions.

On 19 February 2024, the EU launched Operation Aspides, a naval mission to protect commercial vessels in the Red Sea. France, Germany, Italy, Greece, and Belgium have confirmed participation in the protective mandate, which is designed to only act in response to a threat with minimum force. As part of the operation, naval vessels will accompany vessels and an airborne early warning system will be used to protect against attacks at sea.

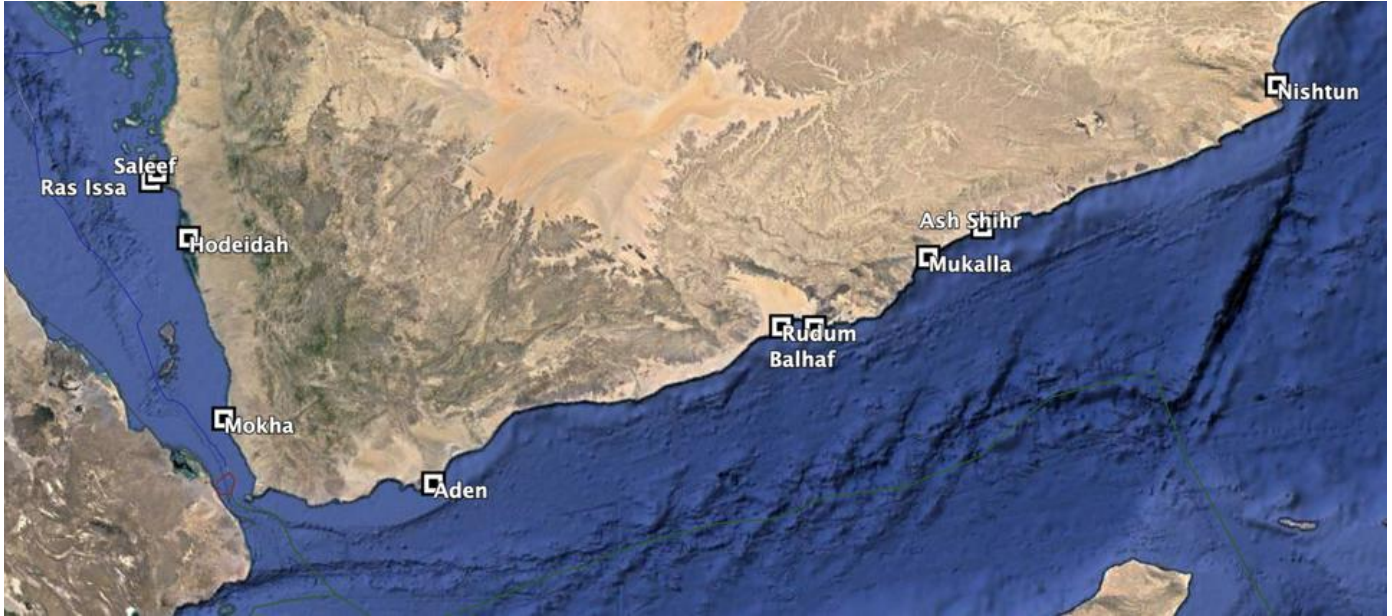
On 16 March 2024, the Indian Navy carried out an operation against the pirates on the MV RUEN, a bulk carrier that was hijacked by Somalia-based pirates on 14 December 2023. INS Kolkata, with supporting ships and aircraft, forced the pirates onboard to surrender with no injury to crew, pirates or any members of the Indian military. During the operation, the pirates shot down an Indian Navy surveillance drone and fired at INS Kolkata. In response, INS Kolkata disabled the ship’s steering system and navigational aids, forcing the vessel to stop. Following the operation, the vessel and crew were released with all safe and the vessel proceeded to India.

