(U) WORLDWIDE: Worldwide Threat to Shipping (WTS) Report 23 January–26 February 2020

27 February 2020

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1. (U) Scope Note

(U) The Worldwide Threat to Shipping (WTS) message provides information on threats to merchant vessels, the shipping industry, and other maritime stakeholders worldwide in the last 30 days. This report is produced primarily to inform merchant mariners and naval forces.

2. (U) Warnings and Advisories: None

1. (U) **MARAD 2020-003A-Southern Red Sea, Maritime Boundary between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Mines in the Water**. Description: A maritime threat has been reported in coastal waters between Midi, Yemen, and Jizan, Saudi Arabia. The nature of the event is reported to be mines in the water that may have drifted north from Yemen following a seasonal change of current flow. The confirmed threat is predominately located in the area bounded by: (A) 16:45.6N 042:15.7E; (B) 15:41.5N 042:39.4E; (C) 15:54.0N 043:02.0E; and (D) 16:58.0N 042:35.1E, but the threat may extend outside of it. Exercise caution when transiting this region. Further updates will be provided when available. For more information about U.S. Maritime Alerts and Advisories, including subscription details, please visit www.marad.dot.gov/MSCI. Any questions regarding this alert should be directed to GMCC@uscg.mil.

3. (U) Summary

1. (U) GULF OF ADEN: On 25 February, a merchant vessel reported a suspicious approach by 11 skiffs with 4-5 persons onboard each boat near position 12:13N - 044:06E, 67 NM northeast of Djibouti.

2. (U) ARUBA: On 25 February, authorities seized the Russia-flagged general cargo ship ARESSA after a search of the vessel revealed a ton of cocaine.
3. (U) VENEZUELA: On 24 February, six armed robbers boarded the Togo-flagged tanker SAN RAMON as the vessel was anchored Boraccha Island waters, north of Puerto La Cruz. The ship's master was shot in the face and died trying to resist the robbers.
4. (U) RED SEA: On 23 February, naval forces from the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen foiled an imminent terrorist attack.
5. (U) GULF OF ADEN: On 22 February, a merchant vessel reported a suspicious approach by 11 skiffs with 4-5 persons onboard each boat 40 NM northeast of Djibouti.
6. (U) GULF OF OMAN: On 22 February, Iran's coast guard seized a foreign vessel accused of smuggling oil in the Gulf of Oman.
7. (U) NIGERIA: On 21 February, armed persons attacked the duty officer onboard a container ship underway approximately 130 NM southwest of Brass, Nigeria.
8. (U) GULF OF ADEN: On 20 February, a merchant vessel reported a suspicious approach by 3 skiffs near position 13:37N - 049:42E, 71 NM southeast of al-Mukalla, Yemen.
9. (U) INDIA: On 19 February, nine persons boarded the vessel AL MARJO while underway 8 NM from the Pipavav coast.
10. (U) NIGERIA: On 18 February, three persons in a small boat approached a tanker anchored near position 06:17N - 003:14, Lagos Secure Anchorage Area, and attempted to board via the anchor chain.
11. (U) LIBERIA: On 18 February, a Ghanaian vessel carrying an assortment of smuggled alcoholic beverages and mining equipment was impounded at the Port of Buchanan in Grand Bassa County.
12. (U) ANGOLA: On 15 February, robbers boarded a support vessel anchored near position 08:43S - 013:17E, Luanda Anchorage, and broke into a paint store room.

