MAST Services

MAST has the experience, capability and global presence to provide comprehensive support to our clients.

"Making the world a safer place to live and work"

Maritime
- Counter piracy
- ISPS services
- Training
- K&R and Ship Arrest

Risk Consulting
- Due Diligence
- Risk management
- Crisis management
- Training

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- System Design, Installation and Maintenance
- Technical Consultancy
- Cyber Risk Consultancy
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Physical and Asset Protection
- Close Protection
- Residential Security
- Security Chauffeurs
- Events and Clubs
- Training
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.

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Incidents:


2. Saudi-flagged tanker approached at 1020 UTC in position 14:18.06N - 052:29.18E, vicinity IRTC Point Bravo, Gulf of Aden. Vessel closed by three small craft. One of the craft was unmanned (likely remote controlled) and approached vessel to extreme close quarters. Vessel followed BMP5 procedures and all small craft withdrew. No damage caused, no crew injured. Vessel and crew Safe. Reported (UKMTO) 3rd Mar.

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

Carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Operating in Red Sea

USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) transited the Suez Canal and is now operating in the Red Sea, according to the Navy. Eisenhower joins the Truman Carrier Strike Group and the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group already deployed to U.S. Central Command, according to the USNI News Fleet and Marine Tracker. USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75) has been operating in a tight area in the North Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman since relieving the Lincoln Carrier Strike Group in December.

Upgraded GEMINI to boost India’s maritime security

Indian media reports that the country’s indigenously developed GEMINI system, used to disseminate information to fishing vessels, is set to receive a boost. Until now, the system has only been used for weather information, but improvements will soon allow two-way communication, better allowing maritime security alerts to be issued to vessels at sea.

Seychelles hands over presidency of the Indian Ocean Commission

Maintaining regional stability in Madagascar and Comoros was among the achievements made during the one-year presidency of Seychelles over the Council of Ministers of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Seychelles’ Vice President said. Vice President Vincent Meriton, the outgoing IOC president, spoke at the 34th Council of Ministers held at Savoy Resort and Spa in the northern Mahe district of Beau Vallon.

Indian Navy postpones ‘Milan 2020’ exercise

The Indian Navy has postponed the Milan 2020 exercise in response to the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak. The multilateral exercise was scheduled to be held from 18th to 28th March this year. The drill was poised to become one of the biggest maritime exercises organised by the Indian Navy involving naval forces from around 30 countries.

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

Indian Ocean Region

Two foreign trawlers packed with over $33m worth of heroin and crystal methamphetamine were seized in Sri Lanka’s biggest-ever drugs bust at sea, a navy spokesman said on Thursday 5th. Troops found 400kg (about 880 pounds) of heroin and 100kg (about 220 pounds) of the drug “ice” on board the two vessels, spokesman Isuru Sooriyabandara said. The street value of the seized narcotics was estimated by officials to be six billion rupees ($33.5m).
Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who is known by his nickname "Farmajo", met Kenya's Interior Minister Fred Matiang'i and other officials on Sunday 8th. The delegation travelled to Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, at the request of Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta. The meeting came just two days after the two presidents spoke by phone and agreed to work together to improve security at their border as well as strengthen trade and diplomatic relations.

Somalia partners voice concern over troop deployment in Gede
Somalia's International Partners have issued a statement in which they expressed concern over the deployment of large number of troops by the Federal Government of Somalia and Jubbaland regional administration. The International Partners called on "all actors to exercise restraint, to reduce the presence of security forces in Gede, and to avoid any actions that could spark violence.

UN warns of new desert locust swarms in Somalia
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has warned that the desert locust population which has ravaged countries in the Horn of Africa remains alarming in Somalia. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), FAO said the locusts are continuing to breed in the northeast of Somalia and new swarms are expected to form in the coming weeks as they start flying and becoming voracious.

