



Monthly Piracy Report

Latest Assessment

Total Number of Attacks in May: **25**
Total Number of Attacks this year: **169**
Ships Released in May: **0**
Crew Released in May: **0**

New Ships Taken in May: **1**
New Crew Taken in May: **26**
Ships Held at end of May: **17***
Crew Held at end of May: **269***

Summary

Global pirate activity dropped to 25 attacks over the course of May. Piracy decreased off the coast of Somalia, with fewer attempted attacks, and one successful hijack of a Liberia-flagged tanker. Attacks increased in the northern Gulf of Oman, where swarm tactics were reported for the first time. Attacks dropped in West African waters, but two serious attacks were recorded within 24 hours off Nigeria. Attacks fell in southeast Asia, although three of these were directed at vessels underway rather than at anchor as is more common in the region. Two attacks were officially recorded in Latin America.

At least 269 crewmembers are currently being held, with many facing detention periods of over 300 days, at a current average of 160 days. No vessels were released for ransom from Somalia in May. Average ransom amounts are approximately US\$5 million at present.

Near-term Forecast

East Africa: There will be a reduced risk of piracy in the Indian Ocean and southern Arabian Sea due to poor weather conditions created by the southern monsoon season (May-September). There will be a heightened risk of attacks at chokepoints (southern Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab Straits, southern Gulf of Aden and northern Arabian Sea). Swarm attacks are also possible in these locations.

West Africa: Vessels remain vulnerable up to 120NM off Nigeria, Benin and Togo. Stationary vessels in anchorages off major ports remain vulnerable to all forms of attack.

Asia: Mostly opportunistic attacks in anchorages and ports will continue. Barges will remain at risk of boarding and theft due to slow speed and ease of access.

Latin America: Opportunistic theft will remain likely in ports and anchorages

**excludes various local dhows and fishing vessels, and their crews*



Above: pirate incidents recorded in May (above)

Below: ongoing areas of piracy concern



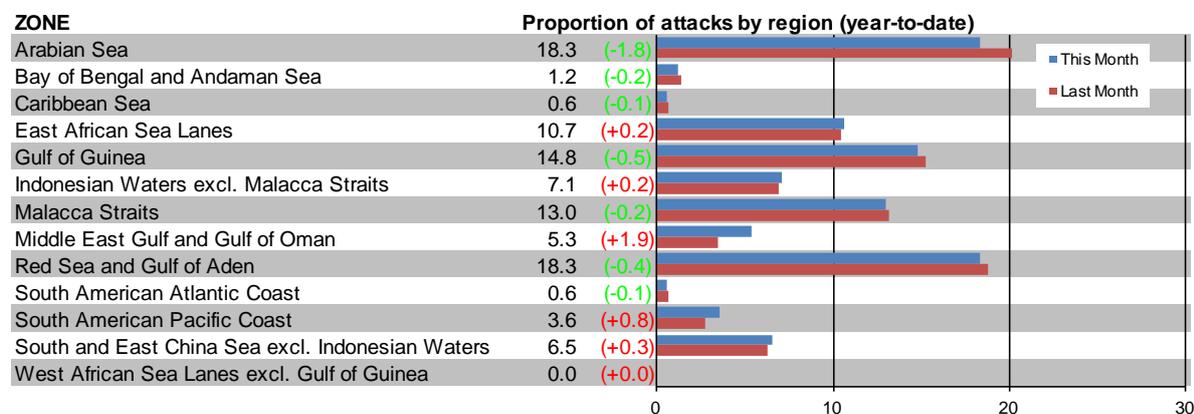
The GAC Protective Solutions team of experts has extensive experience and has dealt with many incidents of vessel hijacking and piracy from the South China Seas, to the Straits of Hormuz and East Africa. A subscription to this monthly security report including 'real time' security updates between each edition costs US\$800/6 months or US\$1,400/12 months. For further information or assistance please contact: ake@gac.com

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Changes in regional pirate activity last month