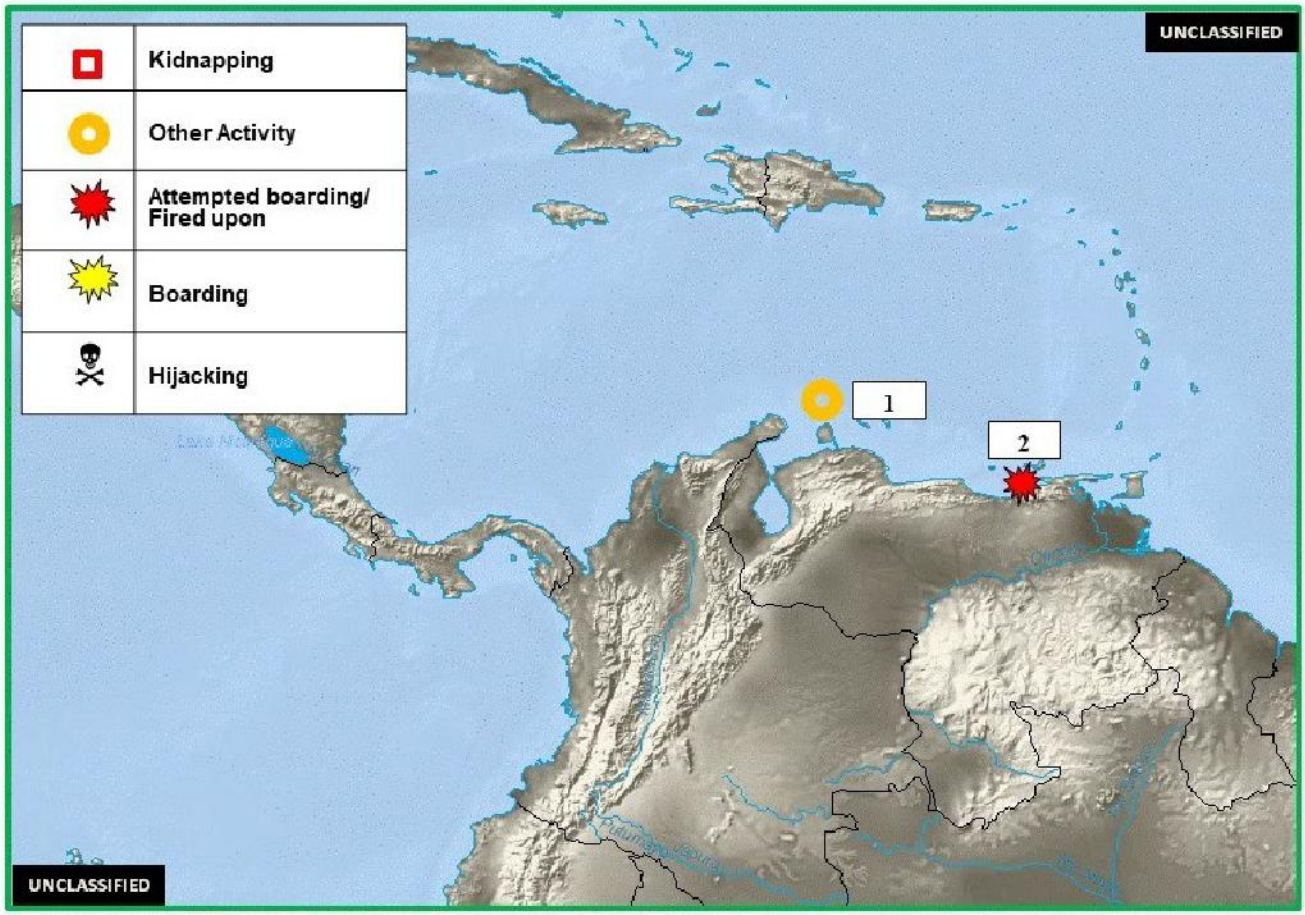
4. (U) Details: Monthly Incidents by Region

(U) This section lists reports of active violence against shipping, credible threats to shipping, or the potential for a situation to develop into a direct threat to shipping over the past 30 days. Every effort is made to ensure that incidents are not double-counted. In the event that double-counting is detected, or an incident is later found to be different than initially reported, an explanation of the cancellation of the inaccurate report will be made in at least one message prior to dropping the erroneous report.

A. **(U) NORTH AMERICA**:

1. (U) MEXICO: On 30 January, suspected poachers in four boats attacked a vessel belonging to an environmental NGO in the Gulf of California. The attack took place in a designated safe zone for the endangered vaquita porpoise. The captain of the vessel carried out evasive maneuvers and water cannons were deployed to repel the assailants. The NGO vessel was not hit by gunfire during the skirmish and there were no reports of casualties. (www.pviltd.com)

B. **(U) CENTRAL AMERICA - CARIBBEAN - SOUTH AMERICA**:



(U) Figure 1. Central America - Caribbean - South America Piracy and Maritime Crime

1. (U) ARUBA: On 25 February, authorities seized the Russia-flagged general cargo ship ARESSA after a search of the vessel revealed a ton of cocaine onboard. (www.fleetmon.com)
2. (U) VENEZUELA: On 24 February, six armed robbers boarded the Togo-flagged tanker SAN RAMON anchored off Boraccha Island, north of Puerto La Cruz. The robbers shot and killed the ship's master and injured a crewman. Another crewman jumped overboard during the boarding and is missing. The robbers looted the ship and fled. (www.fleetmon.com)
3. (U) COSTA RICA: On 15 February, authorities in the port of Limon found 5 tons of cocaine in a cargo container carrying flowers bound for Rotterdam. (www.novinite.com)
4. (U) PERU: On 28 January, two individuals in skiffs boarded an anchored tanker near position 12:00S - 077:10W, Callao Anchorage. While on security rounds, the duty watchman spotted the individuals on the forecastle deck; the alarm was raised and the crew was mustered. Seeing the crew's response, the individuals jumped overboard and escaped. Port authorities were notified. Nothing was reported stolen during the boarding. (IMB)
5. (U) COLOMBIA: On 20 January, an unknown number of heavily armed pirates boarded a yacht and shot a civilian dead near the coast of Cauca Department in the Pacific Ocean. According to navy officers, the pirates boarded the vessel, which was navigating toward Lopez de Micay, and stole personal belongings from three people before killing one individual. The assailants threw the victim's body into the sea and escaped on a small boat. (www.pviltd.com)

