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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.

Follow MAST on LinkedIn and Twitter to keep abreast with these insightful weekly reports and more — including real time security updates.

Editor: David Rider
www.mast-security.com
Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

UKMTO warns of drifting naval mines
Drifting mines have been reported in an area of Yemen and Saudi Red Sea coastal waters. There is no specific threat to vessels following recognised shipping routes. In response a NAVAREA IX Navigation Warning has been issued:
NAVAREA IX. 071/20.
Southern Red Sea and Farasan Bank.
Charts BA 157, 2964 AND 4071.
Mines reported adrift in area bounded by
A. 16-45.60N 042-15.70E
B. 15-41.50N 042-39.40E
C. 15-54.00N 043-02.30E
D. 16-58.70N 042-35.10E

Tanker with multinational crew suspect in arms trading in Gulf
The Djibouti Security Service suspects a tanker of arms trafficking in Gulf of Aden, claiming that the ship is tampering with her tracking records to hide calls to Horn of Africa coast ports, in Puntland and Somalia, and Yemen. We have redacted the vessel name, pending confirmation.

Germany plans to send a warship to the Indian Ocean
The German navy plans to send its frigate "Hamburg" to the Indian Ocean in June to conduct port visits and participate in a regional, naval meeting on the French island of Réunion, the service announced on March 12th. The air-defense vessel will begin its journey in May with interceptor test-firings off the coast of Norway. It is then scheduled to steam towards the Indian Ocean for a five-months training mission.

Piracy takes greater toll on small energy exporters
Tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz can decline for up to two years after a piracy attack, a new Duke University study finds, but the adverse effects of the slowdown are far greater on some Persian Gulf countries than others. "Large exporters of crude oil, such as Saudi Arabia, see little significant long-term impact. But for smaller countries such as Bahrain or Kuwait that rely on exports of refined petroleum products in addition to crude oil, it's a different story," said Lincoln F. Pratson, Gendell Family Professor of Energy and Environment at Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment.

CTF151 undertakes Focused Op IKARUS
Combined Task Force 151 (CTF151) recently completed Focused Operation IKARUS (FO IKARUS) around the Somali Coast, the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden, raising awareness of their presence in the area and ensuring information flow and coordination between CTF151's headquarters, its ships and other agencies in the region.

IMO-led workshop focused on information sharing to boost maritime security in Western Indian Ocean
Regional efforts to enhance maritime security are dependent on good information sharing, through multi-agency National Maritime Information Sharing Centres. An IMO-led regional workshop on information sharing in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden (3rd-5th March) brought together participants from 14 signatory States to the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) and its Jeddah Amendment, which aims to counter and suppress crime in the maritime domain.

To see MAST's services in the Indian Ocean Region, please click here.

Indian Ocean Region
Rear Admiral Ignacio Villanueva Serrano was appointed as new force commander for the EU naval operation Atalanta. His mandate will start on 17th March. He will exercise command and control of all military forces in the Area of Operations during the 34th rotation, and will be responsible for the planning, orchestration and execution of tactical military activities. Rear Admiral Villanueva Serrano, a Spanish national, will take command from Commodore José Vizinha Mirones. He previously held senior positions within the Spanish Maritime Forces (SPMAFOR), and was Commanding Officer of the Spanish Navy Air Wing.
Somalia records first coronavirus case
Somalia has recorded its first case of coronavirus, according to the country’s health minister, Fowsiya Abukar. The patient is a Somali national who has recently returned from abroad. The authorities also announced a suspension on all international flights for two weeks, starting on 18th March.

AMISOM hands over OPD near Halane
The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has handed over the security responsibilities of a community near the Halane basecamp back to the Federal Government of Somalia. The handover is part of the Somalia Transition Plan.

Deadly ambush by Al Shabaab militants
According to an official, an ambush by al-Shabab militants in a base run by the army in Mahaday town, in Middle Shabelle region, caused the death of 3 Somalia soldiers and the injury of 2 others. The militants started an assault on a base in the town causing fatalities and injuries, as said by Ahmed Hussein, the governor of Mahaday.

Somalia warns Pakistan, Iran over illegal fishing
Somalia has sought assistance from the global anti-piracy forces to help it capture 43 boats from Pakistan and Iran that are conducting illegal fishing operations in the Horn of African nation’s waters. The Somali Federal Government has accused the two countries of continuing illegal fishing in Somalia waters, warning the boats will be pursued.

