



WEEKLY THREAT ADVISORY NO. 489

(21 - 27 January 2021)

Summary of Threat Activities and Conclusion

1. Pirate and maritime crime activity in East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA is at low level. There were no reports of piracy/criminal/terrorist related incidents this past week.

2. UKMTO is aware of recent military activity in the Gulf Region. There is no change to the information and guidance recently given to maritime trade transiting the Gulf area. Vessels should proceed in accordance with their company and flag state direction, and are encouraged to report to UKMTO in accordance with BMP5. UKMTO continues to monitor all shipping transiting through the Straits of Hormuz (SOH) and recommends that ships maintain their AIS transmissions throughout the Gulf region, reporting any irregular activity to [UKMTO watchkeepers@ukmto.org](mailto:UKMTO_watchkeepers@ukmto.org) or +44 (0) 2392 222060

3. **UKMTO Notice 004 Jan 2020**
 - 3.1. UKMTO is issuing this Notice to global maritime operators in order to remind mariners and ship operators of the recommended procedures for transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

 - 3.2. BMP5 remains the basis for merchant ship conduct, reporting and monitoring in the area. In addition, vessels and companies will need to be aware of their own Flag State guidance.

 - 3.3. All vessels are strongly advised to remain within International Waters and, where practicable, should avoid transiting through Iranian TTW, including the areas claimed by Iran around the islands of:
 - 3.3.1. Abu Musa, 25° 52' N 55° 02' E
 - 3.3.2. Greater Tunb 26° 15' N 55° 16' E
 - 3.3.3. Lesser Tunb 26° 14' N 55° 08' E



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- 3.4. In the event of merchant vessels being hailed masters should respond with ship's name, flag state and confirm that they are proceeding in accordance with International Law. If contacted by Iranian authorities, it is recommended that masters contact UKMTO.
- 3.5. UKMTO recommends all merchant shipping maintain transmissions on AIS throughout the region to avoid misidentification and to assist with merchant shipping monitoring.
4. **MARAD ADVISORY 2018-014-GPS Interference-Eastern Mediterranean and Red Seas:** This revised advisory cancels U.S. Maritime Advisory 2018-007 Reference: U.S. Maritime Alerts 2018-004A, 2018-004B, 2018-008A. Issue: Multiple instances of significant GPS interference continue to be reported by vessels and aircraft operating in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. These reports have been concentrated near Port Said, Egypt, the Suez Canal, and in the vicinity of the Republic of Cyprus. Additional instances of similar interference were reported in October 2018 near Jeddah Port, Saudi Arabia. This interference is resulting in lost or otherwise altered GPS signals affecting bridge navigation, GPS-based timing and communications equipment. Guidance: Exercise caution when transiting these areas. The U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Centre (NAVCEN) and NATO Shipping Centre websites contain information regarding effective navigation practices for vessels experiencing GPS interference. The information reaffirms safe navigation practices when experiencing possible GPS disruption, provides useful details on reporting possible GPS disruption, and is intended to generate further discussions within the maritime community about other disruption mitigation practices and procedures. This guidance also recommends taking note of critical information such as the location (latitude/longitude), date/time, and duration of the outage/disruption, and providing photographs or screen shots of equipment failures during a disruption to facilitate analysis. The NAVCEN information is available at: <https://go.usa.gov/xQBau>. Contact Information: GPS disruptions or anomalies should be immediately reported to the NAVCEN at <https://go.usa.gov/xQBaw> or via phone at 703-313-5900, 24 hours a day. The NATO Shipping Centre has requested that instances of GPS interference also be reported to them using the format on their Cyber Interference link: <https://shipping.nato.int/nsc/page10303037.aspx>. Cancellation: This message will automatically expire on May 2, 2019.



