



# WEEKLY REPORT



## 31/01/24

Maritime Security | Underwater Services | Operations Support | Agency Services

London | Lomé | Cotonou | Lagos | Port Harcourt





#### Maritime Security Incidents and Updates

HRA, Indian Ocean	2
Yemen Ports and Floating Armouries	6
Drug Smuggling from Latin America	7
Lagos, Nigeria	8
Niger Delta, Nigeria	9
Benin and Togo	10
Western Gulf of Guinea	11
Cameroon to Gabon	12
Congo to Angola	13
Gulf of Guinea Recent History & Trends	14
Militancy, Community Conflict and Industrial Action in the Niger Delta	15
West Africa Shipping News	16

### **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.



Page





**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 25 - 31 January 2024

- 26 January 2024. Missile Attack. 60nm SW of Aden, Yemen. The Master of a tanker reported that two missiles exploded in the water at a distance off the port quarter whilst the vessel was transiting through the Gulf of Aden. Coalition forces responded and no damage or injuries were reported.
- 26 January 2024. Missile Attack. 60nm SE of Aden, Yemen. A tanker was hit by a missile while transiting through the Gulf of Aden. The strike caused a fire in one of the starboard cargo holds. Reports state that the crew attempted to extinguish the fire but had to abandon ship using lifeboats. The crew members were picked up by Indian Navy vessel INS Visakhapatnam and naval personnel embarked on the vessel to extinguish the fire. The Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that the vessel was targeted due to links with the UK.
- 27 January 2024. Fired On. 780nm E of Somalia. A merchant vessel was attacked in the Indian Ocean deep offshore by 3 perpetrators onboard a small craft with weapons. The embarked security team fired warning shots after the craft within 300m. The craft moved away after short exchange of fire. The crew was reported safe and the vessel headed to next port of call.
- 27 January 2024. Hijack. 455nm NE of Seychelles. Naval authorities reported that a Sri Lankan fishing vessel was hijacked by three armed suspects. Reports state that the perpetrators were likely Somali pirates and that the vessel was heading toward the coast of Africa after the attack. Two days later the Seychelles Defence Forces and coast guard rescued the six fishermen onboard and arrested the three suspects.
- 28 January 2024. Suspicious Approach. 780nm E of Somalia. A merchant vessel was approached by a boat with armed personnel without uniforms. Embarked guards fired two warning shots after the craft came to within 400m of the ship. Craft moved away and the vessel continued its voyage. The crew were reported safe.
- 29 January 2024. Hijack. Near Abo, Somalia. An unconfirmed number of armed suspects reportedly boarded an Iranian fishing vessel and took the 17 crew members hostage. Upon receiving a distress call the Indian Navy deployed warship INS Sumitra, which successfully freed the vessel and crew.





**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 25 - 31 January 2024

- 29 January 2024. Suspicious Approach. 44nm W of Mokha, Yemen. A merchant vessel was reportedly approached on its starboard bow by three small craft, which later regrouped astern with a closest point of approach at 1nm. One small craft was grey with a front mounted weapon. The small craft departed the area after the vessel's embarked security team fired warning shots and the vessel carried out self-protection measures. The vessel and crew are reported safe and proceeding to next port of call.
- **30** January 2024. Increased Threat to Shipping. Deep Offshore Somalia. MSCHOA have reported that there are likely two pirate action groups (PAGs) operating in the Indian Ocean. One group was reported to be 600nm south of Socotra Island and has moved eastward and away from the coast of Somalia to 600nm south-east of Socotra Island. The other group was reported approximately 470nm north-east of Seychelles, around 00°34'N, 061°29'E. Both PAGs could be operating with a "mothership" and several smaller craft.



#### 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-born weapons against vessels, which is an evolution from the mines and water-born 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 Somalia-based piracy has substantially increased in the region. There have been 12 Somali piracy incidents reported since 22 November 2023, including the hijacking of a bulk carrier in the Arabian Sea. 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 48 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 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 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.



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 at least two vessels identified as part of the Iranian navy have changed position in the past week, with one, Behshad, maintaining a presence at the western end of the Gulf of Aden since 11 January 2024 and another, Shiba, transiting through the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea starting on 12 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.

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 the 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 carried out another round of strikes against eight Houthi targets on 22 January 2024.