US airstrike said to have killed 6 civilians
A U.S. drone airstrike in Somalia killed at least six civilians, including a 13-year-old boy, according to a Somali lawmaker. The U.S. African Command airstrike in the town of Janale in the lower Shabelle region killed at least six unarmed civilians who were traveling to the capital Mogadishu. Mahad Dhoore, a lawmaker from the Southwest state, told local media on Thursday 12th.

Cartels selling blood donated by Kenyans to Somalia
Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe on Thursday 12th confirmed that detectives from the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) have opened an investigation into claims that blood donated by Kenyans was being sold abroad. According to reports, the blood is mostly sold in neighbouring Somalia by a cartel comprising officers from the KNBTS, which is under the Ministry of Health.

Control of Somali territory (March 2017) Source: Wikimedia Commons

Under control of Al Shabaab and allies
Under control of neutral forces
Under control of Government and allies
Somaliland Government
Territory disputed by Puntland and Somaliland

Could Kenya annex chunks of Somalia?
A new theater of conflict emerged in East Africa when opposing Somali forces clashed on Kenya’s border last week. Kenya has hinted that it could annex parts of Somalia to keep al-Shabab terrorists out of its territory. Tension between Kenya and Somalia soared last week following heavy fighting along the border. The clashes involved Somali government troops and forces loyal to Ahmed Madobe, the leader of Jubbaland, which is one of Somalia’s five semiautonomous states.

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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 (IHR).
Yemen

Six government forces and five Houthi rebels were killed in clashes in the southwestern Taiz province, the Yemeni military said on Saturday 14th. A military statement said a senior rebel commander was among those killed in the clashes, without giving any further details. There was no comment from the Houthi group on the claim.

Yemen Reiterates Warning Against Possible Catastrophic ‘Safer’ Explosion

The Yemeni government has reiterated its warnings against possible disastrous consequences of the explosion or spill at Safer offshore oil platform, which floats off Hodeidah’s northern Red Sea coast. Information Minister Muammar al-Eryani has listed a series of tweets the most disastrous consequences.

6 Houthi rebels killed in armed confrontations

Armed conflicts took place in the Red Sea port city of Hodeidah causing the death of 6 Houthi rebels, according to pro-government Yemeni forces. In a statement released by the joint pro-government forces, the Houthis started an armed conflict on locations of national army forces in Hodeidah’s district of Tuyhata.

MASAM Dismantles 3,556 Mines in 2nd Week of March

King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center’s project for clearing mines in Yemen (MASAM) cleared 3,556 mines during the second week of March 2020. The operations included clearing three antipersonnel mines, 345 anti-tank, 2,634 unexploded ordnance, and 574 explosive devices. Since the beginning of the project, 151,983 landmines have been dismantled after they had been planted by the Houthi militias, in Yemen.

Military tension between gov’t, separatist forces continues to escalate in Aden

The military tension between the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) on Sunday 15th continued to escalate amid heavy deployment of forces in the southern port city of Aden. “Security units loyal to the Aden-based STC were deployed around the Republican Palace and prevented the government’s ministers from holding a meeting inside the building,” a local government official told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

Yemen suspends all flights for two weeks over coronavirus

Yemen’s Saudi-backed government said on Saturday 14th it was suspending all flights to and from airports under its control for two weeks starting on March 18th, amid fears over the coronavirus outbreak.

Yemeni Government Suspends Participation in Hodeidah’s Redeployment Committee

The Yemeni government announced that it has suspended its membership in the Hodeidah Redeployment Coordination Committee holding Houthi rebels responsible for the move. Yemeni Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik has warned that the militias’ recent military escalation and recurrent breaches of the UN-sponsored ceasefire in Hodeidah would thwart the Stockholm Agreement.

Houthis advance in Marib, Saudi border areas

Houthi rebels in Yemen last week secured crucial areas of oil-rich Marib province — the main stronghold of the internationally recognized government of exiled President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. The Houthis took over critical parts of the province, building on recent victories that gave them control over the strategic Nahm district, east of the capital, Sanaa, and the Hazm district, the center of al-Jawf province. They also captured al-Ghail district adjacent to Hazm in the country’s northeast.

