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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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India to have Central Marine Police Force to guard coastline
The Ministry of Home Affairs has completed preparations for setting up a new armed force — Central Marine Police Force — to strengthen coastal security. A final proposal would be sent to the Cabinet by early next month for approval, a source in the ministry said on Saturday 19th. About the structure of the force, a senior ministry officer said, “Unlike other Central Armed Police Forces, the Central Marine Police Force will have its own cadre, rules, manual, Act, infrastructure and would be headed by a Director-General rank officer.”

RAAF deploys P-8A Poseidon to Middle East for maritime security
The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) has deployed a P-8A Poseidon aircraft to the Middle East in support of a US-led internal maritime security coalition. Australia Defence Minister Linda Reynolds said: “The P-8A will work alongside our coalition partners to ensure the safe passage of merchant vessels through the region, boost security and provide an advanced maritime patrol and surveillance capability.

Israel to Take Part in Bahrain Security Coalition Meeting
An Israeli Foreign Ministry delegation will visit Manama to participate in a conference of members of the Working Group on Maritime and Aviation Security, an alliance established by the United States to protect trade in the Gulf. The October 21-22 initiative, hosted by Bahrain in conjunction with the US and Poland, stems from a conference held in Warsaw last February that was attended by top officials from some 60 nations, the goal being to seek ways to attain stability in the Middle East.

UK looks to ramp up maritime security tie-up with India
Indian media reported on Oct. 20th that the UK wants to increase maritime security cooperation between the two nations, in the Indo-Pacific, with special focus on the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). There are plans for a UK liaison officer to be posted to India’s new Information Fusion Centre.

Galle Dialogue 2019 commences in Colombo
Galle Dialogue 2019: the International Maritime Conference organized by the Sri Lanka Navy under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence, began in Colombo on 21st Oct. The International Maritime Conference is sequentially the 10th edition of this flagship event which was scheduled to be held over two days (21st and 22nd October) at the Galle Face Hotel, Colombo, under the theme ‘Refining Mindset to Address Transnational Maritime Threats: A Review of the Decade’.

PH, India sign maritime security deal during Kovind visit
An agreement to cooperate in enhancing maritime security was signed by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and Indian Navy during the state visit of Indian President Ram Nath Kovind to the Philippines.

Indian Navy training squadron visits Tanzania
The Indian Navy’s First Training Squadron has visited Dar Es Salaam and Zanzibar, Tanzania, as part of the African leg of its voyage. The squadron includes the Indian Naval Ships Tir, Sujata and Shardul and Indian Coast Guard Ship Sarathi. They visited Tanzania from 14th to 17th Oct.

To see MAST’s services in the Indian Ocean Region, please click here.
Somalia will press ahead with poverty reduction efforts and a major regional ports and corridors initiative if international creditors forgive the country’s $5 billion debt this February, as expected, the country’s finance minister said on Sunday 19th. Finance Minister Abdirahman Duale Beileh said he was heartened by progress made during discussions with officials from the United States, Somalia’s biggest creditor, Britain, and others during the IMF/World Bank annual meetings this past week.

Over 20 Al Shabaab militants killed in central Somalia
Over 20 Somali-based insurgent group Al Shabaab militants were killed and several weapons seized after Somali National Army (SNA) conducted a military operation in central region of Hiran, officials said on Saturday 19th. Mohamed Nuur Agajoof, Jalalaqsi town mayor, told media that the military operation was carried out between Jalalaqsi and Bula Barde towns in Hiran region, killing over 20 militants.

Conflict and drought displace 300,000 in Somalia so far this year
Over 300,000 people have been displaced due to drought and conflict in Somalia so far this year. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) said insecurity is making it virtually impossible for humanitarians to provide aid in rural areas and is resulting in vulnerable people moving to overcrowded camps in urban areas for assistance.

Kenya wins delay of its border dispute case with Somalia
The International Court of Justice has approved a request by Kenya to delay the public hearing of its maritime boundary case with Somalia. The court initially set September 9th-13th date but pushed the public hearings to November 4th-8th of this year. ICJ, after hearing objections from Somalia, pushed the case to June 8th, 2020, and warned both countries that there will be no further delays.