Yemeni Ports and HRA Floating Armoury Updates



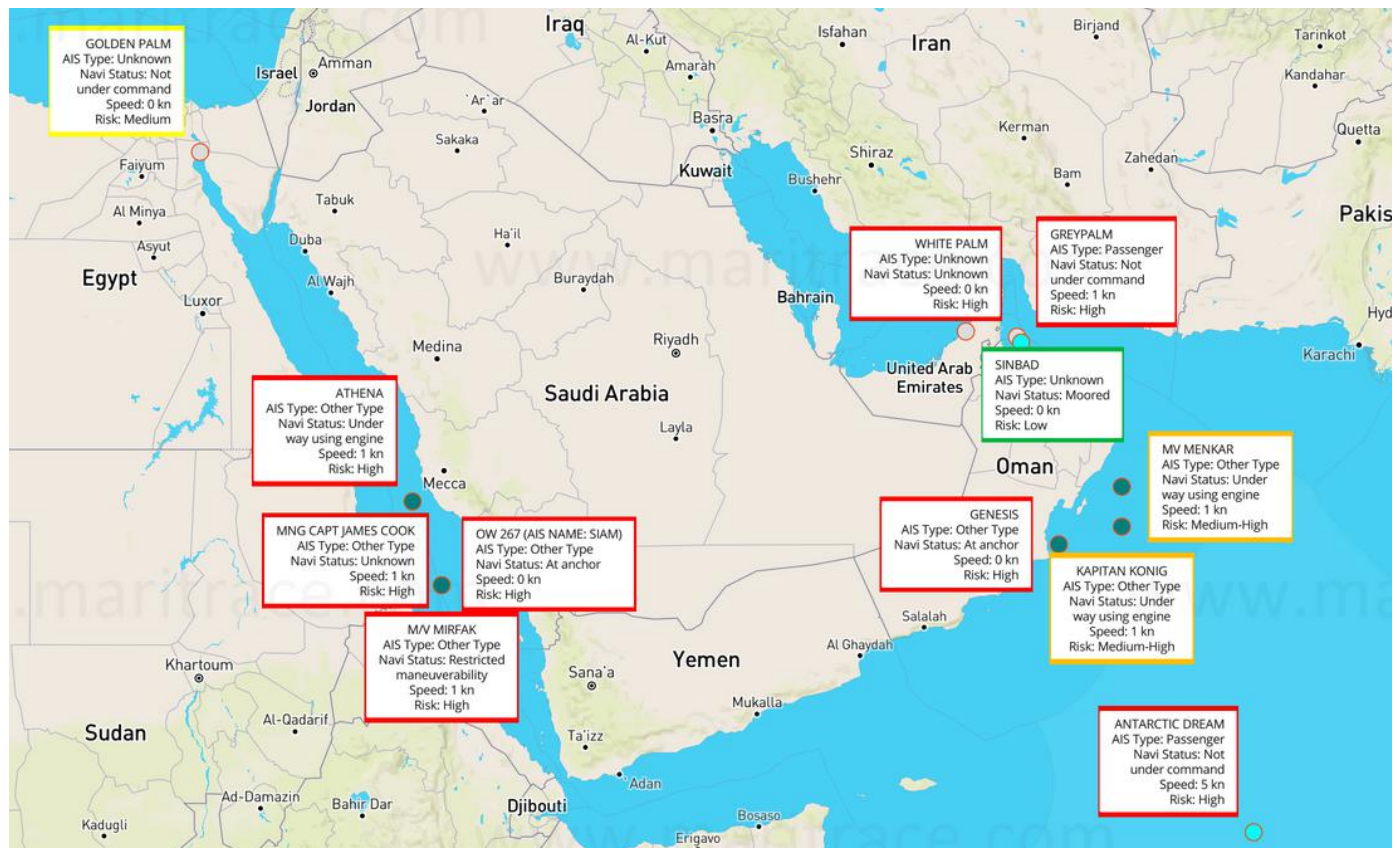
Yemeni Ports status' as of 24 April 2024

