

21 March 2013

## Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea – an update

### Situation and recent threat reports

The number of hijackings of vessels, attacks and attempted boardings in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) remains high and continues to be of great concern to the maritime industry. During January and February 2013 the GoG in general and Nigeria in particular experienced a significant increase in the number of reported piracy attacks. Several of the attacks have been kidnap for ransom incidents and violent robberies, and product tankers are reportedly still the most targeted ship type in the GoG. At present, hijackings aiming at cargo theft appear to have become less common in the region.

### Use of Security Personnel

It is understood that personnel working for private maritime security companies (PMSCs) are not permitted by law to be armed within the territorial waters of the states within the GoG. Only the military forces of the state in question can and do offer their services as armed security guards to owners and operators. Several PMSCs can provide unarmed advisers, who serve as a link between the vessel and the local military guards. Such services are usually offered on the form of a GUARDCON contract, amended to take into account the fact that the armed security is provided by local military forces. Gard is aware of one PMSC whose liability insurance cover has been extended to include armed security guards provided by military forces in Nigeria, Togo and Benin.

Some local agents may offer to hire security guards from the local military forces themselves. This is not done through a PMSC and the contractual and insurance protection available to owners under an amended GUARDCON with a PMSC is therefore not available. Nor are the unarmed advisers available. Such an arrangement may appear cheaper, but anecdotal information indicates it can be difficult for the Master to exercise meaningful authority over guards from the local military forces. Should owners decide to hire armed security personnel, it is recommended this be done through a PMSC, ideally on the form of the amended GUARDCON contract and with the insurance protection mentioned above.

### Advice

Gard's Members and clients planning operations in the GoG are advised to be vigilant and maintain all anti-piracy measures. Prior to and during any operation in the GoG, members and clients are recommended to:

- Seek available information about the current situation and the characteristics of current threats in the relevant areas, e.g. through IMB, MSC, commercial intelligence providers and local sources like ship's agents.
- Make use of the [Interim Guidelines for Owners, Operators and Masters for protection against piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea region](#);<sup>1</sup> carefully assess all relevant risks through a voyage specific risk assessment (ref. Interim Guidelines, paragraph 3).
- Maintain a high state of readiness at all times,<sup>2</sup> implementing BMPs and citadel preparedness; compliance with the BMPs should be the "default" position. The employment of (armed) security personnel may be in addition to, but not instead of, compliance with the BMPs.

In the event of a pirate attack in the GoG, the best way of alerting the local authorities is via the Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (RMRCC) in Lagos, which is run by the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA). When contacted, the Lagos RMRCC should alert the military and/or coast guard forces in the region, who should initiate a response, although it is understood that this cannot be guaranteed.

Organisation	Emergency contact details
Lagos Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (RMRCC), manned on a 24/7 basis	+234 (0)8030685167 (mobile) +234 (1)730 6618 (land line)
International maritime Bureau – IMB Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB PRC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	+60 3 2078 5763 (Tel) +60 3 2078 5769 (Fax) E-mail; <a href="mailto:imbkl@icc-ccs.org">imbkl@icc-ccs.org</a> / <a href="mailto:piracy@icc-ccs.org">piracy@icc-ccs.org</a>

<sup>1</sup> Interim Guidelines published in December 2012 by BIMCO, ICS, INTERCARGO and INTERTANKO. These are a set of stand-alone guidelines which should be read in conjunction with the existing industry guidelines that address the Somalia-based piracy problem, Best Management Practices for Protection against Somalia Based Piracy (BMP4). It is anticipated that the Interim Guidelines will be the subject of updating and revision, when required, as the position in the Gulf of Guinea is continuing to evolve.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the attacks against tankers during 2011 and 2012 in GoG occurred during hours of darkness. A high state of readiness and 360 degrees look-out should therefore be maintained at all times, especially during dark hours.

In case of piracy in Nigerian waters, the following emergency contact numbers are currently available:<sup>3</sup>

Organisation	Emergency contact details
Joint Task Force (Op PULO SHIELD) covering the Niger Delta area	+234 (0)802 3639153 +234 (0)703 9783346 Email: <a href="mailto:hqjtfoppuloshield@yahoo.com">hqjtfoppuloshield@yahoo.com</a>
Naval Headquarters Operations Room	+234 (0)813 8799220
Department of State Security:	+234 (0)813 2222106 +234 (0)813 2222105

A collection of additional information and advice concerning piracy can be found in Gard's Spotlight: "[PIRACY – Robbery or Illegal Violence at Sea](#)" - available on Gard's website under the tab "Preventing Losses".

It is also worth noting that in January 2013, the European Union (EU) announced a new project with a view to enhancing security and safety of maritime routes across seven African countries in the Gulf of Guinea (Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe and Togo). The Critical Maritime Routes in the Gulf of Guinea Programme (CRIMGO) aims to help African governments to improve safety of the main shipping routes by providing training for coastguards and establishing a network to share information among countries and agencies across the region. Please see press release no. [IP/13/14](#) dated 10/01/2013.

---

<sup>3</sup> Information received from INTERCARGO on 6 March 2013. As these numbers are for mobile phones, they may be subject to change.

The information is provided for general information purposes only. Whilst we have taken every care to ensure the accuracy and quality of the information provided at the time of original publication, Gard AS can accept no responsibility in respect of any loss or damage of any kind whatsoever which may arise from reliance on this information.

Gard Alerts not distributed to Members and clients by e-mail are marked with "Web only" in the heading and are available on [www.gard.no](http://www.gard.no).