6. (U) COLOMBIA: On 19 January, two robbers armed with machetes boarded a tanker anchored near position 10:19N - 075:31W, Cartagena Anchorage. The alarm was raised and the crew was mustered. Upon seeing the crew's response, the robbers fled. The incident was reported to the Colombia Coast Guard, whose investigation determined that nothing was stolen. (IMB)

7. (U) ANGUILLA: On 17 January, robbers boarded a sailing yacht anchored in Road Bay, ransacked the interior, and stole personal electronics and other valuables. Police investigators indicated that similar events had recently occurred at the anchorage area. (www.noonsite.com)

C. **(U) ATLANTIC OCEAN AREA**:

1. (U) SPAIN: On 7 February, three stowaways were found onboard Denmark-flagged tanker HARALD MAERSK while the vessel was transiting from Conakry, Guinea, to Amsterdam, Netherlands. The following day, the ship requested a port call in Vigo, Spain, as the stowaways had reportedly turned violent. Spanish authorities boarded the ship and are conducting an investigation. (www.fleetmon.com)

2. (U) ATLANTIC OCEAN: On 27 January, Portuguese forces announced that they intercepted a sailing yacht in the North Atlantic Ocean carrying 1,820 kilograms of cocaine. Two men aboard the yacht were arrested. (www.theportugalnews.com)

D. **(U) NORTHERN EUROPE - BALTIC**:

1. (U) DENMARK: On 15 February, authorities found 310 kilograms of cocaine on the reefer DUNCAN ISLAND while the ship was transferring the drugs to several small boats near Langeland, Denmark. The ship was en route St. Petersburg, Russia. (www.fleetmon.com)

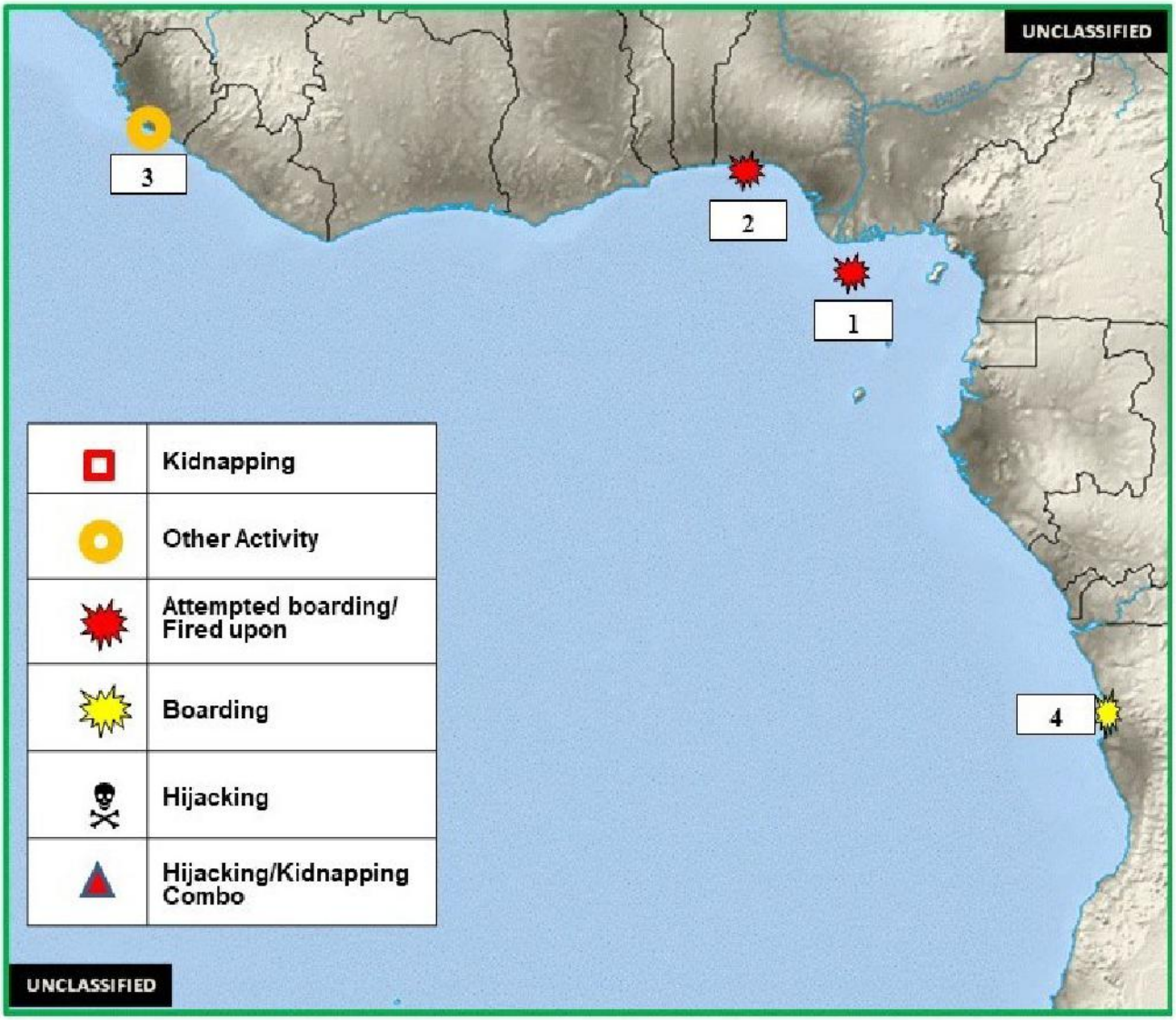
E. **(U) MEDITERRANEAN - BLACK SEA**:

