PIRACY REPORT MARCH 2017

Piracy and Acts of Armed Robbery of Ships

For Monthly Reports
Please contact
Lydelle Joubert
info@PiracyReport.co.za
Analysis

- Between January and March 2017 nine incidents of piracy and robbery of vessels were reported off the Niger Delta, Nigeria; seven in Bangladesh, and six in the Malacca Strait. Of the seven recorded incidents in Bangladesh, six were located between Chittagong and Cox’s Bazar. The Sulu and Sulawesi Seas off Malaysia and the Philippines also recorded six incidents. Three robberies were reported at Batangas Anchorage, Philippines in 2017.

- In the first quarter of 2017 the high risk areas with regard to hijackings and kidnappings of crew were the coast of Nigeria (21 crew kidnapped during three incidents), the Sulu and Celebes Seas off Malaysia and the Philippines (11 kidnapped during three incidents), off the coast of Somalia (28 hostages during two vessel hijackings) and the Sundarbans, Bangladesh (three fishermen kidnapped). Eight fishermen were also killed in a violent attack in the Philippines.

- The Philippines military launched successful operations in both Sulu and Basilan that led to the release of seven captives. One Vietnamese kidnap victim was killed while in Abu Sayyaf custody.

- On 13 March 2017 the Bunkering Tanker, Aris 13 was hijacked en route from Djibouti to Mogadishu. It was not taken in the shipping lane, but 14nm offshore. This is the first commercial vessel hijacked since 2012. Six fishing dhows have been hijacked in 2015. Unconfirmed reports also indicated that two Yemeni fishing boats were hijacked in February 2017, but released shortly after payment of low ransom amounts. Indications are that the objective of these hijackings were to raise funds for more lucrative hijackings.

- The Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) intercepted a boat transporting supplies to the pirates holding the Aris 13. Their swift actions played a important role in the release of the Aris 13. So did pressure by local elders.

- The lack of arrests and prosecution of piracy kingpins by the Somali government remains a problem. Kingpins do business with impunity and have branched out to other forms of crimes in recent years, such as weapon smuggling and fishing vessel protection rackets.
Incidents of Piracy and Robbery of Vessels: 2015 to 2017

Southeast Asia

West Africa

Americas & Caribbean

Copyright © 2017 L. Joubert
Incidents by Region March 2016 to March 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barge</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk Carrier</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cargo ship</td>
<td>CS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard/</td>
<td>PB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrol Boat</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing Boat</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing Trawler</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offshore Supply Vessel</td>
<td>FV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passenger Boat</td>
<td>PMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roll-on-Roll-off Cargo Ship</td>
<td>Ro-Ro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanker</td>
<td>MT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tug</td>
<td>TB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yacht</td>
<td>SY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Sub Continent</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE Asia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Africa/Arabian Gulf</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright © 2017 L. Joubert
Nine incidents of piracy and robbery of vessels were reported in Southeast Asia in March 2017. A suspicious approach was also reported (not included in statistics). Eight of these incidents were robberies and attempted robberies at anchorages. Two robberies and two attempted robberies were reported at Dumai Anchorages, Indonesia. Nine incidents were reported at this anchorage in 2016. Two robberies were reported at Batangas Anchorage, Philippines. Two crew members were kidnapped from a vessel in the Philippines.

5 March 2017 – The Vietnam flagged Cargo Vessel, *MV Phu An 268* was tailed by six armed men in a speedboat off Lihiman Island, Philippines. The vessel was en route to Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysia. The crew took preventative measures and alerted authorities.
23 March 2017 – At 00:15LT the slow moving Tug, Super Shuttle Tugboat 1 towing the Ro-Ro Cargo Vessel, MV Super Shuttle Roro 9 was boarded by at least three men using a green wooden boat near Sibago Island, Philippines. The Captain, Aurelio Agacac and Chief Engineer, Laurencio Tiro were kidnapped from the tug. The speedboat headed in the direction of Tuburan Town. On 26 March 2017 soldiers of Task Force Basilan found Captain Agacac in Barangay Basakan in the municipality of Hadji Mohammad Ajul, Basilan. He was apparently left behind by his kidnappers as they retreated on approach of the military. Laurencio Tiro was rescued by the military on 27 March 2017 during an operation at Sitio Sasa, Barangay Basakan in Hadji Mohammad Ajul town.2

