

Weekly Security & Risk Report

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Issue 261 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.

Coronavirus Port and Terminal Restrictions

The situation remains extremely fluid. For the most recent updates on closures and re-openings, MAST Security recommends using the Wilhemsen Covid-19 Global Port Restrictions Map. [Please Click Here](#) to visit their site.

MAST Security: After a very challenging year for all in maritime, we would like to wish all of our readers across the globe a very prosperous, peaceful and safe 2021.

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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www.mast-security.com

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Indian Ocean Region

The guided-missile cruiser USS Port Royal (CG 73), deployed to U.S. Fifth Fleet and operating in support of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), interdicted a shipment of more than 1100lbs. (521kg) of suspected narcotics from a dhow in the international waters of the North Arabian Sea, Dec. 18th. Twenty-three bags of narcotics were discovered and tested, resulting in a seizure of approximately 150lbs. (45kg) of suspected hash, 400lbs. (181kg) of methamphetamines and more than 600lbs. (272kg) of heroin.

Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

Military Exercise of the coast off Pakistan

It has been reported to UKMTO that Naval ships will carry out Surface, Anti-Aircraft and Depth Charge LIVE FIRING PRACTICE between 0400 and 1700UTC from 01-04, 07-11, 14-18, 21-24 and 28th-31st Dec 2020 in the following areas:

- A. 24-19.00N 066-58.00E 24-00.00N 066-39.00E
24-11.00N 066-27.00E 24-24.30N 066-42.00E
- B. 24-36.02N 063-15.03E 24-36.02N 062-30.03E
24-21.02N 063-15.03E 24-21.02N 062-30.03E
- C. 24-36.02N 062-30.03E 24-36.02N 061-45.03E
24-21.02N 062-30.03E 24-21.02N 061-45.03E
- D. DEPTH CHARGE FIRING AREA
24-16.18N 066-20.50E 24-22.00N 066-27.00E
24-16.30N 066-33.00E 24-10.30N 066-27.00E

Ships and Crafts are to keep well clear of assigned danger area on above specified schedule.

Vessel strikes mine in Southern Red Sea

Associated Press reported that a ship had struck a suspected naval mine on Dec. 25th. The coalition did not identify the vessel or elaborate on the attack. The U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, which patrols the Mideast, did not respond to a request for comment. UKMTO has also not commented on the incident. Details of the vessel involved in the incident and the damage caused have yet to be made public.

Iran slams spike in US military activity in Persian Gulf

Amid heightened tensions in the Persian Gulf, marked by media reports of an Israeli submarine arriving in the region, and US warships deployed for naval drills, the Iranian Foreign Min-

istry has voiced hopes for de-escalation ahead of the upcoming change of administration in the White House, while intimating that Tehran was ready for "any scenario".

Cruises could return to the Middle East in January 2021

The UAE and Oman seem set to reopen their ports to cruises in January 2021. Details from MSC Cruises and AIDA Cruises show that seven-day trips around the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Gulf will restart in January 29 2021. AIDAprima is set for a seven-day voyage from Dubai to Muscat, where it will stay for two days before moving on to Abu Dhabi for another couple of nights. Finally it will return to Dubai for two nights.

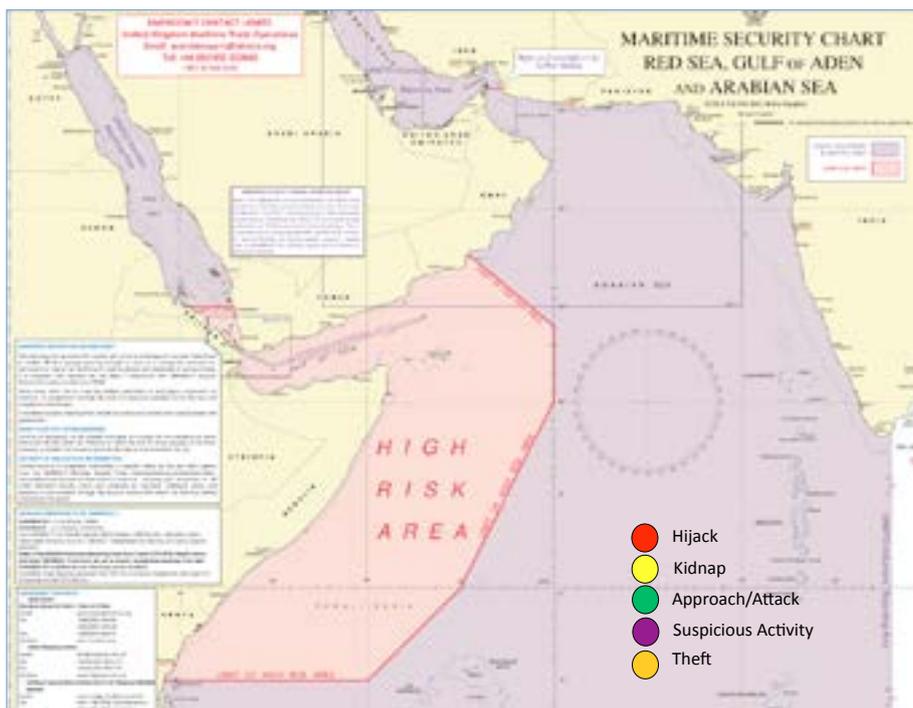
Indian Navy Seeks Third Aircraft Carrier

The Indian Navy has called upon the Indian defence establishment for a third aircraft carrier, while calling it a tactical necessity, Indian Express has reported. The Indian Navy currently one operational aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and a second, aircraft carrier "Indigenous Aircraft Carrier 1 (IAC 1)" is currently being built.