1. (U) LIBYA: On 18 February, eastern Libyan forces said they targeted a weapons depot in their attack on the sea port of Libya's capital, signaling a new escalation in the battle for control of Tripoli. The Libya National Army (LNA) faction, which is based in the east of the sprawling country and commanded by Khalifa Haftar, did not elaborate about the arms depot in their statement. (www.gcaptain.com)

2. (U) SPAIN: On 11 February, Spanish authorities rescued 69 African migrants aboard a large rubber dinghy that had left Moroccan waters for Europe. A passing merchant ship discovered them 36 NM south of the Port of Malaga and reported them to authorities. (www.wtmj.com)

3. (U) ITALY: On 2 February, authorities in the Port of Genoa arrested the Lebanon-flagged car carrier BANA on suspicion of arms trafficking. Reportedly, the ship's documentation had been altered concerning at least three voyages between Turkey and Libya. (www.fleetmon.com)

F. **(U) WEST AFRICA**:



(U) Figure 2. West Africa Piracy and Maritime Crime

1. (U) NIGERIA: On 21 February, the duty officer onboard a container ship underway near position 02:49N - 004:40E, approximately 130 NM southwest of Brass, Nigeria, noticed a speed boat approaching at high speed. They raised the alarm, increased speed, non-essential crew mustered in the citadel, and they notified CSO. As the boat closed, the master commenced evasive maneuvers. The approaching boat called the ship over VHF CH 16 and demanded the ship to stop. Shots were heard being fired towards the ship. After approximately one hour, the boat aborted and moved away. All crew are safe. (IMB)
2. (U) NIGERIA: On 18 February, three robbers in a small boat approached a tanker anchored near position 06:17N - 003:14, Lagos Secure Anchorage Area, and attempted to board via the anchor chain. The duty crewman on routine rounds noticed the attempted boarding and raised the alarm. Seeing the crew's response, the robbers aborted the boarding and escaped in their boat. The incident was reported to port control. (IMB)