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



HRA Floating Armoury Updates

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

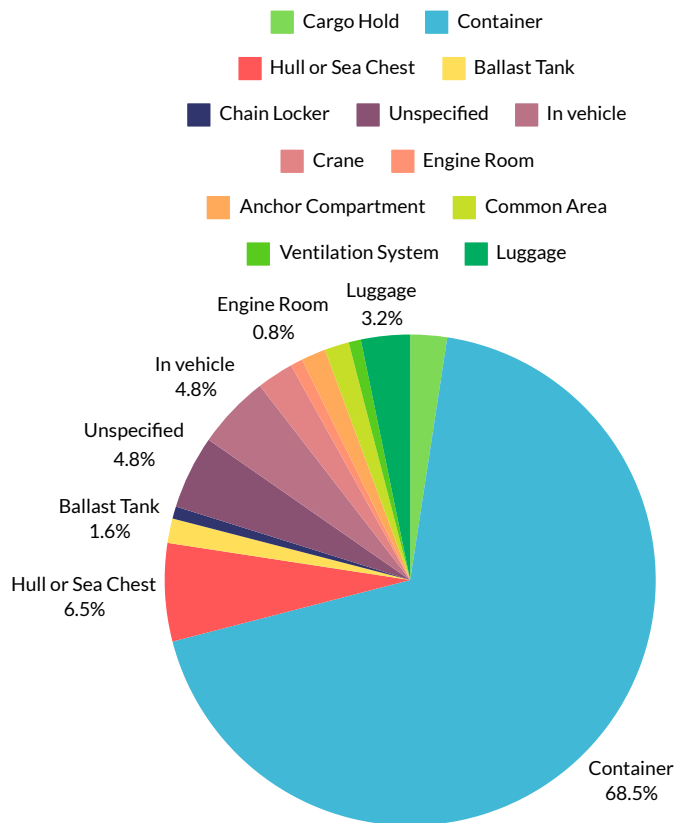
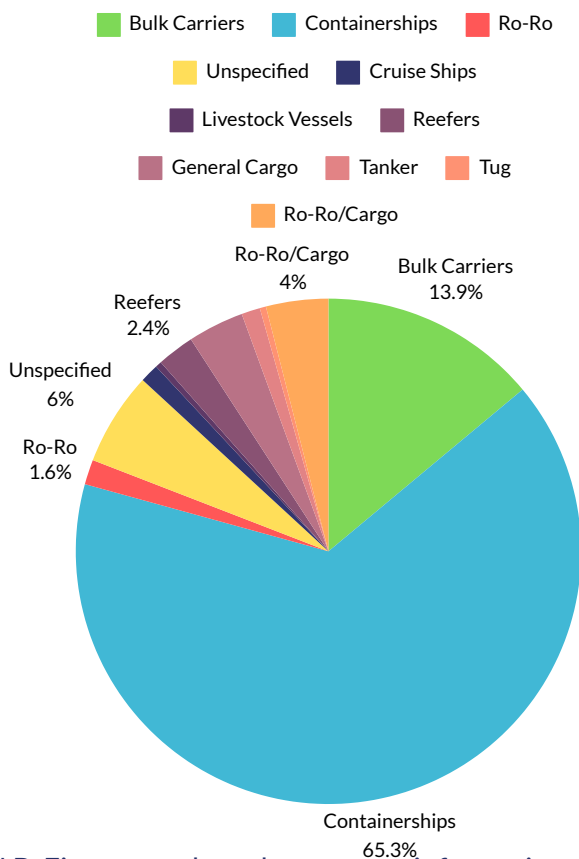


