

Red Sea - Indian Ocean



Incidents:

- Today 07MAR17 UKMTO issued a Suspicious Sighting in position LAT 13 12 N LONG 048 58 E, after an “MV was followed by two skiffs with 16-20 Armed POB”. Report goes onto say that “Skiffs followed Astern for 40 minutes” and that MV is now safe.
- UKMTO and MARAD Advisories relating to Yemen, South Red Sea and BaM 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 suspicious approach in February is a reminder of their importance.

Interesting information:

- Following last week’s WHO’s warning that Somalia was at a risk of its third famine in 25 years putting approximately 6.2 million people in danger (half of the country’s population), over the past few days, already over 110 people died of hunger in just one single region
- Regarding the escalation of ship attacks near Yemen, INTERTANKO’S Marine Director recently stated in an article by Reuters that “The potential for merchant ships to be caught up in this as collateral damage is high”.

- A swarm of Iranian fast-attack boats forced a US Navy ship on March 6 to change course in the Persian Gulf near the straits of Hormuz. The USNS Invincible, a tracking ship, escorted by three ships of the British Royal Navy, came within 600 yards of the Vessel, forcing it to change course. Interestingly, the US this week tested it's A-10 Warthog off the coast of Virginia in simulated attacks against small boats resembling the Iranian Small Boat swarms stating that the A-10 can obliterate them.
- South Korea officially joined the EU's anti-piracy operation around the Gulf of Aden. The Republic of Korea's 4,400-ton destroyer Choi Young took part in the EUNAVFOR counter-piracy mission Operation Atalanta from February 27 till March 4, under the leadership of the Combined Maritime Forces.
- The VOA reports that US officials have said the DoD wants to expand the military's ability to fight al Shabaab in Somalia. "They have recommended that the Trump Administration permits U.S Special Forces to increase assistance to the Somali National Army". The same officials also want the US military to have the ability to launch pre-emptive strikes.

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 Shabaab terrorist group of targeting maritime assets, despite the recent election and formation of Government. The now evident famine which is already affecting the country, combined with the re-appearance of commercial fishing fleets along the Somali coast, along with the increased complacency by some in the Maritime Industry, may result in the possible resurgence of Somali Piracy.
- 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 struggle between the Saudi coalition and Iran to prevail continues and access and control of the maritime domain (especially in the South Red Sea-Bab al-Mandeb) is a major focal point. The fact that Military assets have been targeted, proves that any vessel can be at risk at any time.

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:

- Today MDAT-GoG issued warning 001/MAR/17 regarding a MV that reported being boarded by Pirates on 07Mar17 in Position 04 41 14N – 007 09 27E. The suspicious activity report concluded that the Pirates boarded Vessel but have now left.

Interesting information:

- On March 3rd the Russian Foreign Ministry announced that the 8 crewmembers previously reported as being abducted from the freighter BBC Caribbean were released. The seafarers are well and have been repatriated while the amount of the ransom remains undisclosed.

- The Federal Government of Nigeria has set a target of attracting more than \$10 billion of fresh investments in the oil and gas industry in the next five years, according to the Minister of State Petroleum Resources..

Threat assessment:

Taking under consideration the overall trends, Gulf of Guinea remains the world's hotspot for piracy and maritime crime, 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:

- According to the US Office of Naval Intelligence report, on 22 February, bulk carrier DONG HAE STAR was en route to Indonesia when two black speedboats with 5 POB pursued the Vessel near Pearl Bank off Taganak Island, Tawi-Tawi. The vessel immediately sent a distress call to the Littoral Monitoring Station of the Philippine Navy in Bongao. Upon noticing the Navy Vessels the speedboats disengaged.

Interesting information:

- German national Jurgen Kantner that was held by Abu Sayyaf, was executed on the 27th of February, a day after the deadline for the payment of approximately \$596,000 expired, further to a video release of his execution.

- Around the same story, the Philippines military said on the 2nd of March that they killed at least five suspected Abu Sayyaf militants in Sulu who were believed to have been behind the beheading of the German hostage. In the same incident 11 soldiers were wounded, while Philippines President Duterte apologized to the German administration for failing to rescue the kidnapped tourist.

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**