3. (U) LIBERIA: On 18 February, a Ghanaian vessel carrying an assortment of smuggled alcoholic beverages and mining equipment was impounded at the Port of Buchanan in Grand Bassa County after it docked at an unauthorized pier. (www.frontpageafricaonline.com)
4. (U) ANGOLA: On 15 February, robbers boarded a support vessel anchored near position 08:43S - 013:17E, Luanda Anchorage and broke into a paint store room. Ship's properties were noted stolen. (IMB)
5. (U) BENIN: On 20 February, pirates boarded the Liberia-flagged tanker ALPINE PENELOPE near position 05:10N - 002:05E, 75 NM southwest of Cotonou. Ten crewmen were reportedly kidnapped. The crew includes men from the Philippines, Georgia, and Ukraine. (MDAT-GoG; www.fleetmon.com)
6. (U) NIGERIA: On 16 February, Nigerian soldiers torched more than 20 homes in a community in the oil-rich Niger Delta after suspected pirates killed six people. Gunmen had reportedly attacked a gunboat escorting a vessel in the volatile waters off the Nigerian coast. Then, during an exchange of gunfire, four soldiers and two civilians onboard the vessel were killed. Security forces launched a manhunt for the assailants in the nearby community of Lutugbene in the wake of the attack. (www.guardian.ng)
7. (U) SAO TOME and PRINCIPE: On 14 February, armed pirates in two boats approached and boarded the Marshall Islands-flagged container ship MAERSK TEMA near position 01:33N - 005:19E, 102 NM northwest of Sao Tome. The master raised the alarm, sent a distress message, and stopped the ship. All crew members mustered in the citadel. Upon receiving the distress message, the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB PRC) immediately liaised with the authorities and vessel operators in the region. The Sao Tome Navy/Authorities dispatched a security vessel with a Nigerian naval team and requested the assistance of a nearby Portuguese patrol boat. After the Nigerian naval personnel boarded and searched the ship, the crew emerged from the citadel. Some ship's equipment was reported damaged. Under the escort of the security vessel, the ship proceeded to a safe port. (IMB; MDAT-GoG; www.fleetmon.com)
8. (U) NIGERIA: On 1 February, two robbers in a boat boarded an anchored tanker near position 06:15N - 003:19E, Lagos Anchorage. They tried to seize a duty crewman on routine rounds, who managed to escape. When the crew raised the alarm, the robbers fled without stealing anything. The incident was reported to the Nigerian Navy, which dispatched a patrol boat to the location. (IMB)
9. (U) CAMEROON: On 29 January, armed men in a speedboat kidnapped an individual from a passenger vessel off the coast of Limbe. The armed men subsequently headed towards the Bakassi Peninsula in Cameroon with the hostage. The Cameroon Navy responded by deploying a patrol vessel to Limbe. (www.pviltd.com)
10. (U) COTE D'IVOIRE: On 5 February, Ivory Coast naval forces seized a record amount of cocaine, plastic-wrapped in small bundles bearing the tattered logos of a famous French fashion house and a dark beer from Bolivia. The 411 kilograms of cocaine destined for the capital Abidjan came from a Spain-flagged ship that had been spotted by the navy idling 155 miles off the coast since 30 January. (www.gcaptain.com)
11. (U) NIGERIA: On 29 January, a duty crewman onboard an offshore supply vessel berthed near 04:41N - 007:09E, Onne Port, noticed a robber on deck. When the crew raised the alarm, the robber fled with properties stolen from the ship. The incident was reported to port authority. (IMB)
12. (U) NIGERIA: On 25 January, robbers boarded a tanker during cargo operations while anchored near position 06:16N - 003:19E, Lagos Anchorage. When a duty crewman spotted the robbers near the forecastle, the alarm was sounded. Seeing the crew's response, the robbers jumped overboard and fled in a wooden boat. A naval patrol boat arrived at the location, searched the waters around the tanker, and remained close to the tanker until daybreak. Nothing was reported stolen during the boarding. (IMB)
13. (U) NIGERIA: On 21 January, a merchant vessel was attacked near position 04:04N - 005:47E, 20 NM south of Brass. The crew and vessel were reported to be safe. (www.pviltd.com)
14. (U) BENIN: On 19 January, armed individuals in a skiff boarded a merchant vessel near position 05:08N - 002:17E using a long ladder. No further information is available. (www.pviltd.com)
15. (U) NIGERIA: On 17 January, robbers in a small boat approached an anchored tanker during cargo operations in the Lagos Secure Anchorage Area. Two of the robbers attempted to board the tanker via the anchor chain. A duty