MARINE PIRACY THREAT ASSESSMENT

May 2012

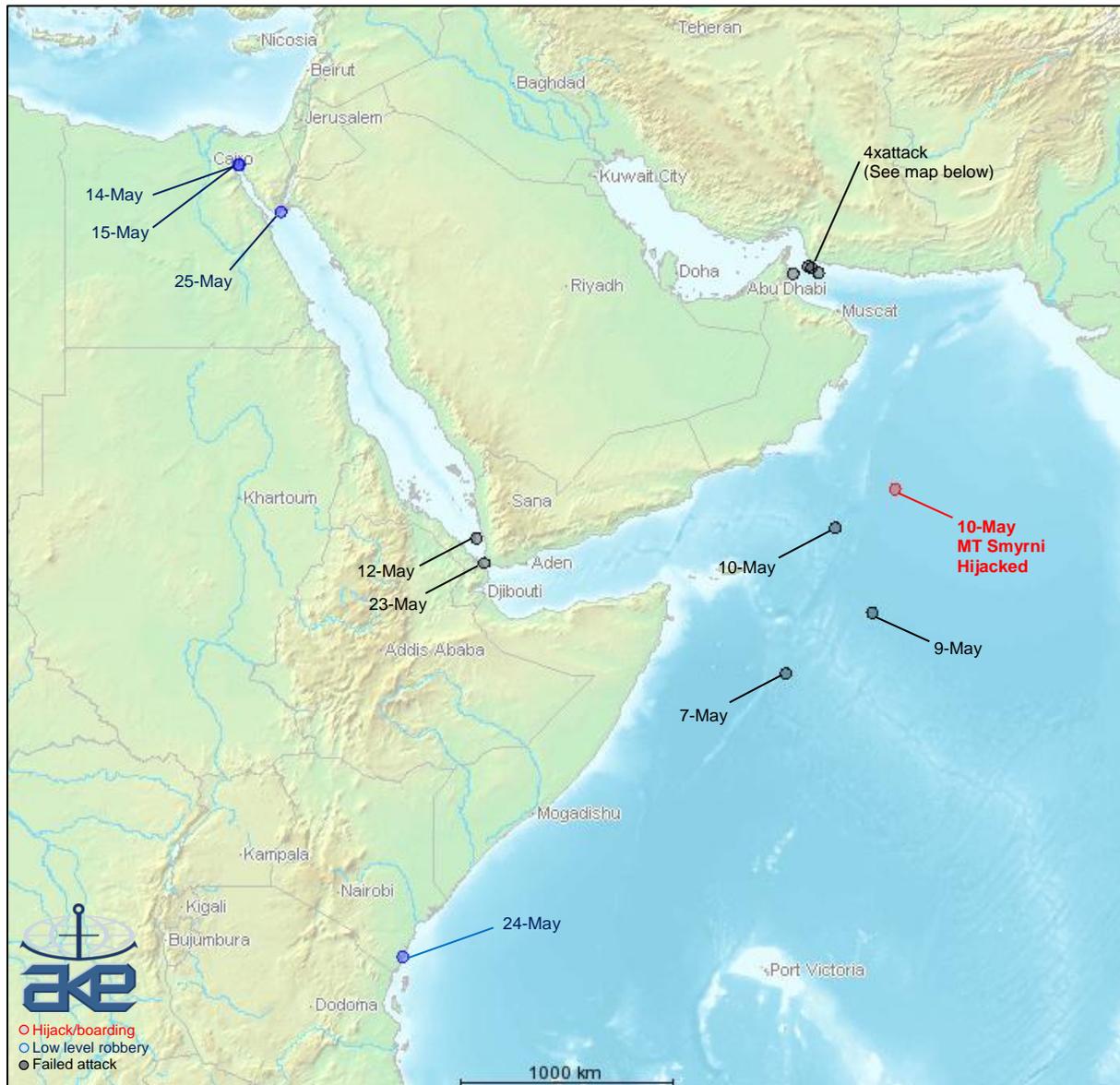


Regional piracy incidents over the past month

Zone	No. of Attacks	Change from previous month	Change from previous year
Arabian Sea	2	-4	-10
Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea	0	-	-
Caribbean Sea	0	-	-1
East Africa Sea Lanes	3	+1	+1
Gulf of Guinea	3	-2	-2
Indonesian Waters excl Malacca Straits	2	-	-4
Malacca Straits	3	-5	-
Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman	4	+3	+2
Red Sea and Gulf of Aden	4	-2	-3
South American Atlantic Coast	0	-	-
South American Pacific Coast	2	+1	+1
South and East China Sea	2	+1	+1
West African Sea Lanes excl Gulf of Guinea	0	-	-3

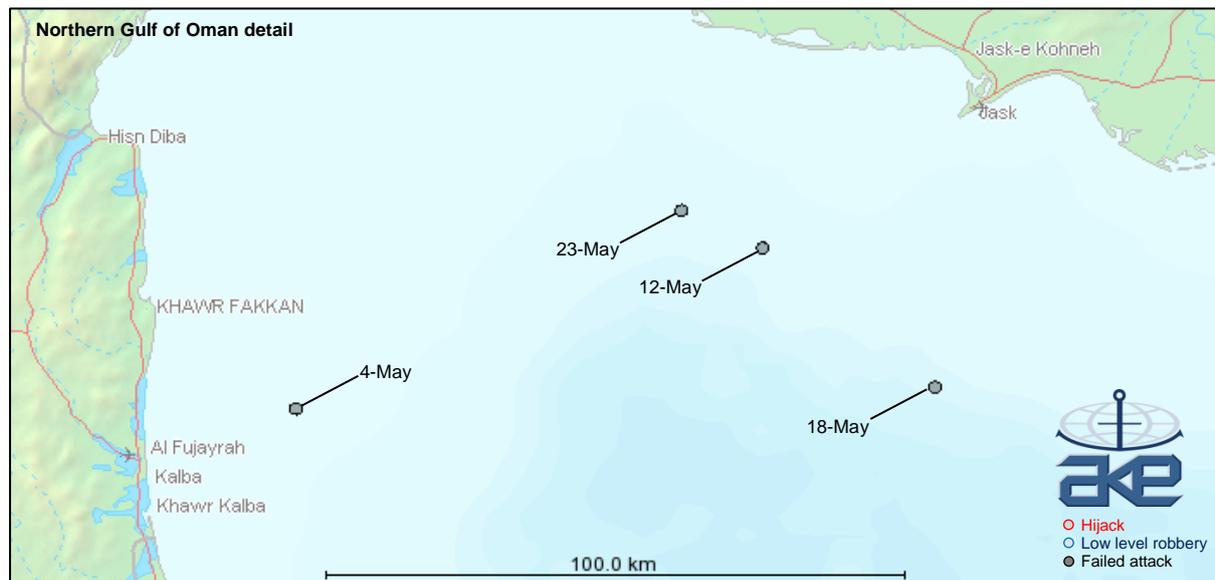
Current Regional Analysis

East Africa



Current Analysis

The total number of incidents decreased by two from April's total of 16. Of the 14 attacks that took place, four were incidents of low level armed robbery. Of the remaining 10 attacks, one vessel was hijacked. The monthly success rate therefore decreased for the second month running, to 10 per cent. Due to the onset of the southern Monsoon season (May-September) weather conditions in the Somali basin, Indian Ocean and southern Arabian Sea gradually worsened over the course of May, explaining the drop in attacks in those areas. More attacks are therefore likely in sheltered chokepoints such as the northern Gulf of Oman and Bab al-Mandab straits in the coming weeks.