Feedback: ASG Kidnapping Incidents in the Philippines

The Philippines military launched successful operations in both Sulu and Basilan that led to the release of seven captives. One Vietnamese kidnap victim from the Giang Hai, kidnapped on 19 February 2017 was killed while Abu Sayyaf was escaping government forces in Tawi-Tawi in mid March 2017.3 In addition to the two hostages from the Super Shuttle Tugboat 1, the five hostages of Serudong 3 kidnapped on 18 July 2016 were also released in March 2017.

The Philippines marines rescued two Malaysian hostages Abd Rahim Summas and Tayudin Anjut in waters off Jolo and Pata Island. They were abandoned by the kidnappers on approach of the naval patrol.4

Task force Sulu rescued the remaining three hostages Fandy Bakran, Mohd Jumadil Rahim and Mohd Ridzuan Ismail at Poblacion Punay in Panglima Estino, Sulu.
East Africa

7/03/2017. Suspicious approach.


Two hijackings and an attempted robbery on a Bulk Carrier were reported in the Gulf of Aden and East African coast in March 2017. Unconfirmed reports also point to the hijacking of two Yemeni fishing boats in February 2017. They were released shortly after being hijacked on payment of a relatively low ransom amount. Indications are there that the funds were needed for more lucrative hijackings. The hijackings were linked to Bakeyle and Issa Yullux. The remaining crew of the Iranian fishing vessel, Sīraj hijacked on 23 March 2015 also still remain in pirate custody in Somalia.

Two robbers armed with knives boarded the Bulk Carrier, Zita in Beira Port Mozambique. They were spotted and escaped without stealing anything.

Aris 13 Hijacking – Somalia

On 13 March 2017 the Bunkering Tanker, Aris 13 with a crew of eight was hijacked by eight armed pirates approaching in two skiffs. The tanker was en route from Djibouti to Mogadishu. The vessel has a freeboard of 3m.

- **13 March 2017:** – MV Aris 13 reported that it is being followed by two skiffs.

- **13 March 2017: 14:54LT** – Loss of communication with MV Aris 13 approximately 14nm NE of Somali coast.

- **13 March 2017: 22:00LT** – Vessel taken to Caluula (Alula), Puntland. From here the vessel was moved to Abo (Haabo), Puntland.
16 March 2017: – A gunfight was reported between pirates and Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) as the PMPF intercepted a boat transporting supplies to the pirates. Negotiations between PMPF, clan elders and pirates followed. The vessel was released without ransom payment after an immunity deal was negotiated for the pirates with the Puntland government.

The attack was attributed to the Siwaagroon sub-clan of the Majerteen piracy group in Bari, Puntland. According to Oceans Beyond Piracy, Jacfar Sacid Cabdulaahi was the pirate leader responsible for the Aris 13 hijacking. According to other sources the pirate leader Abdinasir Aw-Kombe from the same sub-clan, was the mastermind behind the hijacking. Some sources indicated that Aw-Kombe was also behind the MT Liquid Velvet hijacking in October 2011.

Casayr II – No.30 Hijacking – Somalia

On 24 March 2017 the Fishing Dhow, Casayr II – No.30 with three skiffs and 20 crew onboard was hijacked off Eyl, Somalia.

24 March 2017: – Casayr II – No.30 was hijacked. The pirates released one skiff with 13 crew.

25 March 2017: 00:25LT – Casayr II – No.30 sailed to Bander Beyla for resupply of food, fuel and weapons.

26 March 2017: – Casayr II – No.30 was released after pirates took one skiff, food and diesel.

West Africa

Five incidents of piracy were reported in the Gulf of Guinea in March 2017, all off Nigeria. Crew members were kidnapped during two of these incidents.