Operation ATALANTA, EUTM Somalia and EUCAP Somalia: mandates extended for two more years

The EU has prolonged the mandates of its two Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions in Somalia and Operation ATALANTA. The mandate of EUCAP Somalia, the EU's civilian capacity-building mission, EUTM Somalia, the EU's military training mission, and Operation ATALANTA, the EU's executive military maritime operation, will now run until 31 December 2022.

To see MAST's services in the Indian Ocean Region, [please click here.](#)





Somalia

There is growing concern the tensions between Kenya and Somalia may erupt into fighting, due to a military buildup along the two countries' borders. The Somali federal government has sent troops to the border town of Beled-Hawo, while forces from Somalia's Jubaland region, which enjoys a good relationship with Kenya, are stationed in the nearby Kenyan town of Madera, regional media reported on Dec. 24th.

Landmine blast kills 9

At least nine people, including an infant and a woman, were killed when a vehicle carrying civilians in Somalia's Lower Juba region late on Monday 28th struck a landmine, officials said. The incident took place near the vicinity of Taabto, northeast of Dhobley town near the Somali-Kenyan border.

U.S. conducts airstrikes against Al Shabaab

U.S. forces killed multiple explosives experts in Somalia earlier this month who have been linked to the al-Shabaab jihadi terrorist group, officials confirmed Thursday 24th. In coordination with government officials, the U.S. launched two airstrikes Dec. 10 at an Al Shabaab compound in the vicinity of Jilib, Somalia, U.S. Africa Command said.

Somali army kills extremists during clashes with Al Shabaab

At least 7 militants have been killed and dozens wounded during army operations against Al Shabaab in the Gedo region on Friday 24th amid rising tensions in the areas near the Kenyan border. Speaking to Garowe Online, the Somali army's operations commander in the province Col Aden Abdi said the assault was launched following a tip-off about the presence of militants on the outskirts of Garbaharey.

AU forces use 'excessive force' in shooting protesters

Somalia witnessed scenes of violence and chaos as anti-government protests continued for the third week with multiple eyewitness reports of soldiers opening fire on protesters. Vio-

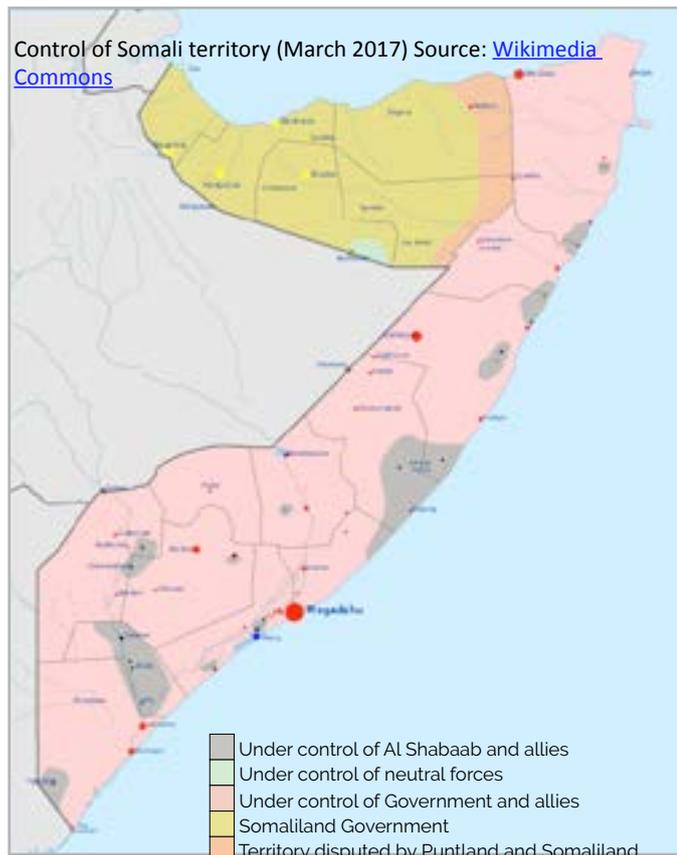
lent clashes have erupted on the streets of Hiran regional capital, Beledweyne between Somali forces and protesters calling for the release of dozens arrested during massive security operations. At least three people were wounded, including a woman, according to hospital sources, Garowe Online reported on Dec. 27th.

Puntland & Galmudug Sign Cooperation Agreement

The Presidents of Galmudug and Puntland, Ahmed Abdi Kariye and Said Abdullahi Deni, signed an agreement on Dec. 24th in Galka'yo, the divided city separately controlled by the two Federal Member States of Somalia. The Puntland and Galmudug Presidents agreed to cooperate on issues ranging from security, to institution building and business.