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5. **On Aug 17, UKMTO issued ADVISORY NOTICE 001/AUG/2017:** - 1. Category: Notice. Description: GUIDANCE ON TRANSITS THROUGH THE BAB EL MANDEB AND ASSOCIATED WATERS. The following information from the UK government relates to transits through the Bab el Mandeb (BeM) and associated waters. It replaces previous guidance UKMTO Notice 001 July 2017 (which refers to CMF advice dated 16 July 2017) and UKMTO Notice 002 July 2017. Recent attacks against merchant shipping in the Gulf of Aden and Bab el Mandeb have highlighted the risks associated with transiting these waters. Daylight attacks by small boats were conducted against two tankers in the southern approaches to the BeM. The method of these attacks has seen two or more skiffs approaching at high speed. In each case, one or more have fired small arms and Rocket Propelled Grenades and carried explosives. In both attacks, the skiffs carrying explosives detonated at a distance from the target vessel, but the presumed intent was to detonate the explosives against the hull. The assessment of the attacks against merchant vessels in the southern approaches to the BeM indicates that due to the low levels of sophistication, the exposure to the threat is greater in daylight hours. However, an attack during the hours of darkness cannot be excluded. The risk of the conflict in Yemen spilling into the maritime domain also continues to exist in the area to the North of the BeM and around the Hanish Islands. Even though we do not expect merchant vessels to be targeted by the forces fighting in Yemen, the threat of collateral damage to commercial shipping is present and should not be ignored. This threat is assessed as greater in the hours of darkness (when attackers may be more likely to misidentify their targets) to the North of the Traffic Separation Scheme to the West of the Hanish Islands. Therefore, operating in these waters requires thorough planning and the use of all available information. The maritime threat environment is dynamic; the risks will not remain constant for subsequent visits. It is essential therefore, that Masters, Ship Security Officers and Company Security Officers carry out detailed Risk Assessments for each voyage to the region and for each activity within the region. All vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden and Bab el Mandeb should follow the guidance of BMP 4 to the maximum extent possible and consider the use of embarked armed security. Recent attacks in 2017 serve to emphasize the importance of robustly following this guidance. This information is aimed to help inform effective mitigating actions and has been developed through cooperation between Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and UKMTO. The use of BMP4, armed security, shifting transit times, or any other defensive measures remain the sole decision of the vessel operator based on its own dedicated risk assessment and the requirements of the flag state. Cancel UKMTO Notice 001/JUL/2017 & UKMTO Notice



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002/JUL/2017. Any queries regarding this UKMTO Notice ring 0044 2392 222060 for further information.

6. **U.S. MARITIME ADVISORY 2017-004 / Threat Type:** - Piracy / Geographic Area: Indian Ocean, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Red Sea, and Gulf of Oman: U.S. flag vessels are advised to remain vigilant and adhere to the counter-piracy annex of their approved Vessel Security Plan when transiting the Sulu and Celebes Seas, in light of recent boarding and kidnappings for ransom that have taken place in the area. Over the past 12 months, there have been at least 14 reported kidnappings and one murder, of which at least ten incidents were reportedly linked to Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), a violent Islamic separatist group operating in the southern Philippines. Previously, only towing and fishing vessels were targeted and crewmembers kidnapped. However, since October 2016, ASG has reportedly targeted three large commercial vessels and one yacht. In November 2016 ASG boarded a German yacht and killed one crewmember, and in February 2017 killed the remaining crewmember after a ransom demand was not met. Thus far, no U.S. vessels have been involved in these incidents. Guidance: Additional information on this threat, including specific recommendations for vessels transiting the area, is available on the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) website at www.recaap.org. Mariners operating in or near this area are also advised to consult the Department of State Travel Warnings for this area and the information can be found at www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings/philippines-travel-warning.html. All suspicious activities and events must be reported to the U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center at 800-424-8802 in accordance with 33CFR101.305. A Ship Hostile Action Report (SHAR) should also be sent to the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) at:

http://msi.nga.mil/NGAPortal/MSI.portal?_nfpb=true&_st=&_pageLabel=msi_portal_page_70&subCode=06 as soon as possible following an incident or suspected activity (including apparent surveillance being conducted by small vessels/boats).

Reference:

https://msi.nga.mil/NGAPortal/MSI.portal?_nfpb=true&_st=&_pageLabel=msi_portal_page_62&pubCode=0009 for further guidance.

7. Pirate and maritime crime activities in West Africa waters is low level. There were two reports of piracy/criminal incidents during the reporting period.



