(U) WORLDWIDE: Worldwide Threat to Shipping (WTS) Report, 23 December 2020–20 January 2021

20 January 2021

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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:

3. (U) Summary:

A. (U) CONGO: On 18 January, robbers boarded a refrigerated cargo vessel while anchored at Banana Anchorage.

B. (U) GULF OF ADEN: On 14 January, a bulk carrier was approached by a skiff approximately 58 NM southwest of Aden, Yemen.

C. (U) BRAZIL: On 13 January, robbers boarded a bulk carrier while berthed at Santana Port.

D. (U) NIGERIA: On 13 January, elements of the Nigeria Navy seized six boats carrying an estimated 100,000 liters of stolen automotive diesel fuel in the Ondo-Lagos coastal area.

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 last 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 31 December 2020, in a refuge for the endangered vaquita porpoise in the upper Gulf of California, one boat was destroyed during an attack on vessels operated by a conservation NGO group. The crew aboard one of the vessels was retrieving a gill net from the water when fishermen aboard at least five pangas began throwing lead weights and Molotov cocktails at both crew and military officials who were onboard. According to the NGO group, as the vessel began to leave the scene, one of the pangas swerved in front of it and smashed into the hull. The smaller vessel broke in two and its two passengers were thrown into the sea. A second NGO vessel recovered the two men, who were then given emergency first aid. Doctors with the Mexican Navy arrived and treated the two, one of whom wasn't breathing when he was brought aboard. While the men were being treated, the NGO group reported, two other fishermen boarded the NGO vessel, threatened the crew and officials onboard, and smashed a camera that was filming the incident. One of the fishermen later died from his injuries. (www.mexiconewsdaily.com; www.bbc.com)

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

Figure 1. Central America – Caribbean – South America Piracy and Maritime Crime

1. (U) BRAZIL: On 13 January, robbers boarded a bulk carrier berthed at Santana Port, near position 00:04S – 051:10W. The robbery was discovered by duty crew on routine rounds. -The robbers were able to board the bulk carrier, steal ship's property, and escape undetected. The crew notified the local police, who subsequently boarded the bulk carrier to carry out an investigation. (Clearwater Dynamics)

2. (U) SAINT MARTIN: At 0340 on 10 January, the owner of a catamaran anchored in Marigot Bay was onboard and heard noise on deck. He found a woman hiding near the mast; she then jumped overboard and swam ashore. A locker had been opened and rifled through, with several items removed but left behind. A police report was made. (www.safetyandsecuritynet.org)

3. (U) COLOMBIA: On 9 January, robbers boarded a vessel underway 33 NM west-southwest of Cartagena near position 10:16N - 076:12W. (IMB; Clearwater Dynamics)

4. (U) SAINT MARTIN: On 5 January, robbers boarded an anchored catamaran in Marigot Bay while the crew was asleep. They stole personal electronics, a laptop, binoculars, a search light, sunglasses, a wallet with cash and credit cards, as well as a backpack with other personal items. A report was made to local police. They indicated that this was the fourth such incident recently. (www.safetyandsecuritynet.org)

5. (U) HAITI: On 4 January, the duty officer onboard a bulk carrier anchored in Port au Prince noticed a suspicious echo on the radar and asked the security patrol to investigate. The security patrol noticed a boat with six robbers, armed with a gun, boarding the bulker using a ladder with hooks. The alarm was raised and the crew retreated into the accommodation area. The robbers threatened the chief engineer who was attempting to secure an open accommodation door. The incident was reported to the coast guard and local authorities. The coast guard responded and boarded the vessel to carry out a search and to investigate. Ship's properties were reported stolen. The crew and vessel are safe. (IMB)

C. (U) **ATLANTIC OCEAN AREA:** No current incidents to report.

D. (U) **NORTHERN EUROPE** – **BALTIC:** No current incidents to report.

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

1. (U) EGYPT: On 6 January, authorities seized a shipment of drugs after discovering a container, with over eight million Captagon pills and almost nine tons of hashish inside, transiting through Port Said. The shipment was said to be headed for Libya. According to reports, the container originated from Lebanon and was loaded on 19 December in a warehouse belonging to a Lebanese exporting firm before being sent to the Port of Beirut. (www.english.alarabiya.net/; www.middleeastmonitor.com)