7 March 2017 – Four crew members were kidnapped from the Nigerian flagged OSV, Perelade 1 off Brass, Nigeria.

8 March 2017 – Seven armed men in speedboats fired on the Bulk Carrier, Sofia approximately 106nm SW of Bayelsa, Nigeria. The vessel increased speed and took evasive manoeuvres. The pirates aborted the attack after 40 minutes.

10 March 2017 – Armed men in speedboats fired on the LNG Tanker, La Mancha Knutsen approximately 90nm south of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The vessel activated the SSAS, increased speed and took evasive manoeuvres which prevented the pirates to hook a ladder on the structure. The pirates aborted the attack and moved away.

29 March 2017 – The Tanker, Cora A was attacked by armed men in speedboats approximately 64nm SW of Bayelsa, Nigeria. The onboard armed security team returned fire, after which the pirates aborted the attack.

30 March 2017 – Four armed men in speedboats boarded the Bulk Carrier, Eleni M around 32nm SW of Bonny, Nigeria. They kidnapped six crew members.
Feedback: Hostages

- **3 March 2017** – The eight hostages kidnapped from the General Cargo ship, *BBC Caribbean* on 5 February 2017 southwest of Brass, Nigeria, were released.
Three fishermen were kidnapped by a gang on the Mathabhanga River, in Shyamnagar Upazila, Bangladesh. Several gas cylinders were stolen from a container ship at Chittagong Anchorage, Bangladesh.
A robbery was reported on the Tanker Angelica Schulte at Cartagena Anchorage in Colombia on 28 March 2017. An attempted robbery on a Chemical Tanker was also reported on 1 March 2017 at Puerto La Cruz Anchorage, Venezuela.
Several countries in the Gulf of Guinea lack the legal framework and will to prosecute pirates. Transparency relating to pirates arrested and prosecution of pirates is also lacking and information is not readily available.

Currently there is no domestic piracy legislation in Nigeria and no piracy prosecutions were instituted in Nigeria in recent years. Very few pirates are identified and information when available is riddled with fake names, aliases and half-truths. It is also not clear what happens to pirates once arrested. Penalties under existing laws do not deter pirates. Arrested pirates are often implicated in more piracy related crimes after their arrest.
Arrests presented in the press are mostly related to low level robbers operating in the creeks, robbing small passenger boats than major piracy incidents. In cases where pirates responsible for hijacking small coastal tankers in territorial waters are arrested, the piracy incidents are often not reflected in IMO or ICC data. Preservation of evidence and time limits on detention periods are a challenge, often leading to the release of pirates. Two cases were reported where stolen product allegedly disappeared while investigations were ongoing.

According to the Nigerian criminal code Act, piracy is currently treated as armed robbery. The Nigerian Maritime and Safety Administration Agency (NIMASA) “Bill for an Act to make provision for the suppression of piracy and to provide for punishment for the offence of piracy” passed it second reading in the Nigerian Senate on 5 April 2017. A public hearing and a possible third reading will follow before the senate will pass the bill.22

Since 2011 pirates have only been arrested in eleven cases related to the hijacking of commercial vessels in the Gulf of Guinea. If arrests were made in cases where crew were kidnapped from vessels, it was never mentioned.

Cape Bird

On 8 October 2011 the Product Tanker Cape Bird was hijacked 90nm South of Lagos, Nigeria. The vessel was released on 14 October 2011 after 8 tonnes of automated gas oil (AGO) were transferred to two barges. According to the Deputy Director Public Relations, Marilyn Ogar, the group responsible for the hijacking was the same group that was responsible for the hijacking of the Rosa Tomasos on 3 September 2011.23

Rosa Tomasos

According to Nigerian authorities the Rosa Tomasos was hijacked on two occasions - on 3 November 2011 and again in early September 2012. None of these incidents appeared in IMB or IMO Records.

