

Red Sea - Indian Ocean



Incidents:

- On 12Feb17 in Psn 15 06.5N 052 28.8E an MV reported being approached by a skiff with 6 Armed (RPG and Heavy Weapons) from the Port side and crossed vessel's Bow to the starboard side. Vessel sounded alarm, increased speed, and activated hoses, along with Armed Guards showing their weapons. Vessel is now safe. UKMTO while classifying it as non Piracy related incident, emphasized the need for vessels to utilize IRTC and to also take advantage of group transit schemes.
- UKMTO and MARAD Advisories relating to Yemen, South Red Sea and BeM straights are still in effect following the attack late last month on the Saudi Warship. In addition all advisories relating to the South Coast of Yemen are still in effect and the latest suspicious approach is a reminder of their importance.

Interesting information:

- The US Navy via Admiral Donegan, Commander of the Fifth Fleet forces, stated that the attack on the Saudi Arabian Frigate in late January was the result of a remote controlled unmanned attack boat while indirectly pointing the finger at a third party (Iran), being the supplier of such equipment.

- Despite the positive development of the Somali elections electing a Government, the problems continue with more bombings and violence in a business as usual fashion. At the same time, the U.N and Global organizations are warning of a highly likely upcoming famine due to the current drought that has plagued the country.
- Saudi Coalition forces are starting to push towards capturing the strategic port of Hodeidah from the Houthi's, something that could have effect merchant shipping in various ways.
- Approximately 30 Yemeni Coastguards were deployed near the vicinity of Balhaf LNG plant, in order to increase security in the area. These guards were trained by U.A.E forces, in an effort to ensure that the LNG Plant remains safe.

Threat Assessment:

- Instability in Somalia and the state of the civil war in Yemen will continue to affect the threat level to Merchant Vessels.
- First, in Somalia, the threat to Merchant Shipping remains either in the form of Piracy or the ongoing possibility of the Al Shabab terrorist group of targeting maritime assets, despite the recent election and formation of Government.
- Second, in Yemen, the high risk and almost inevitable spill over of violence stemming from the Yemen Civil war to the maritime domain in the form of terrorism, piracy or collateral damage from unrelated incidents remains. The recent incident in GoA is alarming because while non Piracy related, the particular skiff could be there looking to do something much worse. At the same time the escalation of the push by the Hadi Government to take over Hodeidah by the Houthis, can easily lead to a large scale exodus of Houthi forces towards the Red Sea, with unknown intentions (something we saw in Apr.16 when Houthis and AQAP were pushed out of Al Mukala and a series of incidents at sea prompted to advisories still in effect in the area). In addition, Vessel's waiting for or conducting operations in the area could be impacted as well.

Sea Guardian continues to urge high levels of vigilance in the entire HRA with South Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Somali Coast, remaining areas where caution needs to be exercised despite the lack of Piracy related incidents. ALL advisories in effect in South Red Sea and Yemeni Coast must be adhered by all. Reduced military presence in the area makes strict BMP Implementation (including IRTC and group transit scheme use) of the utmost importance.

West Africa



Incidents:

- No major incidents to report in the area.

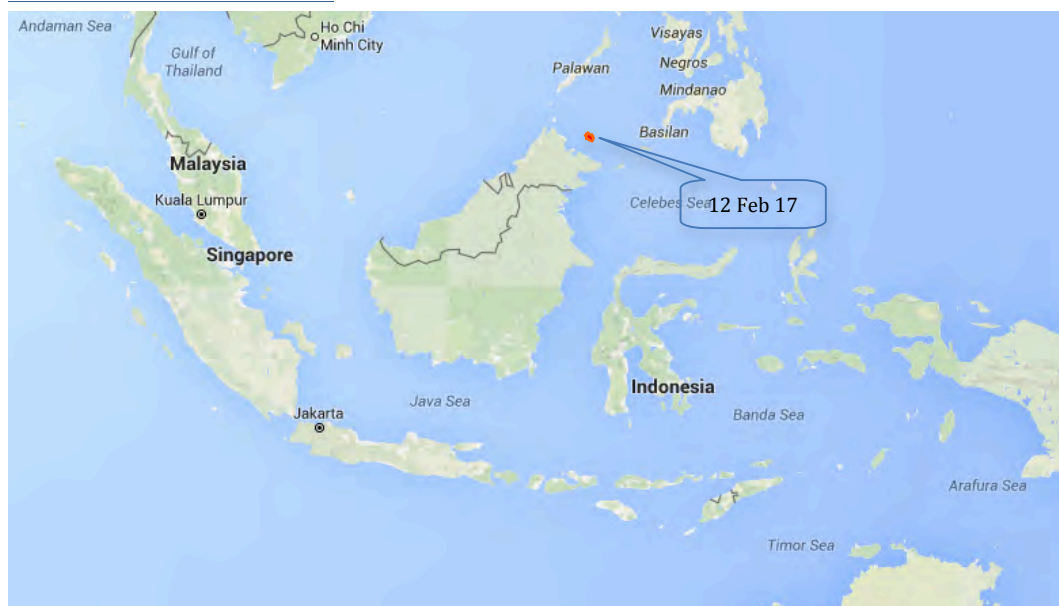
Interesting information:

- A US Diplomat during a conference in Ivory Coast last week, stated that the United States are increasingly concerned about the levels of piracy in the West Africa region and that “creating National strategies for maritime security is essential”.
- The Crewmen reported abducted last week in Nigeria appear to be well but there has been no additional information on their possible release.

Threat assessment:

Taking under consideration the overall trends, Gulf of Guinea remains the hottest spot for piracy, particularly marine kidnapping for ransom. As long as corruption and militant disruptions can't be confined or even better eliminated, it is clear that maritime piracy and kidnapping will continue to plague the waters of West Africa. In any case all vessels operating GoG waters should adopt strict BMP4 implementation measures, follow MDAT-GoG guidelines and report any suspicious activity.

South East Asia



Incidents:

- On 20Feb17 Philippine coastguard reported that MV Giang Hai was attacked near Baguan Island, an area notorious for Abu Sayyaf activity. Gunmen boarded the vessel, caused extensive damage to vessel's equipment, killed one crewman and abducted seven in what appeared to be the latest attack by pirates.

Interesting information:

- The above attack comes near the vicinity where last November, another Vietnamese Vessel was attacked by Abu Sayyaf, and crew was kidnapped in that incident as well. It is believed the militants are holding at least 20 foreign and local hostages in the southern province of Sulu.

- While as reported the Philippines are seeking assistance in Maritime Security from both US and China, the USS Carl Vinson Carrier strike group has begun its freedom of navigation patrols in the South China Sea (A President Trump campaign promise), something that the Chinese are openly opposing claiming that such incidents increase tensions.

Threat assessment:

By far Sulu-Celebes Sea and eastern Sabah region are the most dangerous waters in SE Asia the last six months and apart from several statements from officials of adjacent countries for common patrols to fight the terrorist groups and the announcement of several other measures to confine piracy activity, there is nothing tangible so far. In any case all vessel's transiting above-mentioned waters should remain vigilant while strictly implementing BMP4.

**Overall Map of Incidents can be found at <http://www.sguardian.com/risk-map/>
We would also like to encourage the recipients of this report, to follow Sea Guardian's Social networks for up to date and real time information**

