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The Security and Risk Report Series focuses on:

- Operational risks in areas of instability which could affect the safety of commercial and private vessels and personnel ashore and at sea.

- In country reporting on key countries where civil conflict are directly impacting on maritime operations; and

- Reporting and analysis of incidents of terrorism, piracy and other related criminal activity.

MAST has a global reach and presence, delivering first hand, accurate and exclusive intelligence. MAST is entrenched and committed in continuing to support and promote the awareness of the very real risks that seafarers and other stakeholders face.

This Intelligence Report Series is a brief snapshot of MAST’s Intelligence capabilities. MAST Intelligence specialises in providing clients with a suite of products and services, including: political and economic risk analysis, detailed port and vessel security briefs, vessel passage plans, threat and risk mitigation and travel risk management.

Working closely in conjunction with a host of experts, MAST Intelligence offers a market leading service pertaining to all maritime affairs.

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12th February 2020

Issue 215 of the series reviews, analyses and threat assesses the fragile and conflict affected coastal states Libya, Somalia and Yemen. The Mediterranean migrant crisis, incidents affecting maritime security and influencing maritime news are also reported and analysed, focusing on the keys theatres of maritime instability.
Incidents:
1. Duty A/B on board anchored Singapore-flagged tugboat sighted two suspicious fishing boats approaching the tug boat at 1910 LT in position 21°41.72N - 091°50.34E, Martabari anchorage, Bangladesh. AB saw several perpetrators armed with knives boarding the tug boat. He reported to the OOW, who immediately activated the general alarm. Perpetrators escaped from the tug boat when they realised their presence was discovered. Crew conducted a search and found some mooring ropes and shackles were stolen. No crew injured and no reported damage to the tug boat. Reported (ReCAAP) 7th Feb. (Not shown on chart)

MAST advice on increased tensions in region:
Following the death of Qasem Soleimani, a response from Iran is expected in the region. MAST strongly advises against deploying armed guards during transits in the Strait of Hormuz/Persian Gulf. Unarmed guards, trained in threat recognition and well schooled in the patterns of life at sea in the region are recommended. Masters should adhere to BMP 5 recommendations and ensure relevant agencies such as UKMTO are informed before transiting the region. Additionally, crew should run citadel training drills before entering the Strait. Should the vessel be boarded, the authorities should be informed and crew housed in the citadel.

HMAS Toowoomba starts operations in Middle East
The Royal Australian Navy’s Anzac class frigate HMAS Toowoomba has arrived in Bahrain and started operations in the Middle East under Operation MANITOU, as part of the Combined Maritime Forces. Minister for Defence Senator Linda Reynolds said HMAS Toowoomba will perform key roles such as counter-terrorism, preventing piracy and ensuring freedom of navigation.

Somalia’s untapped Oil and new petroleum bill creating further divisions
President of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo on Saturday 8th signed into law the controversial petroleum bill, paving the way to extraction and exportation of the end products. For months, the law had caused divisions with Somalia, with regional states protesting certain clauses which they deem controversial. Jubaland and Puntland have strongly opposed certain provisions where they termed “draconian” and “unreasonable” after a tussle in both houses.

Illegal Fishing Is Destabilizing Somalia
More than a dozen countries are fishing illegally in Somali waters, and in the waters of other African coastal countries, according to a new study, led by Sarah Glaser, acting director at Secure Fisheries, a project of the US nonprofit One Earth Future. The study shows that this fishing pressure undermined Somali coastal communities by driving unfair and unmanaged competition for finite natural resources.

HMS Defender Makes Second Drugs Bust
Whilst operating in direct support of Combined Task Force 150 in the Indian Ocean, Her Majesty’s Ship (HMS) DEFENDER, a United Kingdom Royal Navy destroyer, seized 2,500kg of hashish with an estimated regional wholesale value of around $1.3 million US Dollars. This was her second significant drugs bust in as many months, as on 19 December she seized and destroyed a record haul of crystal methamphetamine.