Will Somaliland's Berbera port be a threat to Djibouti's?

East African competition to provide port and logistics services for landlocked Ethiopia is heating up between Djibouti and Somaliland. Djibouti's port is the main transit point for imports to and exports from Ethiopia, but the government in Addis Ababa wants to diversify its options. Somaliland, an unrecognised breakaway region of Somalia, is home to the Berbera port, where a major expansion is expected to be inaugurated in March of 2021.



Analysis

The expulsion of Kenyan diplomats has been precipitated by the Kenyan government hosting a visit by the leader of Somaliland. The Somalis are further angered by the possibility that Kenya might also recognise the relatively successful (by comparison to Somalia) Somaliland as an independent state at some point. Of course, picking fights with neighbours is an age old trick by failing leaders down the ages to divert attention from internal failings and the poor performance of the government in the lead up to elections.

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. 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

Yemen's President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi has sworn in a new government that was formed thanks to a power-sharing deal brokered by Saudi Arabia last year. The 24-member cabinet, announced last week, was sworn in during a ceremony held on Saturday 26th in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, where Hadi is living. The new government, headed by Prime Minister Maeen Abdul Malik, represents Yemen's northern and southern areas with equal numbers of members from each region.

Houthi threaten to bomb Saudi ports after coalition blocks their ships

Houthi militias on Dec. 23rd threatened to bomb Saudi ports in the Red Sea after their oil tankers were blocked from reaching Al-Hudaydah port in Yemen, Al-Khaleej Online reported. Foreign Minister of the Houthis' self-proclaimed National Salvation Government, Hisham Abdullah, warned that the militias would carry out revenge attacks on ports of countries which form part of the Saudi-led coalition.

Yemen fights cholera outbreak with vaccination drive

Yemen is fighting a cholera outbreak in the southeastern province of Hadramout, with local and international health bodies carrying out an emergency vaccination campaign. Outbreaks in the remote Hajjar district usually last from April to September and cases vanish in the following months. But this year the district's main hospital reported receiving new cases of cholera in October, November and December for the first time in decades.

Houthi militia launch missile targeting Yemen's Al-Jawf

Houthi militants launched a missile targeting Al-Jawf in Yemen, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Saturday 26th. The attack was launched from the governorate of Amran and the missile hit the northern city, the Arab Coalition's spokesperson Col. Turki Al-Maliki said.

UAE scrambles for control in Gulf, complicating regional balance

Apart from building strategic ties with Israel, the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) attempts to control international naval trade in the Gulf and its activities in war-torn Yemen are increasingly becoming a source of concern for regional and global players, Turkish pro-government newspaper, The Daily Sabah, stated on Dec. 24th.

Iranian, Swedish Diplomats Discuss Yemen Crisis

Senior advisor to Iran's foreign minister in special political affairs Ali-Asghar Khaji held talks with Sweden's Special Envoy for Yemen Peter Semneby. During a videoconference call on

Wednesday 23rd, the two sides discussed the latest political developments in Yemen as well as the dire humanitarian situation in the Arab country. In their talks, they highlighted the importance of pushing on with mutual cooperation in order to help settle the Yemen crisis politically.

Martin Griffiths Hopes The Yemen Conflict Would be Solved by 2021

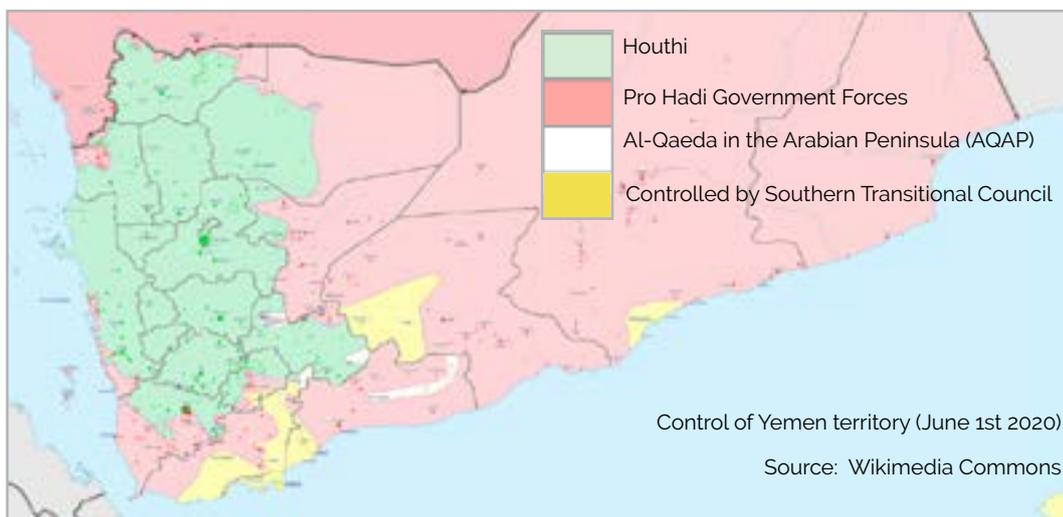
UN envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, called on Sunday 27th for reaching a solution to the conflict in war-torn Yemen by 2021. "2020 has been another year of cruelty for Yemenis with the continuation of bloodshed, displacement, economic freefall, and the outbreak of COVID-19," Griffiths said in an interview with the UN online magazine, Politically Speaking.

