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Maritime Security – Gulf of Guinea

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Maritime Security – Gulf of Guinea

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Introduction

Piracy off West Africa has been a very serious concern for many years. Incidents have been reported as far south as Angola and as far north as Sierra Leone.

The spectrum of potential maritime criminals in West Africa is wide. They range from opportunistic thieves looking to rob vessels at anchor; stevedores stealing small amounts of cargo, to highly sophisticated criminal gangs that can operate across national boundaries. These gangs have the ability to identify, track and hijack specific vessels and conduct ship to ship transfers of petroleum cargoes offshore.

Attacks are often violent in nature and cases include kidnapping for ransom of ships' crews.

Added to the criminal mix are politically motivated militias who regard maritime assets, in particular those connected to the local oil industry, as legitimate targets.

This briefing should be read in conjunction with the Loss Prevention Briefing, *Maritime Security – General Recommendations* which can be read here:
www.nepia.com/latest/publications

For a glossary of the abbreviations used in this briefing see appendix 2 found **here.**

Security organisations

Marine Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea, (MDAT-GoG)

The MDAT-GoG was established in 2016 and is operated by the UK and French navies; it replaces the now dissolved MTISC-GoG.

The scheme is entirely voluntary; however vessels are encouraged to take part to allow a prompt response to any incident.

The voluntary reporting area and reporting structure can be found on the UKHO security chart Q6114. (See Appendix I).

Contact details for the reporting scheme can be found on UKHO Chart Q6114 and are as follows:

Email: watchkeeper@mdat-gog.org
Telephone: +33 (0) 298228888

Regional specific security guidance

Piracy tactics
As previously stated there is a broad spectrum of tactics employed by pirates in the West African region, the main activities in this area can be broadly split into the following categories:

Armed robbery
Vessels slowly approaching port or at anchor are prime targets. Robbery is often opportunist and violent in nature. The usual targets are personal valuables, and money from the ship's safe off Lagos, Port Harcourt, Bonny River, Cotonou and Lomé.

Cargo theft
Theft of vessels cargoes happens throughout the region. In particular the pirates target vessels carrying valuable oil or chemical cargoes. As such they target product and chemical tankers, although other vessel types are not entirely excluded. The aim of the pirates is to hijack vessels and transfer the cargo to smaller vessels. These attacks are well organised, and often the pirates are knowledgeable about vessel operations and can operate the cargo systems independently of the ship's crew.

Kidnapping
There have been numerous instances of crew kidnapping. Crew are typically taken ashore following an attack and ransom demands are issued by the kidnappers.

For more information, please visit www.nepia.com 🐦 📘 in ▶

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Ports, anchorages and operational areas

The type and level of threat at each port and area of operation varies. It is important that the threat level and type in a particular port, anchorage or area of operation is regularly assessed. This may require expert advice. At the very least IMB piracy reports for the area should be monitored, but CSOs should be aware that it should be understood that many incidents in the region, particularly in Nigeria, are not reported to IMB.

Image courtesy of REUTERS/Luc Gnago

Global counter piracy guidance for companies, Masters and seafarers

As well a general advice in relation to all forms maritime security, the Global counter piracy guidance for companies, Masters and seafarers contains regional specific advice as well. This includes important contact details.

It is recommended that Members distribute the guidance among their Masters and crew and it can be downloaded here:

www.ocimf.org/media/91171/Global-Counter-Piracy-Guidance-For-Companies-Masters-and-Seafarers.pdf

BMP West Africa

BMP West Africa - Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and enhance Maritime Security off the Coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea.

This publication is to help Masters conduct their voyage risk assessment. It outlines best practice to detect, avoid, deter, delay and report attacks in the Gulf of Guinea region.

It should be read alongside Global Counter Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers.

It is highly recommended that members distribute this guidance to their vessels and it can be downloaded here:

www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/media/1046/bmp-west-africa.pdf

Maritime global security site

The site provides guidance and information for companies and mariners seeking on a wide range of Maritime Security Issues.

