

THE STATE OF MARITIME PIRACY 2018

ASSESSING THE HUMAN COST

REPORT



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STABLE SEAS

a program of One Earth Future

Supported by the Global Maritime Crime Programme
(GMCP) of UNODC.

THE STATE OF MARITIME PIRACY 2018

ASSESSING THE HUMAN COST

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Cover photo by Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA).

Suspects arrested onboard pirate vessel MT Bright off the east coast of Malaysia, southeast of Singapore.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEFINITION OF PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	vi
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
DATA SOURCES.....	1
STATE OF MARITIME PIRACY 2018—INCIDENT TYPES	2
PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN EAST AFRICA 2018.....	3
<i>Overview: East Africa Incidents.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Piracy in the HRA.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>East Africa Human Cost.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Trends: East Africa</i>	<i>6</i>
PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN WEST AFRICA 2018	7
<i>Overview: West Africa Incidents.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>West Africa Human Cost</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Trends: West Africa.....</i>	<i>10</i>
PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN ASIA 2018	13
<i>Overview: Incidents in Asia 2018</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Asia Human Cost</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Trends: Asia.....</i>	<i>16</i>
PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN 2018	21
<i>Overview: Incidents in Latin America and the Caribbean 2018.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean Human Cost.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Trends: Latin America</i>	<i>24</i>
ENDNOTES.....	26

DEFINITION OF PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea¹ defines piracy as:

- (a) any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed:
 - (i) on the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft;
 - (ii) against a ship, aircraft, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State;
- (b) any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft;
- (c) any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described in subparagraph (a) or (b).

Resolution A.1025(26)² of the International Maritime Organization's Code of Practice for the investigation of Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships defines armed robbery against ships as:

- (a) any illegal act of violence or detention or any act of depredation, or threat thereof, other than an act of piracy, committed for private ends and directed against a ship or against persons or property on board such a ship, within a State's internal waters, archipelagic waters and territorial sea;
- (b) any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described above.

INTRODUCTION

Publication of 2018's *State of Maritime Piracy report* marks the ninth year that One Earth Future (OEF) has assessed the human cost of maritime piracy. Over the years, the report has evolved from being first a project of Oceans Beyond Piracy to currently being part of the Stable Seas program. Our focus has expanded from piracy off the coast of Somalia to piracy and robbery of vessels in the Gulf of Guinea, Southeast Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. What has remained constant is our goal to explain and quantify the magnitude of these crimes and the profound impact they have had on stakeholders and, most importantly, the victims.

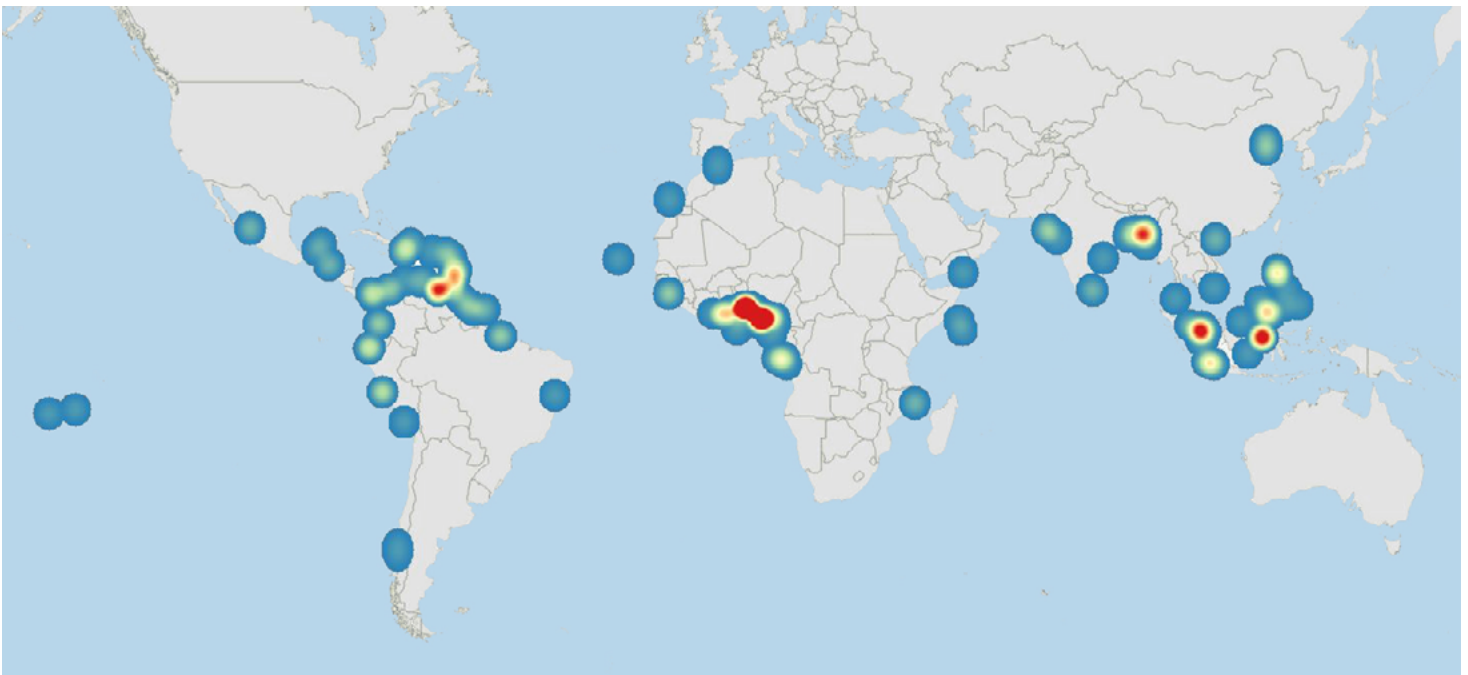
Wherever piracy and armed robbery of ships occurs, victims are subjected to physical and psychological trauma. Violence is common during attacks. In many instances, sailors and fishermen experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after they have suffered an attack or kidnapping and after being held hostage for days, months, or even years. A 2018 study on the long-term impact of maritime piracy on the well-being of crew members showed that 25.77 percent of former hostages have shown symptoms fitting the definition of PTSD after their release.³

Through its founding principles of transparent sharing of information and stakeholder-driven solutions, the 2018 *State of Maritime Piracy* report reiterates OEF's belief that ending violence at sea is possible. Continuing to identify and analyze the nature and the significance of these crimes is a vital step toward achieving this mission.

Stable Seas wishes to acknowledge and thank our funding partner, the Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for their contribution to the *State of Piracy 2018* report. The report aims to identify and analyze trends in maritime piracy and robbery of vessels worldwide to create a better understanding of the global piracy problem and the ways in which it affects maritime stakeholders. Stable Seas is grateful to have the excellent support and cooperation of the GMCP.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In 2018, **THE GULF OF GUINEA WAS THE AREA WORST AFFECTED** by piracy and maritime robbery of vessels worldwide. The number of incidents increased by 15 percent over 2017. The number of attacks where crew members were held for ransom on hijacked vessels or kidnapped for ransom from vessels was alarmingly high.
- **NO HIJACKINGS WERE REPORTED IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN IN 2018**, including Somalia, the Gulf of Aden, or the Red Sea, in spite of pirate groups retaining the capabilities. This was the result of efforts on land by international agencies, coastal communities, and maritime authorities preventing safe haven for pirate groups. Additionally, the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMP5) by crews and onboard security teams and the efforts of the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) and Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and other navies all contributed to decreasing the number of attacks.
- **INCIDENTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN INCREASED BY 20 PERCENT.** Anchorages off Barcelona and the Windward Islands remained armed robbery hotspots.
- **INCIDENTS IN ASIA FOR THE MOST PART REMAINED THE SAME AS IN 2017.** Several suspects were arrested for crimes associated with piracy and robbery of vessels due to effective cooperation by regional law enforcement agencies.



DATA SOURCES

Incident data was collected from several sources which included maritime authorities and other maritime role-players as well as media reports. Special thanks go to the International Chamber of Commerce's International Maritime Bureau, the International Maritime Organization, and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), from whom the bulk of the information was derived. Amahlo-Suritec as well as EOS Risk Group, Den Norske Krigsforsikring for Skib (DNK), and independent sources also contributed incident data to the Stable Seas dataset.

STATE OF MARITIME PIRACY 2018—INCIDENT TYPES

HIJACKING

Hijacking for cargo theft is the most complex piracy model, requiring a coordinated effort and often the complicity of a variety of actors. Ships carrying petroleum products are targeted and attacked. Once the vessel is hijacked, the crew is often forced to navigate to a remote location where parts of the cargo are transferred to another ship or a storage facility on land. The stolen cargo is then sold on the black market or blended with legitimate refined products.

In 2018, ships and crews were also held for ransom on hijacked vessels. In some cases, the cargo was stolen, but more often pirates ransomed the crew and ship after no cargo was found on board, or after they were unable to transfer the cargo to a pirate vessel. This is a high-risk venture as the hijacked vessels are held for up to ten days, making the hijacking syndicate vulnerable to capture.

KIDNAPPING

Kidnap for ransom employed by Somali pirates is unique compared to models elsewhere in the world. Pirates in this region often hijack a vessel and steer it toward a coastline where they will hold both the vessel and its crew captive for a long period of time—sometimes even years—until a ransom is paid. Somali pirates have also been known to use motherships to launch attacks farther out at sea. These attacks are more sophisticated and generally require a relatively large investment.

In West Africa and Asia, perpetrators often board the ship with explicit intent to kidnap crewmembers. Hostages are then taken to land, where they are held during the ransom negotiations.

ARMED ROBBERY

Armed robbery occurs when perpetrators are reportedly armed and attempt to steal ship stores and/or crew belongings. These incidents can occur on ships that are underway or anchored and both at anchorages or ports and at sea. In West Africa, failed hijackings or kidnap-for-ransom attacks may also lead to armed robberies. These instances usually involve larger groups of attackers who may be equipped with automatic weapons.

ROBBERY

Robbery is defined as an incident where the perpetrators were reportedly unarmed and attempted to steal ship stores and/or crew belongings. This type of incident frequently occurs onboard ships that are at anchor or drifting close to a port or anchorage. These instances in general pose only a minor threat to the crew.

FAILED ATTACK/BOARDING

Failed attacks and boardings refer to incidents in which pirates or armed robbers were thwarted by self-protective actions taken by crew, embarked security teams, or naval intervention.