To see MAST’s services in the Indian Ocean Region, please click here.
Skepticism surrounds Somalia’s new surveillance cameras
Al-Shabaab militants reportedly destroyed four newly installed surveillance cameras in the capital Mogadishu, blowing them up with explosive devices in late January. Somalia’s national security forces installed the closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in December in a move to cut crime and also prevent attacks by the Islamist militant group, Al-Shabaab.

Tension high in Mandera over fugitive Somali minister
Tension has remained high in Mandera town for the fourth day now with reports that troops of the Somali National Army troops are converging along the border, planning to raid a hotel where a Jubaland minister is allegedly holed up. Somalia has accused Nairobi of harbouring fugitive Jubbaland security minister Abdirashid Hassan Abdinur.

Kenyan police pursuing Al-Shabaab militants
Kenyan police said on Friday 7th they are pursuing Al-Shabaab militants who killed an elderly person and burnt a village in the northeastern region near Somalia border on Thursday night. Northeastern regional police commander Paul Soi said the militants, who stormed Ijara village, were repulsed after killing the old man whose son works at the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF).

Al-Shabaab Militants Launch Attack On KDF Convoy
Al-Shabaab militants have launched a daring raid on Kenyan military convoy in southern Somalia on Thursday 6th, local residents said. The attack which began with landmine blast struck KDF convoy near Dhobley town has triggered a face-to-face gunfight between the Kenyan forces and Al-Shabaab fighters.

Puntland shuts down NIEC’s office over electoral law deadlock
Puntland on Thursday 6th announced it had shut down the office of Somalia’s National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) in its capital, Garowe amid rift over country’s new electoral law. Garowe Online reported.

Somali leaders urged to renew efforts to defeat Al-Shabaab
The United States has called on the Somali government and the five regional states to renew their mutual commitment to defeat Al-Shabab as part of efforts to stabilize the Horn of African nation. The U.S. embassy in Somalia said the Somali leaders must negotiate and work together to establish security and ensure credible elections take place for 2020/2021.

Analysis
Al-Shabaab continues to mount operations throughout the country, despite efforts by US Central Command to degrade its capabilities with ongoing airstrikes which aim to remove AS leadership. It is questionable as to whether this “body count” policy is working.

Threat Assessment
The political situation has seen increased tension between regional states and the Federal Government. Should this continue, there is an opportunity for criminal organisations to return to their previous maritime activities. Al-Shabaab continues to challenge the government and efforts to disrupt its operations continue, although AMISOM forces will withdraw some time in 2019. The trade in illegal charcoal by terror and crime groups continues, although the Combined Maritime Forces and UN are working on measures to prevent it. Youth unemployment in Somalia has not improved with 67% of Somali male youths aged between 14 to 29 unemployed. Pirate financiers offer lucrative and attractive opportunities, and were seen to be increasingly active in the last inter-monsoon period. Recent incidents off Somalia have highlighted the robust protections offered by both BMP5 and well trained, vigilant armed protection teams. Illegal fishing has returned to the region and there are wider political concerns that it could spark a resurgence in maritime crime unless checked. There is a risk that complacency in some quarters has seen a reduction in PMSC presence in these waters that could result in a piracy success. A lack of adherence to BMP5 protocol, particularly not maintaining a safe distance off the coast, has increased risks to shipping. Merchant vessels would be wise to maintain the same distance from the coast, particularly ensuring that the Socotra Gap isn’t taken. All vessels are advised to update risk assessments and register with UKMTO/MSCHOA prior to entering the Indian Ocean High Risk Area (HRA).
Yemen

The internationally recognized Yemeni government on Saturday 8th repeated its call for international aid organizations to move their offices from Houthi-held Sanaa to the southern port city of Aden. Salem Al-Khanbashi, Yemen’s deputy prime minister, said Aden was much safer and that the government would facilitate the work of UN bodies if they agreed to relocate.

Hospitals attacked, disrupting healthcare
 Attacks on health facilities in Yemen’s Marib province, East of the capital Sana’a, have left some 15,000 people – many of them displaced from other parts of the country – with severely limited options for medical care, the UN said on Monday 10th.

