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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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Contents:

- Mast Services
- Indian Ocean region
- Somalia
- Yemen
- Mediterranean
- Libya
- Gulf of Guinea
- South East Asia
- Central & South America
- Severe Weather Warnings

Page

2
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

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Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

U.S. and Bangladesh Navies kick off CARAT 2019
The U.S. and Bangladesh navies kicked off Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Bangladesh 2019 with an opening ceremony held at the School of Maritime Warfare and Tactics (SMWT) in Chattogram, Nov. 4th. The CARAT exercise series, celebrating its 25th anniversary, is designed to address shared maritime security concerns and strengthen partnerships. Bangladesh has been a participant since 2011.

Iran to mass produce undersea missiles
The Iranian Navy commander announced on Sunday 3rd that his forces have accessed the technology to launch missiles from under the sea, vowing to upgrade the mission to mass production in the near future. During a visit to a technical-engineering workshop at the venue of Shahid Beheshti University, Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi highlighted the navy’s achievements in different aspects.

Pakistan Navy gets a big boost against Indian Navy in Arabian Sea
According to a press release the Pakistan Navy Media Directorate published, the steel cutting ceremony of two Type 054 A/P multi-role Frigates, being built for the Pakistan Navy, was held at Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard in China. China recently started the construction of an export version of one of its advanced frigate and will deliver it to Pakistan as part of a major arms deal. The ship is a version of the Chinese Navy’s most advanced guided-missile frigate Type 054AP.

UAE to take over Indian Ocean maritime and trade group this week
The UAE will take over the chair of an international group of nations focused on maritime security and trade this week. Representatives of the members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association are to meet in Abu Dhabi. The Emirates will lead the association from 2019-2021 under the theme of ‘Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean’.

Marines Provide Embarked Security for Strait of Hormuz Transit
Marines and sailors from U.S. Central Command’s Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team (FASTCENT) recently provided the MSC-chartered roro Liberty with an on-board security presence during a transit of the Strait of Hormuz, a regional flash point for tensions between Iran and the United States. A FASTCENT unit boarded the U.S.-flagged Liberty on Oct. 21st. On Oct. 24th, after the transit, a U.S. Navy Seahawk helicopter lifted them off the ro/ro’s deck.

India, Saudi Arabia to hold first joint naval drills in early March
India and Saudi Arabia will conduct their first-ever joint naval exercises in the first week of March next year, as the two sides agreed to enhance their cooperation in defence and security areas, sources said on Thursday 31st Oct. An Indian source privy to the development said a preparatory meeting on the proposed drills took place early this month in India and another meeting would take place in December.

To see MAST’s services in the Indian Ocean Region, please click here.
Somalia's Islamic State affiliate vows support for group's new leader
Somalia's Islamic State affiliate, one of the most important outposts of the militant group, swore allegiance in a statement on Sunday 3rd to the new leader named by the organization following the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Somalia's Province posted pictures on Telegram of around a dozen fighters standing among trees, with a caption saying they were pledging allegiance to Quraishi.

Uganda plans to deploy more troops to secure Somalia
Uganda plans to deploy more police personnel to serve under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Formed Police Unit, a senior police officer confirmed. Grace Turyagumanawe, director of peace support operations in the Uganda Police Force, said Kampala is working on the logistics to deploy more Formed Police Units to help secure Somalia.

Al Shabaab militants ambush Somali forces
Members of Al Shabaab extremist group on Sunday night ambushed and killed two Somali government soldiers in Bula Burde town in the central region of Hiiraan, an official said on Monday 4th. Liban Abdi, the governor of Bula Burde town in the central region of Hiiraan, an official said on Monday 4th. Liban Abdi, the governor of Bula Burde town told journalists that government soldiers were attacked by Al Shabaab militants, sparking a confrontation between the army and the militants.

Seven Al Shabaab terrorists killed in Somalia
An official said on Thursday 31st Oct. that the Somali Armed forces have killed seven Al Shabaab militants and wounded 8 others in an operation carried out in Juba region in Somalia. The spokesman said that “We started the offensive in Koban village passing through Bangeni, Arare and Mana Mufo village and there was stiff resistance from the militants, but our forces finally drove them out of those villages and we killed seven of them and injured eight others”

Al Shabaab claims Kenyan base attack
Al Shabaab claimed to seize and destroy a Kenyan military base in the Dhija Bula area on the outskirts of Dhoblely town in Somalia’s southwestern Gedo region on Oct. 30th. Al Shabaab separately claimed to assassinate a Somali National Army (SNA) soldier in Dharkenley district in Somalia’s capital, Mogadishu, on Oct. 30th.

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 BMPs 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 death toll in Yemen’s war since 2015 has reached 100,000, according to a highly regarded database project that tracks the conflict. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (Acled), which tracks confirmed fatalities in the conflict and is seen as reliable, said the figure included 12,000 civilian deaths in directly targeted attacks. It said 20,000 people had been reported killed this year, making it the second deadliest year of the war after 2018.