SUSPICIOUS APPROACHES

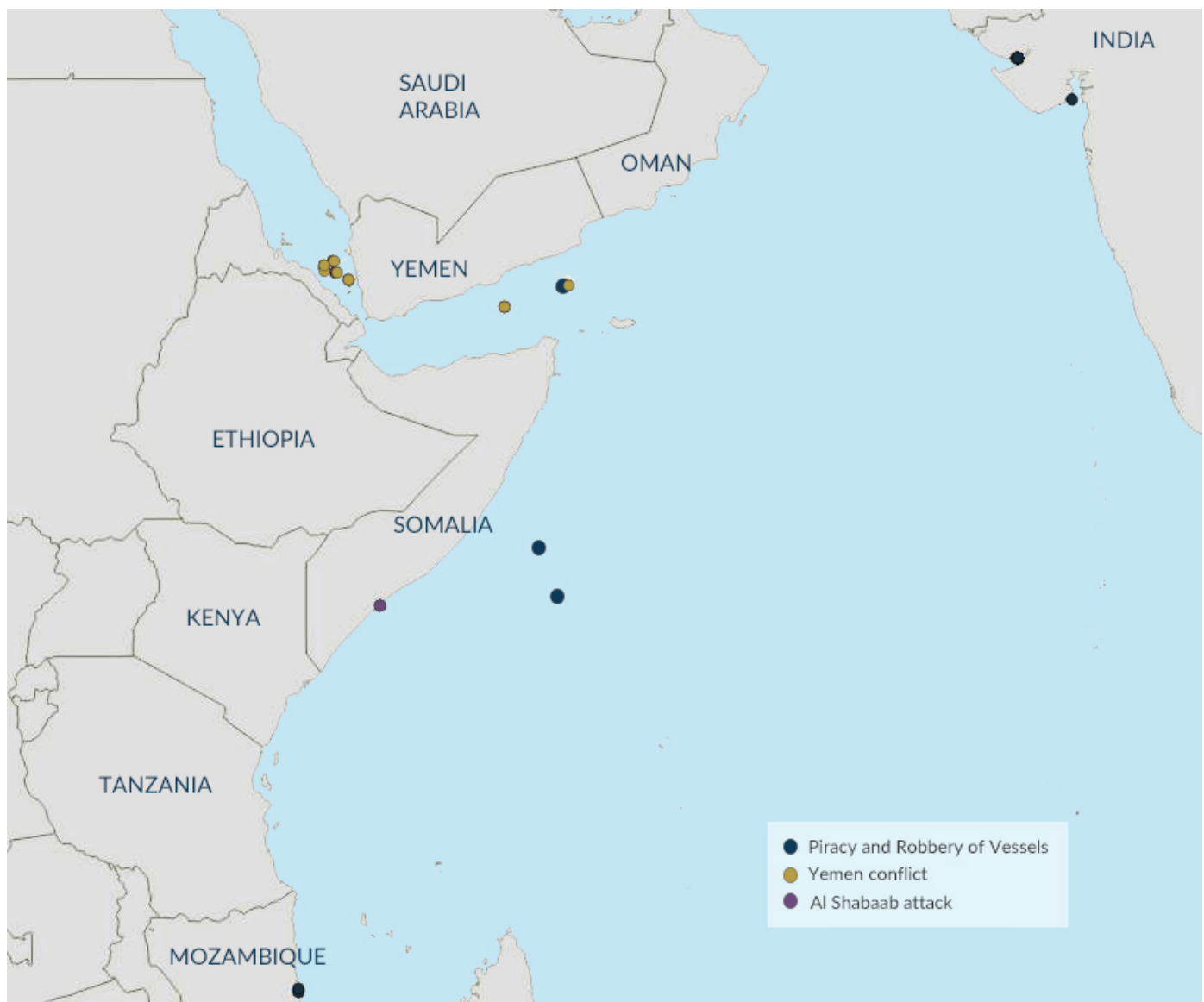
Suspicious approaches include cases where a ship reports a close encounter or a direct approach from another vessel which feels threatening in nature. The perceived threat is determined by the ship's master based on the actions of the approaching vessel or from observation of weapons or ladders. Suspicious activity can include incidents when armed guards or naval forces deter an approaching vessel or skiff that may not have displayed overtly hostile actions.

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN EAST AFRICA 2018

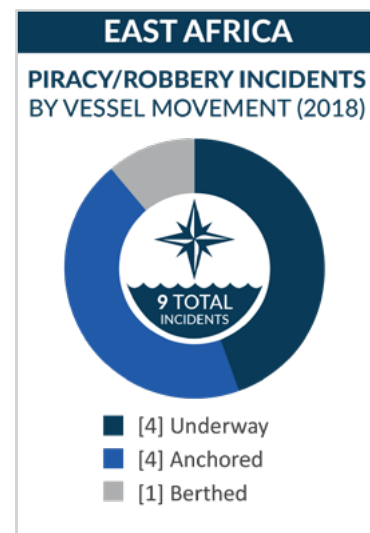
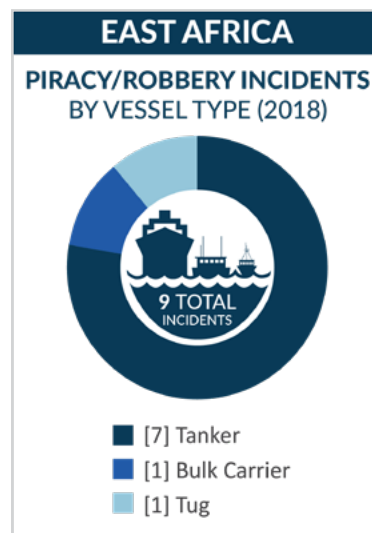
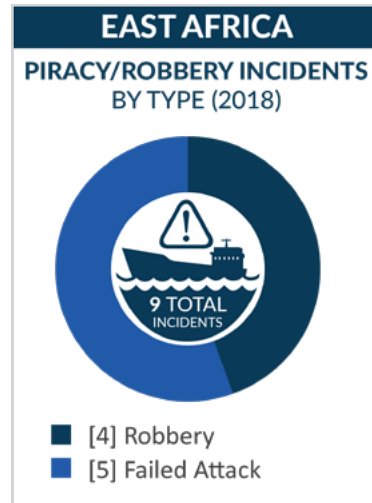
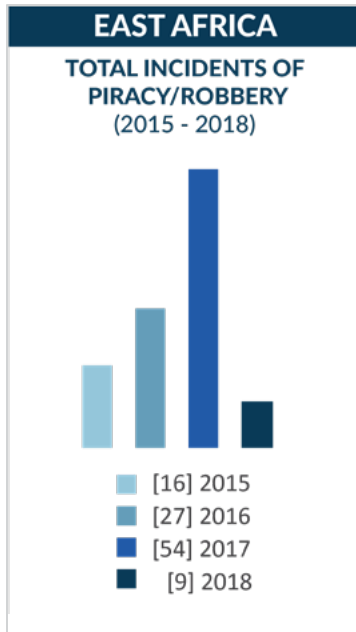
MAIN MESSAGES:

- Nine piracy and maritime robbery-related incidents were recorded in East Africa in 2018. During three incidents, armed men in skiffs approached and fired on vessels off Somalia and Yemen. None of these attacks were successful.
- During one incident, the tanker *Ocean 1*, towed by the tug *ASL Scorpio*, was boarded and robbed by three men from a fishing boat off Gujarat, India. The marine police arrested the robbers and recovered the stolen property.⁴
- Incidents of robbery and attempted robbery were reported at Kandla Anchorage in India (three incidents) as well as Nacala Port and Anchorage in Mozambique (two incidents).
- Suspicious approaches in this area are often not linked to piracy; rather, they are more closely associated with the conflict in Yemen, fishing vessels operating in the area, and smuggling activity.
- A mortar attack from land off Baraawe, Somalia, on the landing craft *Alpha Kirawira* was attributed to Al Shabaab.

MAPPING OF INCIDENTS OF PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY OF VESSELS IN EAST AFRICA



OVERVIEW: EAST AFRICA INCIDENTS



The root causes for piracy off Somalia - coastal violence, weak economic conditions, and the prevalence of crime networks - are still present.

PIRACY IN THE HRA

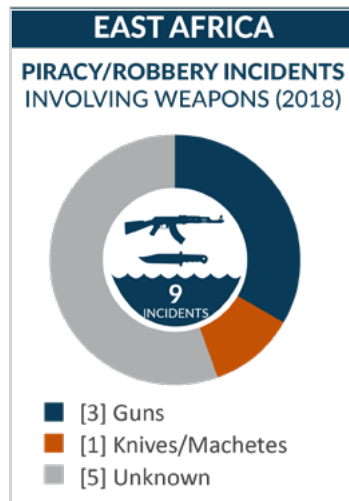
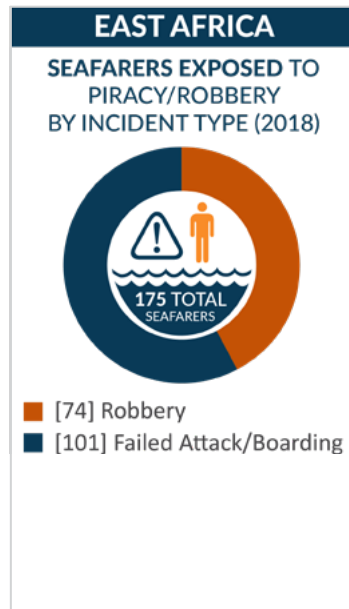
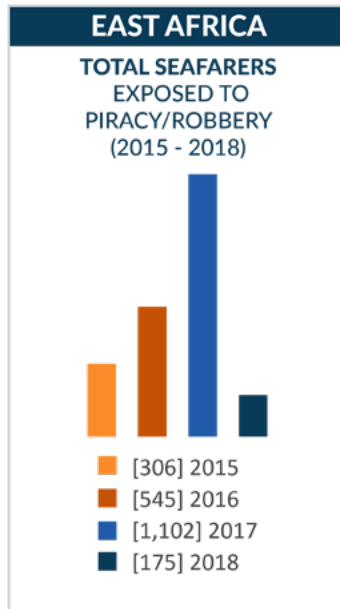
Although no vessels were hijacked for ransom off the coast of Somalia and in the High Risk Area (HRA) in 2018, pirate capability to launch attacks remains. Pirates were not able to hijack vessels mainly due to the effort of foreign navies, including the successful arrests of pirates by these navies, as well as onboard security measures and the presence of private security teams on vessels.

During one of the three failed piracy incidents in 2018, four men armed with AK-47s approached and fired on the bulk carrier *KSL Sydney* while she was underway approximately 340 nm east-southeast off Mogadishu, Somalia, on 16 October 2018. The attack was repelled by the onboard security team.⁵ On 28 October 2018, south of Hobyo, Somalia, the frigate *ESPS Castilla*, assigned to EUNAFOR Operation Atalanta, destroyed a whaler found to be involved in the attack.

The root causes for piracy off Somalia—the poor socioeconomic situation and political instability in the country—are still present. This latent potential for piracy brought about by coastal violence, weak economic conditions, and the prevalence of crime networks was explored in detail in a 2017 report by One Earth Future.⁶

On land, the threat of piracy is offset by the development of local institutions and marine forces, capacity-building efforts by several international role-players, and a changing attitude among elders and local authorities unwilling to allow their territories to serve as a safe base for pirates, as well as the building of legal capability to prosecute pirates.

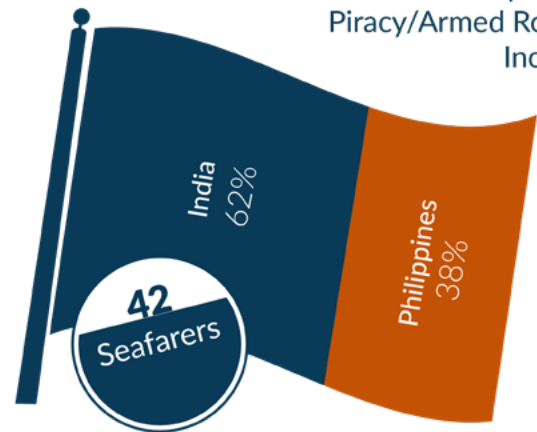
EAST AFRICA HUMAN COST



EAST AFRICA: NATIONALITIES

This graphic represents the 42 known nationalities of the 175 seafarers exposed to piracy and armed robbery at sea in 2018.

EAST AFRICA: KNOWN NATIONALITIES of Seafarers Exposed to Piracy/Armed Robbery Incidents



SOMALI HOSTAGES IN 2018

On 7 June 2018, four fishers from the Iranian fishing vessel *Siraj* were released from Somalia. The *Siraj*, along with another fishing vessel, *Jaber*, were hijacked by a criminal gang at Ceel Huur in the Mudug region of Somalia on 23 March 2015. In August 2015, the *Jaber* slipped its moorings and escaped. Since then, eight crew members of the *Siraj* have died in captivity and Somali government forces rescued four in November 2015.⁹ Four hostages remain in captivity.¹⁰

Fishing Incident

On 6 November 2018, the Taiwanese fishing vessel *Shun Hao* was attacked 350 nm off Mogadishu, Somalia. The *FV Shun Hao* fled after it was fired on. It is speculated that the vessel was associated with IUU fishing and that the attack was in retaliation for these activities.⁷

This incident was recorded prior to the allocation of fishing licenses by the Somali government to Chinese companies to fish for migratory tuna stocks in Somalia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The right to fish up to 24 nm off the Somali coast is reserved for local fishers.⁸ Nevertheless, some Somali fishers and local activists fear that the allocation of licenses to foreign companies will deplete fish stocks off the coastline and that this might be used as motivation for renewed incidents of piracy.

TRENDS: EAST AFRICA

Conflict in Yemen

Several attacks off Yemen in recent months were linked to the conflict in Yemen. Ships with a military profile or with a sailing pattern associated with logistical support to either party in the conflict were targeted. This included oil tankers with links to parties in the conflict or vessels calling on Yemeni ports, and vessels chartered by the World Food Programme (WFP) to supply food to Yemen.

In 2018, missile attacks on vessels, sea mines, remote-controlled water-borne improvised explosive devices (WBIEDs), and attacks by Houthi militia members in skiffs were reported.