Prisoner swap talks underway in Jordan
 Associated Press reported on Feb. 10th that UN-backed talks to arrange a prisoner swap began on Monday in Jordan with little fanfare. Although heavy clashes continue on the ground, the resumption of talks signals modest headway in diplomatic efforts.

Sudan rethinks participation in Yemen conflict, withdraws troops
 Sudan is reconsidering its participation in the armed conflict in Yemen and gradually reducing its forces there, Information Minister Faisal Mohamed Salih has said, Trend reports citing Sputnik. “Currently, there is a revision of the whole war in Yemen, even among the coalition’s principal countries, and there is an opinion that military activities will not solve the problem, and will likely to compound it”, Salih said on Sunday 9th at the ongoing summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa.

Yemen Army Downs Saudi Spy Drone over Hodeidah
 Yemeni air defense forces downed the drone with a surface-to-air missile as it was on a reconnaissance mission over Kilo 16 district of the province, located around 230 kilometers west of the capital Sana’a, on Saturday 8th evening, an unnamed Yemeni military official said, according to Press TV.

Yemeni government troops defect to Southern Transitional Council
 Despite being on the same side in the war against the Iran-allied Houthi rebels, the internationally recognised government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council appear headed for another confrontation. The dispute stems from a government military battalion on the island of Socotra defecting to the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC). A military source told Al-Masdar News that the 1st Infantry Brigade’s Coastal Protection Battalion in Socotra pledged allegiance to the STC.

Yemeni gov’t forces shell Houthi weapons depot in port city of Hodeidah
 Forces loyal to Yemen’s government launched artillery shelling against weapons depot of the Houthi rebels in the country’s Red Sea port city of Hodeidah, local sources told Xinhua on Saturday 8th. “One of the Houthi weapons depots was targeted by the government forces using artillery shelling that began on Friday evening and continued sporadically overnight,” a military official said on condition of anonymity.

Aid to Houthi-controlled Yemen to be cut back over risk it can be diverted
 The world’s biggest humanitarian aid operation will be scaled-down next month in Houthi-controlled Yemen, because donors and aid workers say they can no longer ensure that food for millions of people is reaching those who need it. Aid agency sources told Reuters Houthi authorities in northern Yemen were obstructing efforts to get food and other help to those in need, to an extent that is no longer tolerable.

Belgian region halts arms sales to Saudi Arabia over ‘Yemen drama’
 The Belgian region of Wallonia, home to the FN Herstal and CMI arms plants, said on Thursday 6th it had halted weapons sales to Saudi Arabia’s defence ministry because of the war in Yemen. Confirming a report in the newspaper L’Echo, Belgium’s Wallonia said Minister-President Elio di Rupo had “the Yemen drama” in mind when refusing an export licence to the Saudi air force.

To see the latest threat analysis and Yemen port information in MASTOPDEIA, please click here.

MST recommends BMP measures be enforced and watches strengthened during transits in the region.
The United Nations Higher Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) on Friday 7th said that more than 1,000 illegal immigrants have been rescued by the Libyan Coast Guard so far this year. As of Feb. 6th, some 1,040 refugees and migrants have been registered as rescued or intercepted at sea by the Libyan Coast Guard and have disembarked in Libya, an increase of 121 percent compared to the same period in 2019, the UNHCR said.

**Migrant crossings 2017-2020. Source: UNHCR**

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**91 migrants feared missing in Mediterranean**

A boat with at least 91 migrants on board floating in the Mediterranean Sea off the Libyan coast is feared missing. A hotline for migrants in distress at sea says Libyan authorities on Sunday refused to attempt to rescue the migrants because detention camps are 'full'.

**Italy and Libyan coastguard deal renewed**

The renewal of a controversial 2017 agreement between Italy and the Libyan coastguard governing migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea officially entered into effect on Sunday, February 2nd for a period of three years. Under the terms of the new agreement, which aims to curb the arrival of migrants in Europe, Italy will provide financial assistance to the Libyan authorities in order that the Libyan coastguard is trained in rescue operations.