Yemen's Humanitarian Crisis Worsened Amid COVID

For Yemen, 2020 has been an apocalyptic year, which has exceeded even the worst forecasts for a country that has in recent years been ravaged by war and humanitarian disaster. The rapprochement between the Houthis — a political and armed movement that controls two-thirds of the population of Yemen's population — and Saudi Arabia at the end of 2019 was viewed with some optimism, yet new clashes have since broken out across the country. Even the outbreak of COVID-19 did not stop the violence. As a result of new clashes, more than 18,600 people died between 1st Jan. and 5th Dec. 2020, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).

To see the latest threat analysis and Yemen port information in [MASTOPDEIA](#), please click here.

MAST recommends BMP measures be enforced and watches strengthened during transits in the region.





Mediterranean

At least 20 migrants and refugees died when their boat capsized off Tunisia's coast as they tried to cross the Mediterranean to the Italian island of Lampedusa, Tunisian authorities said. The Tunisian coastguard rescued five people and the search for more was continuing, National Guard spokesman Ali Ayari told Reuters news agency on Thursday 24th, adding that the boat was overloaded and in poor condition.

Greece Poised to Replace Turkey as NATO Air Power in East Mediterranean

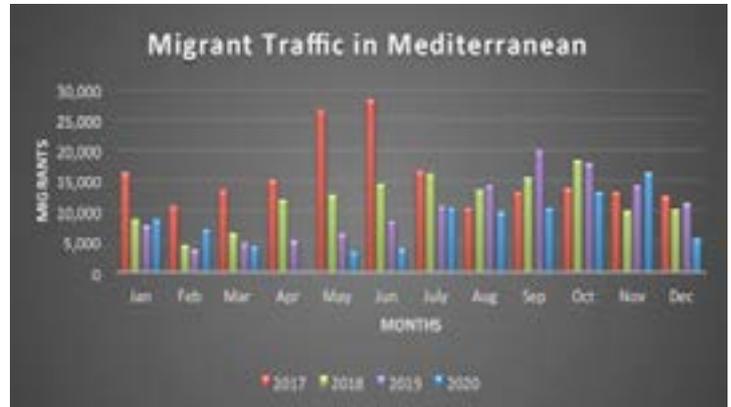
With Greece and Turkey locked in a standoff over rights to the seas, Greece could gain an advantage by taking over Turkey's role as NATO's top air power in the East Mediterranean, where Turkey wants to drill for oil and gas off Greek islands. The Pentagon-linked military news website RealClear Defense showed the US further tilting toward Greece after Turkey was barred from buying American-made F-35 fighter jets following purchase of the Russian-made S-400 missile defense system.

Turkey to Greece: Act responsibly

Turkey on Saturday 26th urged Greece to act in a common sense and responsible manner, responding to a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) recently issued by Greece for a vast area in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean, reports Anadolu Agency. "We see that Greece continues her provocative and escalatory steps in the region," Hami Aksoy, the Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson, said in a statement.

Egyptian army intensifies military exercises over regional concerns

The Egyptian army has intensified the military exercises and drills recently as a "deterrent message" to some regional powers, and an assurance of the armed forces' readiness against any threats, according to political and military experts. "The four strategic directions of Egypt, the Mediterranean at north, Sinai at east, Libya at west and the headwaters of the Nile at south, made the joint exercises very important now," said Samir Farag, an Egyptian military expert.



Migrant crossings 2017-2020. Source: [UNHRC](#)

The current migrant smuggling situation

Despite winter weather conditions, migrants have continued to attempt to cross the Mediterranean in December. Sadly, this has resulted in significant loss of life, with at least 20 migrants losing their lives over the Christmas period off Tunisia.

While Libya has continued to return to port any migrants it catches in its waters, it is clear that the people smugglers continue to exploit surveillance gaps and militia connections in order to continue their operations.

The political landscape remains largely unchanged, although Egypt and Greece are both being viewed more favourably by EU nations who are tiring of Ankara's ongoing behaviour.



Migrant statistics in the Mediterranean (Figures last updated on Dec. 29th 2020). Source: [UNHCR](#)



Libya

Turkey's defence minister said that any attack by eastern Libyan renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar on its personnel in the North African country would be met with force. "A war criminal, murderer Haftar and his supporters must know that they will be seen as a legitimate target in case of any attack on Turkish forces" by his troops, Hulusi Akar said in an address to Turkish units in Tripoli late on Saturday and made available to the media on Sunday 27th.

Turkish visit to Libya is of strategic importance

A visit by Turkish National Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and a high-level military delegation to Libya to inspect the Turkish troops deployed in the country is of great importance in terms of its timing and the critical messages it sent to the Libyan parties. Accompanied by Turkey's Chief of General Staff Gen. Yasar Guler and other military commanders, Akar met with Chairman of Libya's High Council of State Khalid al-Mishri, Defense Minister Salahuddin al-Namroush and Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha, regional media reported on Dec. 28th.