Somalia, AU urge troops to protect kids in combat zones
Somalia and the African Union Mission (AMISOM) have called on national security forces to strive to protect children in combat zones. Hassan Ali Mohamed, Defence Minister, reiterated the government’s commitment to ensuring the protection of children. “Our message is loud and clear. Violations of human rights should end, especially recruitment and use of child soldiers,” Mohamed said, according to a statement.

Kenyan police launch manhunt for Al Shabaab militant in border region
Kenya’s security officers said Friday 18th they have launched a major manhunt for Al Shabaab militant behind recent murder of 11 police officers near the border with Somalia. The police said Abdullahi Banati, a Somali Galjeel, led a team of militants that planted improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that killed paramilitary police officers from HarHar camp on Oct. 12th.

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Somalia Commando Unit Commander Killed
The Commander of a Turkey-trained commando unit was killed, Friday 18th, in Mogadishu in an exchange of fire between his bodyguards and unknown assailants a stone’s throw from Villa Somalia, the President’s office. Mohammed Suleiman was the Commander of a unit named 'The Eagle'.

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/MSCCHOA prior to entering the Indian Ocean High Risk Area (HRA).
UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths expressed some hope for resolving the Yemen conflict on Oct. 17th. Griffiths noted that the al Houthi movement had offered to suspend all missile and drone strikes against Saudi Arabia in late September and that the Saudi-led coalition had limited the number of airstrikes conducted in October. Griffiths noted that the progress was fragile, but stated that it was a “step in the right direction.”

4 soldiers killed in armed confrontation in southern Yemen
At least four Yemeni soldiers were killed and eight others injured on Monday 21st during an armed confrontation in the southern province of Abyan, a military official told Xinhua. According to the local military official, who asked to remain anonymous, pro-government Yemeni forces clashed with security units of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Mudiyah district in the eastern part of Abyan.

Intra-Houthi fighting breaks out
Unknown gunmen shot al Houthi officials Saad Mahrouq and Colonel Amin Hassan al-Shabibi in Ibb city in western Yemen on Oct. 18th, according to anti-al-Houthi media. These sources allege that al Houthi forces are clashing with each other in Ibb. There has been no confirmation from official Houthi sources.

Houthis Accused of Randomly Planting Landmines
Yemeni military officials accused on Sunday Houthi militias of randomly planting landmines and explosive devices along streets, houses and farms from where the rebels have been expelled, adding to the misery of people, including children, women and the elderly. Reports of humanitarian organizations suggest that Yemen has become one of the largest landmine battlefields in the world since World War II.

Yemen’s Economic Committee Accuses Militias of Evading their Obligations
Yemen’s Economic Committee has accused Houthi militias of attempting to create a new oil crisis and evading their obligations in paying salaries while seeking to derail the UN envoy’s efforts to implement the Stockholm Agreement. In a statement seen by Asharq Al-Awsat, the committee said the insurgents have prevented importers of oil derivatives from applying for permits that allow shipments to enter Houthi-controlled Hodeidah port, despite the government’s initiative to resolve the crisis.

American weapons ended up in the wrong hands in Yemen
American-made weaponry has fallen into the hands of rival militia groups in Yemen, some of whom have turned their arms against each other in a bitter and worsening conflict, a new CNN investigation has found. Fresh evidence shows that military hardware that was supplied to US allies has been distributed in contravention of arms deals to militia groups, including UAE-backed separatists.

UN starts long-delayed truce monitoring in Hodeida
UN officers, tasked with monitoring a ceasefire between Yemeni government forces and Iran-allied Al Houthi militia in the port city of Hodeida, have begun setting up observation posts there, military sources have said.

