

## Policy paper

June 2021

### OUR VIEW

It is important that Denmark continues to allocate counterpiracy resources to maintain the pressure on the piracy in West Africa and off the coast of Somalia.

The Danish embassy and trade office in Nigeria and the maritime military adviser from the Danish Defence supports the efforts in West Africa, and have built up knowledge, network and competences in the region.

There is urgent need for enhancement of the security situation for the merchant vessels and their crews, including Danish crewmembers, in the Gulf of Guinea. Danish Shipping is therefore very pleased that Denmark from end of 2021 sends a frigate to the region on a counter-piracy mission.

Denmark should actively work with international partners in providing maritime assets to counter-piracy operations and the establishment of a naval operation in the Gulf of Guinea, in

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# Piracy

**Piracy continues to be a serious problem since a significant proportion of the world trade passes through waters where piracy is a threat. Piracy inflicts high costs on the shipping industry, creates insecurity for seafarers and hinders the affected countries' development.**

Piracy continues to be a threat, especially off the Western coast of Africa, in East Africa and in Southeast Asia. To defeat piracy, it is necessary to protect the commercial ships and include preventive actions on land.

Danish Shipping has provided input to the development of the different Best Management Practices (BMP) and participates in the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. It is recommended that for the companies with ships passing through piracy threatened waters, bespoke risk assessments are completed, which in turn informs the implementation of appropriate measures to protect crews and the ships against potential attacks. Guidance can be found in the BMPs or other area specific guidelines. Ships should also report to the international reporting centres.



### WEST AFRICA

Piracy and other maritime threats are most dominant off the coast of West Africa, especially in the Gulf of Guinea. The situation is more complex than in the Horn of Africa. The piracy threat mainly stems from Nigeria, but spreads to many countries in the region. Nigeria has been among the top kidnapping countries in the world for the past decade. The pirates are primarily originating from Nigeria and are well organized, heavily armed and relentless in their efforts to board the vessel.

Ships are targeted both on their way in or out of harbours, in the deltas, and also in international waters far from the coast. The pirates target all types of ships, and

actions range from petty theft to armed robbery of entire cargos, typically refined oil - or kidnapping the crew. Danish companies have invested in intelligence, protecting their communication, escorts, and changing planned routes at short notice. Because of the high threat from piracy, the Danish authorities have raised the Security level to TWO (out of three) for Danish flagged vessels in the region.

In 2016 Denmark reopened the embassy and trade office in Nigeria, in August 2017 a defence attaché took over the post, acting as maritime adviser for Danish shipping companies and assisting in maritime capacity building in the region. The piracy threat development in West Africa does not only affect the shipown-

order to enhance the maritime surveillance and security, and together with the countries in West Africa build up the necessary regional capabilities via advice and training.

Danish Shipping urges the countries in West Africa to safeguard their territorial waters, and companies operating in the region should have the option to choose providers of private armed guards.

Danish Shipping is a signatory to the Gulf of Guinea Declaration on Suppression of Piracy and encourages all relevant stakeholders to be as well.

The European Union has shown leadership with its extensive military Operation ATALANTA off the coast of Somalia. It is important that the operation has been extended to the end of 2022.

ers, it also affects the West African countries, whose export to especially Europe is deeply dependent of seaborne trade.

### **EAST AFRICA**

The piracy situation off the coast of Somalia has improved in the recent years. Coordinated international efforts have decreased the number of attacks and hijackings drastically. However, Somali pirates still possess the ability and willingness to attack merchant ships, as confirmed by the hijacking of a merchant ship on the 13th of March 2017 close to Somalia's coast and a number of failed attacks on larger merchant ships in the Gulf of Aden during 2017 and 2018.

It stresses the importance of continued presence of military naval vessels, aircraft and helicopters, and companies still have to follow the guidance in the BMP and retain the use of armed guards whenever assessed necessary.

### **SOUTHEAST ASIA**

The threat of piracy in Southeast Asia has existed for many years. Local shipping has primarily been targeted, and crew members have been kidnapped. It is important that countries in the region are active and work together to fight piracy, so it does not develop.

### **FACTS**

- There is at any given time app. 70 Danish controlled ships in the North-western part of the Indian Ocean including the Gulf of Aden, and around 30 ships in the Gulf of Guinea.
- From May 2012 till date, no merchant vessels were hijacked off the coast of Somalia except one incident in March 2017. However, there have been reported hijackings of some cargo / fishing dhows during the above period.
- In 2020, the number of incidents recorded in West Africa showed that more than 40% of the reported 195 incidents globally took place within the Gulf of Guinea region. 35 incidents were recorded for Nigeria - unchanged from 2019. All three hijackings as well as 9 of the 11 vessels fired upon worldwide were reported in these waters as well. Further, the number of crew kidnapped in the Gulf of Guinea increased from 121 in 2019 to 130 in 2020, with Gulf of Guinea accounting for 95 % of the crew members kidnapped globally. This continues to be an escalation in the pirates' methodology in comparison with previous years. Not all attacks are reported.
- A marked increase has been seen in Piracy related activities, especially kidnap for ransom, in the Gulf of Guinea from 2018 and till date.
- The Danish authorities have in beginning of 2020 raised the Security level to TWO (out of three) for Danish flagged vessels in a defined area of up to 200 nautical miles off the coast of Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroun and Equatorial Guinea.
- A reporting centre for West Africa (Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade Gulf of Guinea - MDAT-GoG) was created in the summer of 2016. The centre provides a 24-hour manned service of military experts. The MDAT-GoG receives reports, shares important updates and provides guidance on ship operating patterns and security risks with the Gulf of Guinea maritime community. Ships trading in the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) are encouraged to send regular reports to the MDAT-GoG as per the reporting format.
- The Information Fusion Centre (IFC) in Singapore, which is having international liaison officers from the navies and law enforcement agencies of more than 15 countries, works on early warning, information sharing and operational response.