Somalia brings supermajors back into the fold as IMF agrees to forgive debt
Peace has broken out after years of acrimony between Somalia's federal government and member states, with a working accord on revenue sharing and a majority of International Monetary Fund (IMF) members pledging debt relief. The distribution and distribution of $1.7 million in back-payment of major oil company surface rentals to the federating states is an extraordinary achievement after 30 years of civil conflict, as is the decision by 100 IMF member states to forgive some $330 million of sovereign debt.

Schools close in north-east Kenya after Al Shabaab targets teachers
A series of targeted killings of schoolteachers by a militia group in Kenya has seen an exodus of staff and the closure of hundreds of schools across the north-east of the country. Thousands of teachers have left their posts in the past two months following several suspected Al Shabaab attacks in the region.

US air strikes target Al Shabaab
AFRICOM conducted an airstrike targeting Al Shabaab near Gandarshi in central Somalia's Lower Shabelle region on Mar. 7th. The strike killed four militants.

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 BMP5s 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

U.N. Special Envoy Martin Griffiths on Saturday 7th called for an immediate end to military action by Yemen’s warring parties as renewed violence between the Houthi movement and a Saudi-led coalition threatened peace efforts. Fierce battles have resumed in al-Jawf province since last month and culminated with the Houthi group taking control of its capital al-Hazem last week, as the Saudi-led coalition resumed air strikes against the region’s towns and villages.

Saudi Arabia closes only border crossing with Yemen

The Saudi authorities closed Wadia border crossing, as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. A source from Wadia crossing said that the Saudi authorities informed the administration on the Yemeni side that no Yemeni traveller is allowed to enter the Saudi territory until further notice, Middle East Monitor reported on Mar. 10th.

Saudi-Led coalition carries out an operation in Yemen’s Salif

The Saudi-Led coalition fighting in Yemen carried out an operation against Iran-aligned Houthi targets in Yemen’s port district, Salif, Saudi state TV reported late on Saturday 7th, citing the coalition. The coalition said it destroyed sites used to assemble and launch explosives-laden boats and drones that pose a threat to maritime shipping lines in the Red Sea’s Bab al-Mandeb strait.

Yemeni gov’t accuses Iran of being behind foiled oil tanker attack in Arabian Sea

Yemeni Information Minister Muammar Iryani on Thursday 5th accused Iran of being behind a foiled attempt to attack an oil tanker in the Arabian Sea. “Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps stands behind the foiled terrorist attack on the oil tanker as it was sailing toward the Gulf of Aden,” Iryani said in a statement carried by the state-run Saba News Agency.

al Qaeda suffers heavy losses in Yemen conflicts

Yemen-based al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, also known as AQAP, has been weakened by the deaths of its leaders at the hands of US drones, ground attacks by Yemeni troops and rivalry with other groups, experts said. “al Qaeda is going through hard times with its leaders’ priority now to hold the group together,” Saleh Al-Baydhani, a Yemeni political analyst, told Arab News.

5 pro-gov’t soldiers killed in Houthi attack

On Friday 6th, as many as five soldiers of the pro-government Yemeni forces were killed as a result of an attack conducted by Houthi militants in the nation’s southern province of Dhalea, a military official informed Xinhua. The local military official who refused to be named stated that “the attack occurred when a heat-seeking missile fired by the Houthi rebels and struck a military vehicle of the pro-government forces near Al Husha district in western part of Dhalea.”

Tribal Sheikhs Systematically Targeted by Houthis

Since the Houthi militias launched their coup against Yemen’s legitimate government five years ago, they have been using tribal chiefs whether by recruiting them or by humiliating and repressing them and eliminating their social role. Tribal sources in the capital, Sanaa, have reported that the group has returned to targeting tribal chiefs in the capital and other Houthi-run areas, after accusing them of not recruiting militants from their tribes to fight in insurgent ranks and falling short in collecting financial donations.

Conference looks at future map for peace in Yemen

Rebuilding war-torn Yemen was the central focus of a conference held over the weekend of Mar. 7th-8th in Istanbul. Titled “Post-War Yemen: A Forward-looking Vision,” it was sponsored by the Tawakkol Karman Foundation, an Istanbul-based endowment fund named for Tawakkol Abdel-Salam Karman, a Yemeni journalist and rights activist, and Nobel Peace Prize co-laureate.

