PIRACY REPORT JANUARY 2017

Piracy and Acts of Armed Robbery of Ships

For Monthly Reports
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Analysis

Several incidents of piracy and robbery of vessels were reported in the Sulu and Celebes Seas off Malaysia and the Philippines in January 2017. Three fishermen were kidnapped from their boat presumably by Abu Sayyaf (ASG) or associated groups. Eight fishermen were brutally killed on their fishing outrigger off Zamboanga, Philippines. The motive behind the killings is most likely extortion or revenge. A general cargo ship reported an attempted boarding off Basilan Island, Philippines. It is likely that kidnappings and attempted kidnappings will continue in the Sulu and Celebes Seas.

Two hostages kidnapped from the Heavy Load Carrier, Dongbang Giant 2 were released by ASG in January 2017.

Another robbery took place in Muara Berau Anchorage, Samarinda, Indonesia. This was the ninth incident since April 2016.

A robbery and an attempted robbery were reported at Pepel and Freetown Anchorages off Freetown, Sierra Leone. This is in all likelihood as a result of the Freetown Container Terminal strike on 24 January 2017. The strike slowed operations down at the port. Lack of space at the port cause delays and longer working hours for the container drivers.

Five incidents were reported in South and Central America and the Caribbean in January 2017. Incidents have been increasing in the last few months. Two armed robberies on yachts while underway were reported off Honduras.

Two robberies were recorded at Chittagong Anchorages, Bangladesh. An attack on a tug towing another vessel was also recorded off Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh.

The reported hijacking of the General Cargo vessel, Merbey off the coast of Nigeria seems to be a case of fraud rather than a hijacking incident, if Mohammed Oulahcen’s version of events is correct. The vessel’s position on AIS has been off the Calabar coast, Nigeria since August 2016. The vessel’s name was also changed to Omerbey 1 in September 2016. This was the name of the vessel before Oulahcen became a partner in 2015.
Incidents of Piracy and Robbery of Vessels: 2015 to 2017

Southeast Asia

West Africa

Americas & Caribbean

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Incidents by Region January 2016 to January 2017

EAST AFRICA AND ARADIAN GULF
WEST AFRICA
INDIAN SUB CONT
SE ASIA
SOUTH AMERICA
Incidents 2017: Type of Ship Attacked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type Vessel</th>
<th>Code</th>
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<tr>
<td>Barge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulk Carrier</td>
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<tr>
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<td>CS</td>
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<td>Coast Guard/Patrol Boat</td>
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<td>OSV</td>
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<tr>
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Seven incidents of piracy and robbery of vessels, including a maritime kidnapping, were reported in Southeast Asia in January 2017. Robberies were recorded at Muara Berau Anchorage, Samarinda Indonesia; Sandakan Port, Sabah, Malaysia; and Batangas Anchorage, Philippines. One kidnapping was reported in the Philippines. Three fishermen were kidnapped during this incident. Due to kidnappings and attacks on vessels in the Philippines, some shipping companies operating between Australia and Asia are currently diverting vessels to the east of the Philippines through the Pacific.1

3 January 2017 – The General Cargo Ship, Ocean Kingdom was attacked by six armed men in two speedboats approximately 21.6nm East off Basilan Island, Philippines. The master of the vessel increased speed and used anti piracy measures to evade the boarding. Authorities were alerted through a message to Radio Zamboanga. The vessel sustained fire damage.2

6 January 2017 – The Chemical Tanker, Great Sailor was approached by men in a small boat in the eastbound lane of the Singapore Strait approximately 2.8nm north of Nongsia Point, Batam Island. The attackers attempted to board the tanker, but were prevented from doing so when the master took evasive action and pointed a spotlight at them.3
9 January 2017 – Crew of a fishing outrigger, only identified as F/B NR, based in Sangali, were brutally attacked at around 20:00LT by five armed men in two speed boats. The attack occurred close to Siromon Island, approximately 25nm east of Zamboanga, Philippines. Five of the 15 crew jumped overboard and were found unharmed. The attackers stole cash and valuables such as cell phones. They tied the fishermen up and shot at them, killing eight which included two children. The remaining two were rescued by passing fishermen. The boat was found partly submerged as bullets had pierced the hull. A suspect, a native of Sitio Seaside in Sangali, Midzfar Yunos Nuno was arrested the next night during a drug operation. Another suspect, Arakain Samlan was arrested in a separate operation. Both were previously arrested for extortion of fishermen in the village. Eight additional suspects are wanted by the police in connection with the incident. The incident is not believed to be connected to recent ASG kidnappings. According to police sources, extortion or revenge could be motives for the killings. Two colleagues of the accused were killed by authorities in November 2016 while on patrol.  

