

## WEEKLY PIRATE ACTIVITY UPDATE

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**122 - 28 December 2012 (Vol. 1; No.47)**

**End of Year Newsletter:**



**Happy New Year!**

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**Holiday season cheer** - as MV Iceberg 1 crew members are freed by Puntland forces following two-week operation; pirates killed, arrested and others fled. Alarming increase in kidnappings off Nigeria. More details surface from Iceberg 1 remaining 22 crew of the treatment and abuse during their time held captive as MPHRP welcomes news of their release. Rumours of MV Leopard, held for two years, crew member death rejected by shipowners despite pirates' threats to kill hostages. Approaches in Gulf of Oman by suspect pirates continues to raise concerns. Mauritius agreements with UK and UK sees them join the "club" of piracy prosecuting nations, but has yet to prosecute any detained pirates. Meanwhile, the two Italian marines, give special leave by India, are "breathing the air of home," over Christmas. The port of Galle has become the hub against Somali pirates, claims Sri Lankan magazine. Netherlands Vice Admiral, in support of the Government stance, states VPDs are the best option for protecting Dutch vessels. Seychelles and Belgium sign agreement on military cooperation, including placing Coastguard on the Louise-Marie. On the 4th anniversary of anti-piracy escort missions, China opens four ships to the public.

Our sincere wishes for a safe and prosperous New Year - thanks for your support!

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## REGIONAL ACTIVITY

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### East Africa

[STOLEN Seas](#): **Tales** of Somali Piracy film trailer - through Goldcrest Films.

**IN DJIBOUTI**, there is, of course, the ancestral French base, and more recently, the US base, camp Lemonnier - [OCEANUSLive](#). Americans are increasing their presence gradually. Djibouti serves as the United States "continental aircraft carrier" for their drones. But these are not the only military bases. Djibouti is a magnet for countries wishing to implement an effective military in this "paradise" strategic.

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### West Africa

**FOUR South Korean** workers for Hyundai have been freed days after being snatched by gunmen in Nigeria - [BBC News](#).

Gunmen kidnapped the Koreans, along with two Nigerians, in the oil-rich Bayelsa state on Monday.

Officials in Seoul said in a statement that the four Koreans had been freed, but gave no details of the fate of the Nigerian workers.

Kidnappings of foreigners for ransom are common in the Niger Delta, Africa's main oil region. South Korea's Foreign Ministry said the four workers were released after "persistent persuasion."

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**FOUR sailors have** been kidnapped off the coast of Nigeria's oil-rich southern delta, writes the Washington Post - [OCEANUSLive](#).

The International Maritime Bureau said the kidnapping happened Sunday night on an Italy-flagged offshore tug, Asso Ventuno, near Nigeria's Bayelsa state. The bureau said the gunmen seized four crew members before leaving.

Later reports state that Italian sailors are three of the four crew members of the tug Asso Ventuno, kidnapped yesterday off the coast of Nigeria.

The Foreign Ministry has confirmed the seizure by armed pirates, but was unable to identify the nationality of the fourth hostage.

*Image - Courtesy of Shipspotting.com*

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**THE 23 December** pirate attack on an Italian ship 40 nautical miles off the coast of Nigeria's Bayelsa state is part of a growing trend in Africa's Gulf of Guinea region. Four crew members were kidnapped - [AllAfrica](#).

Land-based kidnappings are also on the rise. Until recently, money has seemed to be the primary aim of kidnappers. But a new threat is emerging. Yesterday, the Islamic group Ansaru claimed it was behind last week's kidnapping in northern Nigeria of French engineer Francis Colump. Previous speculation centred on the al-Qaada linked Boko Haram.

Of ten piracy incidents reported in December by the Piracy Reporting Centre of the International Maritime Bureau, five were in waters off Africa - three near Somalia, two off the Nigerian coast and one, consisting of two separate approaches, to vessels near Lome, Togo.

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## Southeast Asia

**A TOTAL of** 16 incidents were reported in November 2012. Of these, two were Category 1 (very significant) incidents, four were Category 2 (moderately significant) incidents, five were Category 3 (less significant) incidents and five were petty theft (minimum significant) incidents - [ReCAAP](#). Compared to the same period in 2011 and 2010, there has been an increase in the number of actual incidents in November 2012. A total of 13 incidents was reported in November 2011 and 12 incidents in November 2010.

Notably, there were two Category 1 incidents in November 2012 involving the siphoning of Marine Gas Oil (MGO) from tanker, Yunita on 11 Nov 12 when she was anchored at Muara Berau Anchorage, Samarinda, Indonesia; and the hijacking of chemical tanker, Zafirah on 19 Nov 12 when she was underway in the South China Sea.