In September 2018, the Royal Saudi Arabian Navy intercepted two Houthi WBIEDs targeting the port of Jizan, Saudi Arabia.¹¹ It is presumed that Jizan was targeted in response to a Saudi–UAE coalition strike on Ugban Island near Al-Hudaydah, Yemen, on 30 August 2018 where 19 fishermen were killed.

Three very large crude carriers (VLCCs) were attacked off Al-Hudaydah in 2018. In April 2018, the *Abaqaiq* sustained minor damage when it was hit by a projectile. In July 2018, two Saudi-flagged VLCCs under escort by the Saudi frigate RSN *Al Damman 816* came under attack by Houthi militia off Al-Hudaydah. One of the two vessels, the VLCC *Arsan*, sustained damage after it was hit on the stern.¹²

On 14 July 2018, five fishers were killed when a Yemeni fishing vessel was destroyed by a sea mine near the port of Al-Hudaydah.

Three vessels transporting humanitarian aid to Yemen were attacked in 2018. On 3 June 2018, six armed men in a skiff attacked the OSV *VOS Theia*, chartered by the WFP, after it departed Al-Hudaydah. The skiff opened fire on the *OSV Theia* with a bow-mounted machine gun. The security team onboard the *VOS Theia* returned fire.¹³ The *VOS Theia* had performed regular trips between Djibouti and Al-Hudaydah.

Approaches by armed men in skiffs off Yemen are often reported as pirate attacks. The picture illustrates an example of a suspicious approach by men armed with AK-47s and a rocket-propelled grenade. The picture was taken off Al-Hudaydah in January 2019. Al-Hudaydah Port Control had no knowledge of them and speculated that they could be members of the Coast Guard in spite of the absence of uniforms. They made several approaches and left after 30 minutes. They are clearly not Somalis.



Men with AK-47s in skiffs off Hodedidah, Yemen January 2019.
Photo: MAST Armed Security Team.

Al Shabaab

On 22 July 2018, the landing craft *Alpha Kirawira* came under mortar attack in the vicinity of the Port of Baraawe, Somalia. The *Alpha Kirawira* has been carrying supplies for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for several years. It was presumed that Al Shabaab was responsible for the attack as they maintained a presence in the Lower Shabelle region.¹⁴

Operations in East Africa

The EU Council has extended European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Operation Atalanta's mandate to conduct counter piracy operations off the Somali coast to 31 December 2020. EU NAVFOR will also continue protecting WFP shipping in the region. EU NAVFOR Operational Headquarters relocated from Northwood, UK, to Rota, Spain, following the UK's decision to withdraw from the EU. The Maritime Security Centre–Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) relocated to Brest, France, at the end of March 2019.

The International Chamber of Shipping, BIMCO, and INTERTANKO updated BMP4—"Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea"—to include security threats in Yemen (BMP5)¹⁵.

The UK Hydrographic Office regularly releases revised Maritime Security Charts. The High Risk Area—as well as the CMF Maritime Security Transit Corridor—are indicated in these charts. The Maritime Security Charts include security-related information, details of reporting schemes, and regional contacts. For charts, go to the UKHO website¹⁶.

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN WEST AFRICA 2018

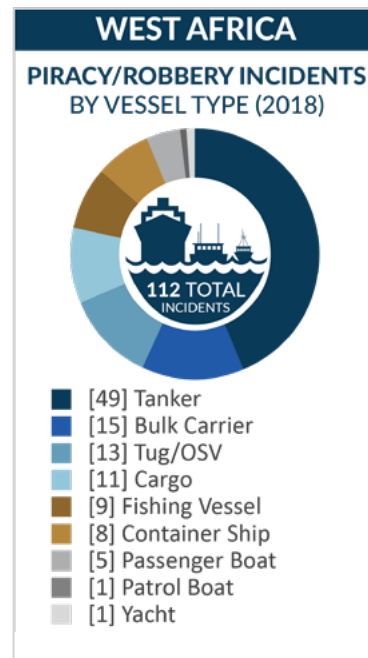
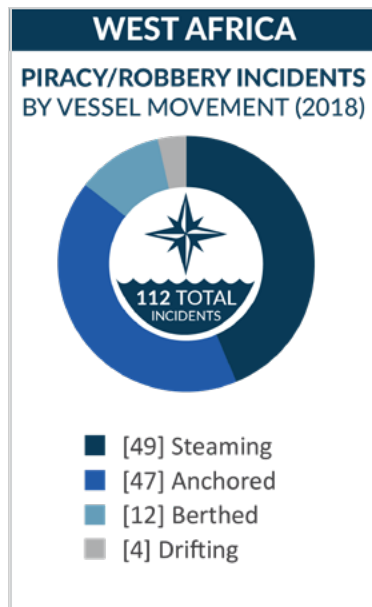
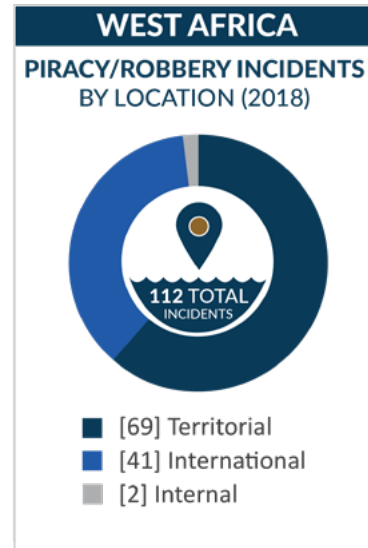
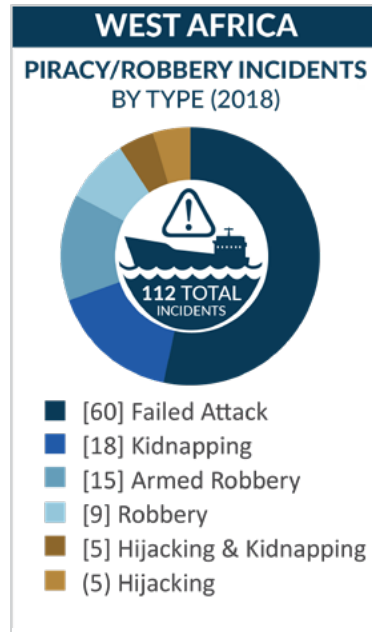
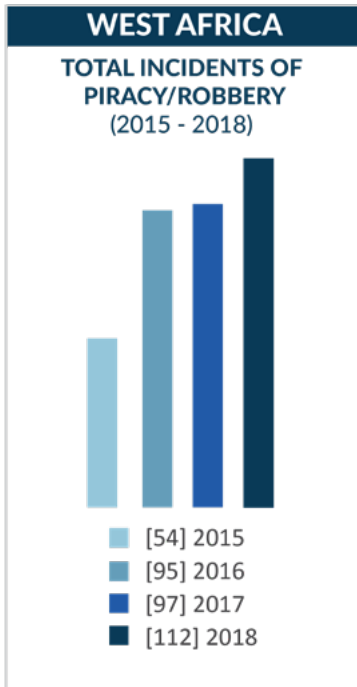
MAIN MESSAGES:

- The Gulf of Guinea was the area most affected by piracy and maritime robbery worldwide in 2018, with the number of incidents of piracy and robbery of vessels increasing by 15 percent from 2017 figures.
- In 2018, pirates in the Gulf of Guinea extended their range of attacks in the region, making attacks highly unpredictable. Hijacking for cargo theft, hijacking to ransom ship and crew, kidnap for ransom, and armed robberies on vessels as well as a combination of these were reported in 2018. Attacks with the intent to hijack vessels or kidnap crew were violent.
- The recurrence of hijacking for cargo theft was observed in 2018 with two successful hijackings of the product tankers *Barrett* and *Pantelena*.
- Crew members were kidnapped from vessels off Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, Congo, and Cameroon.
- A high concentration of violent incidents was recorded off both Brass and Bonny, Nigeria.
- High numbers of incidents of robbery and attempted robbery were also reported at Lagos Anchorages and the Lagos Port Complex in the first half of 2018. Incidents at Lagos Anchorages and Port Complex were mostly classified as petty theft.
- Four suspects were arrested for robbery of vessels in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Ghana. A fifth suspect, Nigerian Itoruboemi Benson Lobia, was arrested in South Africa by Interpol for his involvement in the kidnapping of 11 crew from the general cargo ship *FWN Rapide* on 21 April 2018.¹⁷ Nigerian authorities also arrested men accused of robbery on passenger boats in their internal waters.

MAPPING OF INCIDENTS OF PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY OF VESSELS IN WEST AFRICA



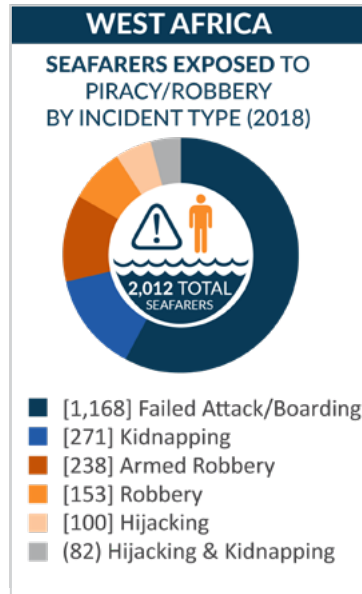
OVERVIEW: WEST AFRICA INCIDENTS



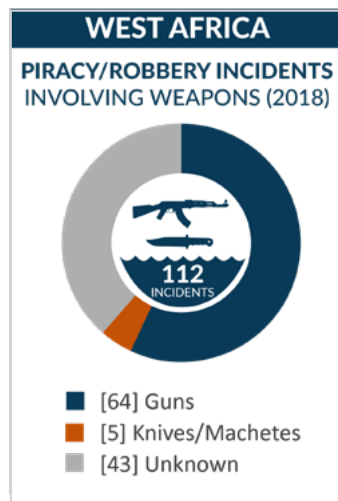
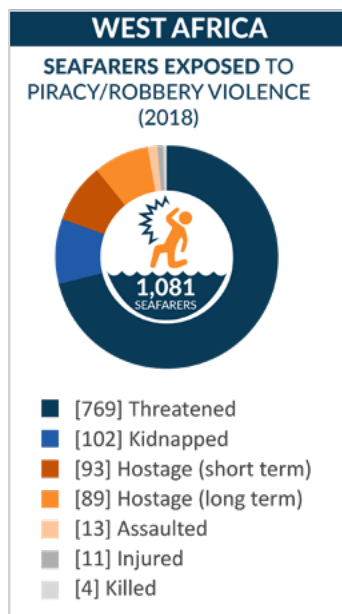
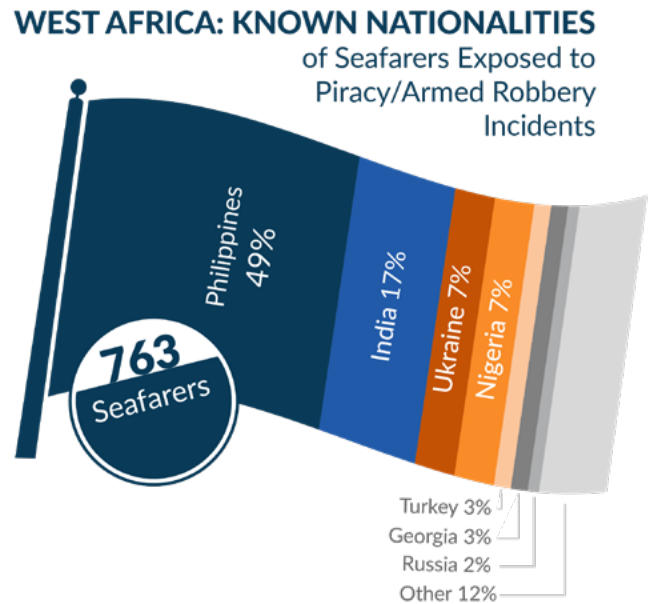
In 2018, pirates in the Gulf of Guinea extended their range of attacks in the region, making attacks highly unpredictable.

WEST AFRICA HUMAN COST

The number of seafarers affected by piracy and armed robbery in 2018 increased by 15 percent from 2017 figures. In total, the number of seafarers affected by piracy and armed robbery in 2018 was 2,012, up from 1,726 in 2017.