This includes regions specific links to the military supporting the region and well as the guidelines for owners, operators and Master for the protection against piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea region version 3.

The maritime global security website can be found at the following link:

www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/geography/gulf-of-guinea/

High risk area (HRA)

The voluntary reporting scheme for MDAT-GoG covers what should be considered as the HRA. This extends from Cap Blanc on the Mauritanian border to the Southern border of Angola; it also incorporates the Cape Verde Islands.
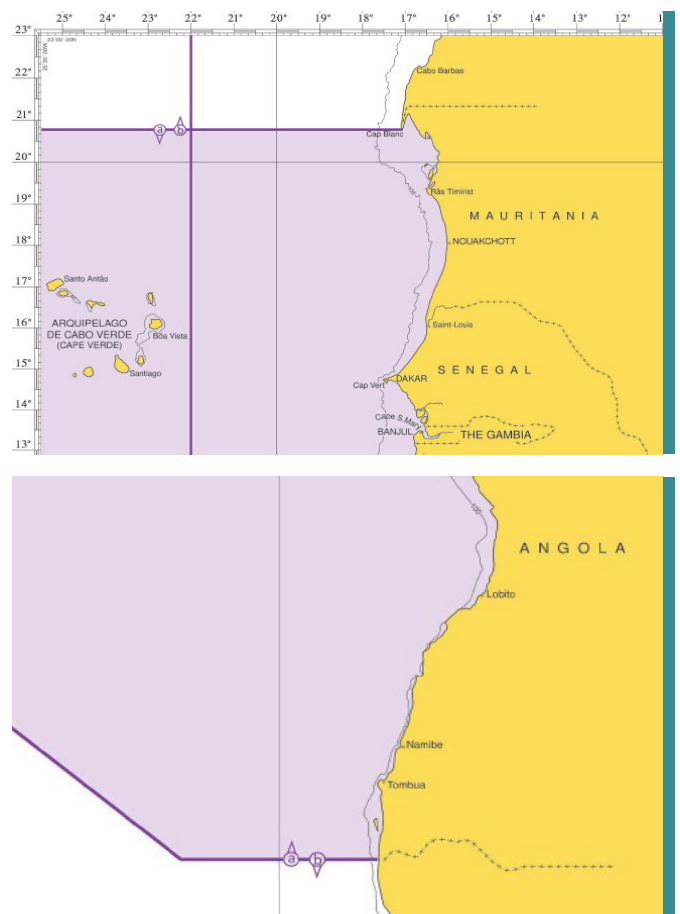
From UKHO security chart Q6114

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Voluntary reporting area (VRA)

MDAT-GoG reporting requirements are found on UKHO chart Q6114. (See Appendix I).

Vessels are strongly encouraged to take part in the scheme when entering or leaving the VRA, reporting daily when within the VRA, also when arriving or leaving ports within the VRA.

Vessels should also report suspicious activity to the MDAT GoG.

Reporting forms and the relevant UKHO security chart details can also be found here:

www.admiralty.co.uk/maritime-safety-information/security-related-information-to-mariners

Disclaimer

The purpose of this publication is to provide a source of information which is additional to that available to the maritime industry from regulatory, advisory, and consultative organisations. Whilst care is taken to ensure the accuracy of any information made available no warranty of accuracy is given and users of that information are to be responsible for satisfying themselves that the information is relevant and suitable for the purposes to which it is applied. In no circumstances whatsoever shall North be liable to any person whatsoever for any loss or damage whensoever or howsoever arising out of or in connection with the supply (including negligent supply) or use of information.

Unless the contrary is indicated, all articles are written with reference to English Law. However it should be noted that the content of this publication does not constitute legal advice and should not be construed as such. Members should contact North for specific advice on particular matters.

Published April 2020.