Notable incidents

On 10 May Liberia-flagged product tanker Smyrni was hijacked around 285NM south east of Masirah Island, Oman at around 0930 local time. The tanker is managed by Athens-based Dynacom Tanker Management and has a top speed of 9 knots and a freeboard of 7.7 metres. No security guards were on board and it is unclear what vessel hardening measures were in place, if any. Reports suggest two skiffs attempted an initial attack which failed, but were successful after returning for a second attempt at hijacking the vessel. The vessel has 26 crew members on board. The hijacking came after weeks of increased mothership activity in the Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea; hijacked dhows are easily hidden amongst local traffic, highlighting the need for crew alertness and effective watch rotas which are essential to achieve early detection and avoidance of attacks.

Although activity fell in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, four attacks in the northern Gulf of Oman should remind operators that attacks have now spread to the area; at least nine incidents have been recorded there in the past six months. A US-flagged cargo ship, the Maersk Texas, was attacked by a group of around 20 skiffs approximately 50NM east of Fujairah at around 0900 local time on 23 May. Reports suggest an attack group of 10 skiffs approached the starboard side of the vessel at a speed of 25 knots and ignored fire hoses, evasive manoeuvres and warning shots fired by the onboard security team. The skiffs returned fire. A second group of 11 skiffs was sighted off the port, but retreated after warning shots were fired at them. The first group turned away after chasing the vessel for around 12 minutes. No injuries were reported.

Uncertainty surrounded initial reports of the attack, which was eventually confirmed by the vessel's owners and corroborated by international reporting authorities. Although swarming is a recognised tactic that has been used by pirates in the Bab al-Mandab Strait in recent weeks, such a large number of pirate skiffs operating cohesively so far north led many to question the credibility of the report. At an average of three or four people on board each skiff, at least 60-70 pirates would have been involved in this single attack; far larger than any pirate attack group recorded to date. It seems likely that local fishing traffic may have been indistinguishable from pirate skiffs, which could explain why such a number of vessels were reported as hostile during the incident.

Regardless of the precise number of skiffs involved, the location and details of the incident hints at a greater level of determination that is likely to be seen in future attacks. This new level of resolve is likely in response to poor success rates and ongoing naval operations. The attack on the Maersk Texas involved a steady exchange of fire between pirates and onboard security, rather than pirates



simply turning away after warning shots were fired. The northern Gulf of Oman provides a steady stream of potential targets transiting to and from the Gulf, and at least eight attacks have occurred in the vicinity over the past six months despite requiring a voyage of over 1000NM from Puntland's north-eastern tip.

Swarm attacks by large numbers of skiffs have yet to result in a successful hijacking, but will continue to be used as a tactic to overpower vessels in chokepoints such as the northern Gulf of Oman and the Bab al-Mandab straits. Commercial vessels should proceed with extreme caution through the northern Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden over the coming weeks as sea states are forecast to be calm and favourable for attack groups. Further swarm attacks should be anticipated.