**5 migrants killed in accident as being smuggled in Libya’s Sabha**

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Thursday 6th said that 5 migrants were killed and 12 others were injured in a traffic accident, as they were being smuggled in the southwestern Libyan city of Sabha. ‘Five migrants, and one Libyan national killed in smuggling incident in Sabha, Libya,’ the IOM tweeted.

**Oxfam accuses EU of tying aid money to migration curbs**

Oxfam has accused the European Union of using African aid and development funding to strong-arm African countries into limiting migration to the continent. The EU Trust Fund (EUTF) for Africa was established in 2015 to address the root causes of mass migration from some of Africa’s poorest and most unstable countries.

**The current migrant smuggling situation**

The past week has again seen significant numbers attempt to cross the Med, forcing NGO rescue groups and the Libyan Coast Guard into action. Suggestions that Libya ignored migrants in distress are extremely concerning, and will no doubt be fully investigated. However, there is very little the international community can do to encourage the country to be more responsive, given the conflict ongoing in and around Tripoli, where many migrants have been taken and placed in to detention centres. The renewal of the deal between Italy and the Libyan Coast Guard has been met with little enthusiasm, particularly by NGO groups who have accused the Libyan CG of harassment at sea in recent months.
Libya

The United Nations expects eastern Libyan tribal leaders to submit by Thursday 6th their list of conditions to reopen blocked oil terminals, UN envoy Ghassan Salame said. Libya’s oil production had dropped sharply since groups loyal to eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar began a blockade on Jan. 18, closing ports and fields in the east and south. Salame told reporters in Geneva in a televised news conference he had spoken to tribal leaders allied to Haftar on Wednesday and asked them to specify their demands.

Italy seizes freighter accused of smuggling Turkish arms to Libya

Italian anti-organised crime and special operations police units have seized a freighter and are investigating whether it was used for arms smuggling after a sailor offered information on the role he said the ship played in the illegal arms trade between Turkey and Libya. The Lebanese-registered BANA had stopped at the port of Messina in Genoa, northwest Italy, for technical checks when the 25-year-old sailor took images showing weapons that he said he had taken in the ship’s cargo hold, the newspaper said.

Haftar sued in US for alleged war crimes

Six Libyan families sued Libyan renegade commander Khalifa Haftar and the United Arab Emirates government in a federal U.S. court on Monday 10th for their alleged roles in committing war crimes in Libya.

Libya’s UN-backed government accuses east-based army of “intransigence”

Libya’s United Nations-backed government on Monday 10th accused the rival east-based army of “intransigence” by refusing to agree to a ceasefire proposal during the Libyan 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) talks in Geneva. “The committee negotiated with the UN Mission about a ceasefire in all of Libya, disengaged forces, return of displaced people, and ending the bloodshed between the Libyans,” General Ahmad Abu-Shahma, head of the UN-backed government’s military committee, said in a statement.

U.S. urges Libya to dismantle militias

U.S. Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland on Monday 10th urged Libyan authorities to dismantle militias and armed groups in the country. The ambassador made his remarks during a meeting with Fathi Bashaga, interior minister of the UN-backed government.

Shutting down Al-Zawiya Refinery will cost Libya significant financial losses

The Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) confirmed on Monday 10th that it was forced to shut down Al-Zawiya Refinery on Saturday as a result of a valve closure in the Hamada region, on the main pipeline between Sharara field and Al-Zawiya Refinery, halting production at the field. The NOC said in a statement on Facebook that Al-Zawiya Refinery’s shutdown will exacerbate the problem of managing, importing and distributing fuel and will lead to very significant costs to the Libyan treasury to import additional fuel to replace the refinery’s production.

UN-brokered Libya talks end with no formal truce deal

Libya’s warring sides ended several days of UN-brokered talks without reaching a deal to consolidate a provisional ceasefire in and around the capital, the UN said. Another round of talks was proposed for later this month “as both sides agreed to the need to continue the negotiations,” according to a statement from the UN support mission in Libya released on Saturday 8th.