Saudi troops arrive in Yemen’s Aden as deal with separatists stalls
Local sources have said Saudi and Sudanese troops have arrived in Yemen’s southern province of Aden in spite of a Reuters report indicating that an agreement between Yemen’s Saudi-backed government and southern separatists was due to be signed. The Yemeni government hopes to retake the city as its interim capital, having lost Sanaa to the Houthis, but was ousted from Aden in August. UAE-backed separatists who – until recently – were in control of the city, hope to declare it the capital of a future state of South Yemen.

UAE continues pull back in certain areas
The United Arab Emirates (UAE) withdrew numerous armored vehicles and personnel from Taiz governorate on Oct. 16th. This comes after the UAE withdrew 200 troops from Aden on October 8 as part of Saudi-led negotiations to end a standoff between the Transitional Political Council of the South (STC) and the government of President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The STC seized Aden, the de facto capital of Yemen, in August.

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.
Migrants at a holding center in Malta set at least five staff cars on fire on Sunday 20th, destroyed parts of the building they were staying in, and left one policeman injured. The riots follow months of new sea arrivals in the small island nation. Witnesses said the migrants at the Hal Far reception center, which is based at a former British army barracks near Malta International Airport, had torched several rooms as well as cars belonging to staff. One police car was also damaged after apparently being set on fire.

Libya coast guard intercepts dozens of Europe-bound migrants
Associated Press reported on Oct. 21st that Libyan Coast Guard assets had rescued 107 people from waters around 120km from Tripoli. The rescued migrants were taken to a detention centre in the capital.

Ocean Viking rescues another 104 migrants
The Ocean Viking has reportedly rescued 104 migrants from a rubber dinghy off the coast of Libya. Among them are 40 minors, ten women and two babies, according to MSF, which operates the migrant rescue ship. The two organizations that jointly run the Ocean Viking ship, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and SOS Mediterranee, released a statement on Twitter on Friday 18th. They announced that they had just rescued another 104 migrants about 50 nautical miles off the Libyan coast.

Italy retrieves seven bodies from Oct. 7 migrant shipwreck
Italy has recovered the bodies of a child and six other people from the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea, more than a week after a crowded migrant boat capsized off the coast of the island of Lampedusa. Men from the Italian coastguard, dressed in white suits and wearing masks over their faces, carried the bodies on to the dock of the island's small port in black bags on Thursday 17th. Wooden coffins were laid on the port side.

The current migrant smuggling situation
Updated figures released by UNCHR this week illustrate the recent spike in migrant crossings, with numbers for August through to October all showing a significant rise. The presumption is that this is caused by favourable sea states combined with the change in Italian leadership. Large numbers of migrants continue to be turned back by both the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy, but once outside Libya’s TTW, only a handful of NGO rescue missions are in operation. This has led to further calls for both the EU and NATO to return to the water, which at this stage remains unlikely. However, should fatality numbers continue to rise, this may become a necessity as the weather conditions worsen.
Arrest warrants issued for Haftar, ex-commanders
A Libyan military prosecutor on Tuesday 22nd ordered the arrest of General Khalifa Haftar and three other retired commanders. According to a statement by the military chief prosecutor’s office, Haftar and three retired commanders were accused of commanding a Russian group that carried out kidnappings and murders on Sept. 24th.

LNA Advances in South Tripoli
The Libyan National Army (LNA), led by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, announced that its forces have advanced in South Tripoli and taken control over Azizia town, 40 km south of the capital Tripoli. Media Center of LNA’s Dignity Operations Room issued a statement on Oct. 21st, stating that the forces took control of Az-Zahraa Brigade after liberating Azizia, following heavy clashes in the region.

Libya Parliament Seeks to Work with UN to Form ‘National Unity’ Govt.
Libyan lawmakers concluded on Saturday 20th a series of meetings in Cairo aimed at forming a liaison committee to work with the United Nations mission in Libya to form a national unity government. The MPs welcomed all international efforts aimed at resolving the Libyan crisis, reiterating, however, their rejection of attempts to undermine the authority of the parliament, given that it represents the people.