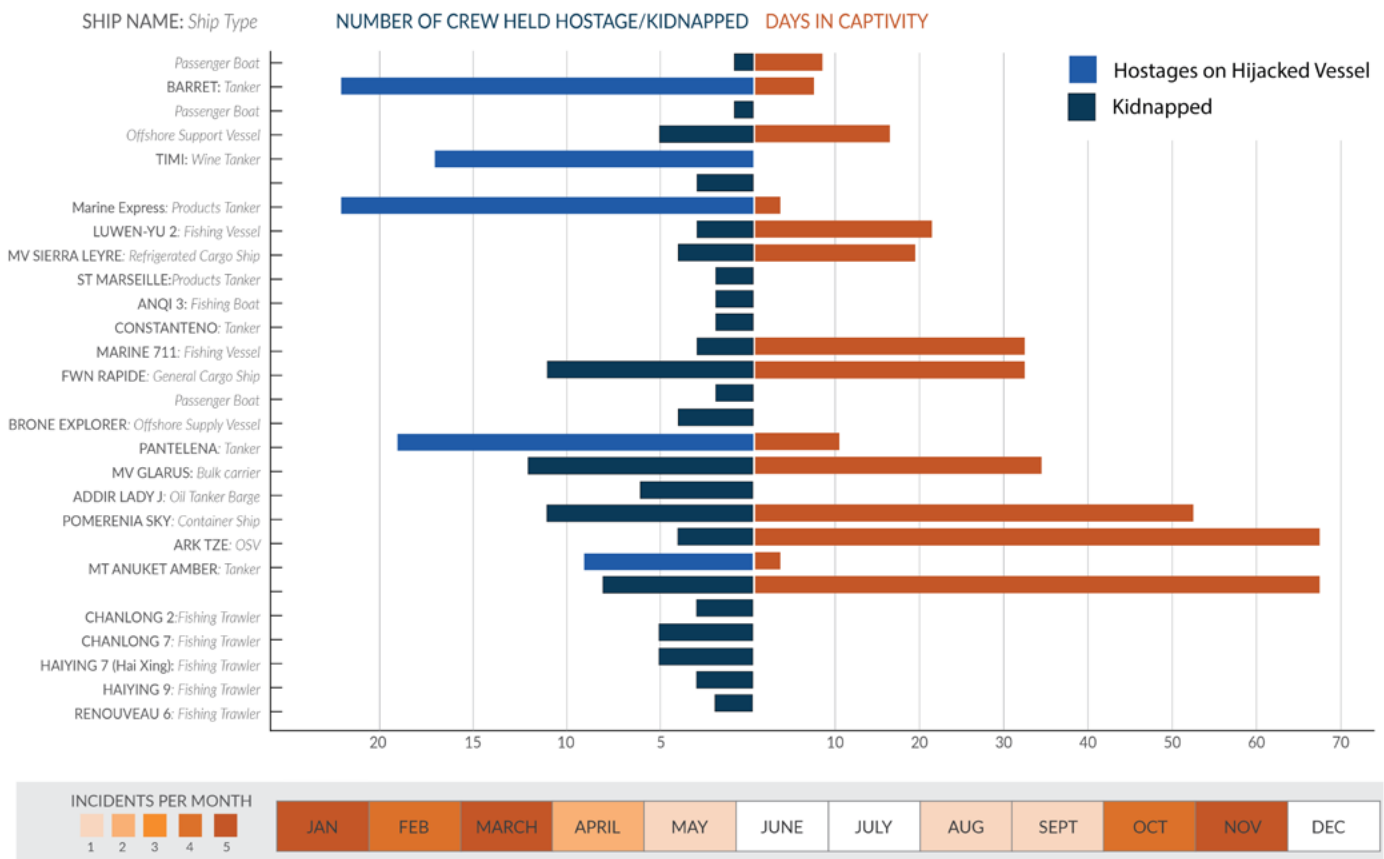
This graphic represents the nationalities of 763 of the estimated 2,012 seafarers exposed to piracy and armed robbery at sea in 2018.



WEST AFRICA: CREW HELD HOSTAGE

- **Hostages kept for one day or less on a hijacked vessel:** 93
- **Hostages held for more than one day on a hijacked vessel:** 89 (Captivity, where release could be confirmed, ranged from 3 to 10 days.)
- **Crew members kidnapped:** 102 (A considerable increase. Duration of captivity was 8 to 67 days for cases where release could be confirmed.)

WEST AFRICA: HOSTAGE SCENARIOS 2018



TRENDS: WEST AFRICA

Hijacking and Kidnapping

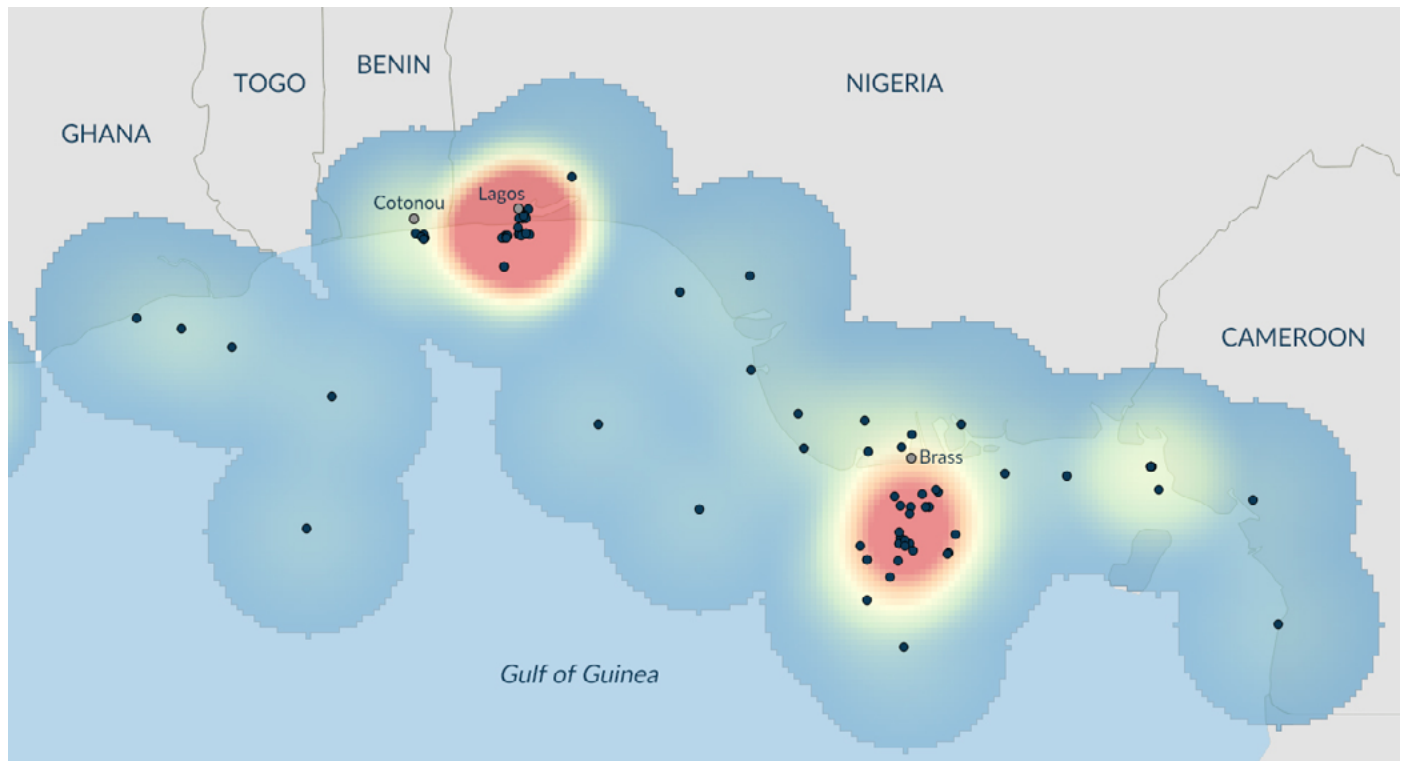
Attacks with the aim to hijack vessels for product or ransom, or to kidnap crew for ransom, were unpredictable and opportunistic in nature in 2018. Geographically, attacks also extended to the wider Gulf of Guinea area with a higher concentration of attacks off both Brass and Bonny in Nigeria. Pirate groups are documented as having attacked up to three different vessels on the same day. Attacks are violent, with up to ten pirates often shooting AK-47s and M16s from one or two speed boats at the bridge of the vessel under attack. Communication and navigation equipment are destroyed and vessels ransacked.

Ten vessels were hijacked in 2018, of which five were tankers and three were fishing vessels. Hijacking for cargo theft resumed in 2018. Hijackings extended as far as Benin and Gabon. In addition to product theft, tanker crews were also held onboard for ransom in five cases, while crew were taken ashore in two incidents.

In January 2018 the product tanker *Barrett* was hijacked from the Cotonou Anchorage in Benin. It was later reported that 2,000 mt of product was stolen from the *Barrett*.¹⁸ A ransom was also paid for the release of both vessel and crew. The crew was held for a week. In August 2018, product was also stolen from the product tanker *Pantelena*. It is likely that pirates also intended to steal product from the tanker *Anuket Amber* when it was hijacked in October 2018; however, the pirate tanker “Veron” developed engine problems and the hijackers were unable to find a replacement vessel.¹⁹

For the most part, Nigerian pirate groups are responsible for the attacks on vessels in the wider Gulf of Guinea. Nigerian pirate groups operate and find safe haven in the Niger Delta, with several kidnapped crew members being held in captivity in the delta in 2018. Crew from the *Anuket Amber*, *Ark Tze*, *FWN Rapide*, and the *Pomerenia Sky*,²⁰ among others, were held captive in the delta during 2018.

MAPPING OF ATTACKS IN GULF OF GUINEA



Lagos Anchorages and Port Complex

In 2018, 27 incidents of robbery and attempted robbery of vessels were reported at Lagos Anchorages (17) and the Lagos Port Complex (10), the majority of which were in the first half of the year. Most could be categorized as petty theft. The majority of robberies were unsuccessful.

At Lagos Port, robbers gained access to vessels throughout the open waterfront using small boats and canoes. They boarded vessels using a rope attached to a hook. The termination of security personnel services, as well as the implementation of 24-hour port operations to alleviate congestion, placed pressure on security operations and were in all probability contributing factors to the increase in robbery.²¹

Vessels at berth at Josepdam Port Services were targeted in a few of these incidents. Theft was also reported at the Josepdam fuel dump. Members of staff were fired for complicity in the thefts.²²

Fishing Vessels

According to Amire Akinbola, president of the Nigerian Trawler Owners' Association (NITOA), there was a drastic reduction in the number of attacks on Nigerian fishing vessels in 2018. According to Bola Kupolati, Deputy Director at the Fishery and Agriculture Department of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, the number of attacks was "insignificant" in recent months.²³ Data on incidents of piracy and robbery of local fishing vessels are not available in open sources.

Some countries in the Gulf of Guinea engage in Fisheries Partnership Agreements with distant-water fishing nations such as China, South Korea, Russia, and the European Union in order to generate investment.²⁴

Eighteen Cameroonian and Chinese fishermen were kidnapped from five Cameroonian fishing vessels offshore Idenau, Cameroon, on 23 November 2018.²⁵ Similar incidents were reported off Nigeria and Ghana in 2018. There seems to be a pattern where Asian fishing vessels flagged and operating from Gulf of Guinea countries are targeted and crew are kidnapped for ransom. During 2018, a total of 26 fishermen were kidnapped from nine fishing vessels in four separate incidents in the Gulf of Guinea. It is hard to say, though, if this pattern is similar for African-operated fishing vessels in the Gulf of Guinea, as incidents are seldom reported.