Turkey trains Libyan Navy in underwater warfare

Turkey's Armed Forces have provided the Libyan Navy with five weeks of training in underwater warfare, Turkish defense officials said on Sunday 27th. The move is part of Turkey's commitment to Libya based on agreements between the two countries, the officials said. In addition, coast guard ship training started on Dec. 20th and will last for six weeks, the statement said.

Mladenov turns down UN envoy position in Libya

Nickolay Mladenov, the UN special envoy for the Middle East Peace Process, has turned down an offer to lead the UN mission in conflict-stricken Libya, according to a UN spokesman. Mladenov told UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that he would not take up the position of special envoy for the North African country "for personal and family reasons," said UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric.

Libya's rivals swap prisoners, part of ceasefire deal

Libya's rivals have kicked off a UN-brokered prisoner exchange, which was part of a ceasefire agreement they inked over two months ago in Geneva, the United Nations and Libyan officials said. The exchange of a first batch of prisoners, supervised by a joint military committee, took place on Friday in the southwestern village of al Shwayrif, according to the UN Support Mission in Libya, or UNSMIL, on Dec 27th.

Russia calls for increased efforts in Libya

Russian Minister of Foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov called for an

increase in international efforts to achieve a peace settlement in Libya. According to the RIA news agency, Lavrov is hosting his Qatari counterpart, Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al-Thani in Moscow to discuss several regional issues, specifically focusing on the Libyan crisis and the middle east.

Haftar calls on troops to 'drive out' Turkish forces

Tensions are rising in Libya after the strongman Khalifa Haftar called on his fighters to "drive out" Turkish forces backing the UN-recognised government, as talks drag on to end long-running war in the oil-rich nation. Marking the country's 69th anniversary on Thursday 24th he said: "There will be no peace in the presence of a coloniser on our land."

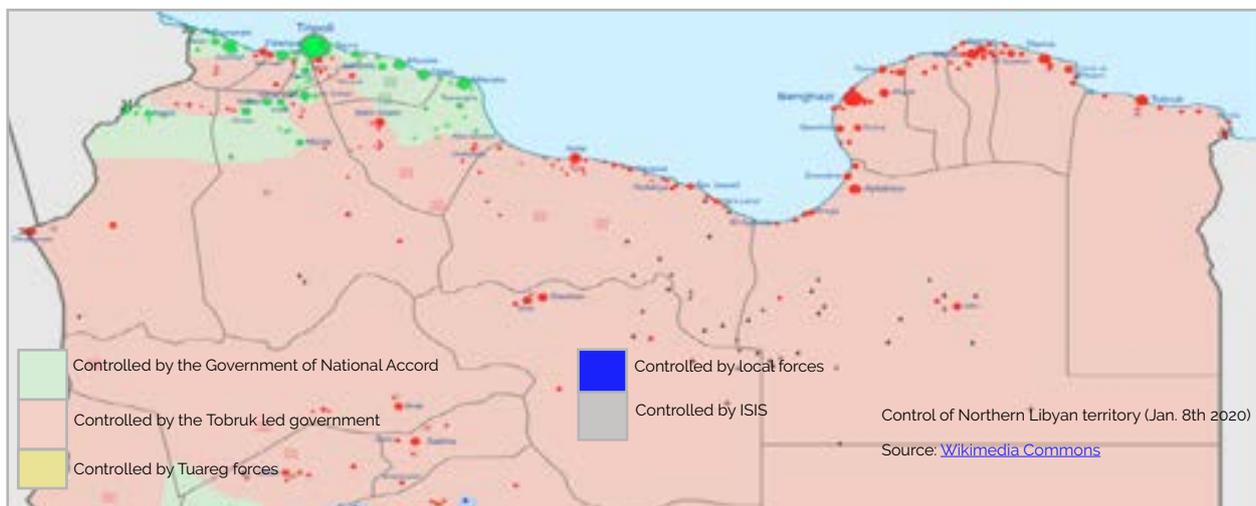
Libya has to be governed from one centre

A single administration that controls all Libyan territory has to be established, Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj stated Thursday 24th. Speaking on TV to the country for its 69th independence anniversary, Sarraj said that the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) supports the idea of holding presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2021 throughout Libya.

ICC concludes third visit to investigate Haftar's crimes

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has concluded its third visit to Libya on Wednesday 23rd to investigate the crimes committed in the country by the militia of General Khalifa Haftar. According to a statement issued by the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "The team of the International Criminal Court Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda has completed its third visit to Libya, as part of documenting crimes committed against civilians."

To read MAST's Libyan Country report on MASTOPEDIA, [please click here](#).





Gulf of Guinea

The Nigerian Navy has concluded its yearly Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) sea inspection code-named 'Still Waters,' which saw 12 naval ships, two helicopters and a detachment of the service's elite squad, Special Boat Service (SBS) deployed across the country's maritime domains to flush out pirates, thieves and smugglers on the Gulf of Guinea corridor. Rear Admiral Kamalrudeen Lawal, Ibass said the training was a routine practice aimed at assessing the operational state and readiness of the NN fleet, with a focus on anti-piracy, anti-crude oil theft, and anti-smuggling operations, among others.