Houthi rebels jeopardise Hodeidah ceasefire by fortifying positions
Yemeni government forces say Houthi rebels have started digging defensive trenches in Hodeidah, threatening recent progress on implementing a UN-brokered ceasefire and troop withdrawal in the port city. The UN-chaired Redeployment and Co-ordination Committee was given the task of implementing the ceasefire and set up joint monitoring posts on the eastern and southern outskirts of Hodeidah last month.

Five Saudi soldiers killed near Yemen border
Five Saudi Arabian soldiers were killed in two days near the kingdom’s border with war-torn Yemen, the official SPA news agency reported Sunday 3rd. SPA did not provide details about the circumstances of the deaths but said the soldiers lost their lives in the southern Jizan region.

Sudan army denies Yemen war casualty claims
The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) has denied claims by Houthi that more than 4,000 Sudanese soldiers have been killed since involvement in the Yemen war. In a press conference in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa on Saturday 2nd, broadcast by Ida’at, Houthi military spokesman Brig Gen Yahya Saree said that the total losses of Sudanese government forces since the beginning of its participation in the war exceeds 8,000 dead and wounded, including 4,253 dead.

U.S. drone strike kills 2 suspected al-Qaida operatives
At least two people were killed when a U.S. drone strike hit a vehicle in Yemen’s northeastern province of Marib on Friday 1st, pro-government media reported. According to Almasdar Online news website, the air raid killed ‘Khamis bin Afraj and his brother Turki in Raidan area north of Marib.’

2 killed in Saudi-led airstrike
At least two people were killed and two children wounded in a Saudi-led coalition air strike on a village in Yemen’s northern province of Saada on Friday 1st, medics and residents said. “The airstrike killed a man and woman and wounded two children in the village in Ashah area of Baqim district on Friday morning,” a medic in Saada told Xinhua by phone on condition of anonymity.

Houthi rebels claim to have downed US-made drone
The Houthi rebel group on Friday 1st said it had downed a “spy” drone in northern Yemen. The group’s spokesman, Yehia Serie, stated the downed drone was a U.S.-made ScanEagle unmanned aircraft. The drone, “was downed while carrying out hostile and spying activities in the border areas [with Saudi Arabia]," Serie said without elaborating.

Socotra sees renewed clashes
Gunmen aligned with the Transitional Political Council for the South (STC), a southern Yemeni secessionist group, attacked government headquarters and demanded the dismissal of Governor Ramzi Mahrous in the Socotra archipelago in the Gulf of Aden on Oct. 30th. Mahrous had recently declared that visas were required for foreign visitors, which sparked the attack, according to anti-STC media.

UAE completes Aden withdrawal
The UAE announced on Oct. 30th that it has withdrawn its troops from Yemen’s de facto capital, Aden, and handed over security responsibility there to Saudi Arabia and President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi’s government. The UAE promised to continue its counterterrorism mission in Yemen with the help of Yemeni partner forces. Sudan has also recently drawn down its forces in southern Yemen. Qatari media reported that as many as 10,000 Sudanese soldiers have left the country and returned to Sudan in recent months.

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

MAST recommends BMP measures be enforced and watches strengthened during transits in the region.
After a week stranded at sea with 88 migrants onboard, German rescue ship Alan Kurdi docked in the Italian port of Taranto on Sunday 3rd, following a deal among EU nations. Italy granted permission for migrants to disembark on Friday after Germany and other EU countries agreed to take in the migrants. “Germany and France will take in 60 migrants, Portugal 5 and Ireland 2,” the Interior Ministry said.

131 Syrian migrants reach Cyprus by boat
Cyprus police say 131 Syrian migrants have reached the east Mediterranean island nation aboard a boat. Cypriot authorities tracked the migrants’ 20-meter (65-foot) craft early on Monday 4th off the island’s northwestern coastline.

Italian ship with 151 rescued migrants docks in Sicily
An Italian offshore supply vessel has brought 151 migrants to Sicily after rescuing them in waters off Libya a day earlier. The Asso Trenta docked on Sunday 3rd at Pozzallo with the migrants. It was not immediately known if they would stay in Italy, or be distributed among other European Union countries.

Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Reach 87,315 in 2019; Deaths Reach 1,087
IOM, the UN Migration Agency, reports that 87,315 migrants and refugees have entered Europe by sea through 30th Oct., a 12% decrease from the 99,122 arriving during the same period last year. Over half all arrivals this year (47,015) have landed in Greece, while another one-fourth (22,247) have landed in Spain, with the balance arriving in much smaller proportions to Italy, Malta and Cyprus.

