

## IN 1553 – Piracy and vessel security in the Gulf of Guinea – an update

Information Note Published on 17 February 2021

In recent months there has been an alarming increase in levels of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

The [Security Committee](#) would like to ensure that our Members are properly informed about developments in the **Gulf of Guinea**, so that members who have business there are able to make appropriate preparations.

This Information Note takes the form of links to public domain information, and some summarised information from sources not in the public domain, available to members of the security committee.

Two examples of recent attacks on vessels are given here by **Safety4Sea**. There are also other articles from **Bloomberg**, **Maritime Executive** and some reliable background information from a 2019 piece in **The Economist**.

[Pirates attack vessel off Sao Tome \(S4S\)](#)

[Tanker thwarts piracy attack off Port Gentil \(S4S\)](#)

[Piracy Pays in Africa's Gulf of Guinea \(Bloomberg\)](#)

[Gulf of Guinea Attacks Drive Increase in Global Piracy \(ME\)](#)

[Gulf of Guinea is now the world's worst piracy hotspot \(Economist\)](#)

What is happening is an increase in **Kidnap-for-Ransom** (K&R) attempts in the Gulf of Guinea. Pirates are increasingly using “mother vessels”. They are endeavouring to avoid Nigerian waters which may be better secured owing to oil and gas activities. Security in other territorial waters may be much worse and even in some cases with no local state security at all.

During January 2021 a total of 17 crew members have been released after captivity and another 15 crew members have been kidnapped. Several different pirate groups are operating over a widespread area. There has been an increase in violent attacks with pirates firing small arms towards the target vessel superstructure during the attack.

There remains a significant threat of kidnap-for-ransom (K&R) piracy towards merchant vessels in the Gulf of Guinea. The use of vessel onboard citadels as part

### IMCA Contact:



**Nicholas Hough**  
Consultant – Safety & Security

### Committees:

[HSS - Security](#)

### Tags:

[#Health, Safety & Security](#)

of the [Best Management Practices to deter piracy – West Africa](#) (BMP5) is recommended as far as practical.

**Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG)** is a co-operation between the UK and French Navies, co-ordinated with local navies. MDAT-GoG maintains coherent maritime situational awareness in the Gulf of Guinea area, informs and supports industry, and contributes to the safety and security of seafarers in the region.

For the best response, Members operating vessels in this area are encouraged to register and provide their position to [MDAT-GoG](#) and also follow the advice in [BMP5 – West Africa](#).

**BMP5 – West Africa**

**OCIMF: Gulf of Guinea Bridge Cards**