Incidents:

1. Late Report: Underway Ghana-flagged general cargo ship boarded by eight pirates armed with assault rifles in a speed boat at 0320 UTC in position 03:32.70N - 006:09.39E, around 45nm SSW of Brass, Nigeria. Pirates stole ship and crew properties and kidnapped five crew members before escaping. Remaining crew onboard sailed the ship to a safe port. Reported (IMB) 16th Dec.

Cyprus Shipping Chamber says 'enough is enough' with piracy in Gulf of Guinea

The Cyprus Shipping Chamber (CSC) on Tuesday expressed regret and frustration over the ineffectiveness of the international community to address the continuing piracy crisis in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). "Unfortunately, the CSC is sad to observe that we have now reached the end of 2020 and despite the efforts being made by the industry, the situation remains gravely dangerous for ships trading in the GoG," the chamber said in a statement.

Piracy Attacks Continue In Nigeria, Ghana Waters

During the festive period, piracy attacks have continued to occur along the Nigerian and Ghanaian coasts. According to reports, three incidents of piracy were recorded between December 18th and 21st despite the Federal Government's pledges to nip waterways insecurity in the bud.

Union Lauds RSG For Completing Nembe/Bonny Jetty

The Bonny Maritime Transport Association (BMTA) has commended the Rivers State Government for the completion of the Nembe/Bonny Jetty which is due for commissioning in January 2021. The association also lauded the security agencies for intensifying security along the waterways in the state during the Christmas period.

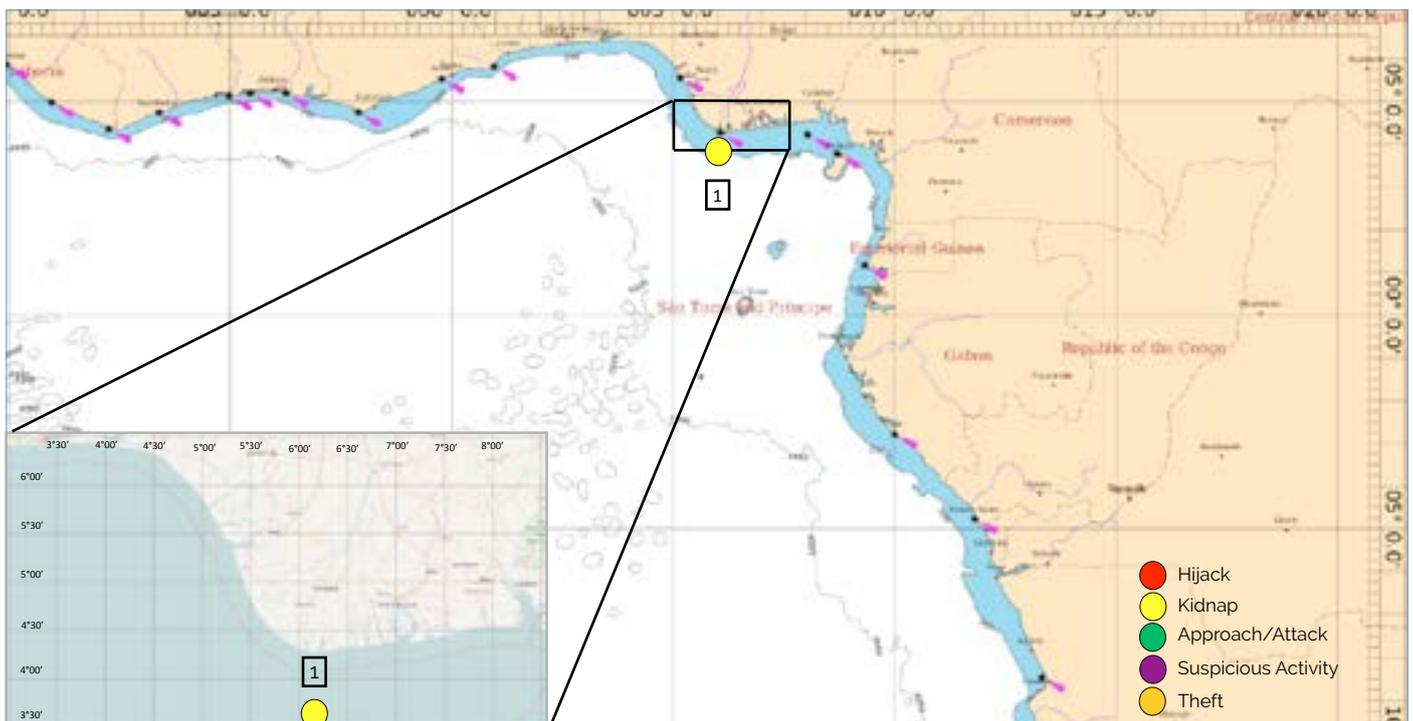
Order EFCC to Vacate Tompolo's Property, Unfreeze Accounts, Group Tells Buhari

A militant group, the 21st Century Youths of the Niger Delta and Agitators with Conscience (21st CYNDAC), has called on Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari to urgently intervene in the alleged refusal of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to vacate the property of Chief Government Ekpemupolo, also known as ex-militant Tompolo, and unfreeze his accounts. The group, in an email statement yesterday by its Coordinator, 'General' Izon Ebi, said the appeal became necessary to avoid the development snowballing into another round of unrest and agitations in the Niger Delta region.