Social media exposes Libyan warlord’s mercenaries

Foreign mercenaries fighting in Libyan renegade commander Khalifa Haftar’s ranks normally remain out of the public eye, but photos and videos they share on social media reveal their true nature. One such video shows African militias in a vehicle bearing the logo of so-called Haftar forces. It attracted attention because it showed them speaking a language other than Arabic.

IOM calls for prosecuting migrant smugglers in Libya

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Thursday called for prosecuting migrant smugglers and traffickers in Libya. The inter-governmental organization related to the United Nations made the appeal following the report that 5 migrants were killed and 12 others injured in a traffic accident as they were being smuggled in the southwestern Libyan city of Sabha late Wednesday (5th) night.

To read MAST’s Libyan Country report on MASTOPEDIA, please click here.
Incidents:

1. Late Report: Two robbers in a boat boarded anchored Marshall Islands–flagged tanker at 0130 UTC in position 06:15.7N – 003:19.1E, Lagos Anchorage, Nigeria. They tried to cease the duty AB, on routine rounds, who managed to escape. Alarm raised. Hearing the alerted crew the robbers escaped without stealing anything. Incident reported to Nigerian Navy. A patrol boat was dispatched to the location. Reported (IMB) 1st Feb.

Ghana Maritime Authority expresses concern over GoG security situation

Thomas Alonsi, Director-General of Ghana Maritime Authority, has expressed concern over the rise of kidnapping cases in the Gulf of Guinea. “It is evident by reports from the IMB showing that even though there was a decline in overall worldwide incidents of piracy last year, there was an alarming increase in crew kidnappings across the Gulf of Guinea,” he said at the Fourth Executive Council Meeting of the African Maritime Administration.

Inside Atlas Cove Island of oil thieves

Residents of villages located in the Atlas Cove area of Lagos State recently heaved a sigh of relief following the eviction of some persons suspected to be pipeline vandals from the area by the military. Over 300 sections of vandalized pipeline were discovered in the long stretch between Atlas Cove and Ilashe village, which according to officials of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), could be equated to travelling from Marina to Badagry.

Navy Intercepts Suspected Smugglers, Seizes Petrol, Rice

The Nigerian Navy has intercepted suspected smugglers on the Cross River State waterways, with 692 bags of foreign rice and 181 drums of Premium Motor Spirit or petrol. Five suspects arrested aboard four boats on two separate occasions are all Nigerians: Clement Okon Chali, Michael Ita Effiong, Felix Sunday, Aniefiok Effiong and Sunday Etim Bassey.

ECSA raises the alarm about the Gulf of Guinea

At the ECR Conference on Maritime Security and the Blue Economy in the European Parliament on Feb. 6th, ECSA raises the alarm about the dire security situation in the Gulf of Guinea. “Urgent action has to be taken by the EU right away. The new European Commission wants to be a geopolitical Commission, and this is a topic that the geopolitical Commission can deliver on,” said Martin Dorsman, ECSA’s Secretary General.

Ivorian security forces confiscate $40 million worth of cocaine

Security forces in Ivory Coast have confiscated $40 million of cocaine in the country’s coastlines. This seizure, which occurred on Tuesday, Feb. 4th, is the biggest the country has ever recorded. Communication Advisor, Yves Zogbo Jr, stated that “security forces launched a maritime operation to seize 411 kilograms of cocaine on the high seas.” The cargo is believed to have arrived as a single consignment from Brazil before being transferred onto three smaller boats, he said.

Nigeria Loses N522bn in 28,349 Oil Spills

Nigeria lost N522.2million through 28,349.72 barrels of crude oil spilled into the environment by oil and gas companies in 2019. The National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, NOSDRA, disclosed to Nigerian media.