Italy renews deal with Libya to block migrants
Italy has renewed a controversial agreement signed in 2017 with Libya to block illegal migrants trying to leave from the North African country’s coast. Italy’s Foreign Minister Luigi di Maio told parliament on Wednesday Oct. 30th that the 2017 deal with Libya would be automatically extended for another three years from November.

The current migrant smuggling situation
There has been little change in the past week, with large numbers of migrants still attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, with many being returned by Libyan naval and Coast Guard assets. NGO rescue missions continue to provide the bulk of support, however, disembarking several hundred rescued migrants over the course of the week. There has been no political movement in recent weeks which could mitigate this; migrants have escaped a detention centre in Tripoli following claims of abuse and inhuman conditions at the centre, demonstrating the security issues which persist in Libya itself.
Gov't forces announce progress against eastern-based army in southern Tripoli
The UN-backed government forces of Libya on Monday 4th announced making progress against the rival eastern-based army in south of the capital Tripoli, said a statement by the UN-backed government on its official Facebook page. "Our forces attacked positions of the militias of the war criminal Haftar (eastern-based army) in Al-Nahar and Khallat Al-Farjan areas (southern Tripoli), causing heavy losses to them," Mohamed Gonono, spokesman of the UN-backed government forces, said in the statement.

LNA Thwarts GNA Attack in Tripoli
The Libyan National Army, led by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, announced it thwarted a militia attack in Saladin, pointing out that violent clashes led to their retreat. It also announced the death of two members of the militia led by Abdul Ghani al-Kikli, known as “Ghaniwa”, in al-Nagleyya axis. Those members were the last top commanders that Ghaniwa relies on during the battles.

Security sources confirm clashes in Sabha
Security sources from Sabha have reported skirmishes in the area of Mansheya and an attack on a military checkpoint belonging to a militia group called battalion 128, loyal to Haftar, near Al-Qadisiya Square, on Saturday (2nd) night. According to the sources, gunmen set a military vehicle on fire and attacked members of the battalion, noting that no death casualties were reported.

EU funds Libyan Coast Guard but has limited monitoring capacity, leaked report suggests
In the past two years, the EU has spent more than 90 million euros funding and training the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) in an attempt to keep migrants out of the continent. Yet a leaked EU report seen by Euronews suggests that the bloc’s ability to monitor LCG’s activity is limited at best. The report in question was sent in July this year by the European External Action Service to member states’ ambassadors.

Malta halts shipment of cash destined for Haftar
The Maltese government has seized a massive shipment of unofficial Libyan banknotes believed to have been destined for Khalifa Haftar, the military commander leading an offensive to dislodge the UN-backed government in Tripoli.

Amnesty International blames Haftar for fate of kidnapped Libyan female lawmaker
Amnesty International has launched on its website a campaign calling on Khalifa Haftar to reveal the fate and whereabouts of the member of House of Representatives (HoR) Siham Sirgiwa and urging him to ensure her release and protect her from all forms of torture. Amnesty International said there’s still no communication with Sirgiwa over the months that she has been kidnapped which might point to signs that she was tortured or abused.

Libya’s Interior Ministry condemns Haftar’s warplane attack on its Tripoli HQ
The Libyan Interior Ministry has condemned attacks on its headquarters in Tripoli by Khalifa Haftar’s warplanes, saying in a statement that the attacks were evidence of the criminality of the military forces who carried it against state institutions disregarding the threats they posed to civilians.

To read MAST’s Libyan Country report on MASTOPEDIA, please click here.
Gulf of Guinea
Benin authorities have opened an investigation after pirates abducted nine people from a Norwegian-flagged boat off the coast of the West African nation, the port of Cotonou said. The pirates boarded the vessel, which is owned by Norwegian shipping firm J.J. Ugland, while it was at anchor on Saturday 2nd off the coast. All those on board were Filipinos, the Norwegian Shipowners’ Association said. After the attack, the Norwegian-flagged MV Bonita docked in Cotonou and police started interviewing the remaining crew on board, the port said on its official Facebook page late on Sunday 3rd.

Incidents:

2. Anchored Norway-flagged bulk carrier reported attacked at 0320 UTC in position 06:14.54N – 002:32.54E, around 9nm Southwest of Cotonou, Benin. Attackers boarded and kidnapped nine crew before escaping. Remaining crew notified naval authorities; vessel docked in Cotonou. Reported (MDAT/Source) 2nd Nov.

Sailors abducted in Togo
Pirates off the coast of Togo have kidnapped four crew members from a Greek oil tanker, just days after a similar kidnapping in the waters of neighbouring Benin. The Togolese navy said on Monday 4th that armed attackers boarded the Elka Aristotle near the port of Lome after shooting and wounding the ship’s security guard. Those abducted include Greek, Georgian and Filipino nationals.