Maritime Security and Cooperation

Obangame Express 2018 took place in late March 2018. Obangame Express is an annual multinational exercise designed to strengthen maritime security and cooperation, information sharing, and maritime domain awareness in the Gulf of Guinea. The exercise is sponsored by US Africa Command. Twenty African nations and US Naval Forces Africa as well as other European and South American nations took part in the exercise.²⁶

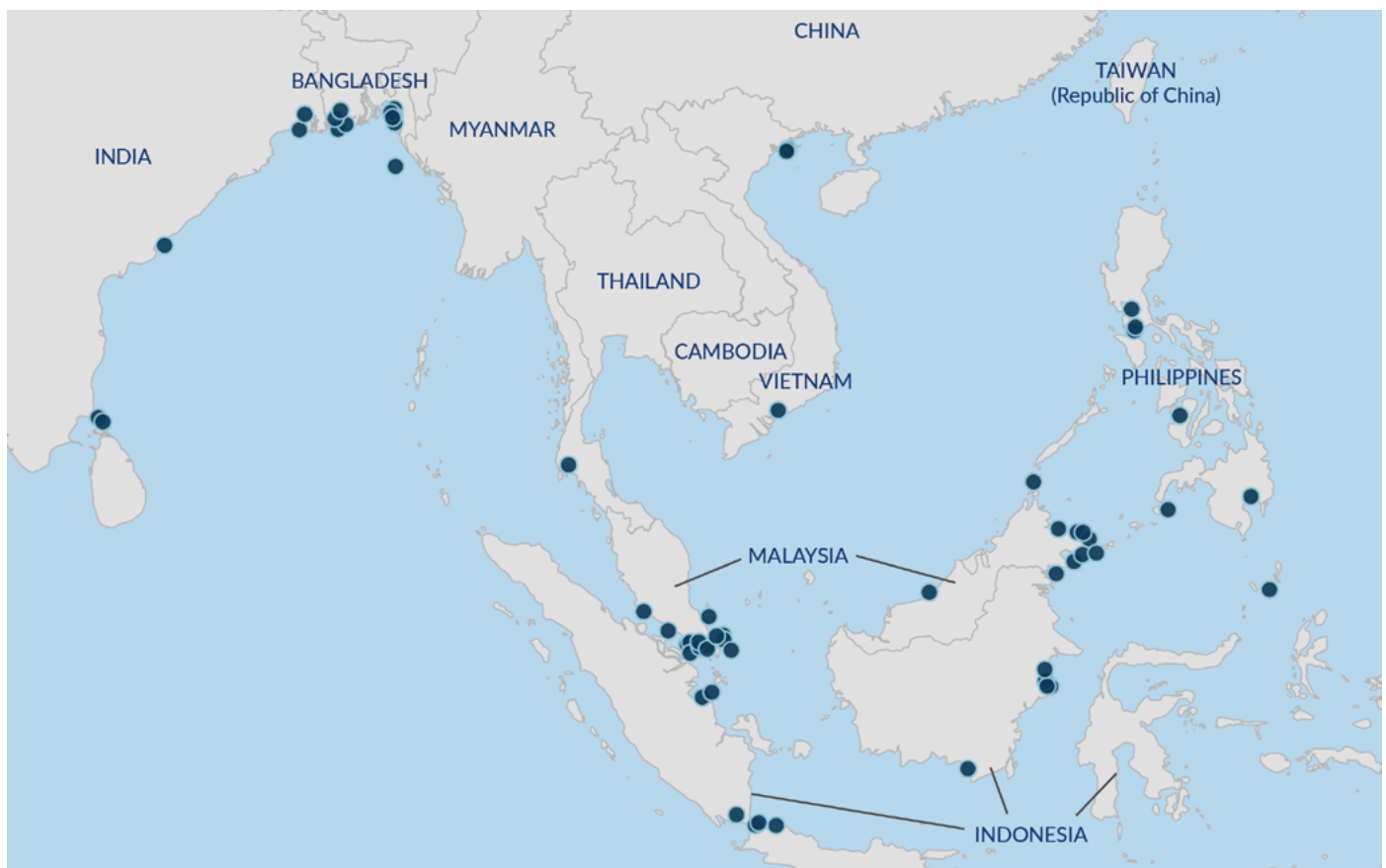
The proposed Suppression of Piracy and other Maritime Offences Bill 2018 was before the Nigerian National Assembly in early January 2019.²⁷ This bill gives effect to the provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation and its protocols. The hope is that the bill will be passed into law in 2019.

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN ASIA 2018

MAIN MESSAGES:

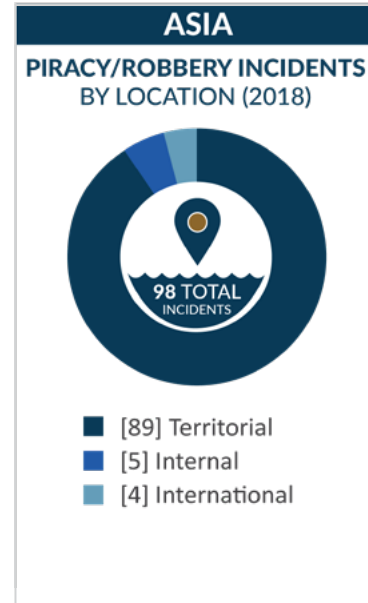
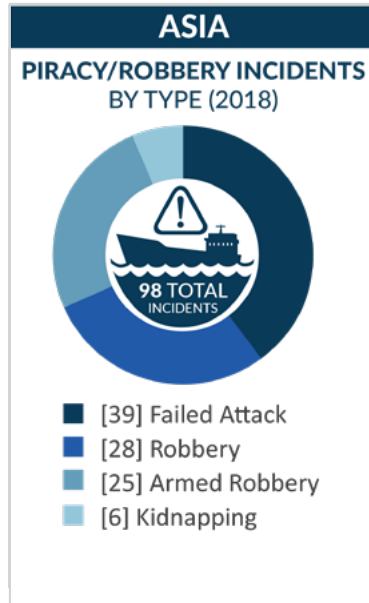
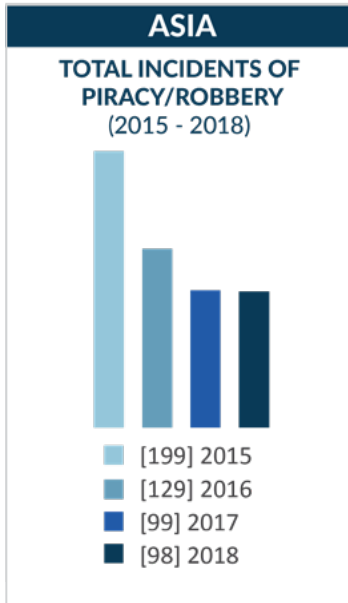
- During 2018, 98 incidents occurred in Asia, which is one fewer than in 2017.
- No successful hijackings were reported in 2018. Two attempted hijackings were reported in 2018 on the tankers *Lee Bo* and *Tesai*. In both cases there was no product on board, and in both cases the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) arrested the suspects. Three incidents of hijacking for cargo theft were recorded during 2017, two against tankers and one against a tug towing a barge with palm oil.
- Kidnapping incidents increased from four incidents in 2017 to six in 2018. All of these kidnappings were from fishing vessels; two off Sabah, Malaysia, and four in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh. The number of kidnapping incidents in the Sundarbans was in all likelihood higher than reported.
- The kidnappings of five fishermen from two fishing vessels off Sabah, Malaysia, in September and December 2018 emphasize that the threat of kidnapping in the Sulu and Celebes Seas remains. Crews of vessels are urged to remain vigilant when transiting the area and when possible, to re-route ships from this area. Best management practices to deter piracy and kidnapping should also be practiced.
- Almost two-thirds of robbery incidents reported in Asia in 2018 occurred when vessels were at anchor. Almost a third of these were at two locations, Muara Berau Anchorage, Samarinda, Indonesia; and Chittagong/Kutubdia Anchorages, Bangladesh.
- At least 64 suspects were arrested by law enforcement officers of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines in 2018 for crimes related to piracy and robbery of vessels.

MAPPING OF INCIDENTS OF PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY OF VESSELS IN ASIA

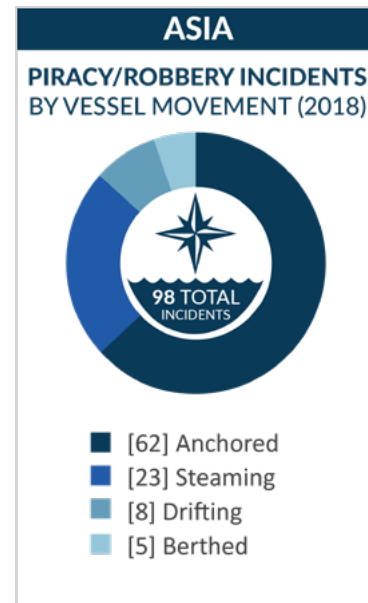
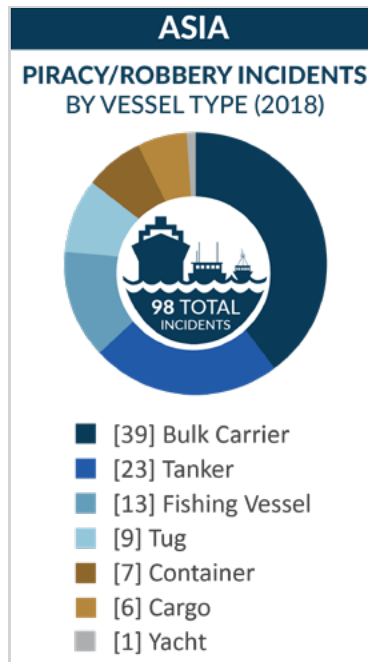


OVERVIEW: INCIDENTS IN ASIA 2018

In 2018, Stable Seas documented 98 incidents of piracy and armed robbery in Asia. For the purposes of this report, Stable Seas defines the Asia region as the area from the eastern coast of India to the Banda Sea in Indonesia. Incidents occurring on the west coast of India have been included in the East Africa region of this report.

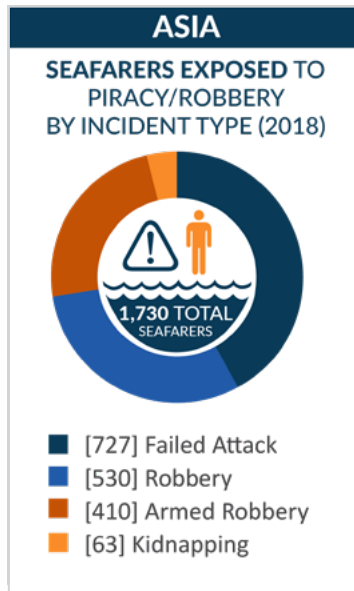
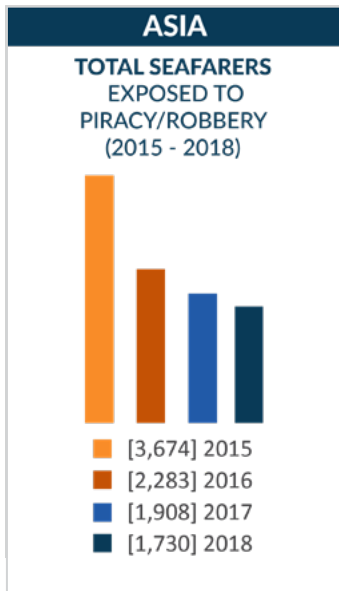


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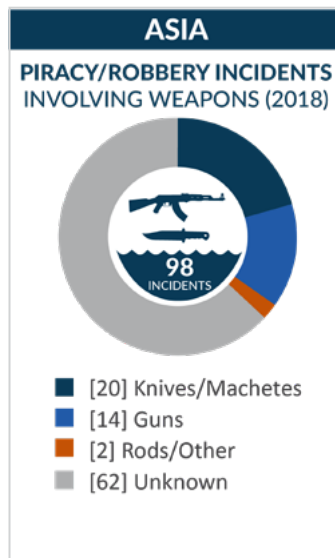
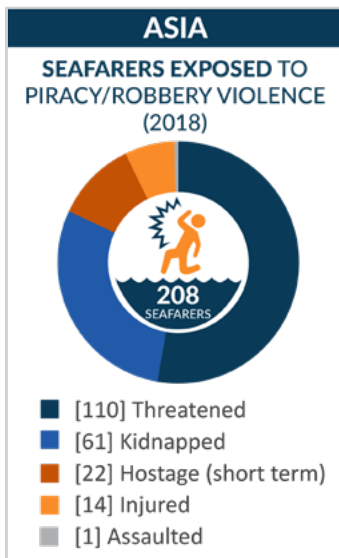
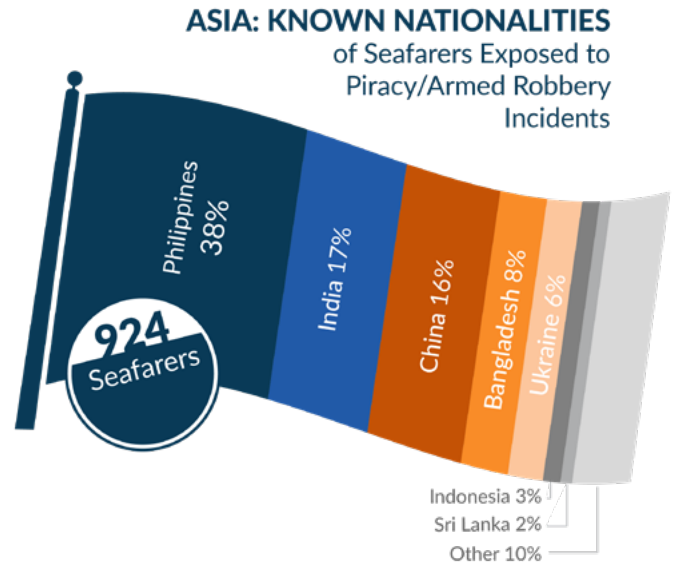


ASIA HUMAN COST

A total of 1,730 seafarers were exposed to piracy and armed robbery in Asia in 2018, which is a decrease from 2017.