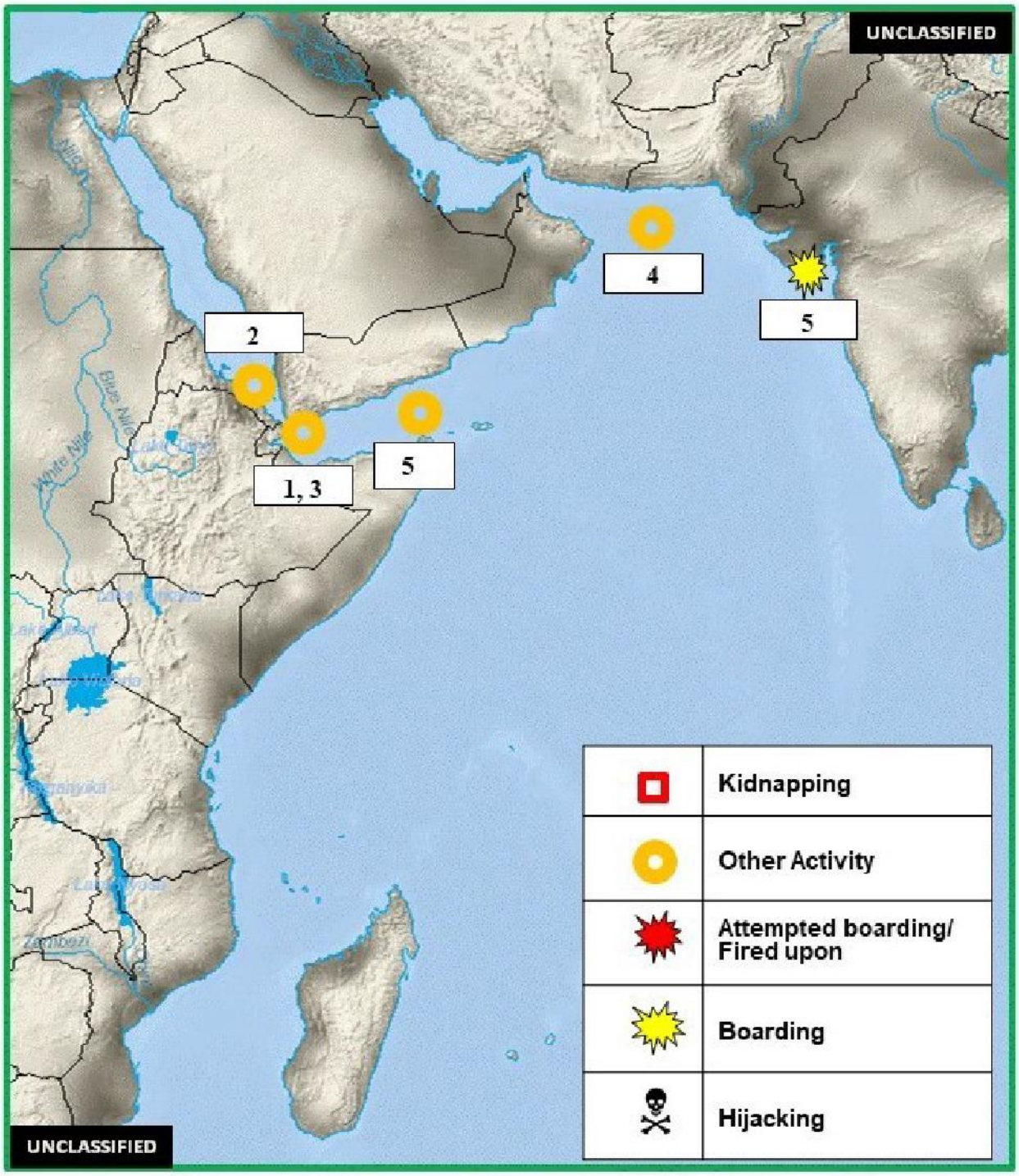
crewman on routine rounds noticed the robbers and raised the alarm. The crew mustered and informed a patrol boat. Seeing the crew's response, the robbers aborted the attempted boarding and fled. The authorities were notified. (IMB)

16. (U) NIGERIA: On 22 January, eight crew members, kidnapped by Nigerian pirates from the Greek tanker HAPPY LADY on 30 December, were released. (www.fleetmon.com)
17. (U) NIGERIA: On 21 January, Panama-flagged container ship MSC GRACE reported being attacked by approximately 15 armed individuals in a skiff near position 04:04N - 005:47E, 20 NM south of Bonny. The vessel increased speed and non-essential crew members took shelter in the citadel. When armed naval guards onboard the MSC GRACE returned fire, the skiff aborted the attack and departed the area. The Nigerian Navy was notified. (IMB; www.sguardian.com; www.fleetmon.com)
18. (U) NIGERIA: On 20 January, a merchant vessel reported being attacked by six individuals in a skiff near position 05:30N - 003:41E, 57 NM southeast of Lagos. (www.sguardian.com)
19. (U) BENIN: On 20 January, Marshall Islands-flagged container ship ATLANTIC DISCOVERER reported being attacked near position 05:08N - 002:17E, 75 NM south-southwest of Cotonou. (www.sguardian.com; www.fleetmon.com)
20. (U) NIGERIA: On 19 January, 19 of the 20 seafarers kidnapped on 15 December from the tanker DUKE were released. One able seaman died shortly after capture. Following their release, the crew members had medical checks and are reported to be well, given the circumstances of their ordeal. They will be debriefed by local authorities and then return home to their families. (www.maritime-executive.com)
21. (U) NIGERIA: On 16 January, five armed pirates in a small craft approached a tanker underway near position 03:38N - 006:40E, 52 NM southwest of Bonny. The crew raised the alarm and began evasive maneuvers. When the security team on the tanker fired warning shots, the pirates returned fire and departed the area. (IMB)

G. **(U) ARABIAN GULF**:

(U) No current incidents to report.