Negotiations

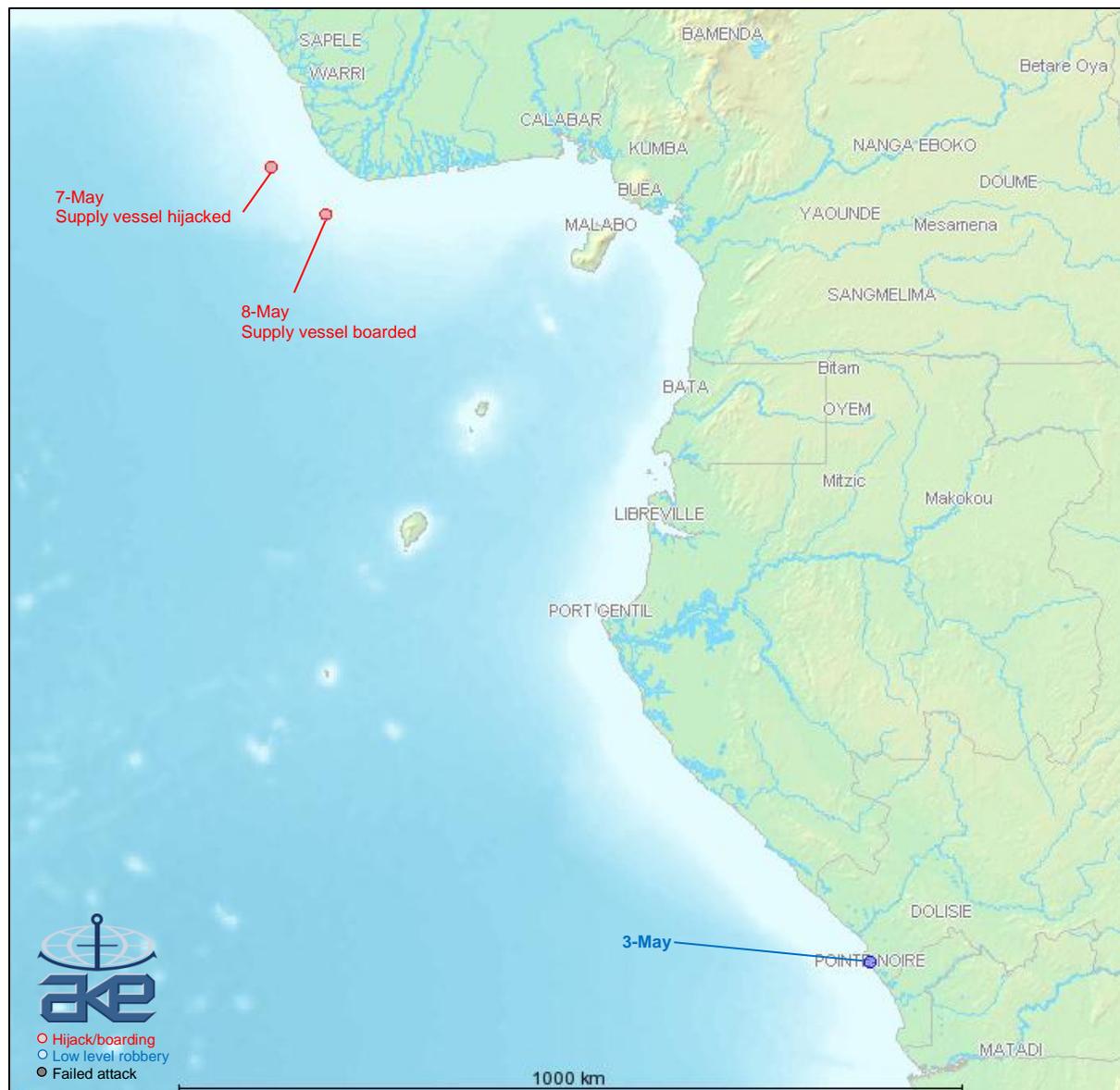
No vessels were released for ransom this month.

Political/regulatory developments

On 15 May helicopters launched from EUNAVFOR ships off the coast of Somalia attacked a logistics base north of Haraardheere. The operation reportedly destroyed a number of skiffs on the beach, but no human casualties were reported. The attack was the EU's first attempt at targeting pirates on shore since the EU Council extended the navy's operational mandate in March to allow airborne attacks on inland waterways and coastal areas up to 2km inland. The tactical escalation is a reflection of the difficulties EUNAVFOR and other naval forces experience whilst trying to police several thousand square kilometres of ocean with just a handful of ships; the hope is that targeting stockpiles of skiffs, weapons, fuel and supplies onshore will be a more effective means of disruption. The EU mandate is currently limited to airborne attacks; 'boots on the ground' is not an option at this point.

The long-debated move is likely to have significant impact on pirate bases in the short term as further operations have already been planned, according to the EU. However in the longer term pirates, who have consistently shown their ability to evolve tactics in response to naval operations, are likely to respond by relocating logistics bases further inland and possibly amongst coastal communities to deter attacks due to heightened risk of civilian injuries.