Nigerian Navy rescues drowning passengers in Lagos boat accident

Operatives of the Nigerian Navy Ship BEECROFT attached to the newly established Forward Operations Base (FOB) Tarkwa Bay and Nigerian Navy Boat Service (SBS) personnel rescued 12 passengers after their boat capsized in Tarkwa Bay in a heavy wake on Dec. 27th.

To see MAST Services in the region, [please click here](#). And and to read Nigeria's country report, [please click here](#).





South East Asia

An Indian Navy warship undertook a "passage exercise" with the Vietnamese Navy in the South China Sea from December 26th to 27th as part of efforts to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries, officials said. The ship INS Kiltan had been sent to the country to deliver relief material for flood-affected people in central Vietnam and participated in the exercise on its return journey, they said.

Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

PH Navy sends out patrol ships amid fear of COVID-19 strain from Sabah

The Philippine Navy has deployed more patrol ships as the military and local government units intensified screening against a new variant of the coronavirus that might enter from nearby Sabah. Lt. Gen. Corleto Vinluan Jr., Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) commander, has directed all joint task forces in the command to intensify patrols and block the entry of ships coming from Sabah, local media reported on Dec. 29th

PH Navy upgrades arsenal to defend waters

The Philippine Navy has upgraded its arsenal to effectively defend the country's territorial waters as part of the government's efforts to modernize the military. Aside from the arrival and commissioning of the PN's first guided-missile frigate, another highlight for the Navy this year is the partial delivery of the 10 high-speed and fast boats contracted for the Naval Special Operations Command (Navsocom).

Wee: Investigate fuel plot allegations

Malaysia Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong wants the police to investigate allegations that the ministry and several agencies are involved in a fuel supplying syndicate in the coastal areas. Dr Wee has lodged a police report over a WhatsApp message titled "Corruption Conspiracy and Scandal in Malaysia" at the Cheras police station. The message, allegedly written by one Muhammad Fauzan Jamil, claimed that the syndicate was willing to share its profits on fuel orders in the country's waters with the minister in connection with a Malaysian shipping notice issued by the Marine Department (JLM).

MMEA foils attempt to smuggle hashish worth RM1.5m in Kuala Perlis

The Kuala Perlis Maritime Zone (KPMZ) Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) thwarted an attempt to smuggle 300 kilogrammes (kg) of compressed hashish, worth an estimated RM1.5 million in a special operation in Kuala Perlis waters on Dec. 25th. Kedah and Perlis MMEA deputy operations director Maritime Captain Zulinda Ramly said in the raid at 3am on Friday, an unregistered fibreglass boat was detained around 0.4 nautical miles (about 600 metres from the coast) west of Sungai Padang beach near here.

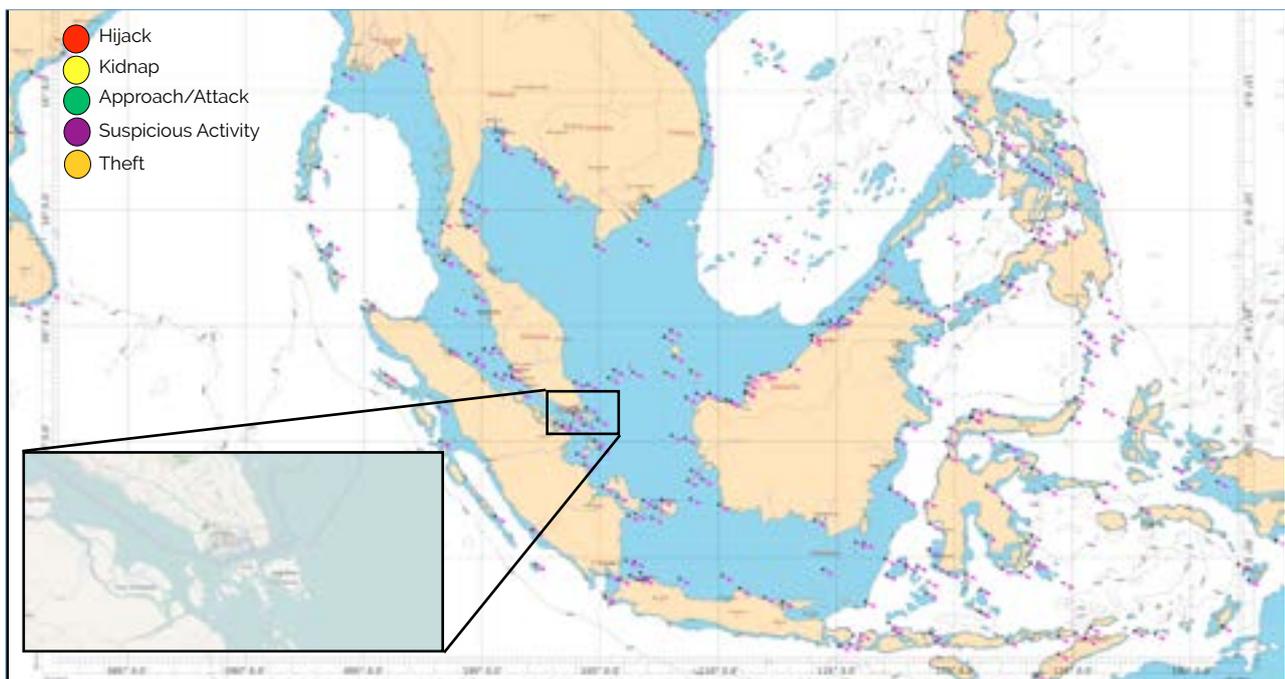
Japan invites German warship for naval drill to counter China's growing regional influence