H. **(U) INDIAN OCEAN - EAST AFRICA - RED SEA**:



(U) Figure 3. Indian Ocean - East Africa - Red Sea Piracy and Maritime Crime

1. (U) GULF OF ADEN: On 25 February, a merchant vessel reported a suspicious approach by 11 skiffs with 4-5 persons onboard each boat near position 12:13N - 044:06E, 67 NM northeast of Djibouti. The crew reportedly spotted ladders on some skiffs. (IMB)

2. (U) RED SEA: On 23 February, naval forces from the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen foiled an "imminent terrorist" attack by the Iran-aligned Houthi movement in the southern Red Sea. (www.reuters.com)
3. (U) GULF OF ADEN: On 22 February, a merchant vessel reported a suspicious approach by 11 skiffs with 4-5 persons onboard each boat near position 12:10N - 043:31E, 40 NM northeast of Djibouti. The crew reportedly spotted ladders on some of the skiffs. The armed security team fired warning shots. (IMB)
4. (U) GULF OF OMAN: On 22 February, Iran's coast guard seized a foreign vessel accused of smuggling oil in the Gulf of Oman. The tanker was reportedly towed to Bandar-e-Jask Port and all 13 crew members were detained. The head of the Iranian coast guard did not provide details regarding the ownership of the vessel, its intended destination, or the nationalities of the arrested crew members. (www.pviltd.com)
5. (U) GULF OF ADEN: On 20 February, a merchant vessel reported a suspicious approach by three skiffs near position 13:37N - 049:42E, 71 NM southeast of al-Mukalla, Yemen. (IMB)
6. (U) INDIA: On 19 February, nine persons boarded the vessel AL MARJO while underway 8 NM from the Pipavav coast. India Coast Guard forces responded to the incident and arrested the individuals. (www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com)

I. **(U) EAST ASIA - SOUTHEAST ASIA - INDIAN SUBCONTINENT**:

1. (U) INDONESIA: On 9 February at 0252 hours, a duty crewman raised the alarm after noticing a robber in the engine room of the India-flagged product tanker SWARNA JAYANTI while underway near position 01:15N - 103:10E, 4.6 NM northeast of Batam Island. During a search of the vessel, the crew discovered that ship's properties was stolen. The incident was reported to local authorities. (IMB)
2. (U) INDONESIA: On 9 February at 0220 hours, a duty crewman raised the alarm after noticing six robbers in the engine room of the Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier NEW SPIRIT while underway 5.1 NM northeast of Batam Island. During a search of the vessel, they found nothing missing. The incident was reported to local authorities. (IMB)
3. (U) INDONESIA: On 2 February, a crew of a tug moored to a buoy near position 01:03N - 103:53E, Batam Island, noticed three robbers on deck and raised the alarm. The robbers managed to escape with the assistance of two accomplices waiting in a boat. The police responded and carried out a search of the vessel. During the search, police discovered a broken padlock to a storeroom, from which ship's equipment had been stolen. (IMB)
4. (U) INDONESIA: On 22 January, a duty crewman onboard a bulk carrier anchored near position 03:42.6S - 114:25.2E, Taboneo Anchorage, saw that the lock on the bosun storeroom was broken and some of ship's properties were stolen. The incident was reported to port control and a local agent. (IMB)
5. (U) MALAYSIA: On 21 January, Malaysia-flagged fishing vessel SSK 00543/F, was attacked by six armed persons wearing dark clothing and masks in a grey-colored speed boat near position 05:29N - 119:03E, approximately 4 NM northwest of Tambisan, Lahad Datu, Sabah, Malaysia. Malaysian authorities responded and found three crew members on the fishing vessel, but five other crew members had been kidnapped. (www.pna.gov.ph; www.pviltd.com)
6. (U) INDONESIA: On 21 January, four robbers boarded the Indonesian tanker HORIZON MARU in Kabil waters, eastern Batam Island, Indonesia. The crew managed to fight off the robbers and capture one of them in the process. One crewman suffered an injury to his face during the skirmish. The captured robber was handed over to police. (www.fleetmon.com)
7. (U) INDONESIA: On 20 January, the crew noticed two robbers onboard their product tanker anchored in Kabil Anchorage, Pulau Batam. The crew managed to apprehend one of the robbers, but the other robber escaped in a waiting boat along with two accomplices. The crew handed over the robber to the Indonesian marine police, who boarded the vessel to investigate. (IMB)