West Africa



Current Analysis

Attacks dropped from April to May, with just three incidents reported. One attack was an incident of low level armed robbery at Pointe Noire anchorage; this location regularly experiences low level attacks which can be avoided by simple mitigation techniques, first of which should be crew alertness and preparedness. The other two attacks were higher level incidents off Nigeria. Operators should remain wary that many incidents go unreported off West Africa, and official statistics do not reflect the realities of the maritime security environment.

Notable incidents

Two supply vessels were attacked off Nigeria within 24 hours of each other. On 7 May a supply vessel carrying 17 crew was hijacked in position 04:26.19N - 004:58.44E approximately 40NM from the coast and held for around 11 hours before being released without harm. On 8 May six armed pirates launched a skiff from a fishing trawler, and boarded a supply vessel towing a barge in position

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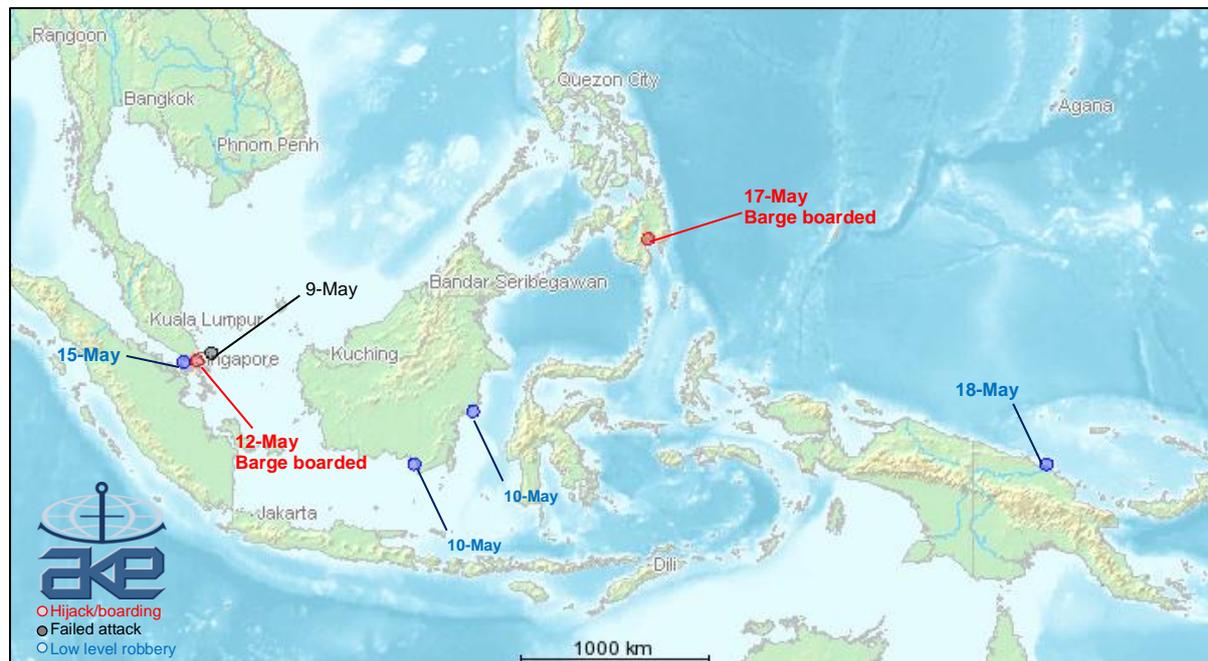


03:53.5N – 005:35.9E, approximately 20NM south of Pennington oil terminal and 45NM south east of 7 May's attack. The crew mustered in the citadel for 1.5 hours, before emerging to find possessions stolen and minor damage to the vessel. The two attacks demonstrate the increasing threat to supply vessels off West Africa; 8 May's attack in particular confirms previous AKE warnings of the increased use of motherships off Nigeria.

Political/regulatory developments

The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) presented a Bill on Piracy and Other Unlawful Acts at Sea to the National Assembly. The precise details of the bill are unclear, and must be debated by various stakeholders before it enters into force; it was first proposed in 2008. The proposed bill and the delays involved in its creation are a reminder that Nigeria remains underequipped both legally and militarily to adequately respond to developing maritime security threats in the Gulf of Guinea.