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8. GULF OF GUINEA: On 26 Jan, the Hong Kong flagged tanker SEAFRONTIER was approached by a skiff approximately 163nm southwest of Agbami oil field.
9. NIGERIA: On 21 Jan, a small craft approached an underway container vessel approximately 64nm southwest of Bonny.
10. The shipping industry has warned in recent months about increased incidents of piracy and kidnapping in the Gulf of Guinea, particularly around Nigeria. Pirates this month attacked an oil production vessel off Nigeria and kidnapped nine Nigerian nationals.
11. In other parts of the world, there were three reports of piracy and criminal incidents against commercial shipping.
12. MALAYSIA: On 25 Jan, five robbers boarded the Barbados flagged bulk carrier ARK ROYAL in the Singapore Strait.
13. INDONESIA: On 24 Jan, the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency detained the Iran flagged tanker HORSE and Panama flagged tanker FREA in Pontianak waters, West Kalimantan, Indonesia on suspicion of illegally transferring oil in Indonesian Waters.
14. SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE: On 23 Jan, pirates kidnapped 15 Turkish crewmen from the Liberia flagged container ship MOZART approximately 98 nm northwest of Sao Tome. One Azerbaijani crew member was killed during the incident.
15. The navies of China, Japan, India, Russia, Korea and Iran continue to provide escort naval services to their flag vessels due to the continued presence and danger posed Somalia-based piracy threats. These efforts combined with the increased deployment of armed maritime marshals on board commercial shipping have significantly reduce the success of Somalia-based piracy in the HRA in hijacking commercial vessels of late but not the presence of pirate groups operating in the HRA. International Intelligence Agencies' assessment is that existing presence of Somali-based piracy threats can easily be translated to successful hijacks as were experienced in 2009/2010/2011 by should these preventive measures be eased off by all stakeholders.
16. **Weather Conditions.** High pressure dominates the weather pattern over the region producing mostly clear skies. Tropical Cyclone 02A is influencing all



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areas; expect increased winds and seas until 17 June. Southwest monsoon conditions resume after and will continue until September. Expect increased localized wind flow through the Strait of Hormuz due to funnelling effects.

Instructions and Piracy Related News

17. Warning for Red Sea, Bab el-Mandab Straits and Gulf of Aden

17.1. There have been numerous attacks and suspicious approaches reported near the southern entrance to the Bab el Mandeb Strait during the reporting period. Levels of pirate activity in the Indian Ocean remain elevated, with five hijacks reported since March 2017 (MT ARIS 13, CASAYR II NO.30, AL KAUSAR, SALAMA 1 and OS 35). The threat of further attacks and hijacking remains high. All Masters are advised to exercise heightened vigilance within the High Risk Area (HRA), stringently implement BMP4 and liaise closely with embarked armed security teams (AST) and regional authorities. If not making calls in Yemen, it's recommended by UKMTO that vessels should use the IRTC and western lane of the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) in the Bab el Mandeb / southern Red Sea region, to provide a greater lee from Yemen. Further such incidents and hijackings are likely to take place, and all vessels transiting this region are advised to remain vigilant. While international naval patrols and anti-piracy measures on-board commercial vessels have practically eradicated Somali piracy since its peak in early 2011, poverty coupled with other factors that motivate pirates remain and some vessels transiting this region may have increasingly become complacent in the belief that the piracy threat had diminished.

17.2. While the international community has over the past several years taken significant steps in order to improve security in the region, including boosting naval forces in the area and requiring ships to take protection measures, including reporting in and out of high risk areas, sailing at top speed as far away as possible from the Somali coast and travelling with armed escorts on-board, the threat of an attack and hijacking remained as the real root of the cause on the ground in Somalia has never been properly addressed. After five years without a successful attack, analysts say that complacency may have set in and this week's successful hijacking is likely to result in potential copycat attacks, as pirate action groups head-out in a



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bid to successfully hijack a commercial vessel. Masters are advised to remain vigilant at all times inside the HRA and are advised to adhere to strict guidance and protective measures as set down in BMP5. Sailing yachts should avoid transiting the HRA. Past activity has demonstrated that pirates will attack both large and small yachts transiting this region. While successful attacks and hijackings of merchant vessels have significantly decreased over the past two years, the possibility of attacks and the successful hijacking of sailing vessels continue to remain high. This is due to the reduction of revenue sources from pirated merchant vessels and the fact that sailing yachts are vulnerable and easier targets. PAG's continue to conduct "soft approaches" on merchant ships transiting the area. Skiffs have approached vessels in order to probe the reaction of the crewmembers and any possible Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) on-board. If the pirate approach does not elicit a response, the pirates will likely proceed with an attack, in which additional skiffs may participate. Vessels transiting the greater Gulf of Aden region should operate under a heightened state of alert. This is due to increasing tensions in the region, which in turn can escalate the potential for direct or collateral damage to vessels transiting the region. These threats may come from a number of different sources such as missiles, projectiles, or waterborne improvised explosive devices. Houthi rebels have claimed responsibility for the 1 October 2016 attack on a UAE vessel.