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APPENDIX 1: UKHO SECURITY CHART Q6114
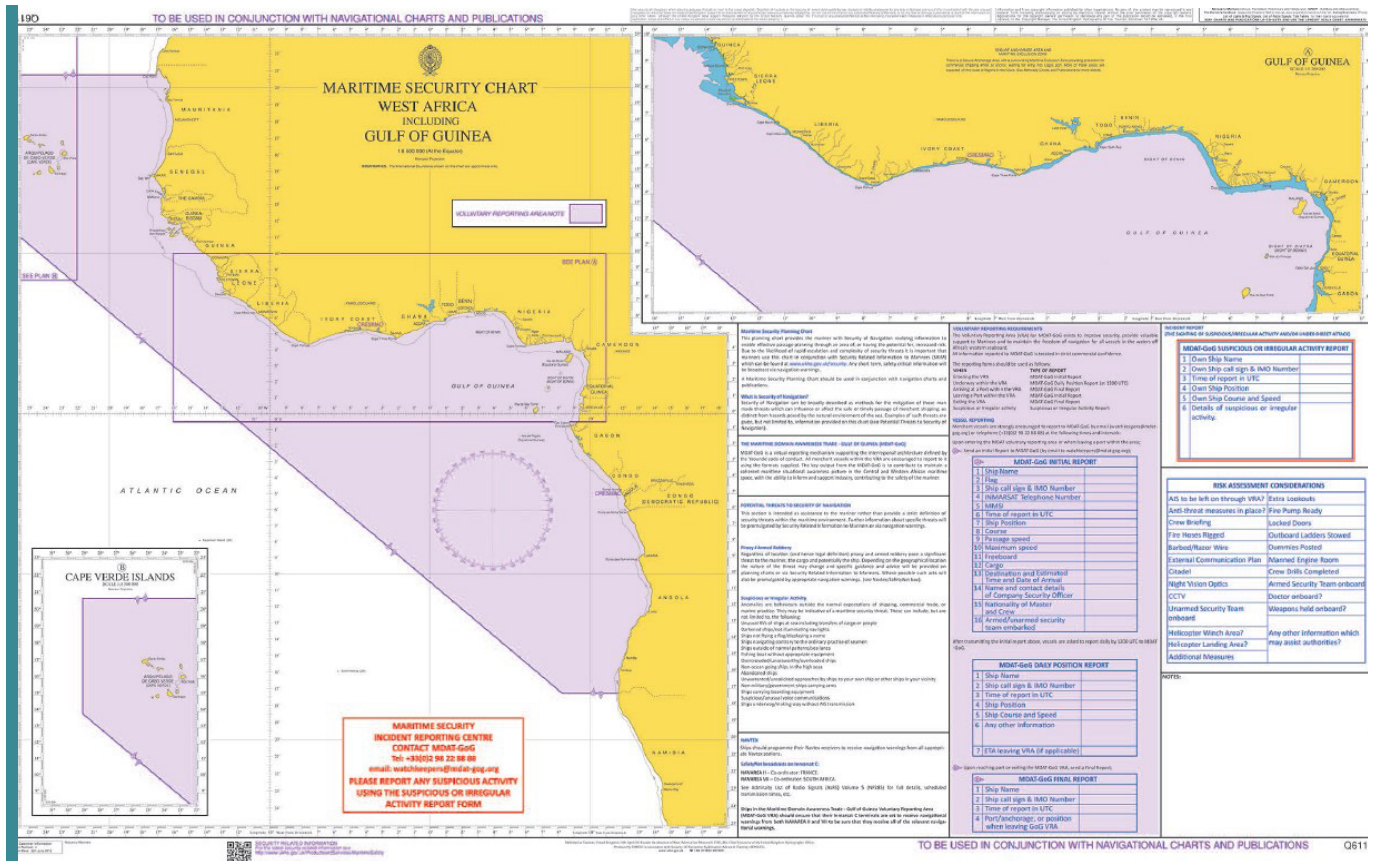
APPENDIX 2 – GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMP (WA)	Best Management Practices West Africa
CSO:	Company Security Officer
IMB:	International Maritime Bureau
GoG:	Gulf of Guinea
HRA:	High Risk Area
MDAT-GoG:	Marine Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea
UKHO:	United Kingdom Hydrographic Office
VRA:	Voluntary Reporting Area