UK’s Dominic Raab hopeful for Yemen war de-escalation this year

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, said on Thursday 5th that he was hopeful for a de-escalation this year in Yemen’s five-year-old civil war, in which London backs the Saudi-led coalition.

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

MST recommends BMP measures be enforced and watches strengthened during transits in the region.
Turkey says 2016 migrant deal with EU needs to be updated
Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Tuesday 10th that a 2016 agreement between Turkey and the European Union needs to be updated, taking into account developments in Syria, and that Ankara was ready to work constructively on the issue. In an interview with state-owned Anadolu news agency, Cavusoglu said that EU visa liberalization and an update of the country’s customs union with the bloc must be implemented to help solve the migrant issue.

Over 20,000 migrants died in Mediterranean since 2014, UN says
The U.N. migration agency said on Friday 6th that a shipwreck off Libya and other recent maritime incidents have raised its estimated death toll among migrants who tried to cross the Mediterranean past the “grim milestone” of 20,000 deaths since 2014. Paul Dillon, spokesman for the International Organization for Migration, pointed to incidents including the presumed drowning of 91 people who went missing from a dinghy that left Garabulli, Libya, on Feb. 9, and the disappearance of a ship that set off from Algeria on Feb. 14.

Spain disrupts large smuggling operation
Associated Press reported on Mar. 7th that Spanish police had broken up a smuggling ring, arresting 89 people involved in operations to smuggle both illegal narcotics and people from North Africa to mainland Spain. The Civil Guard stated that the gang used speed boats to ferry their illegal cargoes across the Mediterranean. AP reported.

The current migrant smuggling situation
Once again, migration via the Mediterranean has been in the media focus, following incidents at the Turkish and Greek border in the last week. These, combined with fears over the spread of the coronavirus, have led to further demonisation of migrants, and attacks on camps in the Greek islands along with political protests have all contributed to a fraught situation. As Turkey calls for a renegotiation of the 2016 deal it signed with the EU, the human element of migration has very much been in the background, with NGO groups left to continue their rescue missions in the Med itself. There are, sadly, no quick political fixes to the situation.
Libya
The U.N.-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) destroyed on Saturday 7th an ammunition depot belonging to forces loyal to eastern-based putschist Khalifa Haftar. GNA’s Libyan Army spokesman Mohammad Qanunu announced on social media that an ammunition depot storing heavy weapons used to randomly bomb neighborhoods around Tripoli was destroyed in Qasir Benghashir, south of the capital, in retaliation against attacks launched on civilians by Haftar’s militia.

Egypt, UAE establish Libya naval commando squad to fight Turkey
Middle East Monitor reported on Mar. 9th that a special naval commandos unit made of of dozens of Libyan fighters has been setup with the help of the UAE to carry out operations against Turkey’s naval interests in the Mediterranean, sources told Al-Araby Al-Jadeed. Egyptian and Libyan sources revealed the new squad’s missions include blocking the naval route that Turkey uses to send military aid to the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli.

Haftar Meets Macron, Says Committed to Signing Libya Ceasefire
Libyan National Army commander Khalifa Haftar held talks in Paris on Monday 9th with French President Emmanuel Macron. He told Macron that he will sign a ceasefire and stick to it if militias loyal to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord commit to it, a French presidency official said.

Central Bank says oil blockade cost Libya $2.7 billion so far
The Libyan Central Bank has announced that Libya has lost over 2.7 billion dollars since the Jan. 18th oil blockade, adding in a statement that February revenue amounts to 380 million dinars. The Libyan Central Bank added on Monday 9th that foreign currency purchase fees had made 6 billion dinars in revenue while sovereign revenues brought in 5 million dinars, adding that it had approved a budget of 38.6 billion.