17.3. UMS HQ advises all vessels transiting this region to report any hostile activities immediately. Somali pirates have recently shown an ability to mount hijacking expeditions far out into the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, and inshore traffic might be an easier target. EUNAVFOR spokesperson Commander Jacqui Sherriff said that the recent series of attacks against commercial shipping again highlights the need for vigilance and adherence to self-protection measures (by the deployment of on-board AST) and compliance to Best Management Practices (BMP) 5. It is crucial that Somali pirates are denied opportunities to attack vessels so that there will no chance of a successful hijack. One successful hijack is one hijack too many because it will encourage and motivate more Somalis to taking up piracy!

17.4. CMF and EUNAVFOR and intelligence agencies have warned of increased complacency amongst stakeholders which may give rise to opportunities for piracy action groups and organizations funding piracy



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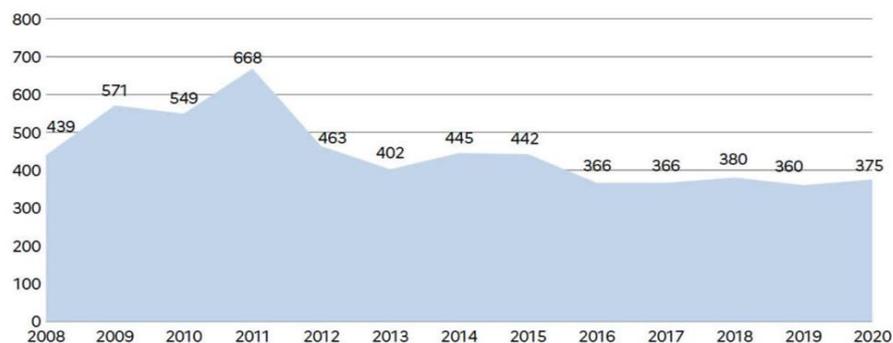
activities to revive the threat. All stakeholders are advised to heed the latest UN Report on Somalia and the possibility of the piracy threat being resuscitated back to haunt the shipping community. The report was shared in WETA No. 378 and WETA No. 379.

18. French Navy's 2020 Report on Worldwide Maritime Piracy and Robbery

18.1. The Maritime Information Cooperation and Awareness Center (MICA Center) of the French Navy released its 2020 annual report on maritime piracy and robbery acts that impacted worldwide maritime security.

18.2. 375 acts of maritime piracy and robbery were recorded worldwide in 2020 by the MICA Center, compared to 360 in 2019. MICA Center's 2020 annual report outlines a slight upward trend of maritime insecurity.

18.3. Considering MICA Center's 2020 annual report, the Gulf of Guinea remains the most dangerous maritime area in the world in spite of the efforts of Nigeria and coastal countries, and acts of piracy now extend from Ghana to Equatorial Guinea. In South East Asia, robbery is on the rise, particularly in the Straits of Singapore and Malacca. The number of robbery acts in Latin America remains high against maritime trade and pleasure boating.



Annual evolution of piracy and robbery incidents

18.4. Promoting information exchange and cooperation among the different maritime actors remains more necessary than ever in order to guarantee security and freedom of shipping overseas.

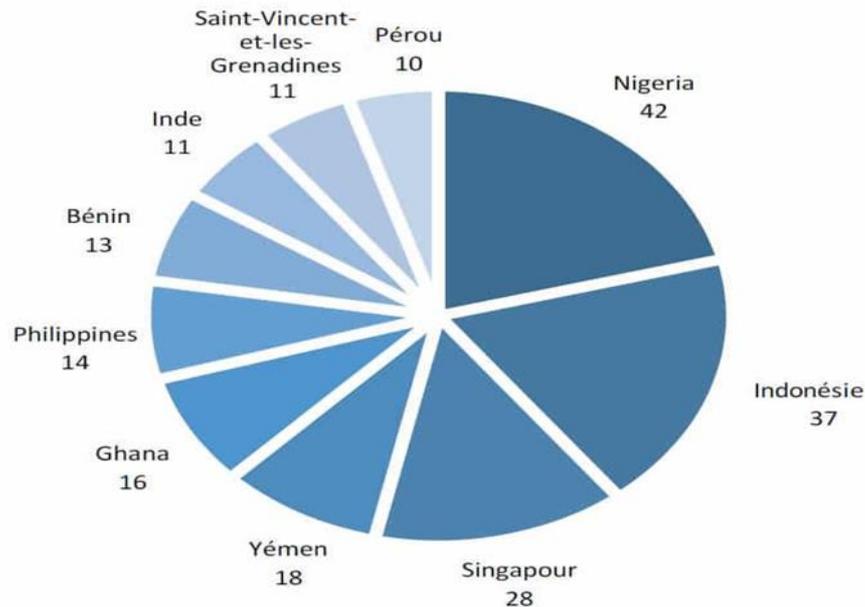
18.5. With a worldwide scope, the Maritime Information Cooperation and Awareness Center (MICA Center) is the French center of expertise