Japan on Friday 25th invited Germany's Navy to send a warship for a naval drill to counter China's growing regional influence in the Indo-Pacific region. In talks between Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi and his German counterpart, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Kishi hoped that a German warship would hold joint exercises with Japan's Self-Defense Forces in 2021.

Abu Sayyaf Group still holding four hostages

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Gilbert Gapay revealed that they believe that Abu Sayyaf Group terrorists currently hold four hostages in Sulu province. The AFP has been conducting a FMO (Focused Military Operation) in order to rescue them in recent weeks.

To see MAST's services in the region, [please click here](#).





Central and South America

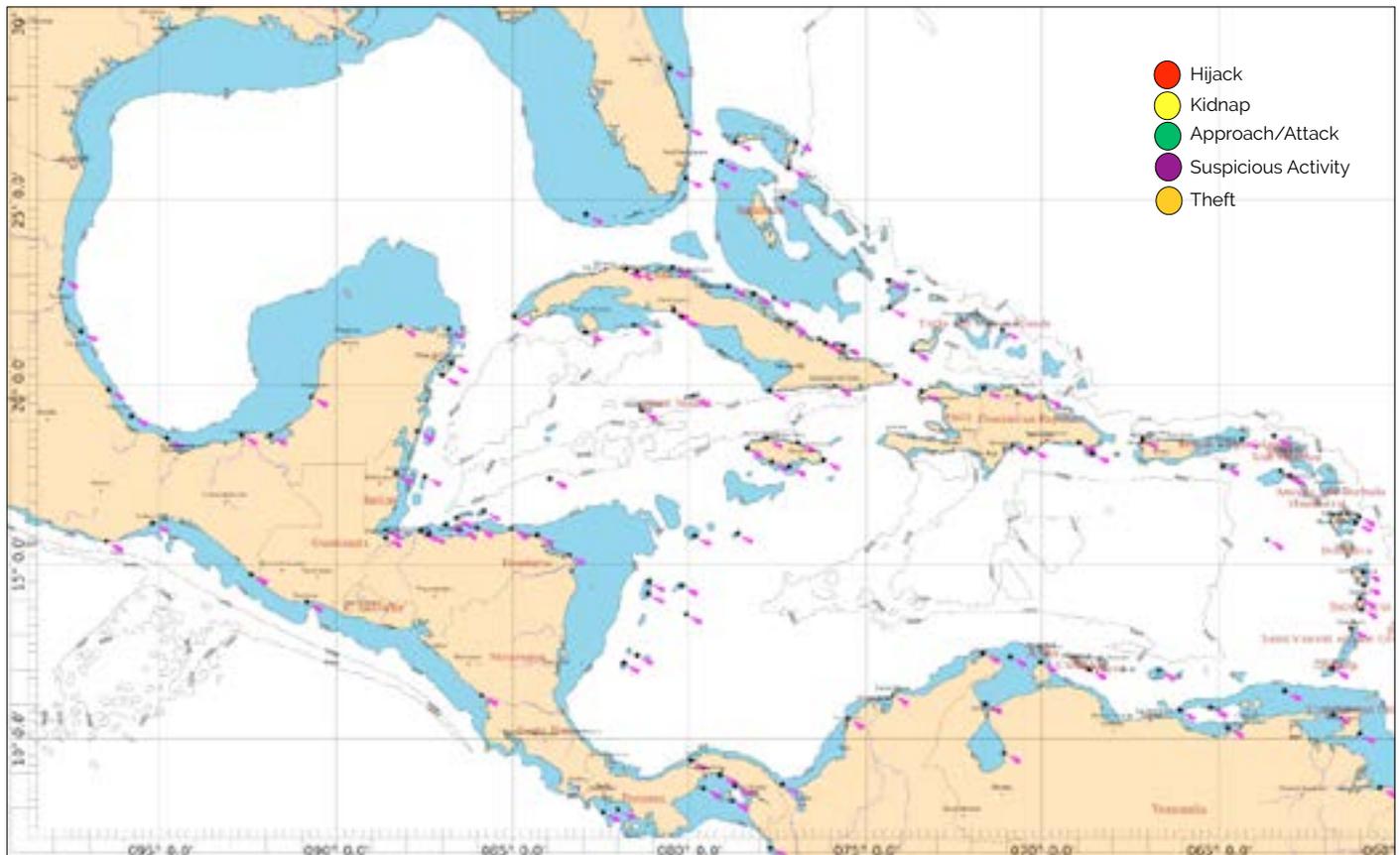
Nothing significant to report.

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.





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](#).

South-West Indian Ocean



Note: The forecasts are correct as of the day before publication. For latest updates please follow the provided links.