In the first incident on 3 November 2011 the tanker, Rosa Tomasos was hijacked en route from the Niger Delta to Lagos, Nigeria. The vessel was recovered with its cargo intact. Five suspects were arrested by the State Security Service in Lagos. It included a retired naval officer Lieutenant Commander Lawrence Adesanya. Two suspects, Abenego Abaka aka Captain Abedi and a lawyer, Felix aka FNU escaped arrest.24

The second hijacking took place in September 2012. The pirate leader Aseluwa Oluwariokami aka Wazobia and 13 others were arrested in connection with this incident late in September 2012. Wazobia was also involved in the hijacking on the Energy Centurion and the Anuket Emerald in August 2012. He named senior government officials, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) members, oil marketers and three paramount rulers as piracy sponsors. He claimed that the group has hijacked almost 20 tankers in the preceding 10 months, which seems unlikely. Although it is clear that hijackings often go unreported in Nigeria, ten hijackings in total were reported for the whole of 2012, which would mean that his group was the only active group over this time.

Anuket Emerald

On 18 August 2012, 16 robbers armed with machine guns, hijacked the product tanker Anuket Emerald from the Lome anchorage, Togo. The attack was carried out with the vessel, MV Ejenavi, a safety vessel converted from an old fishing vessel. The Ejenavi is owned by Great Eagle Maritime, Lagos, Nigeria, with Capt. Nicholas Okotie as Managing Director.25 The pirates damaged the tanker’s communication equipment, speed boats, rescue boat, engines and its loading computer.
The funnel was repainted, and the name was changed to read *Rald*. The IMO number was also removed. The second officer noticed that the ship-to-ship transfer vessel had a distinctive orange hull with a round funnel. 3,000 metric tonnes of AGO were transferred to the vessel.

The *Anuket Emerald* was released on 23 August 2012. With the help of AIS, the intelligence firm, Gray Page worked with the owners to identify a likely pirate vessel. A suspect vessel, *MT Grace* was found discharging oil at a jetty at an oil storage facility at Apapa, Lagos. The tank farm belongs to Integrated Oil and Gas Ltd managed by the former Minister of the Interior, Emmanuel Iheanacho. The documents submitted to the harbourmaster indicated that the cargo was loaded from a vessel named *Rald*. Nigerian authorities seized the cargo.

The chartered vessel, *MT Grace* was operated by Akoto Ventures Nigeria. The company is owned by Prince Akoto. The vessel was chartered by Moses Olugbenga Fubunmi aka Gbenga Olagoke of PVR Ventures. According to Olagoke he bought the stolen AGO allegedly from a woman Chinwe Agaga, MD of AEGIS Energy Limited. No record could be found to substantiate this claim.26

Five days after the release of the *Anuket Emerald* the Wazobia Group hijacked the *Energy Centurion*.

**Energy Centurion**

On 28 August 2012 the Product Tanker, *Energy Centurion* was hijacked at the Lome Anchorage, Togo. The Togo Navy was unable to intercept the *Energy Centurion* before it left Togolese territorial waters.

Security cameras on board the *Energy Centurion* as well as telephone calls made while the vessel was under pirate control led to the identification of Blessing Nube. He was arrested in a hotel in Lagos along with other pirates while planning another hijacking.

One of the arrested, Sola Sama was an oil marketer before he became a pirate. He worked with the security authorities and made a telephone call to a pirate identified as Capt Mike. This led to the arrest of Capt Mike. Capt Mike’s confession led to the arrest of a further two pirates. Capt Mike was also involved in the hijacking of the *Anuket Emerald* and the *MT Mariam*. It is not clear if Capt Mike is Mike Ogboroma involved in the Maximus hijacking. Sola Sama’s confession led to the arrest of Adeolu which claimed to be forced into the gang after he did engine repairs for the gang.