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dedicated to maritime security. Based within the Atlantic Maritime Prefecture at Brest, the MICA Center was founded in 2016 to address the strategic issues raised by threats to the security of maritime areas.



18.6. The center is operated by about thirty men and women belonging to the French Navy and navies of partner countries, and is monitoring 24/7 the worldwide maritime traffic.

18.7. The MICA Center is an analysis and assessment center of the maritime security situation, but it is also a central warning unit should an attack at sea occur: it collects and relays useful information to the benefit of partners who subscribe to its free services.

18.8. This annual report synthesizes the reports that are regularly transmitted to the maritime industry actors; its goal is to provide an analysis of the trends observed and to describe the evolution of the operating modes.

19. Does Somali Piracy Hold Security Lessons for the Gulf of Guinea?

19.1. The subject of maritime security has gained prominence since the turn of this millennium as piracy and armed robbery at sea intensified. With



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most littoral states committing their budgetary allocations to security on land, maritime governance frameworks have lagged behind, inadvertently creating safe spaces for insurgents eager to boost their political and economic clout from disorganized seas.

19.2. Particularly, Africa has emerged as a maritime terrorism hotspot, presenting a tremendous obstacle to the development of its blue economy. Seafarers have borne the brunt of unsafe waterways as pirates increasingly target ships.

19.3. Pirate groups in the Gulf of Guinea - with an ever-increasing capacity to stage attacks on ships - have become a nightmare in the African maritime security landscape as stakeholders hunt for a long-term solution.

19.4. However, inasmuch as Africa is a playbook example for maritime insecurity, it also a laboratory where maritime security strategies get tested for coherence and effectiveness.

19.5. Fundamentally, the Western Indian Ocean region presents a unique case study on how nations can create the capacity to proactively respond to maritime instability and piracy. Unfortunately, as external assistance continued to pour in for countries to enhance their maritime governance structures, there is a dearth of comparative analysis to map out the effectiveness of capacity building programs existing in the region.

19.6. The emergence of Somali piracy in mid-2000s was a litmus test for East African nations, most of which had under-resourced and weak maritime governance structures. This would attract foreign assistance mostly from the United Nations (UN) and EU to build these nation's capacities to counter piracy off their coasts. Some of the initiatives introduced included multilateral naval missions, establishment of legal systems to prosecute pirates on land and institutions to maintain safety at sea.

19.7. A book released in October of last year titled "Capacity Building for Maritime Security: The Western Indian Ocean Experience" sought to address this gap by comparing how littoral states in the Western Indian Ocean revamped their maritime spaces in the wake of maritime security threats.



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- 19.8. The compelling aspect about this book is the foundation it creates to analyze specific actions undertaken in the region to counter piracy, the aspects that worked and the shortfalls encountered, especially how some of the institutions created have been unable to evolve as Somali piracy declines.
- 19.9. These insights can be relied upon by experts elsewhere like in the Gulf of Guinea to contextualize maritime security threats and ensure the resultant capacity-building efforts exceed just the notion of counter-piracy. Thus, the focus should be on blending external assistance with local efforts to give maritime security capacity-builders visibility in national public agendas. Often times, the profession remains in the periphery and lacks political concern and priority in national security reforms.
- 19.10. But how should maritime governance structures be configured to regions where threats abound, rather than be tethered to an idealized outcome - a common approach with donor-funded capacity building programs, which tend to be very prescriptive.
- 19.11. Take the case of resource-rich countries in Western Indian Ocean such as South Africa - whose institutions have the capacity to handle maritime threats - as opposed to Kenya and Seychelles, which still depend on external assistance.
- 19.12. The authors of the book introduce a new framework to assess maritime security governance gaps in Africa called "Spaces, Problems, Institutions and Projects," or SPIP. It is a multilayered approach that first identifies how maritime spaces are problematic to a country, followed by how institutions and governance structures are mobilized to respond to these problems. Lastly, the implementation gaps that exist in various reforms and capacity building projects that a country undertakes are analyzed to determine how they can be further developed in future.
- 19.13. Care has to be taken not to simply transplant knowledge learnt from other regions while leaving out the cultural, economic and political conditions of a different target area. Somali piracy cannot be directly compared to instability in the Gulf of Guinea, which means the capacity building approach for maritime institutions in West Africa will have to be distinctive and responsive to the political expectations in the region.