Arab League chief calls for immediate ceasefire in Libya’s Tripoli
Arab League (AL) Secretary General Ahmed Abul Gheit renewed on Friday 18th his call for an immediate ceasefire at the Libyan capital Tripoli. In a statement, the AL chief urged all Libyan parties to engage in the political process that is sponsored by the United Nations for reaching a settlement of the Libyan crisis.

Libyan National Army Urges Berlin Conference to Disarm Militias
The Libyan National Army demanded that the upcoming Berlin conference prioritize the disarmament of militias loyal to the Government of National Accord, headed by Fayez al-Sarraj. The LNA, led by Khalifa Haftar, hailed in a statement on Friday ‘every international effort aimed at achieving peace and stability, eliminating terrorism and dismantling militias, leading to the formation of a legitimate government that does not answer to gangs and militias and that represents all the Libyan people’.

Libya estimates 2020 budget at less than $34 bln - GNA economy ministry
Libya’s 2020 budget is estimated at slightly less than 48 billion Libyan dinars ($34 billion), the UN-backed administration said on Thursday 17th, a day after it sharply hiked kerosene prices as part of a reforms programme.

Libya-US talks to develop oil sector and enhance transparency
Libyan and US officials held talks in Washington on ways to bolster Libya’s oil sector and enhance transparency in data dissemination in Libyan institutions. From the Libyan side, the meeting was attended by Libyan Minister of Planning, Taher Al-Jahmi, Finance Minister Faraj Boumtari, Chairman of the National Oil Corporation (NOC) Mustafa Sanallah, and Governor of the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) Saddek El Kaber.

Libya complains to Moscow about Russian mercenaries fighting for Haftar’s forces
The Head of the Libyan Presidential Council Fayez Al-Sarraj has confirmed that his government has submitted a complaint to Moscow about Russian mercenaries fighting alongside Khalifa Haftar’s forces that are leading an offensive against Tripoli. Speaking on France 24 Channel on Wednesday 16th, Al-Sarraj said his government officials talked to Russian officials about the mercenaries and that his government trusts Moscow’s role in Libya’s stability.

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

Citing Security, NPA Cancels $133.28M SAA Fees
Concerned by threat to national security and the cost of doing business at the country’s seaport, the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) has notified the Nigerian Navy of its decision to dismantle the Secure Anchorage Area (SAA), operated on behalf of the Navy by a private company, OMSL Limited. NPA insisted that the security of the country’s waterways was the statutory responsibility of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Marine Police, and Nigerian Navy, which must all ensure a safe and secure Nigeria territorial waters.

Nigerian Navy Arrests Seven for Providing Maritime Security Services
As part of its mission to secure the coastal waters of the world’s piracy capital, the Nigerian Navy recently intercepted a small craft and arrested its occupants for a criminal offense: providing security services to a merchant ship. According to a spokesman for the Nigerian Navy, the service received a tip that the “rogue vessel” Workhorse was providing an escort to a oil tanker, the Osmamwe. The naval base NNS Pathfinder deployed a gunboat crew to Bonny Anchorage to intercept the Workhorse. Upon arrival, the Nigerian Navy boat crew determined that the seven civilian-clothed crewmembers on board Workhorse could not “provide the appropriate permit” to operate as a security vessel, and the team arrested them.

NSCDC arrests 23 suspected oil thieves in Rivers
The Rivers State Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps has arrested 23 suspected oil thieves and seized a vessel and 20 vehicles used in conveying stolen petroleum products. The suspects, according to the state NSCDC Commandant, Mr Muktar Lawal, were apprehended in various parts of the state.

Security expert seeks collaboration among littoral states
Former President, Maritime Security Providers Association of Nigeria (MASPAN), Captain George Alily (rtd), has called for increased collaboration in information sharing among littoral states in the country to support the maritime security architecture being put in place by the government to secure the nation’s waterways against pirates’ attacks.

Trawler Fined $1 Million in Ghana
A trawler has been apprehended in Ghanaian waters having caught at least 13.9 tonnes of small pelagic fish in a single day, using illegal nets. The small-mesh nets found on board – which are illegal for an industrial trawler – indicate that the vessel was specifically targeting small pelagics. Analysis of the catch also showed that a significant proportion were undersized juveniles.