## RELEASED BY PIRATES

**PUNTLAND government forces** conducting a humanitarian rescue operation have safely rescued 22 hostages on board the MV Iceberg 1 vessel - [OCEANUSLive](#).

Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) units laid siege to the MV Iceberg 1 vessel beginning on Dec 10 near Gara'ad coastal village of Mudug region and the operation concluded successfully today when all 22 hostages were released, after a two-week period of fighting pirates and laying siege to the vessel.



After 2 years and 9 months in captivity, the hostages have suffered signs of physical torture and illness. The hostages are now receiving nutrition and medical care.

*Image - MV Iceberg 1, Photo Garowe Online*

[Shipping Times](#) goes on to state:

One crewmember is known to have died, and is reported as being suicide, driven to despair by the situation he was in. Akram Wagdi, the ship's third officer is said to have leapt overboard in October 2010.

The ship's engineer has been reported as being killed by the pirates but there are no confirmed reports of this, though today's statement from Puntland seems to back up the loss of two members of the original crew of 24 since the hijacking.

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## PIRATES IN COURT

**MUCH has been** written about Somali piracy. Academics on this forum, as well as others, have debated the best options for the prosecution of suspected Somali pirates - [EJIL Talk](#). Most pirates are detained by powerful navies of maritime nations, such as the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, or by joint maritime fleets such as the EU NAVFOR. Yet, most capturing nations are not interested in prosecuting detained pirates in their national courts under true universal jurisdiction, because such prosecutions are expensive, logistically difficult and politically unattractive. In order to avoid the undesirable policy of catch-and-release, maritime nations concluded transfer agreements with regional states interested in opening their national courtroom doors to Somali piracy prosecutions.

Over the past five years, transfer agreements have been concluded with Kenya and the Seychelles, and dozens of successful prosecutions have taken place in Mombasa and in Victoria. Mauritius joined the "club" or piracy prosecuting nations recently, by concluding similar transfer agreements with the United Kingdom and the European Union; apparently a transfer agreement is also being negotiated with the United States. However, as of today, Mauritius has not actually accepted any detained pirates for prosecution purposes.

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## Italian Marines

**TWO Italian marines** on anti-pirate duty charged in India with killing two fishermen in February arrived home on Saturday for a family Christmas after India gave them special leave, according to [Reuters](#).

"Finally we are breathing the air of home. We have to thank all the institutions which made all this possible," said Massimiliano Latorre on arrival at Rome's Ciampino airport with his colleague, Salvatore Girone.

"Ten long months have passed and we really didn't expect to be coming back for Christmas."

The two sailors, part of a military security team protecting the tanker Enrica Lexie, are accused of shooting the two fishermen they say they mistook for pirates off the southern Indian state of Kerala.

*image - Italian marines Salvatore Girone (L) and Massimiliano Latorre (C) walk with Italian Navy Chief of Staff Admiral Luigi Pinelli Mantelli after landing at Ciampino airport in Rome, December 22, 2012.*

*Credit: REUTERS/Alessandro Bianchi*

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## PRIVATE SECURITY

**SRI LANKA'S** southern port of Galle has become a hub in the fight against Somali pirates who threaten international merchant shipping, a report in a new magazine said - [Daily News Sri Lanka](#).

An increasing number of vessels are embarking and disembarking armed guards used for onboard protection as they sail past Galle, located close to the main East-West shipping route across the Indian Ocean, Samuditha, a new magazine for entrepreneurs, reported.

This opened up opportunities for companies providing supplies and services to shipping as well as ex-servicemen who make use of their combat experience to work as private security guards on merchant ships, it said.

Sea marshals and weapons hired from Sri Lanka are supplied by Rakna Arakshaka Lanka Limited, a security company operating under the Defence Ministry, the magazine quoted Rakna Arakshaka Lanka chief executive Major General K B Egodawele as saying.

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## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

**CHINESE and Australian** naval officers shared their experiences in the conduct of counter-piracy operations in the Middle East Area of Operations at a roundtable meeting on December 24, 2012 - [World Maritime News](#).

Rear Admiral Zhou Xu-Ming Commander of the Chinese Naval Task Group and the commanding officers of three visiting People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLA-N) ships met with the Acting Commander of the Australian Fleet Commodore Jonathan Mead, AM, and Commodore Greg Sammut, CSC, at Garden Island in Sydney.

Australia's Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, AO, CSC, said the visit was an opportunity for the Royal Australian Navy and the PLA-N to share lessons learnt during their counter-piracy patrols.

*Image - Chinese and Australian Naval Officers Share Counter Piracy Experiences*



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**FOLLOWING the signing** on Friday of an agreement between the two countries to allow such military cooperation - [OCEANUSLive](#).