Investigations indicated that the coastal town of Igbokoda in Oda State was a key point for pirate operations and that a training camp for pirates was located there. At the end of October 2012 the Special Task Force set up by NIMASA launched an attack on the base and a firefight ensued. Wazobia was identified as the leader of the group. As a pirate with the name Wazobia was identified in the hijacking of the *Rosa Tomasos* the assumption is made that his real name is Aseluwa Oluwariokami. Thirteen other members of the syndicate were arrested and a cache of 16 automatic weapons and ammunition was confiscated. The gang members comprised of Nigerian, Ghanaian and Togolese nationals. Some members managed to escape.

Blessing Nube also implicated members of the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, NNPC members, oil marketers and traditional leaders in the hijackings. According to him these members are sponsors and recipients of the stolen product and provided pirates with basic operational intelligence.

Both Blessing and Wazobia identified three oil facilities receiving stolen oil. This included the facility of Integrated Oil and Gas Limited, Ibafo, Apapa, Lagos. The fuel stolen from *Anuket Emerald* was traced to Tank 7 of their tank farm. The rest of the tank farm was reopened end of September 2012 while tank 7 was sealed while investigations were ongoing. By March 2013, 2,500 tons of the stolen product allegedly disappeared from tank 7 at the tank farm.
MV Cotton

The Tanker, *MV Cotton* was hijacked on 16 July 2013 from Port Gentil, Gabon by 12 to 15 gunmen. The pirates sailed the *Cotton* to Nigeria where the 3 500 tons of fuel were transferred to the *MT Mustard*. The ship was released by the pirates on 22 July 2013.

The *MT Mustard* berthed at Tema after entering Ghana’s waters after which she left for Saltpond Offshore Terminal, Takoradi, Ghana. On 1 August 2013 the Ghanaian Navy intercepted *MT Mustard* as she was leaving Saltpond.

Captain Olabisi Olaniawo plus 13 crew members were taken into custody by Ghanaian security personnel.\(^{27}\)

On the surface the transaction looked legit. According to the owners of the *MT Mustard*, Omaroil Agency Limited, they were contracted by a Ghanaian company, Kare and Kare Limited, to provide a vessel to transport 3 000MT of High Pour Fuel Oil (HPFO) from Tema offshore to discharge at Tema Port. The agreement between the two companies was signed by Alhaji omar Suleiman, MD of Omaroil and Richard King Atipko, from Kare and Kare. On 19 July 2013 the *MT Mustard* sailed from Tema Anchorage and proceeded to a point 60nm offshore Tema for a ship to ship transfer with a motor tanker AKA1. According to Capt Olaniawo Olabisi he requested that the surveyor of *MT Mustard* board the AKA1 for inspection, but it was refused. The representative on *MT Mustard* ordered him to go ahead with the operation. He also indicated that his crew saw the name of the *MV Cotton* on a liferaft. He allegedly reported the incident to Ghanaian authorities a day later.

As ownership of the oil was in dispute, the *MT Mustard* laid off Ghana while the investigation was finalized. According to Omaroil the crew were forced to load stolen cargo. In September 2013 the court ruled in favour of Omaroil to have the oil removed in order for Omaroil to regain use of their tanker. The court instructed that the stolen oil should be offloaded from the tanker. The oil was evacuated into the underground tanker of Glasbrown Ltd. Unconfirmed sources indicated that the oil was gradually siphoned from these tanks.\(^{28}\)

In October 2016 an article appeared in the Nigerian Voice by Augustine Avornyio, the 4\(^{th}\) engineer onboard the *MT Mustard* in 2013. He claimed that the *MT Mustard* was the victim of a hijacking incident prior to the *MT Cotton* hijacking on 19 February 2013 while in transit through Bayelsa, Nigeria. A speedboat with six armed pirates boarded and hijacked the vessel. Onboard the pirate speed boat were two European hostages kidnapped in a prior incident. The Greek captain Omios Kazaniatoras went in hiding and the crew were assaulted to force them to reveal his location. On approach of a Nigerian Naval Vessel the pirates robbed the crew and kidnapped the captain.\(^{29}\)