IOM opens health center in largest camp for displaced

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is opening the first health center in Yemen’s largest displacement camp. The organization said in a statement that the center opened in the Al Jufainah camp and is expected to treat about 100 patients a day.

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.
Migrant crossings 2017-2020. Source: UNHCR

Libya’s coast guard intercepted over 300 Europe-bound migrants off the country’s Mediterranean coast and returned them to the capital, Tripoli, the UN migration agency said. The International Organization for Migration tweeted that most of the 301 migrants, who were on three boats and intercepted Saturday, were taken to detention centers in Libya. It said that some managed to escape at the disembarkation point, as the boats were brought back to shore. Associated Press reported that a further 105 migrants were intercepted on Sunday.

Malta pushing refugees back into Libya war
Malta has let the Libyan coastguard drag a boat of migrants from Maltese waters back to Libya, violating international law, a UN agency said. The incident occurred on Sunday (15th March) after the wooden boat, carrying 49 people, became stranded because its engine failed, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), said on Monday.

Malta ignores distress calls from migrants at sea: NGO
Some 110 people crossing the Mediterranean Sea in an inflatable boat were at risk of drowning on Saturday 14th, according to the sea rescue organization Alarm Phone. The aid organisation accused the Maltese government of ignoring their calls for help. Alarm Phone received a distress call early Saturday morning with news that 110 migrants coming from Libya were at risk of drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. After 30 hours at sea, the travelers’ inflatable boat has lost a significant amount of air, the organization said on Twitter. The migrants were in a rescue area under the jurisdiction of Malta at the time of their distress call, German newspaper, DW, reported.

Traffickers behind Syrian toddler death get 125 years each
Three members of the human trafficking ring whose activities led to the death of Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi, in a case that made headlines worldwide, were each sentenced to 125 years in prison by a Turkish criminal court on Friday 13th. The 2015 death of 3-year-old Kurdi, as well as five other refugees who shared his boat in the Aegean, shocked the international community and came to symbolize the plight and desperation of Syrian refugees.

The current migrant smuggling situation
As the EU ramps up efforts to tackle the novel coronavirus, migrants are on the political backburner, leading to accusations that some countries are sitting on their hands while the situation worsens. Certainly, the weekend saw significant numbers of migrants put to sea in an effort to reach EU nations, which the Libyan Coast Guard stopped. However, there remain grave concerns that returning migrants to a potential war zone is less than optimal. Unfortunately, political hands remain tied and the UN is left with little it can do practically to stop it. With the focus on closing borders and a cessation of movement within the Schengen zone itself, the migrant crisis will unfortunately be largely ignored unless it represents a transmission problem for member states.
Libya
The oil crisis in Libya is deepening as a blockade of the country’s vital oil fields generated losses of more than US$3 billion, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) announced late on Thursday 12th. The war-torn country controls vast oil reserves, the biggest in Africa, and typically pumps out 1.2 billion barrels a day. The NOC reported that production had been reduced to a trickle of 97,500 barrels a day. It warned of a looming fuel shortage given the government’s inability to pay for imports.

749,000 people remain in areas impacted by fighting in, around Tripoli
Fighting in Tripoli and surrounding areas of Libya continues to heavily impact civilians, a United Nations spokesman said on Monday 16th. “Around 749,000 people remain in areas impacted by fighting in and around Tripoli, according to estimates, including almost 345,000 people in frontline areas,” Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said at the daily news briefing.

Libya’s state oil firm says jet fuel illegally shipped to east
A shipment of jet fuel has been imported into eastern Libya from the United Arab Emirates in breach of an arms embargo and other international agreements, Libya’s NOC state oil company said on Monday 16th, reported Reuters. “The shipment came from the UAE to Benghazi on a ship called Gulf Petroleum 4 and has been in Benghazi port for a number of days,” the NOC said in a statement.

Turkish servicemen killed in attack on Libya’s Mitiga Airport - LNA
The Libyan National Army said it had killed Turkish servicemen stationed at Mitiga Airport in Tripoli, the Russia news website Sputnik reported on Sunday 15th. LNA spokesperson Ahmad al-Mismari said that Turkish military targets, including radars and air defences, located at Mitiga Airport had been struck by the LNA for several days.