This graphic represents the nationalities of 924 of the 1,730 total seafarers exposed to piracy and armed robbery at sea in 2018. The nationalities of the remaining 806 are unverified.



ASIA: CREW HELD HOSTAGE

In 2018, 61 crew members from six separate kidnapping incidents were held hostage in Asia. All of the victims were fishermen. Two incidents took place off Sabah, Malaysia, and four in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh.

The average time crew members were held hostage in the Philippines during kidnapping incidents from 2014 to 2018 was five months.

Attackers were armed in 36 incidents. Weapons included iron rods, knives, machetes or long knives, and firearms, some of which were homemade.

Hostages kept for one day or less: 18

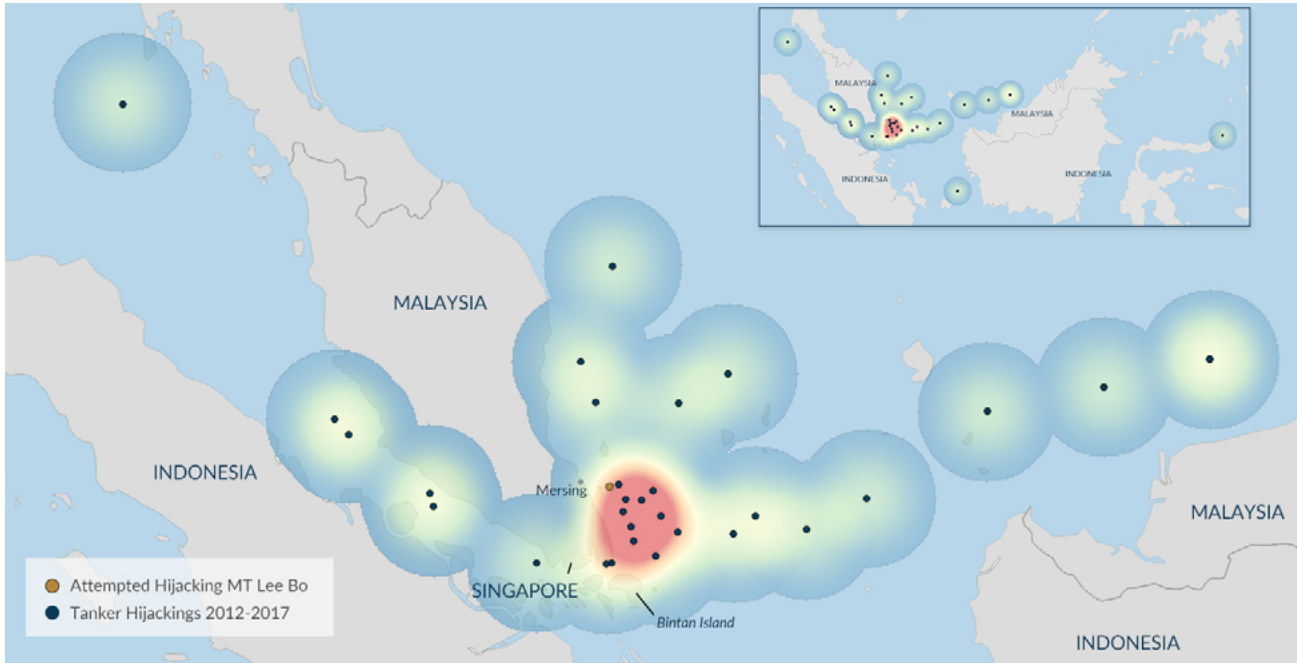
Hostages held for more than one day and confirmed as released: 24

Hostages still in captivity from 2016/2017: 5

Hostages kidnapped in 2016/2017 and released in 2018: 5

TRENDS: ASIA

Attempted Hijacking for Cargo Theft



Case Study: Tanker Lee Bo

On 31 May 2018, MMEA received intelligence that a vessel was identified to be hijacked for its product.

On 1 June 2018, at around 03:00LT (Local Time), the tanker *Lee Bo* was off Mersing, Malaysia, when the chief officer noticed a small boat coming alongside. Fourteen men armed with knives and machetes boarded the MT *Lee Bo*.²⁸

MT *Lee Bo* was not the intended target. The syndicate had planned to hijack and siphon product from a product tanker identified for the purpose into the pirate vessel, MT *Bright*, that was waiting nearby. For some reason they changed their plans and hijacked the MT *Lee Bo* instead, without knowing that there was no product on board at the time.

After they realized there was no product on the *Lee Bo*, the attackers stole laptops, mobile phones, and money from the twelve crew members (six Indonesians and six Sri Lankans). Two crew members were also injured during the attack.²⁹

On 1 June 2018, MMEA dispatched their AgustaWestland AW139 helicopter just one hour after receiving confirmation of the hijacking. They also deployed their ship, KM *Sebatik*, and the Special Task and Rescue (STAR) team to the location. After locating the MT *Bright*, they boarded and searched the vessel.

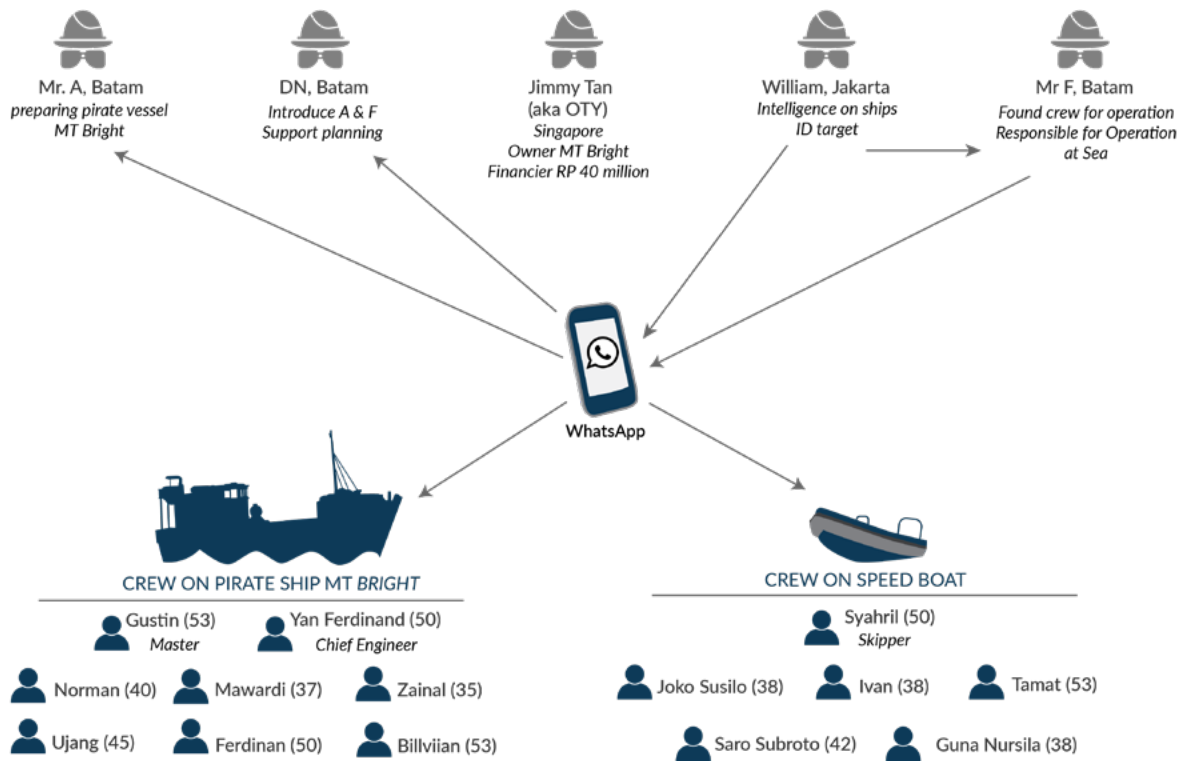
Fourteen members of the hijacking syndicate were arrested on MT *Bright* by members of the MMEA. Two other suspects believed to be the kingpins in the operation were arrested in



Top: The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) director-general Datuk Seri Zulkifli Abu Bakar with some of the cell phones and weapons seized.
Bottom: Suspects arrested onboard pirate vessel MT *Bright*. Photo: MMEA.

Batam, Indonesia, with the help and cooperation of Indonesian authorities. A large number of the suspects were from Batam, Riau Islands. Some of the organizers were from Jakarta, Indonesia. Jimmy Tan, a businessman from Singapore and the financier of the operation and owner of MT *Bright*, has since been arrested.³⁰

SUSPECTS IN MT BRIGHT HIJACKING NETWORK³¹



Kidnapping in the Sulu and Celebes Seas

Two kidnapping incidents were reported in the Sulu and Celebes Seas in 2018, both occurring on fishing vessels. Two fishermen were kidnapped from the *Sri Dewi 1* in September 2018³² and three from the trawler *SN 259/4/F* in December 2018. The two fishermen from *Sri Dewi 1* have since been released. On 5 April 2019, the Philippines Joint Task Force Sulu launched an attack on the Abu Sayyaf Group holding the hostages from the trawler *SN 259/4/F* on Simisa Island, Sulu, Philippines. One fisherman was fatally wounded in the ensuing firefight. The two Indonesian hostages tried to escape by swimming to Bangalao Island. One was rescued by Philippine marines while the other drowned.³³

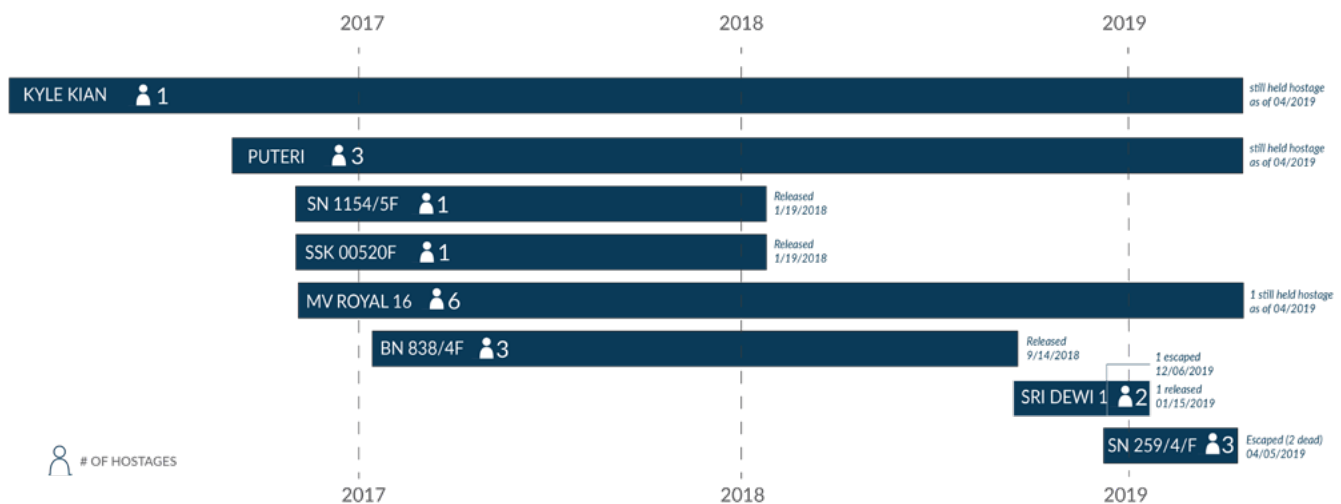
The threat of kidnapping by the Abu Sayyaf Group remains high in the Sulu and Celebes Seas. Slow vessels with a low freeboard, such as fishing vessels, tugboats, small passenger boats, and yachts are at high risk, although crew were also kidnapped from two bulk carriers and a heavy load carrier in 2016 and 2017.