3 feared dead in Rivers sea pirate attack
Three persons are feared dead when gunmen suspected to be sea pirates in the early hours of Saturday 2nd attacked three passengers boats en-route Port Harcourt from Billie in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. Eyewitness account had it that the gunmen, who attacked the boats separately along the route, also carted away properties belonging to passengers. Other media outlets reported that five boats had been hijacked, but this has not been confirmed.

Ship-owners laud cancellation of secure anchorage area
Ship-owners have backed the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) over its decision to cancel the Secure Anchorage Area (SAA) payment operated by OMSL Limited, a private security firm in conjunction with the Nigerian Navy. Speaking to selected maritime journalists in Lagos, Chairman/CEO of Starzs Investments Company Limited, Engr Greg Ogbeifun stated that government agencies should be encouraged to manage secure anchorages on Nigerian waters.

Multinational maritime exercise begins in Nigerian waters
A five-day combined naval exercise began in Nigerian waters at the end of October. The maritime exercise, codenamed: “Grand African Nemo (Navy exercise for maritime operations) involves the participation of four Nigerian Navy ships and a helicopter. The Exercise, being coordinated by the Nigerian Navy, according to a statement, Wednesday, by the naval spokesman, Commodore Sueman Dahun,” is aimed at supporting the efforts of regional navies to counter criminal activities in the maritime domain through different operational modes of planned exercises.”

Navy arrests 5 vandals, recovers 3,400 litres of stolen petrol
The Nigerian Navy operatives attached to the Forward Operating Base (FOB) on Thursday Oct. 31st arrested five suspected pipeline vandals with 136 jerry cans laden with Premium Motor Spirit (PMS). The suspects; Oseni Noah, Toyin Hunsa, Rasheed Amish, Kamoru Ishau and Ibrahim Ojogbele, were arrested and handed over to officials of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

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

With Islamic State affiliates active in the country, the Philippines remained a refuge for foreign terrorist fighters from Indonesia and Malaysia and a potential destination for those fleeing Syria and Iraq, according to the latest annual country report on terrorism of the US Department of State. The Country Reports on Terrorism 2018 noted that Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) affiliates active in the Philippines in 2018 included parts of the Abu Sayyaf, Maute group, Ansar al-Khalifa Philippines (AKP) and elements of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

PH Navy’s second missile frigate to be launched Nov. 8th
The BRP Antonio Luna, the Philippine Navy’s (PN) second missile frigate, will be launched on Nov. 8 in South Korea. Lt. Commander Maria Christina Roxas, Navy public affairs office chief, said the launching ceremony will take place at the Ulsan shipyard of South Korean shipbuilder Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI). “As per schedule, November 8th is the launching in Ulsan,” Roxas said.

China Coast Guard Challenges Merchant Ship Near Contested Reef
During a recent transit past disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, the Greek-owned tanker Green Aura was harassed by Chinese government vessels, her master told Philippine media last week. Though Scarborough is claimed by the Philippines and is located within Philippine waters, the administration of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has insisted that it will not raise the matter with Beijing.

MMEA foils bid in Semporna to smuggle out petrol
The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) succeeded in intercepting an attempt to smuggle petrol out of the State early on Sunday 3rd. Two men were detained on board a traditional boat (jongkong) with 260 plastic jerry cans believed to be filled with 6,500 litres of petrol (pic) around 1am near Pulau Bohayen. Semporna Maritime Zone Director, Commander Norrimi Hassan, said a patrol boat approached the vessel during its routine rounds.

7 soldiers wounded in separate encounters with suspected Abu Sayyaf members in Sulu
Seven soldiers were wounded following separate clashes with suspected Abu Sayyaf men in Patikul, Sulu on Wednesday, a regional military spokesperson said on Thursday 31st. According to Armed Forces Western Mindanao Command’s Major Arvin Encinas, the first encounter lasted for 50 minutes when operating troops of the 1st Scout Ranger Battalion engaged the local terrorists at Sitio Kan Mindang in Barangay Pangdanan.

Mindef committed to Sabah, Sarawak security: Mat Sabu
The Malaysian Ministry of Defence is committed to strengthening security in Sabah and Sarawak to curb external threats including transborder kidnapping, said its Minister Mohamad Sabu. He said the territorial sovereignty, security and prosperity of the people are a priority of the government. “Generally, the security of Sabah and Sarawak at present is regulated by operations by the military services namely the army, the Royal Malaysian Navy and the Royal Malaysian Air Force,” Mohamad was quoted as saying.

11 men arrested for illegal MGO trade in Singapore
The Singapore Police Coast Guard (PCG) has stopped an illegal transaction of marine gas oil (MGO) in Singapore waters and arrested 11 men for their involvement in the incident. A joint operation between PCG and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) last Wednesday led to the arrest of six crew members of a craft belonging to a marine service provider and another five crew members of a foreign-registered tugboat, at the sea off Northern Tuas on the western end of Singapore.

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.

Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea

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