Asia



Current Analysis

Total pirate activity in the region dropped by four from last month's total of 11 attacks. Of the seven attacks recorded, three were serious instances of vessels being attacked or boarded underway. The remaining four attacks were instances of attempted or successful robbery targeting vessels at anchor.

Notable incidents

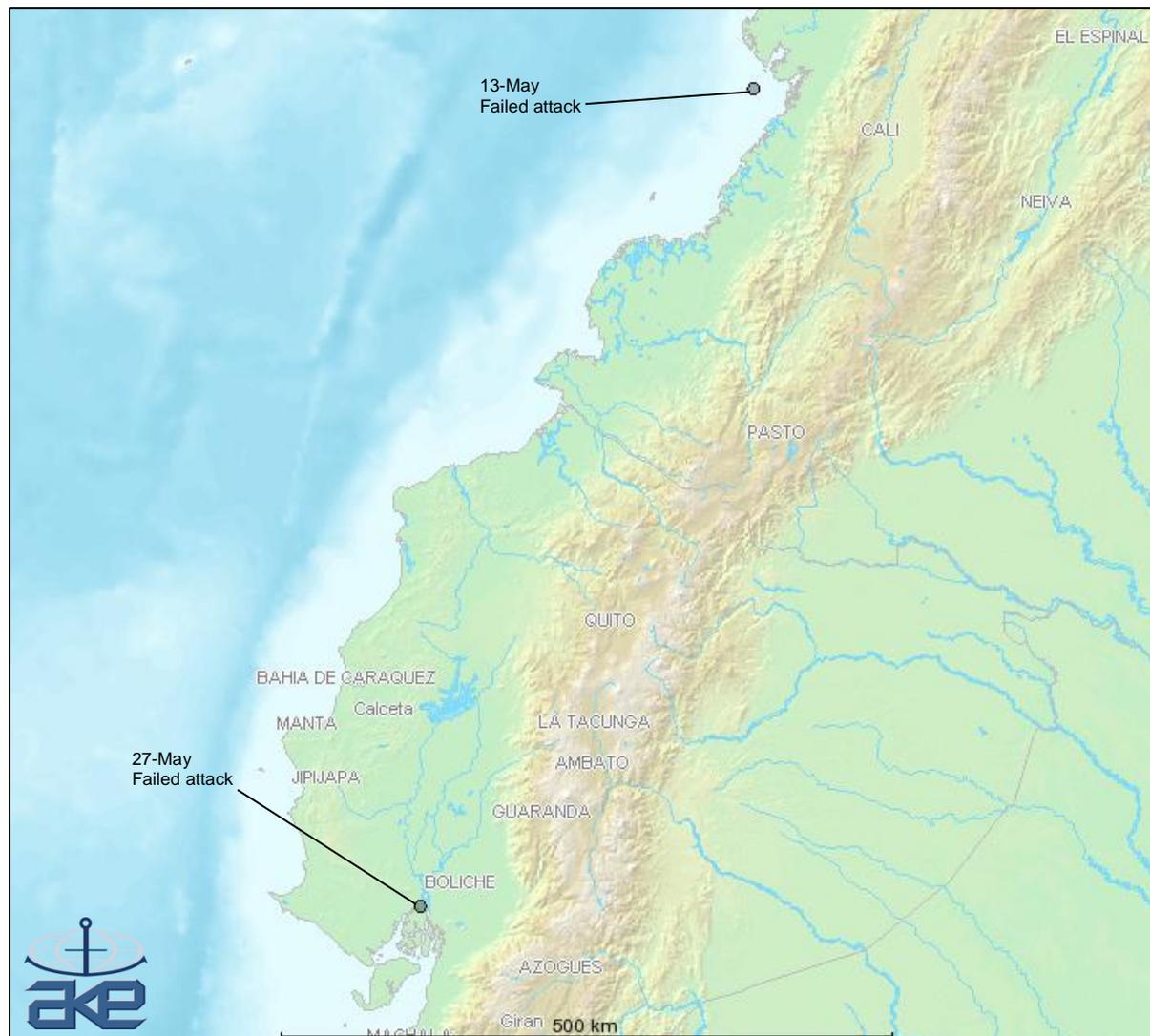
On 9 May, eight to ten armed men in two skiffs approached and boarded Singapore-flagged tanker Savvy, underway at 0208 local time approximately 30nm northeast of Horsburgh Lighthouse, Singapore. The crew were able to create a safe room by sealing access leading to the accommodation block and engine room. After about 20 minutes, the pirates failed to gain access to the crew and escaped. The attack comes less than a month after seven armed men boarded a Panama-flagged tanker 20NM from Horsburgh Lighthouse on 17 April. On that occasion the crew were threatened and robbed before the attackers escaped.