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20. CTF-151 and Djibouti Hold Talks to Combat Piracy

- 20.1. The Commander of Pakistan-led Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151) held a recent engagement via Zoom with the Commander of the Coastguard and Deputy Commander of the Djibouti Marine Nationale.
- 20.2. CCTF-151 held a joint conference with the Commander of the Djibouti Coastguard and Deputy Commander of the Djibouti Marine Nationale. Commodore Abdul Munib SI (M) of Pakistan Navy followed the current Covid-19 trend of using Zoom conference calling to discuss future collaboration and encourage counter-piracy capability development. The virtual meeting also validates that despite Covid-19 restrictions, the CTF-151 mission to engage with regional partners remains at the forefront of CMF's operational activity.
- 20.3. As well as ongoing counter-piracy efforts, they discussed future opportunities for collaboration. "We share a common goal – to ensure free flow of commerce," said Cdre Munib. "At CTF-151, our measure of success is to ensure zero piracy incidents. We are already there, now we need to maintain it. Our mutual cooperation and coordination can make this happen." He added his desire to assist Djibouti in its pathway to joining the CMF as a member nation, further enhancing cooperation between participant nations. Colonel Waiss Omar Bogoreh of the Djibouti Coastguard concurred; "We will continue to support CMF operations with our assets and personnel."
- 20.4. In an earlier meeting during the Turkish Navy command of CTF-151, Djibouti proposed liaison officers from their Coastguard. The success of this liaison hasn't gone unnoticed; "Having an additional officer from Djibouti Coast Guard would be of great value to build our capacity and enhance cooperation and coordination." added Col Bogoreh. "I am ready to cooperate further and keep lines of communication open and share more information in order to keep this region safe. I look forward to see more representation from Djibouti in CMF in the future."
- 20.5. Djibouti has proposed a Liaison Officer to CMF in the past, and Commodore Munib is keen to explore future representation from the country.



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- 20.6. Merchant vessels transiting through the Southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden can enhance their maritime security by following the guidance provided in BMP5, which includes using Armed Security Teams, using the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC), and notifying the UKMTO in Dubai of their progress.
- 20.7. Outside of CMF partners, CTF 151 regularly work with other maritime security partners such as EUNAVFOR and Independent Deployers to provide a continuous military presence in the region.
- 21. US Maritime (US MARAD) Updates its Gulf of Guinea, Red Sea/Gulf of Aden and Persian Gulf Security Advisories**
- 21.1. West Africa
- 21.1.1. The US Department of Transportation Maritime Administration (US MARAD) has revised its advisory for the Gulf of Guinea (2021-002).
- 21.1.2. According to Risk Intelligence's Monthly Intelligence Report January 2021, attackers operating off the southern and eastern Niger Delta remain the most significant threat in the Gulf of Guinea. All types of vessels may be targeted, yet successful boarding are more likely on 'low and slow' vessel types such as small bulk carriers or product tankers, general cargo and offshore supply ships or fishing vessels.
- 21.1.3. The dry season in the Niger Delta, which will last roughly until March, allows for operations of small boats offshore and for attacks at significant distances from the coastline (potentially up to 250nm off the coastline in the dry season), including in the EEZs of neighboring countries.
- 21.1.4. Throughout the Gulf of Guinea, the threat of kidnap-for-ransom attacks is assessed as moderate to high for the coming month, depending on the distance from the Niger Delta coastline where perpetrators have access to the necessary infrastructure to protect hostages from security forces and rival gangs during ransom negotiations.