To see MAST Services in the region, please click here. And to read Nigeria’s country report, please click here.
South East Asia

Responding to questions in Parliament, Singapore’s Minister for Defence Dr. Ng Eng Hen has indicated that the pirates responsible for recent incidents in the Singapore Strait are not from Singapore. Ng says the number of piracy and sea robbery incidents occurring in the Singapore Strait fluctuates considerably from year to year. For example in 2014, 2015 and 2019 there were 48, 104 and 31 such incidents. But in the remaining years over the last decade, the average was around 12.

Incidents:
1. Robber spotted in the engine room of underway India-flagged tanker at 0252 LT in position 01:15.68N - 104:10.52E, approx 5.2nm from Nonga Point, Pulau Batam, Indonesia (Eastbound lane TSS). The master raised the alarm, mustered the crew and conducted search for the perpetrator. Some valves (engine spares) were reported missing from the engine room. The master reported incident to Singapore VTIS East. No crew injured. Reported (ReCAAP) 9th Feb.

2. Six robbers armed with knives were seen in the engine room of underway Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier at 0220 LT in position 01:15.72N - 104:8.47E, approx 5nm from Nonga Point, Pulau Batam, Indonesia (Eastbound lane TSS). Robbers ran onto the deck when they saw the crew. He reported the incident to Singapore VTIS East and requested to go to Singapore to conduct further search. Upon arrival in Singapore, the Singapore Police Coast Guard boarded the ship to conduct further search. No perpetrators were found and nothing was stolen. Reported (ReCAAP) 9th Feb.

3. Alert crew onboard Indonesia-flagged tug moored to a buoy noticed three robbers on deck and raised the alarm at 2120 UTC in position 01:03.89N – 103:53.98E, Batam Island, Indonesia. The crew confronted the robbers who were able to escape with the assistance of two of their accomplices waiting in their boat. Incident reported to the police who boarded the tug for investigations. A search was carried out. It was noticed the padlock to the storeroom was damaged and ship’s equipment stolen. All crew safe. Reported (IMB) 2nd Feb.

Thailand refuses entry to cruise ship with no coronavirus cases
Thailand has barred passengers from Holland America’s cruise ship MS Westerdam from disembarking, its health minister said on Tuesday, the latest country to turn it away amid fears of the coronavirus despite no confirmed infections on board.

Philippine leader terminates troop agreement with U.S.
Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has given formal notice to the United States of his decision to scrap a bilateral Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), officials said on Tuesday, following through on repeated threat to downgrade the defense alliance, Reuters reported on Feb. 11th.

‘Doctor kidnapped by Abu Sayyaf to treat sick Abu Sayyaf leader’
Abu Sayyaf bandits kidnapped a doctor in Sulu last week to treat their leader, who is suffering from tuberculosis. Lt. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Western Mindanao Command chief, said Abu Sayyaf leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan needs immediate medical assistance.

Philippines signs deal with Japanese firm for 2 patrol ships
Japanese shipbuilder Mitsubishi Shipbuilding Co. Ltd. has signed a P6.7 billion (JPY 14.5-B) deal to build two 94-meter patrol ships for the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), in a bid to beef up its maritime capabilities.

Curfew in ESSZone extended to Feb. 20th
The curfew in the waters off seven districts in the Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZone) has been extended until Feb 20th. Sabah Police Commissioner Datuk Omar Mammah in a statement yesterday said the curfew from 6 pm until 6 am covered the waters of Tawau, Semporna, Kunak, Lahad Datu, Kinabatangan, Sandakan and Beluran.

To see MAST’s services in the region, please click here.
Central and South America

Nothing significant to report.

Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

Standing advice:
The repercussions of a vessel being caught acting as a mule with drugs stowed will depend on the type, amount and national laws, but may be disruptive and costly. When and if operating in these areas, especially Columbia and Peru, it is advised that:

- Potential stowage areas such as rudder shafts are denied as far as possible, and/or routinely searched.
- Access points are closely monitored by a vigilant watch for the duration of the vessel’s call at port.
Nothing significant to report.

Severe Weather Warnings

Warnings detailed on this page are from the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and are issued by respective Regional Specialised Metrological Centres, Tropical Cyclone Centres or National Meteorological Services. For further information on severe weather warnings please click here.