Tripoli government declares emergency, shuts down ports, airports
Libya’s Tripoli-based Government of National Accord has declared a state of emergency over the coronavirus and will close all air and sea ports from Monday, Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj said on Saturday 14th. Serraj also said, in a broadcast address, that his internationally recognized government had earmarked 500 million Libyan dinars ($360.54 million) to combat the disease if it reached Libya, though no cases had been confirmed so far.

UN too scared to stop breaches of arms ban, says Libyan minister
A fear among key members of the UN security council of taking on the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Egypt has allowed the three countries to carry out a wholesale breach of the UN weapons embargo to Libya, one of Libya’s most senior ministers has warned. Widely seen as the most influential figure in the UN-recognised Government of National Accord, based in besieged Tripoli, Fathi Bashagha vowed step up his government’s fight to end the assault on Tripoli by east Libya’s strongman, Khalifa Haftar.

Al-Sarraj and Merkel reiterate need to commit to Berlin conference conclusions
The Head of the Presidential Council Fayez Al-Sarraj has discussed on the phone with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel the latest developments in Libya, especially the ongoing conflict amid the offensive on Tripoli by Khalifa Haftar’s forces. The media office of the Head of the Presidential Council said the phone call on Thursday 12th saw Merkel reiterating Germany’s keenness on implementing the conclusions of Berlin conference on Libya and working with the Government of National Accord to achieve stability in the country.

Libya’s NOC to cut all non-essential expenses - statement
Libya’s National Oil Corp (NOC) has implemented austerity measures, along with its subsidiaries, to cut all non-essential expenses due to a shut down of facilities, a statement on NOC’s Facebook page said on Friday 13th.

Libyan interior minister Fathi Bashagha holds talks with UK government
The Tripoli-based interior minister of Libya’s Government of National Accord, Fathi Bashagha, held talks in London on Thursday 12th with senior British officials over reform in the Libyan security sector.

To read MAST’s Libyan Country report on MASTOPEDIA, please click here.
Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

15 Oil Thieves Bag Three-year Jail Term In Lagos
A Federal High Court sitting in Lagos on Monday 16th sentenced 15 oil thieves to three years imprisonment and ordered the forfeiture of two vessels along with 868.5 metric tonnes of crude oil to the Nigerian Government. Justice Rilwan Aikawa found them guilty on all three counts and sentenced them to one-year in prison on each count, which will take effect from the day of their arrest.

We will ensure better funding to boost Navy operations in 2021
The leadership of the House of Representatives on Monday promised to consider better budgetary allocation for the Nigerian Navy in the 2021 Appropriation Bill. Rep. Yusuf Gadgi, Chairman, House Committee on Navy, made the disclosure when he led other members on inspection of projects at the Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) Pathfinder in Port Harcourt.

Rivers port set to receive first RoRo vessel
The Nigerian Ports Authority has announced that the Rivers port is set to receive its first Roll on/Roll off (RoRo) vessel. The NPA said the introduction of RoRo operations will in no small measure increase the revenue base of Rivers port in particular and the ports authority as a whole.

Navy, NDLEA Move To End Hard Drugs On Waterway
The Nigerian Navy and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) said that it would strengthen its bond in order to put an end to movement of hard drugs and other related substances on the waterways. The Director of Seaports Operations, (NDLEA) Mrs. Omolade Faboyede made this known when the agency visited the Western Naval Command (WNC).

She said that findings had shown that a large volume of drugs coming into the country was through the sea, saying drug issues were not only a communal threat but a national threat.

Navy intercepts 316 drums of illegal diesel at Agbani offshore
The Nigerian Navy, Forward Operating Base, FOB, Ibaka, in Mbo local government area of Akwa Ibom State, has intercepted 316 drums of illegally refined diesel also known as Automotive Gas Oil (AGO). The seized drums which contained 300 litres of AGO each were intercepted during a routine patrol by Navy gunboats en route to the Republic of Cameroon.

National Assembly to secure maritime patrol aircraft, helicopters to Nigerian Navy
The National Assembly said it would make funds available for the procurement of patrol aircraft, Maritime patrol aircraft, and helicopters as well as refurbish other worn out facilities in the Nigerian Navy, Eastern Naval command. The House Committee Chairman on Navy, Mr Yusuf Gadgi, disclosed this at the Forward Operating Base, Ibaka, Mbo Local Government Area during a tour of facilities in the Command.