Fishing vessels attacked in the last five years in the Sulu Seas had Indonesian, Filipino, and Malay crew. Although a high percentage of crew kidnapped from fishing vessels were Indonesian, the Indonesian crew were all working on Malaysian boats. According to Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno L.P. Marsudi, approximately 6,000 Indonesian crew members are working legally on Malaysian fishing vessels.³⁴ All fishing boats are artisanal fishing vessels working from small harbors in the Sulu Sea. Eight of the Malaysian trawlers attacked in the last five years were registered under the Sabah small ships register; three were under Semporna (SA prefix), two under Lahad Datu (LD prefix), two under Sandakan (SN prefix), and one in Beluran (BN prefix).

ASIA: CREW HELD HOSTAGE IN SULU & CELEBES SEAS

Ship Name	Vessel Type	Incident Date	Kidnapped	Release Date	Days in Captivity <i>as of mid-April 2019</i>
Kyle Kian	Fishing	2/14/2016	1	not yet released	1156
Puteria	Fishing	9/10/2016	3	not yet released	947
SN 1154/4F	Fishing	11/05/2016	1	01/19/2018	441
SSK 00520F	Fishing	11/05/2016	1	01/19/2018	441
MV Royal 16	Bulk Carrier	11/11/2016	6	one not yet released	885
BN 838/4F	Fishing	1/18/2017	3	09/14/2018	605
Sri Dewi 1	Fishing	11/09/2018	2	06/12/2018 - 1 escaped 15/01/2019 - 1 released	86 126
SN 259/4/F	Fishing	12/05/2018	3	04/05/2019 - 1 died during escape	121

TIMELINE OF HOSTAGE SCENARIOS IN SULU & CELEBES SEAS



ASIA: CREW HELD HOSTAGE IN SUNDARBANS, BANGLADESH

Vessel Type	Incident Date	Kidnapped	Release Date	Days in Captivity
Fishing Trawler	20/01/2018	4	likely released	unknown
Fishing Boat	Unknown	22	03/03/2018	unknown
Fishing Boat	01/06/2018	18	01/06/2018	1
Fishing Boat	13/07/2018	12	likely released	unknown

Kidnapping in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh

The Sundarbans is one of the largest mangrove forests in the world, stretching from the southwest coast of Bangladesh into India’s state of West Bengal. Fishermen live off catches of fish and shrimp in this area. *Bahinis*, or gangs, are kidnapping fishermen from the Sundarbans, as well as from the Meghna River and the coast off the Sundarbans in the Bay of Bengal. In 2018 at least 56 fishermen were kidnapped during four incidents, but the real number of incidents is likely much higher. According to fishermen, kidnappings decreased in 2018.

Fishermen fish in large groups to improve safety, but the bahinis also operate in groups of seven to 40, often kidnapping 25 or more fishermen at a time. They operate from trawlers or speed boats and are armed with firearms (sometimes homemade) or knives. During these attacks, boats, fish, nets, fuel, money, and cell phones are looted as well.

From time to time, fishermen take matters into their own hands. During one such case on 2 October 2018, a group of fishermen caught 12 kidnappers when they were attacked in the Meghna River. On that day, a bahini in two fishing trawlers attacked the fishermen while they were fishing at Monpura Island. Fifteen boats came to the fishermen’s rescue and captured half of the gang. They were taken to the Monpura police station.³⁵

In August 2018, members of the Barguna District Fishermen-Trawler Owners’ Association organized a human chain in protest of the attacks by these gangs and the alleged trespassing of Indian fishing trawlers in Bangladeshi waters. They demanded joint patrols by the navy, coast guard, and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB).³⁶

At least 35 members of these bahinis were arrested in 2018. There are often gunfights between law enforcement officers and these kidnappers. In 2018 officials were also injured during these incidents.

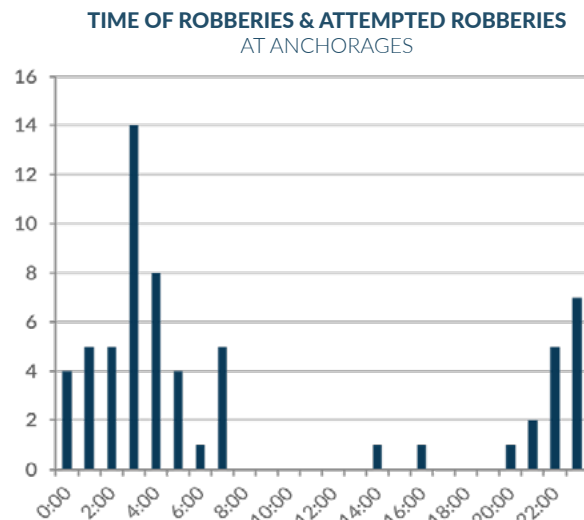
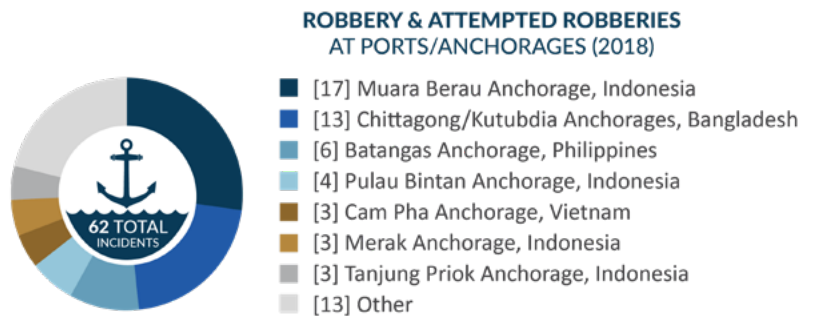
The government offered amnesty to the bahinis in 2014 and 2015. They offered to rehabilitate members and give them financial assistance to create a sustainable income if they surrendered. In May 2018, 54 members surrendered to Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal. In addition, 58 firearms and 3,351 bullets were handed in. According to authorities, 274 gang members representing 26 bahinis have surrendered and handed in their arms during the last two years.³⁷

Robbery and Attempted Robbery at Anchorages

Almost two-thirds of robbery incidents in Asia during 2018 occurred when vessels were at anchor. Almost a third of these were at two locations, Muara Berau Anchorage in Samarinda, Indonesia (17) and Chittagong/Kutubdia Anchorages in Bangladesh (13). Almost all of these incidents took place overnight. Of these, 14 incidents were reported between 03:00LT and 04:00LT.

Ten robberies were reported at Manila Anchorages in the Philippines during 2017. Container ships were targeted in all incidents. Survival and safety equipment such as life rafts, immersion suits, breathing apparatuses and cylinders, and firefighting outfits were stolen.

In January 2018, the container ship *Polar Ecuador* was boarded by robbers from the motor banca *Shyriell* at the South Harbour Anchorage of Manila, Philippines. The master alerted authorities and the Philippine Coast Guard dispatched a fast patrol craft to the scene. They located the *Shyriell* and arrested five suspects.³⁸ As a result, only one robbery was reported at Manila Anchorage in 2018.



Coastal State-Embarked Personnel

In 2018 the Philippine Coast Guard continued to deploy sea marshals onboard shipping vessels in high-risk areas in the Moro Gulf of the Sulu and South China Seas as an anti-piracy and anti-terror measure.³⁹

Best Management Practices

ReCAAP advised all vessels to re-route from the Sulu and Celebes Seas where possible. If they cannot re-route, transiting vessels are advised to be vigilant and to apply best practices according to the *Regional Guide to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia*.⁴⁰ Vessels transiting the Sulu and Celebes Seas should consult the Sabah Notice to Mariners NTM 14 of 2017 on the Ship Reporting System.

Vessels transiting the area are advised to report to the Operation Centre in the Philippine Coast Guard District of Southwestern Mindanao; Philippine Coast Guard Station Bongao (Central Tawi-Tawi); Philippine Navy Littoral Monitoring Station (LMS), Bongao, Tawi-Tawi; and the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) when transiting eastern Sabah.⁴¹

United Nations Initiatives

The Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) had its second Maritime Law Enforcement Dialogues event in Southeast Asia in 2018. The GMCP aims to promote strong investigative and prosecution capabilities for transnational maritime crimes under its Prosecutors Network and through its regional training initiatives.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in partnership with the Philippine Coast Guard, launched the first meeting of the Contact Group on Maritime Crime in the Sulu and Celebes Seas in August 2018. The initiative is modeled on the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. The group focuses on maritime crime, bringing together role-players in law enforcement, government, the shipping industry, and academia.

In 2018 law enforcement officers from South and Southeast Asia participated in visit, boarding, and search-and-seizure (VBSS) training in Sri Lanka that was delivered by GMCP mentors.⁴²

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN 2018

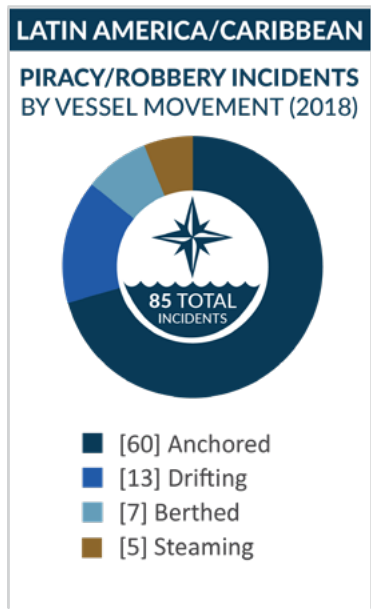
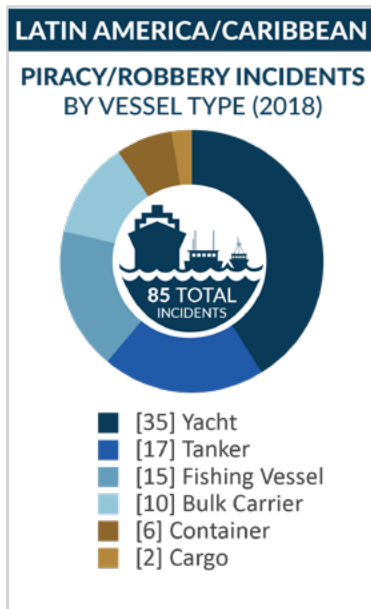
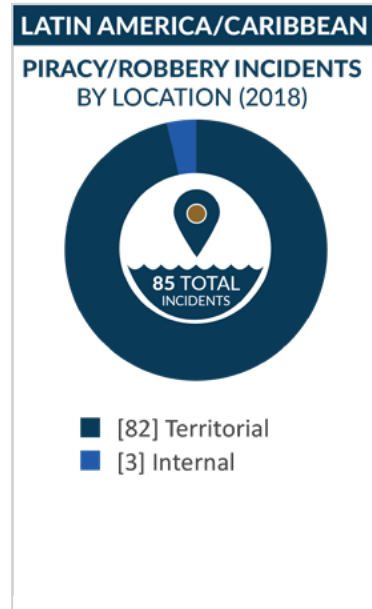
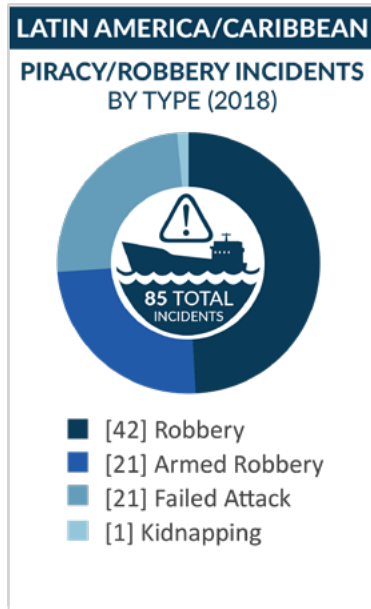
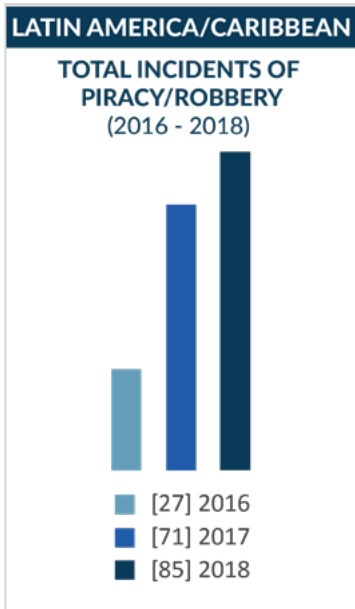
MAIN MESSAGES:

- In 2018, Stable Seas recorded 85 incidents of robbery in Latin America and the Caribbean, a 20 percent increase over 2017.
- Anchorages off Barcelona in Venezuela, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and St. Lucia and Grenada represented incident hotspots in Latin America and the Caribbean during 2018.
- Five incidents were also reported off Guayaquil, Ecuador, against container ships, none of which were successful.
- Anchorage crime against yachts made up roughly 41 percent of all cases.
- In 2018 a total of 16 suspects were arrested for robberies on fishing vessels in Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad.
- Attacks reported off Guyana and Suriname in 2018 were extremely violent, with 16 reported deaths. Three fishermen were also reported missing.