Shipping firms still pay $2,000 per day for protection of crew, vessel
Despite the abolition of the controversial safe anchorage area by the Nigerian Ports Authority, NPA, where vessels and crew members wait before they proceed to berths, shipping companies still pay $2,000 per day to operators of the area. Speaking Vanguard Maritime Report at a maritime stakeholders meeting in Lagos, Mr. Mark Wash, Executive Director, ENL Consortium, operators of berth A, B and C at the Apapa port, confirmed that NPA has told shipping firms to stop paying for protection at the ‘safe anchorage’.

To see MAST Services in the region, please click here. And to read Nigeria’s country report, please click here.
The three Indonesian fishermen kidnapped in waters off Tambisan island, Kinabatangan on Sept 23rd, are being held by the Abu Sayyaf group led by a sub-leader wanted by the Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom) in a village in Indanan town, Sulu, southern Philippines, Daily Express has been able to confirm. A terrorism researcher at Jakarta-based think-tank Galatea, Utta Levenia Nababan, said the hostages are currently being held by Salip Mura’s group.

Incidents:

1. Duty oiler on routine rounds onboard a bulk carrier underway was taken hostage by five robbers armed with a gun and knives at 1700 UTC in position 01°03.45N – 103°38.70E, Singapore Straits. The robbers threatened the oiler and tied his hands. They then stole ships spares and escaped. The oiler reported the incident to the OOW who raised the alarm and notified Singapore VTIS. Reported (IMB) 19th Oct.

Curfew in ESSZone extended until Nov 11th

The curfew in the waters off seven districts in the Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZone), which ends tomorrow, has been extended to Nov 7, said Sabah Police Commissioner Datuk Omar Mammah. The curfew from 6 pm to 6 am covers the waters off Tawau, Semporna, Kunak, Lahad Datu, Kinabatangan, Sandakan and Beluran, he said in a statement on Oct. 22nd.

‘No resurgence of kidnapping in Mindanao’

Relentless military operations have prevented the resurgence of kidnapping in Mindanao. Lt. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief, said recent reports of kidnapping could be the handiwork of mid-level Abu Sayyaf leaders who are out to make a living.

46 on Esscom wanted list since 2016

A total of 46 individuals, mostly foreigners, were placed on the Eastern Sabah Security Command’s (Esscom) wanted list since 2016. Deputy Commander Brigade General Hamzah Ali (pic) said of the figure, 28 individuals were either killed or surrendered themselves to the authorities in Malaysia.

Why China’s Coast Guard Spent 258 Days in Waters Claimed by Malaysia

Chinese coast guard vessels spent 70% of the past year patrolling in a tract of the South China Sea claimed by Malaysia, an American think tank says. The coast guard presence, especially long-term for a Chinese mission in the widely disputed South China Sea, followed by Malaysia’s muted response gives China an ever-stronger upper hand over the Southeast Asian country.

ReCAAP ISC 3rd Quarter Report on Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia

A total of 54 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships (comprising 49 actual incidents and five attempted incidents) were reported in Asia during January-September 2019

Southeast Asia on alert for Isis ‘grand agenda’

South East Asian nations are on high alert for about 50 Indonesian Islamic State fighters and their family members who could be tasked with carrying out the terror network’s “grand agenda” of destroying the region’s secular governments following their escape from Syrian prisons, the South China Morning Post reported on 19th.

Kidnappers Demand Ransom for British Man and Wife

The gunmen who abducted a British national and his Filipina wife have demanded 50 million pesos (almost U.S. $1 million) in exchange for their freedom, a Philippine military official said on Thursday 17th. This came as the Philippine Coast Guard announced it had deployed its anti-terror unit and a high-speed boat to beef up the military’s search-and-rescue mission in the porous coastlines of the Zamboanga peninsula in the southern Philippines.

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.

Western North Pacific Ocean and South China Sea

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