Haftar force’s rocket attack kills two, injures four in Libya’s capital
Two civilians have been killed and four others wounded in renewed Grad and Mortar rockets’ shelling by Khalifa Haftar’s forces on Souq Al-Jumua and Arada in Tripoli. The media office of ‘Volcano of Rage Operation’ of the Government of National Accord (GNA) confirmed on Sunday 8th the number of casualties, saying the deaths were a man and a woman.

AGOCO announces new oil discovery in Sirte basin
Libya’s Benghazi based Arabian Gulf Oil Company (AGOCO) announced the discovery of a new oilfield in the Bayda field (concession 47), part of the Sirte basin. The discovery came as part of drilling exploratory well Z-1-47, located 50 km northwest of the Bayda oil field.

Turkish journalists arrested over Libya leak
Two journalists have been detained in Istanbul after writing an article about a member of Turkey’s intelligence agency who lost his life in Libya on Thursday 5th. The editor-in-chief of the Oda TV news site Barış Terkoğlu, and Hülya Kılınc, a reporter for the outlet, are charged with several intelligence-related offences, including obtaining, disclosing and revealing documents and information about the operations of Turkey’s National Intelligence Organisation (MIT).

Libya rejects Arab League resolution on Libyan-Turkish ties says it’s an “account-settling”
Libya has expressed reservations about the Arab League’s decision at its regular meeting held on Wednesday 4th in Cairo, related to the “Turkish interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries”, saying it is a clear double standard, according to the Libyan Foreign Ministry. The ministry said in a statement issued yesterday that “The resolution issued by the Arab League condemns Turkish support for Libya, which was approved by the legitimate government; at the same time, it justifies the intervention of Arab countries, despite that their interference includes bombing, killing innocent people, and destroying facilities.”

Turkey eyes $120B investment potential in Libya
Turkish investors should harness Libya’s $120 billion investment volume -- especially in the contracting sector -- said the chairman of the Turkey-Libya Council of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEIK) on Thursday 5th. “There is a call from Libya in this direction,” said Murtaza Karanfil, adding that Libya was undergoing a reconstruction process and that there were major opportunities in all of the country’s sectors.

To read MAST’s Libyan Country report on MASTOPEDIA, please click here.
Four Georgian sailors kidnapped by pirates near the Nigerian city of Lagos in late February have been released from captivity and will soon return to their homeland, the Georgian Maritime Transport Agency said on Saturday 7th. On Feb. 20th, pirates attacked a vessel sailing under the Liberian flag in the Gulf of Guinea near Nigeria and abducted 10 crew members, of whom four were Georgian nationals. Information on the other captive crew members was not available at the time of writing.

Incidents:

1. A robber in a canoe approached and boarded anchored Marshall Islands-flagged offshore tug at 0150 UTC in position 04:54.4’N – 001:46.59’W, Takoradi anchorage, Ivory Coast. The alert crew noticed the presence of the robber and raised the alarm. All crew mustered and a security search was carried out throughout the vessel. Port Control informed and a security boat was sent to the location. It was reported that a mobile phone was stolen from the vessel. Reported (IMB) 7th Mar.

2. Anchored MV attempted boarding by two robbers at 0330 UTC in position 04:54.4’N – 001:46.59’W, Takoradi anchorage, Ghana. Officer of Watch spotted the robbers and raised the alarm. Robbers hid in small wooden boat manned by two accomplices. Ship and crew Safe. Two other MVs reported attempted boardings in the vicinity. Reported (MDAT) 4th Mar.

3. MV reported boarded at 1827 UTC in position 05:02N – 003:28E, around 83nm South of Lagos coast, Nigeria. Unknown number of attackers. SSAS alert activated. Vessel and crew reported Safe. Reported (MDAT) 5th Mar.


Fishing Threatened in Rivers As Bandits Take Over Waterways
Deepwater and artisanal fishing in the coastal region of Rivers State may soon go extinct as a result of the activities of sea pirates and other criminal elements on the waterways. Environmental pollution, occasioned by the activities of illegal oil bunkers, is also hampering artisanal and deepwater fishing, locals have told Nigerian media.