J. **(U) NORTHEAST ASIA**:

1. (U) SOUTH KOREA: On 9 February, Korean Maritime Police arrested the Russia-flagged tankers AMUR and ZALIV VOSTOK 15 NM west of Gunsan while they conducted an illegal ship-to-ship transfer of oil products. (www.fleetmon.com)

K. **(U) AUSTRALIA - NEW ZEALAND - PACIFIC OCEAN AREA**:

(U) No current incidents to report.

5. (U) Appendix A: Further Contact Information and Resources

(U) This appendix provides contact information for the author of the WTS as well as other entities that can be contacted with maritime crime reports. It also lists other resources where the WTS is posted and where piracy and maritime crime incident information can be found.

(U) Contact

(U) Originator of this WTS report requests consumer feedback. Originator will incorporate all anti-shipping events and violence against the maritime industry into this weekly message where appropriate. To aid in our reporting, please add the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) to your normal corporate and organizational reporting requirements. The 24-hour watch can be reached at +1 (301) 669-4053.

(U) Other Resources

(U) This Worldwide Threat to Shipping (WTS) report is posted at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency's Maritime Safety site: https://msi.nga.mil/NGAPortal/MSI.portal. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) also publishes a live piracy report based on reporting from the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, listing all piracy and armed robbery incidents in the last ten days: https://www.icc-ccs.org/piracy-reporting-centre/live-piracy-report. The Weekly Piracy Update and WTS reports are posted weekly on the ONI Intel Portal: https://www.oni.navy.mil/News/Shipping-Threat-Reports/.

6. (U) Appendix B: Terminology and References

(U) This appendix is provided to promote consistent use of accurate terms of reference in reporting and also identifies those references that were used to gather the information contained in this report. ONI welcomes comment and suggestions for addition or amendment.

(U) **Terminology**

(U) In order to promote consistent use of accurate terms of reference, the following have been adopted to describe the range of criminal anti-shipping activity and impediments to safe navigation in our worldwide reporting and analysis. Please note that these terms relate to observable activity and are independent of target vessel status and exclude actions by governmental powers in lawful pursuit of their authorities:

(U) The following terms have been adopted to describe the range of criminal anti-shipping activity and impediments to safe navigation in our worldwide reporting and analysis:

- (U) **Attempted Boarding** - Close approach or hull-to-hull contact with report that boarding paraphernalia were employed or visible in the approaching boat.
- (U) **Blocking** - Hampering safe navigation, docking, or undocking of a vessel as a means of protest.
- (U) **Boarding** - Unauthorized embarkation of a vessel by persons not part of its complement without successfully taking control of the vessel.
- (U) **Fired Upon** - Weapons discharged at or toward a vessel.
- (U) **Hijacking** - Unauthorized seizure and retention of a vessel by persons not part of its complement.
- (U) **Kidnapping** - Unauthorized forcible removal of persons belonging to the vessel from it.
- (U) **Robbery** - Theft from a vessel or from persons aboard the vessel.
- (U) **Suspicious Approach** - All other unexplained activity in close proximity by an unknown vessel.

(U) **Sourcing**

- Agence France Presse (AFP)
- Associated Press (AP)
- BBC News
- DNK Intelligence & Operations Centre (DNK IOC)
- EU Naval Forces (EU)
- FLEETMON
- International Maritime Bureau (IMB), London and Kuala Lumpur
- International Maritime Organization (IMO), London
- Lloyd's
- Maritime Administration (MARAD), U.S.
- Maritime Security Centre - Horn of Africa (MSCHOA)
- Marine Domain Awareness for Trade - Gulf of Guinea (MDAT- GoG)
- Maritime Asset Security and Training (MAST) Ltd
- National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), Navigation Safety System
- Noonsite.com (Noonsite), website
- Norwegian Shipowners' Mutual War Risks Insurance Association
- Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, Information Sharing Center (ReCAAP ISC)
- Reuters
- Royal Australian Navy (RAN)
- Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN)
- The Maritime Executive (website)
- United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization (UKMTO)
- United Press International (UPI)
- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)

(U) The Weekly Piracy Update (WPU) and WTS reports are posted each week on the ONI Intel Portal and can be found at: https://www.oni.navy.mil/News/Shipping-Threat-Reports/.

(U) ICOD: 26 February 2020

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