Number of Drug Smuggling Incidents from Ports in Latin America from 2023

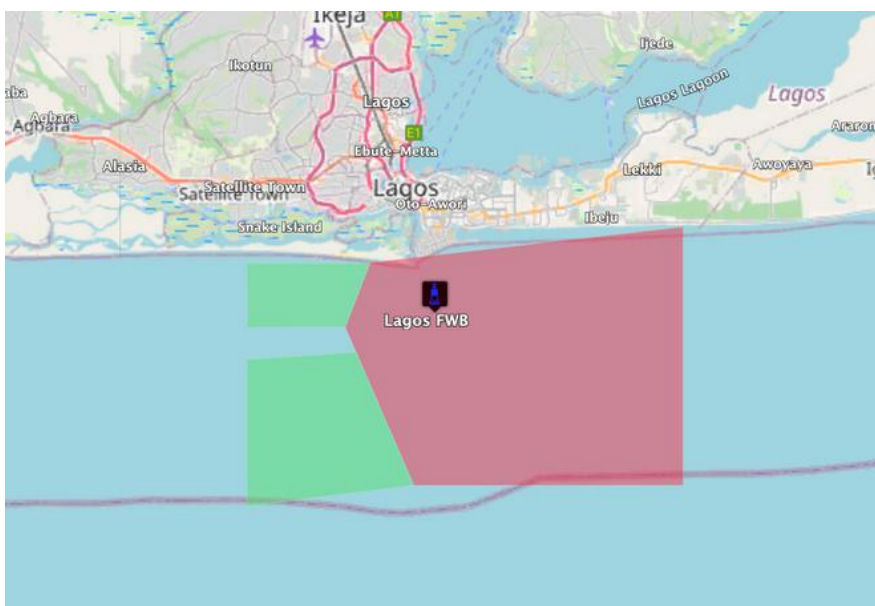
Brazil		Panama		Chile	
Santos	51	Colon	2	Arica	3
Paranagua	13	Almirante	1	San Antonio	1
Rio de Janeiro	11	Unspecified	3	Unspecified	1
Rio Grande	4	Peru		Dominican Republic	
Itaguaí	3	Paita	8	Caucedo	3
Imbituba	3	Callao	4	Haina	1
Natal	2	Unspecified	4	Santo Domingo	1
Itapoa	2	Argentina		Unspecified	6
Vitoria	2	San Lorenzo	2	Paraguay	
San Sebastiao	1	Zarate	1	Unspecified	1
Navegantes	1	Ecuador		Guyana	
Unspecified	9	Guayaquil	22	Georgetown	2
Colombia		Quito	2	Trinidad and Tobago	
Cartagena	7	Puerto Bolivar	2	Pointe Lisas	1
Barranquilla	7	Machala	1	Unspecified	1
Santa Maria	5	Unspecified	25	Haiti	
Buenaventura	4	Mexico		Unspecified	1
Puerto Bolivar	2	Lazaro Cardenas	2	Nicaragua	
Cienaga	1	Veracruz	1	Corinto	1
Unspecified	7	Costa Rica		Unspecified	2
Guatemala		Unspecified	6		
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

Theft, Robbery & Stowaway

STS and NPA Anchorage: **HIGH**
Port Area: **HIGH**

Piracy & Kidnap for Ransom

STS and NPA Anchorage:
MEDIUM
Port Area: **LOW**

Reports 18 - 24 April 2024

Nothing to report.

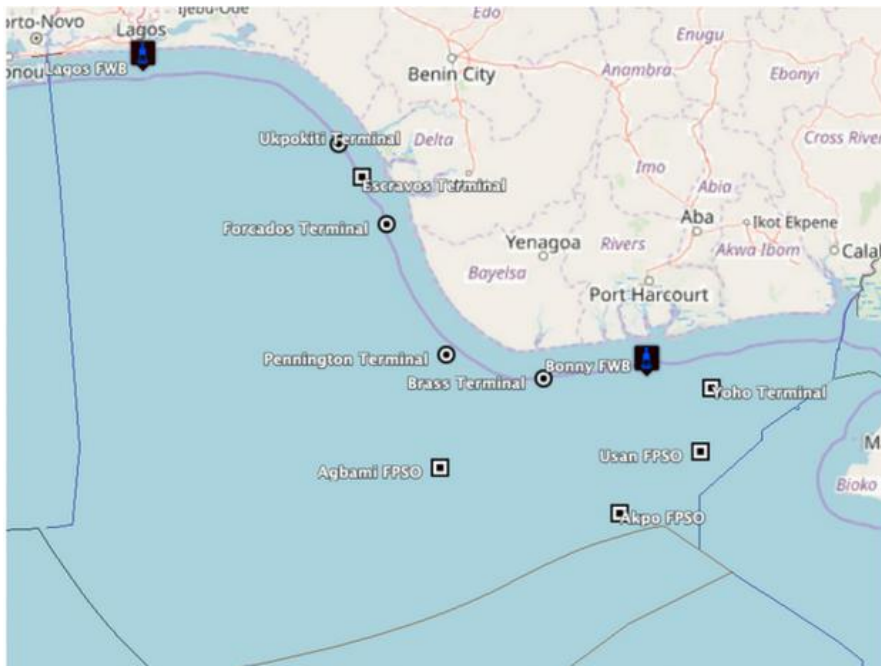
Analysis

Lagos has consistently 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

- **14 March 2024. Theft (unsuccessful). Tin Can Island Container Terminal, Lagos, Nigeria.** Whilst alongside in Tin Can Port, Lagos, containership was boarded by two robbers. Once discovered and alarm raised, they fled, injuring a stevedore in the process. Local authorities informed.