Nigeria’s Closed Border Boosts Smuggling to Cameroon
Cameroonian authorities say smuggling from Nigeria is increasing, five months after Abuja banned land border trade to crack down on the illegal business. “We have more than 100 entrances in the sea. More than one hundred. We can control about 50, but the other 50 is a problem,” Customs officer Pierre Engamba said.

Two Pirate Boardings in One Day in Gulf of Guinea
On Thursday, Greek vessel operator Minerva Marine reported that the product tanker Minerva Virgo was boarded by pirates off the coast of Benin. It was also reported that a second attack, potentially conducted by the same pirate action group, was carried out the same day at a position about 75 nm to the east. It has been noted that when Nigeria clamps down on piracy, gangs shift to other areas in the Gulf.

To see MAST Services in the region, please click here. And and to read Nigeria’s country report, please click here.
South East Asia
The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)-Western Mindanao Command (WesMinCom) hosted the Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines Triilateral Security Conference at the Garden Orchid Hotel here, Thursday 5th. Representatives from the AFP general headquarters, their Indonesian and Malaysian counterparts, and the top WesMinCom officers and its subordinate units joined in the activity.

Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

Indonesia to Send 30 Large Fishing Vessels to North Natuna Sea
Indonesia will send 30 large fishing vessels from the northern Javanese coast to the North Natuna Sea to help assert the country’s sovereignty over the stretch of ocean claimed by China. Chief security minister Mahfud M.D. said the move was on the instruction of President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo. The president said Indonesia must maintain its sovereignty over the country’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

US Coast Guard holds small boat training for PCG
The US Coast Guard recently conducted small-scale training for its Philippine counterpart to boost maritime law enforcement capabilities. The small boat operations course was the first in a series of “train the trainer” courses that is envisioned to prepare Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) instructors to manage the training program in the future, the US Embassy in Manila said in a statement on Monday 9th.

Malaysia Bolsters Security Near Sea Border with Philippines
Malaysia has beefed up security near its maritime border with the southern Philippines, where recent kidnappings have taken place, in a move that will include the deployment of six light attack helicopters purchased from the United States, security officials said Friday 6th. Hazani Ghazali, chief of the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM), said authorities arrested 41 undocumented Indonesia and Filipinos during raids on March 4 as part of a security operation codenamed “Ops Gasak,” which was aimed at disrupting cross-border criminal activities.

No proof of life yet of abducted doctor in Sulu
The Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) bloated in Zamboanga City is checking the veracity that the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) has demanded PHP5 million ransom in exchange for the release of the physician they seized in Jolo, Sulu. Lt. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Westmincom chief, reiterated the government’s “no ransom policy” in addressing the abduction of Dr Daniel Moreno by the ASG bandits. ASG bandits took Moreno on Feb. 4th from his clinic cum residence in Barangay Walled City, Jolo. It has been suggested that the doctor was initially kidnapped in order to treat an Abu Sayyaf commander. On Tuesday 10th, it was reported that the group had demanded P5 million (around $99,000) for his release.

Abu Sayyaf demands Rp8.4 billion in ransom for Indonesians
The Abu Sayyaf group is demanding 30 million Peso (around $594,000) as a ransom for the release of five Indonesians, Indonesia’s top security minister Mahfud MD has revealed quoting a media report. “I have just learnt from TV but a direct report on that matter is not yet available. I will seek official information on it,” he said at a meeting on standardizing the competence of Islamic propagators at the Indonesian Ulema Council here Thursday 5th.

Operation launched to nab ‘lookouts’ targetting potential kidnap victims in ESSzone
Sabah police have cast a dragnet to detain the remaining ‘lookouts’ working hand-in-glove with kidnap-for-ransom groups (KFRG) in the Eastern Sabah Safety Zone (ESSzone). Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESScom) Commander Datuk Hazani Ghazali said ‘Ops Gasak’ was launched to address the threats identified and which frequently occur in the hot spot areas of ESSzone.

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

Nothing significant to report.

Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

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

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