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21.1.5. The advisory revision therefore reflects the growing international concern for maritime security in West Africa and more specifically, the Gulf of Guinea. The advisory includes guidance for vessels transiting this area to visit the new Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade-Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG) and the NATO Shipping Centre website for additional information on threats and specific recommendations. US flag vessels anchoring, transiting, or operating in this region must comply with their approved Vessel Security Plans. Additionally, the recently issued Best Management Practices – West Africa provides additional guidance and resources for operating in this area.

21.1.6. Supplemental information for US Mariners may also be found on the MARAD Office of Maritime Security website.

21.2. Red Sea/Gulf of Aden/Arabian Sea/Indian Ocean

21.2.1. The US Department of Transportation Maritime Administration (US MARAD) has also revised its advisory for the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden/Arabian Sea/Indian Ocean regions (2020-017).

21.2.2. The advisory warns that the conflict in Yemen continues to pose a risk to commercial vessels from threats which may come from a number of different sources including, but not limited to, missiles, rockets, projectiles, mines, small arms, unmanned aerial vehicles, unmanned surface vessels, or waterborne improvised explosive devices. Additionally, piracy continues to pose a threat in the Gulf of Aden, Western Arabian Sea, and Western Indian Ocean.

21.2.3. The MARAD advisory recommends vessels operating in this area to review security measures, ensure their AIS is always transmitting (except in extraordinary circumstances, consistent with provisions of SOLAS), and monitor VHF Channel 16.

21.2.4. The following guidance is additionally provided and which is similarly encouraged by the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) encourages Masters and ship owners to adhere to the following:



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- 21.2.4.1. Conduct a pre-voyage risk assessment and incorporate appropriate protective measures into their vessel security plans. Take advice from available industry guidance such as the BMP5.
- 21.2.4.2. Avoid entering or loitering near Yemen's ports, and exercise increased caution if entering Yemen's territorial waters or Saudi territorial waters north of Yemen on the Red Sea.
- 21.2.4.3. Be especially vigilant when at anchor, operating in restricted maneuvering environments, or proceeding at slow speeds.
- 21.2.4.4. Establish and remain in contact with the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Office (UKMTO) as per the BMP5. Immediately report any incident or suspicious incident.
- 21.2.4.5. Answer all VHF calls from coalition navies.
- 21.2.4.6. Register and report their vessels as per the BMP5 procedures.
- 21.2.4.7. Ensure that the vessel is hardened prior to entering the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden/Somalia/Arabian Sea/Indian Ocean high-risk areas.
- 21.2.4.8. While transiting through these waters it is essential to maintain a 24-hour visual and radar watch.

21.3. Persian Gulf

- 21.3.1. The US Department of Transportation Maritime Administration (US MARAD) revised its advisory for the Persian Gulf region on 7 January 2021 (2021-001).
- 21.3.2. Multiple maritime threats have been reported in these geographic areas, including a mine placed on the hull of a



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Liberian-flagged tanker in the Persian Gulf off Iraq on 31 December 2020 and the Iranian seizure of a South Korean-flagged tanker in the Strait of Hormuz on 4 January 2021. Heightened military activity and increased political tensions in this region continue to pose serious threats to commercial vessels.

21.3.3. Associated with these threats is a potential for miscalculation or misidentification that could lead to aggressive actions. Vessels operating in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and Gulf of Oman may also encounter GPS interference, bridge-to-bridge communications spoofing, and/or other communications jamming with little to no warning. Vessels have also reported bridge-to-bridge communications from unknown entities falsely claiming to be US or coalition warships.

21.3.4. In response to these attacks, the Round Table of Industry Associations and OCIMF jointly published a set of recommended risk mitigating measures for vessels operating in the Persian (Arabian) Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden and Red Sea on 5 January 2021, which is also in line with US MARAD's guidance and is to be applied in conjunction with BMP5:

21.3.4.1. Undertake a new ship and voyage specific threat risk assessment before entering any region where there has been an incident, or the threat has changed.

21.3.4.2. After the risk assessment, review the Ship's Security Plan.

21.3.4.3. Review section 2 of BMP5, which outlines non-piracy threats.

21.3.4.4. Maintain a full and vigilant bridge watch. At night, slow small boats with no wake are difficult to spot on a radar.

21.3.4.5. Maintain a strict communication watch and establish communication with all vessels coming close. Do



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not allow small boats to approach or to come alongside.
Use a searchlight for identification at night.