Though all merchant vessels are currently at risk in the Red Sea, the threat from the Houthis is therefore heightened towards 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



Nishtun

#### Yemeni Ports status' as of 31 January 2024

<b>Gulf of Aden Ports</b>	Status	<b>Red Sea Ports</b>	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		
Saleef Ras Issa Głodeidah		Ash Sh Mukat	
Mokha		Ruðum Balhaf	last.
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#### **HRA Floating Armoury Updates**

Aden

Most platforms and PMSCs have requested that clients inform them of any Israeli links to their vessels.



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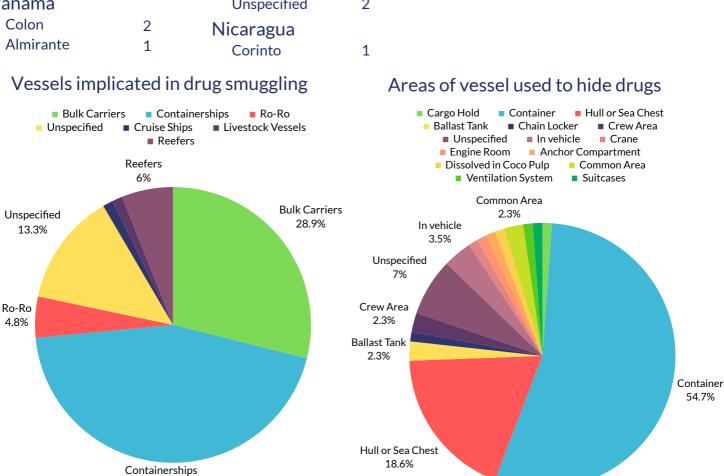
### **Drug Smuggling from Latin America**

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

Brazil		Peru		Chile	
Santos	38	Callao	2	Arica	1
Paranagua	8	Paita	2	Unspecified	1
Imbituba Rio de Janeiro	2 2	Unspecified	2	Dominican Repu	ublic
San Sebastiao	2	Colombia	_	Caucedo	1
Rio Grande	1	Cartagena	5	Unspecified	3
Vitoria Navegantes Unspecified	1 1 4	Puerto Bolivar Barranquilla Cienaga Unspecified	3 2 1 6	Paraguay Unspecified	1
Ecuador		-	0	Guyana	
Guayaquil Quito	8 1	Argentina San Lorenzo	1	Georgetown Unspecified	1 1
Puerto Bolivar	1	Zarate	1	Trinidad and To	bago
Unspecified	7	Unspecified	1	Pointe Lisas	1
Mexico		Guatemala		Haiti	
Veracruz	3	Puerto Quetzal	1	Unspecified	1
Manzanillo Unspecified	1 1	Costa Rica Moin Port	1		
Panama		Unspecified	2		
Colon Almirante	2 1	Nicaragua Corinto	1		

#### Vessels implicated in drug smuggling

44.6%

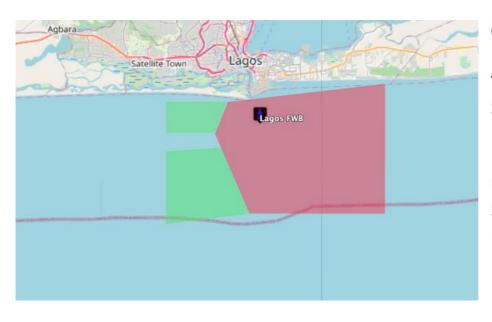


N.B. Figures are based on current information at time of publication of this report, and may change over time as further information on previous incidents is received. The figures represent the number of incidents of drug smuggling/trafficking on merchant vessels from ports in Latin America to ports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

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### Maritime Security - Lagos, Nigeria





**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 25 - 31 January 2024

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.

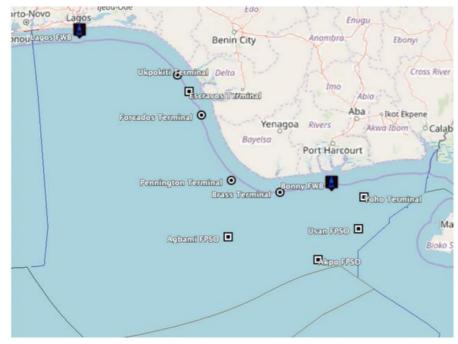
There remains a high risk of armed robbery and theft at all Lagos anchorages and across the port area. If spotted by crew and alarm raised, thieves and robbers will usually flee without altercation or threat to crew. Terminals inside the port have poor security infrastructure, so vessels at berth are easy targets for thieves, robbers and stowaways. It is recommended that vessels maintain a vigilent 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.