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 18 - 24 April 2024

Nothing to report.

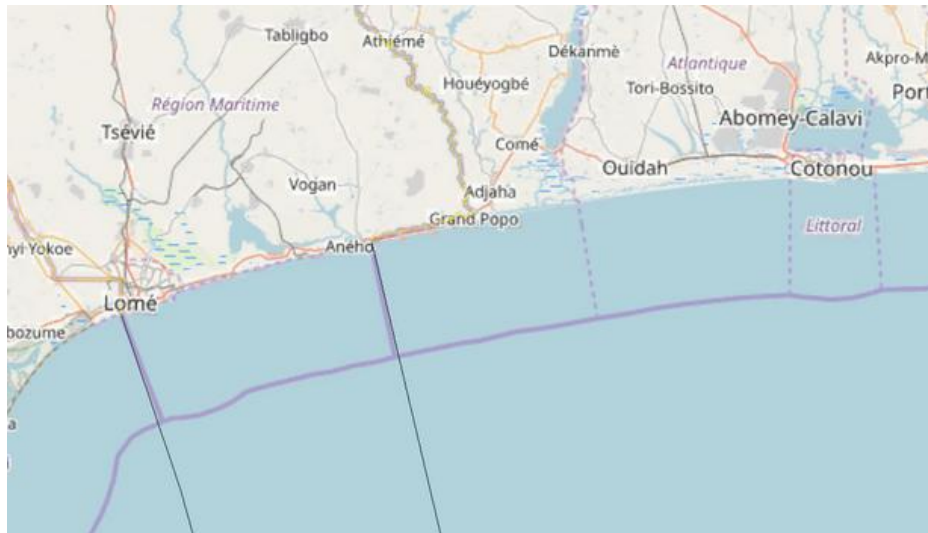
Analysis

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 18 - 24 April 2024

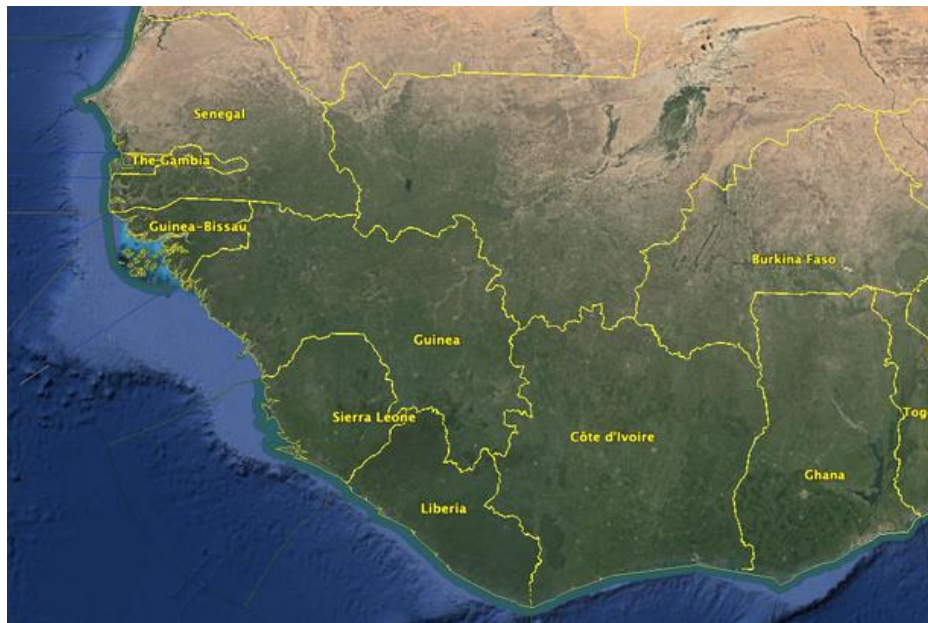
Nothing to report.

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 18 - 24 April 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 an 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 historically been a number of security incidents against local fishing vessels in this area. 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 18 - 24 April 2024

Nothing to report.