21.3.4.6. Ensure that strict boarding controls are in place.

21.3.4.7. Only lower accommodation gangways or ladders when necessary.

21.3.4.8. Rig outboard lighting where possible provided they do not interfere with keeping a safe lookout, particularly over the stern and rig/use searchlights if available.

21.3.4.9. Report any suspicious activity or objects immediately to both the port and UKMTO, see detailed " for the region.

21.3.4.10. Monitor relevant VHF and other communication channels.

21.3.4.11. Check that all fire-fighting equipment is available for immediate use. Make sure the emergency fire pump is available if any maintenance is being undertaken.

21.3.4.12. Keep the Automatic Information System (AIS) on. There is no need to complete the field stating the last or next port of call.

21.3.4.13. Conduct visual checks of the hull.

21.3.4.14. Undertake a visual search from the deck, all around the vessel to check for anything attached to the hull of the vessel. Particular attention should be paid to the hull at the waterline.

21.3.4.15. Conduct regular rounds and search the upper deck.

21.3.5. If a vessel detects anything unusual attached to the hull, then the Master should contact the UKMTO and Flag State



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immediately. All crew should be evacuated from the immediate area and mustered in a safe place. No attempt should be made to remove it. The vessel should follow the advice of the military authorities.

21.3.6. If a vessel is alerted to suspicious activity whilst at anchor, the following additional measures should be considered:

21.3.6.1. Rotate the propeller continuously or at short, irregular intervals.

21.3.6.2. Operate bow and stern thrusters at zero (0) thrust at irregular intervals.

21.3.6.3. Turn the rudder frequently.

21.3.6.4. Switch the echo sounder to transmit counter/combat swimmer/diver threat.

21.3.7. US MARAD additionally warns that all vessels should be aware that US and other coalition naval forces may conduct maritime awareness calls, queries, and approaches to ensure the safety of vessels transiting the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, and Arabian Sea.

21.3.8. If a US flag commercial vessel suspects it is being hailed from a source falsely claiming to be a US or coalition naval vessel, or is being asked for positions or info on coalition military vessels or aircraft operating in the area, the US Fifth Fleet Battle Watch should be immediately informed:

21.3.9. Fifth Fleet Battle Watch: + 973-1785-3879 | E-mail: cusnc.bwc@me.navy.mil

21.3.10. The Maritime Global Security website offers industry issued best practices, including BMP5, guidance to mariners by geographic region, and provides contact and subscription information for regional maritime security reporting centers.



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22. Unlike the presence and substantial involvement of international navies, numbering more than 25 countries and the legit deployment of armed security team (AST) on-board commercial vessels transiting the East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA, the situation in the West Africa HRA is about just the opposite. Nigerian government laws and regulations prohibit the deployment of ASTs other than those brokered by local security companies that used personnel from the Navy which the government has declared as not supported by it. Besides the Nigerian Navy, there is also no other naval forces that provides security and deterrence to the pirates managed by criminal syndicates operating from Nigeria. In other words, the waters and ports around Nigeria are almost a perfect hunting ground for the local criminal syndicates. Given this situation, the threat of piracy at this point of time is higher and more dangerous than that posed by Somali pirates in the East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA, although depending on the continued presence of the navies of EUNAVFOR and CMF and the other independent naval forces and the continued used of on-board ASTs, the situation may quickly reverse. Somali pirates still have the intent, skills, and resources to attack merchant ships. Fundamentally naval forces and intelligence agencies have repeatedly called for continued vigilance and preparedness in the fight against the threat of piracy at both the East Africa and Indian Ocean HRA and the West Africa HRA. Ignoring these warnings is to place one's business, vessels and crew members at risk!
23. UMS HQ therefore advises all stakeholders never to take the security and safety of their vessels and crew members for granted. **CURRENT LOW PIRACY THREAT doesn't mean NO PIRACY THREAT!**
24. **COVID-19 Measures.** UMS HQ continues to remind all our maritime marshals of the current pandemic that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and the need for them to continue remaining on-board so as to protect them from being infected with this dreadful COVID19 virus. UMS HQ urge everyone to think not only for themselves but also for all other crew members and most importantly, their family and loved ones back home.



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25. ***Remember Always “Be Vigilant, Be Safe and Never Be Sorry”***

26. ***UMS HQ wishes all Hindus a Blessed and Joyful Thaipusam.***

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