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

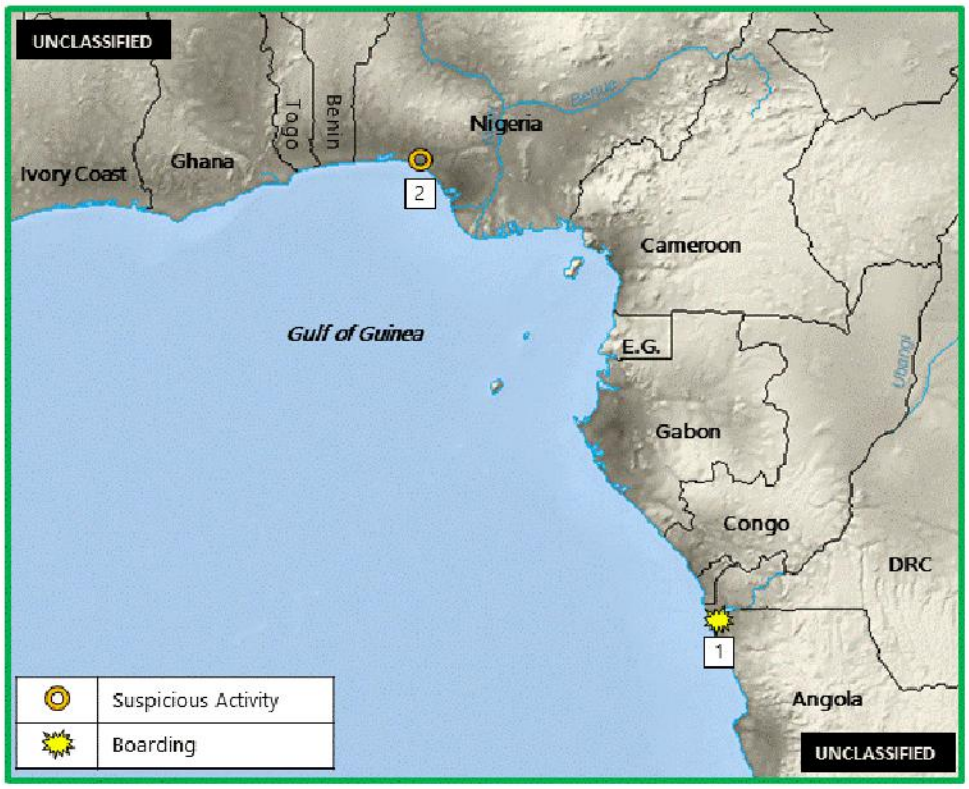


Figure 2. West Africa Piracy and Maritime Crime

1. (U) CONGO: On 18 January, three robbers boarded a refrigerated cargo vessel anchored at Banana Anchorage, near position 06:02S – 012:21E. A duty crew member spotted the robbers in the forecastle store room and informed the officer of the watch. When the crew raised the alarm, the robbers fled. A subsequent search of the vessel by the crew identified broken locks on both the paint store room and CO2 room. The robbers stole four cans of paint and twenty lead seals from CO2 cylinders, including the pilot cylinder. (Clearwater Dynamics)

2. (U) NIGERIA: On 13 January, elements of the Nigeria Navy seized six boats carrying an estimated 100,000 liters of stolen automotive diesel fuel in the Ondo-Lagos coastal area. Twenty-four suspected oil thieves were arrested in the operation. (www.allafrica.com)

3. (U) NIGERIA: On 13 January, the Singapore-flagged container ship MAERSK CARDIFF was reportedly approached and fired upon approximately 150 NM south-southwest of Bonny. MDAT-GoG has confirmed that the vessel and crew are safe. A security vessel that was dispatched by Nigerian authorities to assist the vessel had arrived at the scene and confirmed that no suspicious craft were in the area. (www.fleetmon.com; Clearwater Dynamics)