### Maritime Security - Offshore and Niger Delta, Nigeria





#### Reports 25 - 31 January 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 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**

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

### Maritime Security - Benin & Togo





**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 25 - 31 January 2024

Nothing to report.

#### Analysis

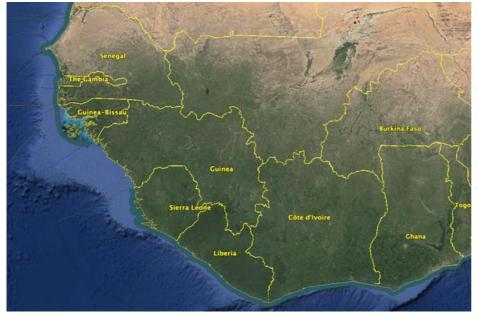
There remains a high threat in the waters offshore Benin and Togo, where vessels often drift awaiting berthing instructions, or carry our STS bunker operations. The area deep offshore Benin should be considered one of the most dangerous areas in the Gulf of Guinea, as there are minimal options for security 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.

### **Maritime Security - Western Gulf of Guinea**





**Current Threat Levels** 

Senegal: LOW Guinea: MEDIUM Sierra Leone: MEDIUM Liberia: LOW Cote d'Ivoire: MEDIUM Ghana: MEDIUM

#### Reports 25 - 31 January 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

• 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.

### **Maritime Security - Cameroon to Gabon**





#### Reports 25 - 31 January 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.

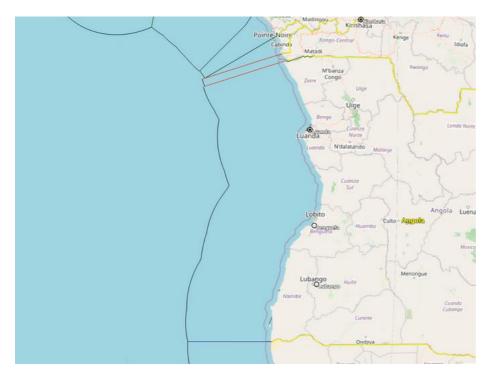
#### **Current Threat Levels**

**Theft, Robbery & Stowaway** 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

### Maritime Security - Congo to Angola





#### **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 25 - 31 January 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

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

Takoradi	4	number of incidents in last 6 mon		
Douala Luanda Lagos Soyo San Pedro Conakry Owendo Matadi	0 6 1 1 0 1 0 1	Luanda Anchorage Takoradi Anchorage Conakry Anchorage Kirikiri Jetty, Lagos Owendo Anchorage Terminal D, Berth 10, Lagos Port	6 4 1 1 1	

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

	Last 3 months	Last 6 months	Last 12 months
Lagos	6	10	17
Lomé	1	1	1
Cotonou	1	1	1
Abidjan	0	0	2
Douala	0	0	1
Dakar	1	2	3
Matadi	0	0	1
Takoradi	0	0	1
San Pedro	1	1	1

#### **Gulf of Guinea Piracy Statistics**

Security Incidents		Crew & Passengers Kidnapped	
This month (last 30 days) Since start of 2024	5	This month (last 30 days) Since start of 2024	9 9
Since start of 2023	47	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	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

### West Africa Shipping News



Operatives of the Rivers State Police Command have reportedly neutralised John Togo, a suspected sea pirate. According to the Commissioner of Police, authorities acted on credible intelligence and trailed Togo to a hideout where he engaged the security operatives in a shootout and was subsequently killed. Two other suspects were arrested following the shootout. Togo was allegedly involved in armed robbery, arms trafficking, sea piracy, and kidnapping in the Bonny, Okirika, and Port Harcourt water routes, and was responsible for the ambush and killing of four security personnel around Degema on 4 November 2023. (Source: Leadership Newspaper)

Last week, the People's Gazette published a report accusing Vice Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla, Nigeria's Chief of Naval Staff, of facilitating an unorganised bunkering of Nigerian crude and a multimillion-naira contract-splitting fraud. The report accuses Ogalla of several offences, including the release of several oil tankers impounded for transporting stolen crude oil in exchange for millions of dollars in kickbacks and accepting over \$170 million in bribes over the past six months. A petition has been sent to Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu calling for an investigation into the allegations. In a statement, the Nigerian Navy has described the allegations against Ogalla as untenable and baseless. (Source: Punch Nigeria)



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#### +44 (0) 203 151 1700

#### info@arcafrica.com

#### Africa Risk Compliance Limited

#### London | Lomé | Cotonou | Lagos | Port Harcourt