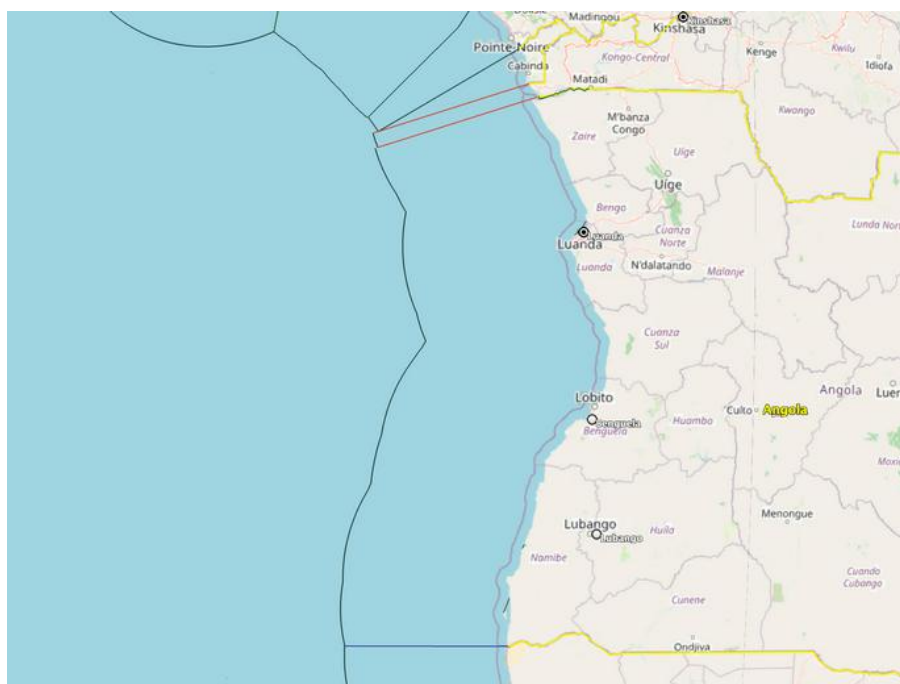
Analysis

The threat at anchorages in countries aside from Nigeria should be considered high, as pirates target alternative locations. A pirate group based in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria is suspected to have carried out attacks in this region. Vessels should remain extremely vigilant when transiting through this area.

There remains a high risk of piracy attack and kidnap in the waters of countries outside of Nigeria, especially Cameroon, São Tomé and Príncipe, 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, such as the waters south of Bioko Island, 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 18 - 24 April 2024

Nothing to report.

Analysis

The threat across the region should be considered high as Niger Delta-based pirates have demonstrated the capability to operate at significant distances offshore. Small product and bunker tankers should be extra vigilant in this area, as they provide relatively low freeboard, cargo that is attractive for the black market, and crew to kidnap. These vessels also often spend a significant amount of time in the region, possibly allowing pirate group networks to collect intelligence in preparation for future attacks.

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

Last Incident

- **12 April 2024. Suspicious Approach. Luanda Anchorage, Angola.** A vessel reported a suspicious approach after two small wooden boats were seen approaching the vessel, landing port side. The suspects left the scene after an alarm was raised.

Maritime Security - Recent History and Trends



Gulf of Guinea Port Security Statistics

Number of incidents in last 6 months

Luanda	6
Lagos	3
Soyo	1
Monrovia	1
Banana	1

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

Luanda Anchorage	6
Soyo Anchorage	1
Apapa, Lagos	1
Tin Can Port, Lagos	1
GDNL Berth 19, Lagos Port	1
Monrovia Port	1
Banana Port	1

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

	Last 3 months	Last 6 months	Last 12 months
Lagos	4	11	17
Port Harcourt	1	1	1
Lomé	1	1	1
Cotonou	1	1	1
Abidjan	0	0	1
Douala	0	0	1
Dakar	2	3	4
Matadi	0	0	1
Takoradi	0	0	1
San Pedro	1	1	1
Banjul	1	1	1

Gulf of Guinea Piracy Statistics

Security Incidents

This month (last 30 days)	1
Since start of 2024	13
Since start of 2023	55

Crew & Passengers Kidnapped

This month (last 30 days)	0
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

West Africa Shipping News



Nothing to report.



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