MAPPING OF ROBBERY INCIDENTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



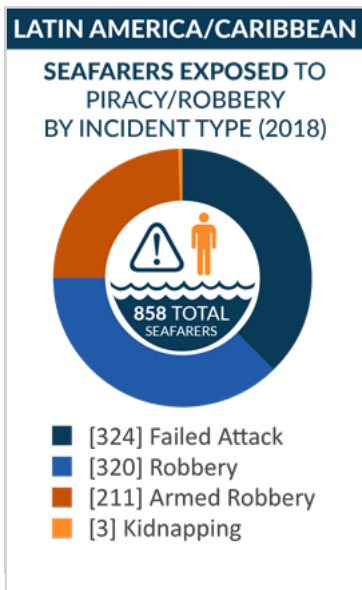
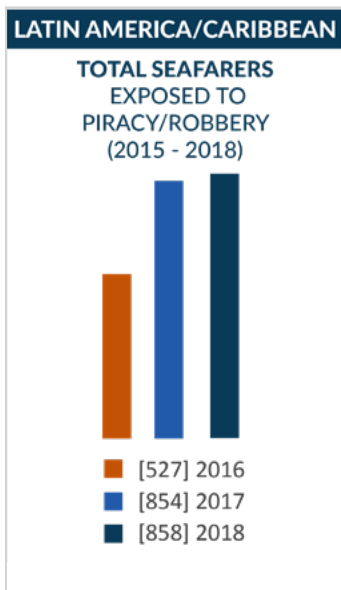
OVERVIEW: INCIDENTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN 2018



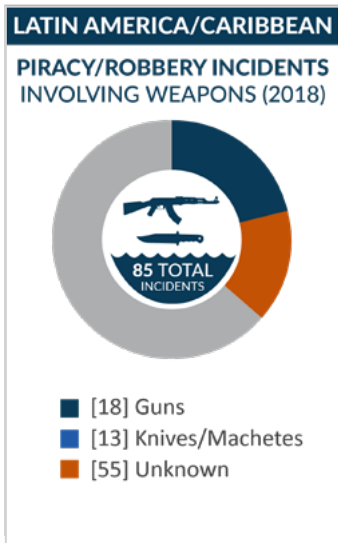
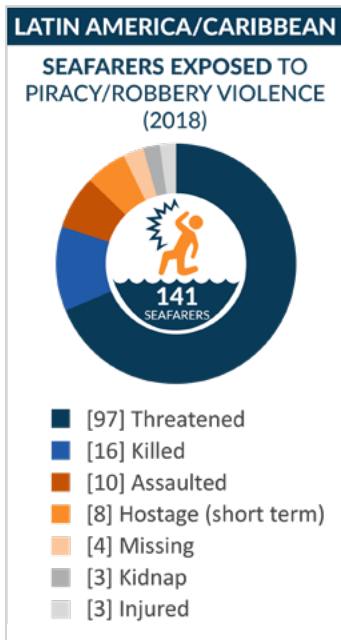
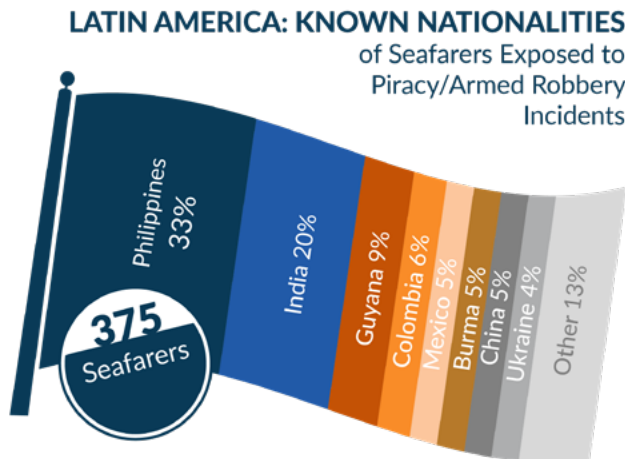
While the overall number of incidents increased in Latin America and the Caribbean from 2017, this increase was primarily on vessels with smaller crews such as fishing vessels.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN HUMAN COST

In 2018, 858 seafarers were affected by piracy and armed robbery in Latin America and the Caribbean—four more than in 2017. This indicates that the increased incidents were mainly on vessels with smaller crews such as fishing vessels, with incidents on fishing vessels increasing from three in 2017 to 15 in 2018.



This graphic represents the nationalities of 375 of the 858 seafarers exposed to piracy and armed robbery at sea in 2018.



TRENDS

Venezuela Anchorages

In total, 15 incidents were reported in Venezuela in 2018. All of these incidents were at anchorages off Barcelona: Puerto Jose Anchorage, Puerto la Cruz Anchorage, and Bahia de Barcelona Anchorage. Eight robberies and seven attempted robberies were reported. Eleven robberies or attempted robberies were against tankers and four against bulk carriers. Robbers were armed with handguns during one of these incidents and knives during five. All of these vessels were anchored at the time. Generally, groups of three to seven robbers board from small boats via the anchor chain and hawse pipe. During four incidents, crew members were threatened or tied up. Mostly, crew possessions or ship stores were stolen.

During one incident, perpetrators dressed in national guard uniforms, boarding under the ruse of an anti-narcotics inspection. Once the perpetrators were on board the duty crew was threatened with handguns. The crew was summoned to the restroom for “inspection” of their cash and valuables, which were then stolen by the robbers.⁴³

Trinidad

In spite of media reports of kidnappings of fishermen, only one incident in 2018 could be verified.

On 30 March 2018, three men on the fishing boat *TFS 3079* set out for recreational fishing off the coast of Mayaro. Families later received a video of the men demanding ransom of US\$6,000 for each of them.⁴⁴

Three incidents of robbery of boat engines were reported in 2018; two were on the open sea off Waterloo in Orange Valley, Couva, and the other a few nautical miles off the Venezuelan border. During these incidents, fishermen were left at sea without their engines. The captain of one of these boats is missing. In the third incident at the Orange Valley jetty in Couva, four Trinidadian nationals were arrested for the theft of an engine and destruction of property when they set the boat on fire.⁴⁵

Venezuelans are likely to be involved in incidents of robbery of fishing vessels off Trinidad and it is highly likely that attacks on fishing vessels and kidnappings of crew are underreported in this area. It is also clear that not all of these attacks could be attributed to Venezuelans as Trinidad in itself has a long history of crime as well as weapon and drug smuggling.

Guyana and Suriname

Four robberies were reported on fishing vessels off Guyana and Suriname. Attacks on fishermen in these two countries are usually extremely violent and brutal.

On 27 April 2018, 20 fishermen in four fishing boats were attacked at Wiawia Bank in New Amsterdam, Suriname, while they were fishing. The attackers approached in a fishing boat. They assaulted the fishermen and threw them overboard; some were weighed down with their hands tied.⁴⁶ The attackers also stole engines, fuel, one of the boats, and the fish catch. One boat sank and two have been recovered since. The attack was linked to an ongoing feud between fishermen in the area over fishing rights. Fifteen fishermen were killed during the attack. Seven suspects have been arrested in connection with the attack. All but one are Guyanese citizens currently residing in Suriname. Some of the men were arrested in Nieuw Amsterdam as they went to sell the stolen catch. The owner of the suspect vessel, *Christina-1 SK1221*, identified as Nakool Manohar,⁴⁷ and the captain of the boat, Ron Drepaul, were arrested in May 2018.

Mexico

Robbery of fishing vessels was reported on the west and east coasts of Mexico. In Mexico, reports of theft of shrimp catches, outboard motors, fishing nets, fish, communication equipment, cell phones, and cash were noted in 2018. Masked robbers armed with rifles attack shrimp boats from speed boats. Fishermen are left at sea when their engines are taken. Incidents were reported at Tres Islas, Mazatlan; Sonda de Campeche; and Laguna de Terminos.

According to media reports, the Mexican state oil enterprise Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) recorded a 310 percent increase in criminal boardings of oil platforms in 2018.⁴⁸ In 2018, 197 incidents were reported on platforms off the coast of Campeche and Tabasco.⁴⁹ Robbers approach the oil platforms in groups of boats at night, climb the platforms, and steal anything from equipment to metal manhole covers. Robbery from oil platforms cannot be classified as piracy, but robbery did extend to offshore support vessels servicing the platforms. Vice Admiral of the Fifth Naval Zone Gregorio Martínez Núñez said that in addition to theft from oil platforms off the coast of Tabasco, fishing boats were robbed of their engines. According to Joaquín Madrigal Olán from the El Faro Federation of Fisheries and Aquaculture Cooperatives, 20 boat engines were stolen in 2018.⁵⁰

Yacht Incidents

The highest number of incidents in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2018 were against yachts. Most of these incidents can be classified as petty theft. In two of the 35 incidents reported, crew were threatened. Yachts were either anchored or berthed. Robberies are mostly at night, and in a high number of the incidents, dinghies and outboard motors are stolen. Robbers reach the yachts with small boats or swim to where yachts are anchored. Robbers often board and rob the yachts without being detected or when owners are sleeping or on land.

Drug Smuggling

Boarding of vessels with the intent to find drugs hidden on board or in sea chests attached to the vessel are often misinterpreted as being attempts at robbery of the vessels. It is possible that some crew may be complicit in the smuggling.

During one such incident at Santos Anchorage, Brazil, on 12 August 2018, four robbers using a rope and a hook boarded the Grimaldi-owned roll-on roll-off cargo ship *Grande Francia* while it was at anchor. The robbers were opening containers on deck when they were spotted by the duty crew and fled upon hearing the alarm. Local police and customs agents boarded for investigation.⁵¹ The next day, authorities seized cocaine that was on board in 41 sacks in two containers.⁵² On 7 August 2018, another Grimaldi vessel, *Grande Nigeria*, was caught in a trafficking attempt as a speed boat came alongside and lifted 18 suitcases onto the ship's cargo deck. They were caught on CCTV camera. Authorities couldn't reach the speed boat in time to arrest the perpetrators. The waterproof suitcases contained 1.2 ton of cocaine, and were eventually found in a container with rice and scrap.⁵³

ENDNOTES

- 1 United Nations General Assembly, "Convention on the Law of the Sea," 10 December 1982, 1833 UNTS 397, art. 101, http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part7.htm.
- 2 International Maritime Organization, "Code of Practice for the Investigation of Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships," Annex, paragraph 2.2, Resolution A.1025(26), 2 December 2009.
- 3 D. Conor Seyle, Karina G. Fernandez, Alexander Dimitrevich, and Chirag Bahri, "The Long-term Impact of Maritime Piracy on Seafarers' Behavioral Health and Work Decisions," *Marine Policy* 87, January 2018, 23–28, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2017.10.009>.
- 4 "ReCAAP ISC Weekly Report 23 to 29 January 2018," ReCAAP Information Sharing Center, [http://www.recaap.org/resources/ck/files/reports/weekly/2018/ReCAAP%20ISC%Weekly%Report%20\(23-29%20Jan%2018\).pdf](http://www.recaap.org/resources/ck/files/reports/weekly/2018/ReCAAP%20ISC%Weekly%Report%20(23-29%20Jan%2018).pdf).
- 5 International Maritime Organization Global Integrated Shipping Information System (IMO GISIS).
- 6 Ben Lawellin and Curtis Bell "Stable Seas: Somali Waters," *One Earth Future*, 1 May 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18289/OEF.2017.015>.
- 7 "2018 Activity Report," Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre Western Indian Ocean.
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