Comment. This incident has several similarities with an incident that took place on 25/26 December 2013 off Zamboanga City. A group of three fishing vessels was attacked near Zamboanga City on that day. Two fishermen escaped and alerted authorities. The decapitated bodies of nine fishermen were recovered in three different locations early in January 2014. This included two children. They had been tied up and shot. All 11 fishermen were also residents of Sangali. The motive for the attack was retaliation for deaths of members of an extortion gang by Badjao fishermen.  

The coastal town of Sangali is highly dependant on fishing. Drug related crimes and extortion are rife in this area.  

18 January 2017 – A Malaysian fishing banca with registration BN 838/4F was approached by nine assailants in a grey speed boat 4nm east of Bakungan Island, Taganak, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. Three Indonesian crew members were kidnapped. The fishing banca was found drifting close to Bakungan Island.  

Feedback : ASG Hijackings of Vessels and Kidnapping Incidents in the Philippines  

☐ 29 December 2016 – ASG was circulating pictures on social media of German hostage Juergen Kantner in an orange jumpsuit standing in a grave and holding a flag with the words “This is my last hour”. They demanded a ransom from the German government, threatening to behead Kantner if their demands are not met. Kantner was kidnapped from his yacht Rockall on 5 November 2016.  

☐ 14 January 2017 – Park Chul-hong and Glenn Alindajao, two hostages kidnapped from the Heavy Load Carrier, Dongbang Giant 2 were released by ASG to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The MNLF handed them to officials in Jolo. The hostages were kidnapped on 20 October 2016.  

West Africa  

Two incidents were reported in anchorages off Sierra Leone on 25 and 30 January 2017 respectively. A robbery on a Bulk Carrier was reported at Pepel Anchorage and an attempted robbery on a Container Ship at Freetown Outer Anchorage. Container drivers and workers at the Freetown Container Terminal embarked on a strike on 24 January 2017 which slowed operations down at the port. Lack of space at the port cause delays for drivers waiting for containers. The workers went back to work after the meeting with port authorities.
The Merbey Incident

According to Moroccan businessman Mohammed Oulahcen, he bought the General Cargo Vessel, Merbey in Turkey in 2015 in partnership with a Portuguese national Jose. The understanding was that the vessel would be sailed to Morocco. According to Oulahcen he was double-crossed by his partner who used the vessel for illegal trafficking of arms and drugs to the Houthis in Yemen. The vessel was then relocated to Nigeria.\textsuperscript{10} According to AIS the vessel has been anchored off Calabar Nigeria since 25 August 2016.\textsuperscript{11}

IMO records indicate that the vessel was renamed in October 2015 from Omerbey 1 (Turkish flag) to Merbey (Comoros flag) and again in September 2016 back to Omerbey 1 (Turkish flag). The owner on record is Barchester Holdings Ltd in Gibraltar.\textsuperscript{12}
On the night of 12 January 2017 bicycles were stole from the yacht, *Inspiration Lady* in a gated marina at Port de la Pointe des Galets, Réunion Island.13

**Red Sea and Bab el Mandeb Strait**

Eleven attacks and suspicious approaches were reported in the Red Sea and Bab al Mandeb over the last year. While the motives for some of these attacks are unclear, most can be attributed to the conflict in Yemen. It seems that ships with a military profile or with a sailing pattern associated with logistical support to either party in the conflict are more likely to be targeted.

Certain vessels fall in a higher risk group. These are:

- Military vessels;
- Vessels involved in operations in support of either side of the Yemeni conflict or vessels following regular routes that could be interpreted as involvement or support in the conflict are likely targets;
- Vessels loitering around islands. Islands in the Red Sea are considered strategic positions and loitering or slow moving vessels can be seen as suspicious by forces occupying the islands.
Military vessels

The navy Destroyer, *USS Mason* reported two failed missile attacks from the Yemeni shore north of Bab el Mandeb on 9 and 12 October 2016. 14
On 30 January 2017 a Saudi frigate was approached by three small boats approximately 27nm off the port of Al-Hodeidah, Yemen. The frigate was rammed by a suicide boat laden with explosives. Two Saudi crew members died and three were injured as a result of the attack.\textsuperscript{15}

**Vessels involved in operations in support of either side of the Yemeni conflict or vessels following regular routes that could be interpreted as involvement in the conflict**

On 1 October 2016 the Houthis claimed responsibility for a missile attack on the logistics catamaran, \textit{HSV-2-Swift} near the port of Mokha, Yemen. The attack caused substantial damage but no reported loss of life.\textsuperscript{16}

On 3 January 2017 the landing craft, \textit{MV Sultan II} was attacked 10nm off the Yemeni coast.\textsuperscript{17}

![Map showing the movement of MV Sultan II](image)

Movement of the \textit{SULTAN II} prior to the attack derived from EMSA IMDatE which utilizes Sat-AIS and LRIT data. (Source EU NAVFOR)\textsuperscript{18}
The attack on the *MV Sultan II* and the *HSV-2-Swift* had several things in common:

- Both operated from the port of Assab on the Eritrean side of the Red Sea. The port was leased to the UAE for a period of 30 years in 2015. The Arab Coalition is using the port as part of their military campaign against the Houthis;
- Both vessels are ro-ro landing craft with a similar profile;
- Both vessels could be tracked on AIS as they were transmitting live on AIS; and
- Both used the same ports regularly with the assumption that they were delivering logistical support to the Arab Coalition. According to reports the *HSV-2-Swift* was leased by the United Arab Emirates military from the UAE dredging company to transport medical aid and other supplies. ¹⁹ The *MV Sultan II* did several transits between Assab and Perim (Mayyun) Island under Arab Coalition control.²⁰

The *MV Sultan II* and the *HSV-2-Swift* are both ro-ro landing craft with a similar profile

On 3 October 2016 a suspicious approach by six armed men in a skiff was reported by the chemical tanker, *MT Nushi Nalini* north of Bab el Mandeb. The vessel was enroute from Al- Hodeidah Port to the Arabian Gulf.²¹

On 18 December 2016 a small cargo ship, *MV Jouya 8* was attacked near the port of Al-Hodeidah, Yemen. The vessel caught fire and sank.²²
Activity around islands

In February and July 2016 two attacks occurred approximately 8nm apart off the Jazirat al Hanish al Kabir Island in the Red Sea. Both vessels were moving very slow at the time which may have been seen as suspicious to forces on the island. In December 2015 Saudi led forces took control of the island from the Houthis. The location of these islands is of strategic importance in the Red Sea.

In February 2016 the yacht, Milashka was damaged in a storm in the Red Sea and was seeking shelter on the western side of the Jazirat al Hanish al Kabir (Hanish) Island. The yacht came under fire and was hit by a bullet from a camouflaged position on the island.23

On 22 July 2016 the Cable layer vessel, Responder was attacked approximately 5nm WSW of the Hanish Islands. Sixteen men armed with AK47s and an RPG7 fired on the cable layer. The Responder was installing cables at 0.5knots at the time.24

Vessels transiting the Bab el Mandeb should remain as far west and south of Yemen as possible and use the western traffic separation scheme. It is advisable to transit the Strait in daylight hours and to maintain best speed.25 Beware of operations or routes that could be interpreted as involvement or support in the conflict.

Americas

Five incidents were reported in South and Central America and the Caribbean in January 2017 of which three were at anchorages. Robberies were reported at Mamonal Inner Anchorage, Colombia; Puerto Jose Anchorage, Venezuela and Guayaquil Outer Anchorage, Ecuador. Two robberies of yachts off Honduras were also reported in January 2017.

13 January 2017 – The yacht, Reflections was boarded by eight men from a fishing panga 5nm off Honduras. Reflections was sailing from Puerto Cortez to Roatan. Two of the men were armed with pistols. Electronics, dive gear, a dinghy with outboard, cash, passports and other valuables were stolen. The theft of the electronics impaired the crew's ability to navigate to their destination. The next day a US Navy surveillance aircraft answered their call and arranged airborne escort.26

15 January 2017 – The LPG Tanker, Nijinsky was boarded by two robbers via the anchor chain at Puerto Jose Anchorage, Venezuela. Four more robbers boarded after they removed the hawse pipe. They took the AB hostage, threatened him with a knife and tied him up. The AB’s cell phone and ship’s properties were stolen. The AB managed to free himself after they were gone.27
21 January 2017 – The yacht, *Ti’Amara* was approached and boarded from three small boats 70nm off the coast of Honduras. Equipment was stolen.
Three incidents were reported in Bangladesh in January 2017. Two robberies were reported at Chittagong Anchorages and one incident at Cox’s Bazar.

17 January 2017 – The tug boat, *Jaya Crystal* towing the vessel *EL Hadj* was approached by several small boats at Cox’s Bazar. The master contacted Chittagong Port Control for assistance and performed evasive manoeuvres. The perpetrators managed to board the *El Hadj* and started a fire onboard. They fled when the Bangladeshi navy arrived on the scene. The crew fought the fire on the vessel, but was interrupted when the master had to steer both vessels to deeper water to prevent grounding.
The skipper of the yacht, Kalokalo was assaulted during an attempted robbery on his yacht on the night of 25 January 2017. He was anchored in Suva, Fiji at the time. He sustained lacerations on both hands and was hospitalized.\textsuperscript{30}

In November 2016 a businessman from Fiji was stabbed in the throat with a screwdriver during a robbery on his yacht at Fantasy Island, Nadion on the Northwest of the island. His laptops, phone and cash were stolen. Shalendra Sinha was charged in connection with the theft and stabbing. He appeared in court early January 2017.\textsuperscript{31}
End Notes