4. (U) NIGERIA: On 8 January, it was reported that four sailors kidnapped from the Marshall Islands-flagged product tanker AGISILAOS on 29 November had been released after 40 days in captivity. (www.urdupoint.com; www.offshore-energy.biz; Clearwater Dynamics)

5. (U) NIGERIA: On 8 January, a bulk carrier underway approximately 40 NM south of Brass was approached by one skiff with eight persons onboard. The skiff approached to within 0.3 NM of the vessel, resulting in the master carrying out evasive maneuvers and increasing speed, and the crew mustering in the citadel. As a result of the master's actions and the vessel's 11-meter freeboard, the skiff aborted the approach. The crew is reported as safe. (Clearwater Dynamics)

6. (U) NIGERIA: On 5 January, local media sources reported that two underway passenger boats were boarded by robbers in the Bonny waterways, Rivers State, near position 04:30N - 007:16E. The robbers forced the passengers to jump overboard before escaping with the two boats, resulting in two of the passengers drowning while the remaining victims struggled to swim to the nearby mangroves. Local security agencies were mobilized after receiving distress calls from some of the passengers. When they arrived at the scene of the incident, they were able to recover the bodies of the two drowned passengers and several of the survivors; however, a number of people are still reported missing. (www.guardian.ng; Clearwater Dynamics)

7. (U) CONGO: On 4 January, robbers armed with knives boarded a container ship anchored at Pointe Noire North Anchorage, position 04:42S - 011:44E. The alarm was sounded and all crew mustered in the citadel. The robbers stole ship's stores and escaped. The incident was reported to port control. All crew is reported safe. (IMB)

8. (U) NIGERIA: On 29 December 2020, the crew on a tanker reported a suspicious approach by a speedboat approximately 94 NM southwest of Brass near position 02:44N - 006:24E. The skiff, which had five armed men on board, approached within 50 meters of the tanker's starboard side. When the master carried out evasive maneuvers, the skiff departed the area. (IMB; Clearwater Dynamics)

9. (U) GHANA: On 26 December 2020, a robber boarded a cargo vessel in Takoradi Anchorage, near position 04:53N - 001:41W. When the duty officer noticed the robber on the forecastle and raised the alarm, the robber fled with ship's property. (Clearwater Dynamics)

10. (U) ANGOLA: On 24 December 2020, robbers boarded a research vessel in Luanda Anchorage, near position 08:44S - 013:17E. The robbers stole several mooring lines from the forecastle without being spotted. (Clearwater Dynamics)

11. (U) NIGERIA: On 24 December 2020, pirates released five Ghanaians who were kidnapped from the Ghana-flagged general cargo vessel AM DELTA. They were in good health and unharmed. (Clearwater Dynamics; www.splash247.com)

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

1. (U) IRAN: On 3 January, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) seized a South Korea-flagged tanker in the Persian Gulf. Seoul confirmed the seizure of a South Korean chemical tanker by Iranian authorities in the waters off Oman and demanded its immediate release. Several Iranian media outlets, including Iranian state TV, said that the IRGCN captured the vessel for polluting the Gulf with chemicals. The semiofficial Tasnim news agency published pictures showing what it identified as IRGCN speedboats escorting the tanker HANKUK CHEMI, which it said was carrying 7,200 tons of ethanol. They reported that the vessel's crew members, including nationals of South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Myanmar, had been detained. The tanker is being held at Iran's Bandar Abbas Port. The tanker has 20 crew members, according to South Korea's foreign ministry. (www.gcaptain.com)

2. (U) IRAQ: On 31 December 2020, Iraqi ordnance disposal personnel defused a large mine discovered on the hull of an oil tanker in the Persian Gulf and evacuated its crew. A statement came a day after two private security firms said that sailors feared they had found the limpet mine on the Liberia-flagged tanker POLA in the waters off the Iraqi Port of Basra. (www.abcnews.go.com)

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

Figure 3. Indian Ocean – East Africa – Red Sea Piracy and Maritime Crime

1. (U) GULF OF ADEN: On 14 January, a bulk carrier was approached by a skiff approximately 58 NM southwest of Aden, Yemen, near position 12:06N – 044:25E. During the incident, the crew sounded the alarm and mustered. At

a distance of 0.2 NM, the onboard security team identified weapons and a ladders in the skiff and fired warning shots. The skiff subsequently ceased its approach and moved away. (IMB)