On 12 and 17 May, barges were boarded and robbed off Singapore and Davo, Philippines. Tugs and barges remain at a heightened risk of boarding and theft due to their slow speed and ease of access.

Political/regulatory developments

On 8 May, 29 Chinese fisherman from three boats in the Yellow Sea were detained by North Korean gunmen, who reportedly demanded payment for their release. One of the vessels' owners told news sources the captors demanded a payment of US\$190,000 for the return of the men and the boats. The men were released after 13 days, and it is unclear whether a ransom was paid. The incident took place after Beijing criticised a North Korean rocket launch and proposed nuclear test, which could explain provocative behaviour backed by Pyongyang.

Americas



Current Analysis

Two attacks were officially recorded in the region in May, compared to April's total of one attack. On 13 May four men boarded Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier Steven C whilst drifting and awaiting berthing instructions at 0545 local time around 9NM from Isla La Palma, Colombia. The alarm was raised, and the crew mustered and reportedly approached the robbers with steel pipes causing the men to abandon the attack. On 27 May four robbers armed with knives boarded a berthed container ship during a customs inspection at Contecon Guayaquil Terminal, Ecuador, but jumped overboard and escaped after seeing crew alertness.

Under reporting of incidents is common and operators should be advised that instances of opportunistic criminality, petty theft and armed robbery in or near anchorages or ports in the region are likely to occur more frequently than is officially reported. In addition, attacks on local fishing vessels, particularly off the northern coast of Guyana, Venezuela and occasionally Suriname, occur with relative frequency but are unlikely to be officially reported. Such incidents are evidence of criminal activity spreading to water, which, in the longer term, could affect foreign vessels if left unchecked.



Currently Held Vessels

Name	Date Taken	Flag	Type	Crew
Smyrni	10 May 12	Liberia	Tanker	26
Naham 3	26 Mar 12	Oman	Fishing Vessel	15
Royal Grace	2 Mar 12	Panama	Cargo	23
Free Goddess	8 Feb 12	Liberia	Cargo	21
Liquid Velvet	31 Oct 11	Marshall Island	Tanker	22
Aride*	30 Oct 11	Seychelles	Fishing Vessel	2
Fardous	13 Feb 11	Yemen	Fishing Vessel	8
Shiuh Fu No. 1	25 Dec 10	Taiwan	Fishing Vessel	26
Orna	20 Dec 10	Panama	Cargo Vessel	19
Albedo	26 Nov 10	Malaysia	Cargo Vessel	23
Choizil*	2 Nov 10	South Africa	Yacht	2
Prantalay 11, 12	20 Apr 10	Thai	Fishing Boats	57
Jih-Chun Tsai 68*	30 Mar 10	Taiwan	Fishing Vessel	11
Iceberg	29 Mar 10	Panama	Roll-On Roll-Off	24
Socotra 1	25 Dec 09	Yemen	Cargo Vessel	6

*Vessel abandoned or destroyed, crew still held

Released Vessels

Name	Vessel Type	Flag	Crew	Date Taken	Date Released	Days in Captivity	Ransom (US\$M)
No vessels released for ransom							

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