The incident was allegedly logged into the *MT Mustard*’s logbook after which they sailed to Tema port, Ghana. On arrival they learned that the pirates’ speed boat capsized in a storm and that one of the European hostages was the only survivor. The crew was under strict order not to speak to the media or report the incident to authorities. After a meeting with Alhaji Suleman from Omaroil the crew was promised compensation. The crew disembarked on 12 April 2013 and reported the incident to iMarine LTD, the representatives of Omaroil in Tema. The crew only received wages for March. This incident was not recorded in IMO or IMB statistics.

The last AIS for *MT Mustard* was received on 14 March 2014 off Tema.\(^{30}\) In August 2014 Omaroil announced their “New Pride”, *MT Redemption\(^{21}\)*, which seems to have a striking resemblance to the *MT Mustard*. No IMO number or AIS data could be found for this ship. In early 2015 the Nigerian Navy arrested the crew of the *MT Redemption* in Brass, Nigeria for possession of 1 000 metric tons of stolen crude. The captain claimed that it was bitumen in the tanks, but laboratory tests at Nigeria Agip Oil Company laboratory confirmed that it was crude oil. They could also not provide relevant documents.\(^{32}\)
MV Crow

The MV Crow, a barge carrying 200 metric tonnes of AGO, was hijacked on the Escravos River on 14 August 2013. According to the Nigerian Navy the pirates responsible, were also responsible for the hijacking of the MT Norte.³⁵

MT Norte

On 15 August 2013 the MT Norte, carrying 17,000 metric tonnes of gasoline was hijacked at an undisclosed location in the Gulf of Guinea. The Notre sent an emergency signal. The Nigerian Navy intercepted the vessel on 17 August. The pirates escaped in a speed boat with the Navy in pursuit. During a gun battle 12 pirates were killed and four arrested.³⁶

MT Mariam

On 17 January 2015 the Product Tanker, MT Mariam was hijacked 63nm SW off Bayelsa, Nigeria in international waters. The vessel was en route to Togo. The Ghana Navy intercepted the vessel in Ghanaian waters and arrested eight Nigerian pirates. The leader of the group and two others, Marcus Olaide Oladapo and Abaiyi managed to get away. Two Ghanaians, George Opata Okrah, a freight forwarder, and Joel Yaw Attah, a shipping agent were also arrested in connection with the incident. They were later acquitted by the Adjabeng District Magistrate's Court. Atta was to receive $75,000 for the use of the M.T. Invictus the transfer vessel. The Adjabeng District Magistrate's Court in Ghana deported the eight Nigerians to Nigeria on 7 January 2016 to stand trial in Nigeria.³⁷

MT Imas

On 11 April 2015 the tanker MT Imas, was boarded by ten men off Lagos, Nigeria. The Nigerian Navy responded to the vessel’s distress call. One suspect was arrested by the Navy. The suspect identified as Shola Shama is most likely Sola Sama aka Michael Babalola or Père John involved in the Energy Centurion and Anuket Emerald hijackings.³⁸

MT Maximus

On 11 February 2016 MT Maximus was hijacked off Abidjan, Ivory Coast. After ten days the vessel was finally intercepted by the Nigerian Navy in Sao Tome. The Nigerian Navy arrested six pirates. It is not clear if they were ever prosecuted. Satellite phone communications as well as the pirate vessel Dejikun let back to Charles Ekpemefumor aka Charles Parker or Captain Charles Agaba. He was declared wanted, but no conformation for his arrest could be found. The owner of the Dejikun, Mustapha Gani, was arrested on the Seme border in June 2016.³⁹

With no reported prosecutions, pirates in the Gulf of Aden operate with impunity….and business is booming.
End Notes


5. John Steed, OBP


8. Jake Longworth, EOS Risk Group