I. (U) **EAST ASIA – SOUTHEAST ASIA:**

1. (U) INDONESIA: On 3 January, three robbers armed with knives boarded the Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier SBI ORION at Muara Berau Anchorage, near position 00:15S - 117:34E. The robbers were discovered by the duty crew at the forecastle store room. They stole ship's stores and escaped. The incident was reported to local authorities. (IMB; Clearwater Dynamics)

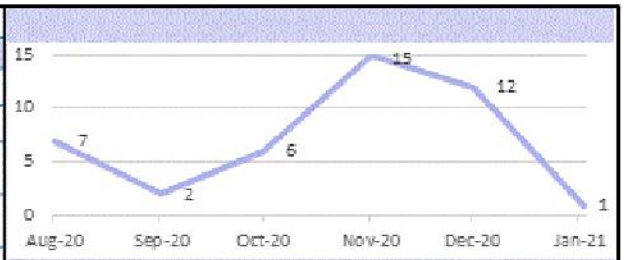
J. (U) **INDIAN SUBCONTINENT:** No current incidents to report.

K. (U) **AUSTRALIA – NEW ZEALAND – PACIFIC OCEAN AREA:** No current incidents to report.

5. (U) **Appendix A: Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea Statistics and Trends**

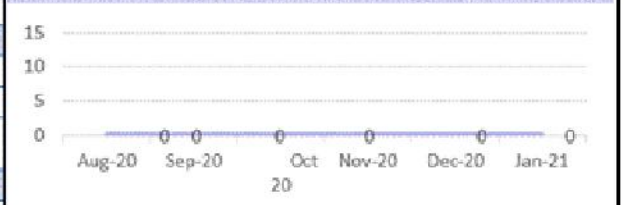
(U) Gulf of Guinea

Event	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Hijackings	2	6	4	1	0
Kidnappings	30	28	32	27	0
Hijacking/Kidnapping Combination	0	4	2	3	0
Attacks/Attempted Boardings	35	44	39	25	0
Boardings	53	64	55	42	1
Total	**120**	**146**	**132**	**98**	**1**



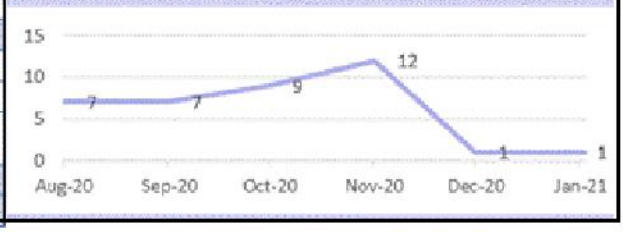
(U) Horn of Africa

Event	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Hijackings	2	0	0	0	0
Kidnappings	1	0	0	0	0
Attacks, Boardings and Attempts	3	2	2	2	0
Total	**6**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**0**



(U) Southeast Asia

Event	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Hijackings	3	1	0	0	0
Kidnappings	4	3	4	1	0
Attacks, Boardings and Attempts	95	82	92	95	1
Total	**102**	**86**	**96**	**96**	**1**



6. (U) **Appendix B: Definitions and Sourcing**

A. (U) **Definitions:** In order to promote consistent use of accurate terms of reference, we use the following definitions to describe a range of criminal antishipping 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) **Hijacking/Kidnapping Combination** – Unauthorized seizure and retention of a vessel by persons not part of its complement who forcefully remove crew members from vessel when disembarking.
- (U) **Robbery** – Theft from a vessel or from persons aboard the vessel.
- (U) **Suspicious Approach** – All other unexplained activity in close proximity of an unknown vessel.

B. (U) **Sourcing:** ONI derives information in this report primarily from government agencies, piracy reporting centers, maritime security companies, and open press.

(U) **ICOD:** 20 January 2021

(U) The Weekly Piracy Update (WPU) and Worldwide Threat to Shipping reports are posted weekly on the ONI Intelligence Portal: https://www.oni.navy.mil/News/Shipping-Threat-Reports/