Stakeholders laud appointment of Jamoh as NIMASA boss
The appointment of a new director at the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) has drawn a series of commendations from stakeholders in the maritime sector who believed that the regime would berth new dawn for the sector. Bashir Jamoh is considered the first NIMASA DG to have risen through the ranks to clinch the seat of director-general.

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

1. Three robbers armed with crowbar and pipes boarded underway Liberia-flagged bulk carrier at 2030 UTC in position 01:10.90N - 103:26E, Singapore Strait. Engine room crew noticed the robbers and managed to lock them inside the engine room workshop. Alarm raised and crew mustered. Two accomplices in a skiff tried to approach the ship but were repelled by the crew. Singaporean and Indonesian Authorities notified. Two Indonesian Authority armed guards boarded the ship and arrested the three robbers. Nothing was stolen and the crew was not injured. Reported (IMB/ReCAAP) 15th Mar.

15 boat crew members, passengers sent to quarantine after violating Negros Occidental COVID-19 measures
At least 15 boat crew members and passengers were placed on a 14-day home quarantine after they allegedly violated travel restrictions for novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). Cauayan town Mayor John Rey Tabujara said all 15 individuals were apprehended by officers of the Philippine Coast Guard on Tuesday (March 18) while they were on board a boat in waters off Barangay a village in the town of Negros Occidental province at 8 a.m.

Philippines: Fishermen allowed to sail
Small and commercial fishing vessels have been exempted from the Luzon-wide maritime travel ban but would be under strict monitoring by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG). In an advisory on Tuesday 17th, the PCG said fishing vessels may continue their business as usual but must follow stringent health and safety measures, as well as obey when signaled to stop and follow directions when boarded for a thermal checkup.

2 Filipinos arrested for smuggling gas off Sabah
Two Filipinos were arrested off Sabah last weekend after they were caught smuggling 980 liters of petrol worth around RM1,783, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency said. MMEA Lahad Datu director maritime commander Abdul Mu-haimin Muhammad Salleh said the Filipinos were intercepted 0.3 nautical miles south of Kampung Kenali 8 p.m. March 14th. He said MMEA personnel in a decoy boat intercepted the boat during a special operation in Felda Sahabat waters.

Philippine Coast Guard to enforce ‘no sail’ policy during lockdown
The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has shifted Saturday 14th, to full alert status, bracing to enforce travel restrictions in all waterways during the Metro Manila lockdown. The lockdown, or community quarantine as government officials call it, will begin midnight of Sunday, March 15 and last until April 14. The metropolitan lockdown is part of government effort to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

China Slams ‘provocative Acts’ By US Warship In Disputed Waters
China on Wednesday 11th accused the United States of violating the disputed territorial waters in the South China Sea by sending in their warship. According to reports, the United States’ USS McCampbell missile destroyer sailed near the Paracel Islands (Xisha Islands), a group of islands in the South China Sea which are currently disputed and claimed by Beijing, Taiwan and Vietnam.

To see MAST’s services in the region, please click here.
Incidents:
1. Nine robbers, in three small boats, came alongside and boarded anchored Panama-flagged reefer ship at 0815 UTC in position 12°01.60S - 077°16.40W, Callao Anchorage, Peru. They took hostage three crew members, tied them up and assaulted them. Alarm raised. Seeing the alerted crew, the robbers escaped with stolen ship’s stores. During the incident, two crew members received injuries. The incident reported to Port Authorities. Reported (IMB) 13th Mar. *(Not shown on chart.)*

2. Late Report: While at anchor, an unknown number of perpetrators boarded Singapore-flagged container ship and attacked the duty ordinary seaman who did not suffer any injury at 2040 LT in position 18°34.20N - 072°24.20W, Port Au Prince, Anchorage, Haiti. General alarm was sounded, and all crew mustered in the accommodation area. The Port-au-Prince port control and Haiti Coast Guard were informed. After about 20 mins, the Chief Officer of the ship conducted a search, but did not find the perpetrators. The search party found four mooring ropes and one metal wire with hook missing. Reported (ReCAAP) 8th Mar.

**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.