Our chief of defence forces Brigadier Leopold Payet signed the agreement at the Independence House with Belgian Colonel Frederick Derolez in a ceremony attended by top local military and foreign affairs officials.

Brigadier Payet pledged that Seychelles will work closely with Belgium "as it has done in the past" and noted it is our duty to fight piracy "which is a major challenge for Seychelles".





He welcomed the placement of second lieutenant Mervin Esparon on the frigate saying the knowledge he will gain will help boost the link between the two countries' forces.

*Image - Brigadier Payet (right) and Colonel Derolez signing the agreement*

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**THE CHINESE navy** opened four vessels previously used for anti-piracy escort missions in the waters of the Gulf of Aden and Somali to the public on Wednesday to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the escort mission - [Global Times](#).

The display ends on December 29.

It is the first time that the navy's three fleets, the North, East and South Sea Fleets, have all been opened to the public on the same day.

Navy open days is a regular activity in many countries as it can stir the interest of the public in the navy and improve their pride in the country. It also proves the increasing confidence of the Chinese navy and helps enhance China's military transparency, a navy officer with the DDG-113 Qingdao destroyer told the Global Times.

As a flagship vessel, the Qingdao joined Chinese navy's first voyage around the world and visited over 20 countries. After serving for 16 years, it was appointed as the command ship in the 11th escort fleet from February to August 2012.

*Image - A visitor toys with a sniper rifle at the navy open day in Qingdao, Shandong Province, on Wednesday.*

*Photo: CFP*

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**IN AN article** by Vice Admiral Matthiewu Borsobom of the NL Navy, he answers a series of questions in an interview which features a view on the use of PMSCs and VPDs on Dutch commercial vessels, which supports the Dutch government viewpoint that responsibility for protection should remain with the armed forces [Netherlands Maritime](#). The extract reads:

Do you respect Dutch shipowners who would use private security to protect their crew and vessels?

"Who is the power sword? Is it the deployment of a task force of the Navy, or should the captain of a merchant ship have responsibility over the use of force on board [his ship] while he is not trained? With that kind of ideological questioning, the people involved, the shipowners, form an opinion. My personal opinion, [says VAdm Borsboom] and which corresponds to that of the government, is that the monopoly of actions by governments is where the responsibility must lie, through their own armed forces. Netherlands, within Europe, is not alone in this view as ascribed. There are even owners who go back on their decision to take on board private security. Yes, we have to be flexible, it must also be affordable for owners - we will do our best. The [Netherlands] Royal Navy has seen 175 VPD operations a year so far. Shipowners may make greater appeals to use us, now and in the future. But I sometimes get the impression that we should be available at the press of a button. This works where private security companies do not."

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## PIRACY COSTS

**SOMALIA** has high hopes in gaining revenue from oil and gas, currently hidden in the underground of Somalia (onshore) and below the Indian Ocean-floor (the offshore) - [Wardheernews](#). More than two decades ago (in the eighties), there was an "oil and gas exploration rush" to Somalia, driven by the country's huge oil and gas potential. The rush was led by Conoco-Phillips, Shell (Pecten), Amoco, Eni, Total and Texaco, who left the country in "force majeure" waiting to come back at the right time, security wise. In a recent meeting, the Minister of Resources said, "Given that the security condition of the country is improving at a rapid speed and the presence of legitimate transparent government, companies of the past and the new ones are all welcome. Somalia will be open for business sometime in 2013 and we honour the agreements of the companies who filed "force majeure" and left the country due to the civil war. We are now working to review the Petroleum Law and make it more competitive and attractive to oil companies and investors". Somalia is aware of the recent discoveries in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique and it is determined to join the race for oil and gas production.

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**THE MARITIME Piracy** Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP) and its partners in the industry-wide coalition established to assist seafarers and their families with the humanitarian aspects of piracy incidents have welcomed the news of the release of the 22 crew members on the Iceberg 1 after 1000 days in captivity in Somalia - [OCEANUSLive](#).

"We are greatly relieved to hear that they are safe after their terrible ordeal" said Peter Swift, Chairman of MPHRP, "and to hear that that they will soon be returning to their homes. It has also been wonderful to hear the expressions of joy and happiness from their families as the news of their release reached them. We are of course grateful to all those who have played a part in their rescue and are making the arrangements for their medical and other check-ups and their repatriation. Now we hope that both public and private organisations will work to ensure that the released hostages, as well as their families, receive all the necessary support and assistance they will require both immediately and longer term as they recover from the trauma and deprivation that they have suffered since being kidnapped on 29 March 2010."

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**THREE crewmen** from the MV Iceberg 1 today recalled their 32-month ordeal at the hands of pirates and the fierce gun battle to rescue them - [The National](#).

The men, who were finally freed today along with 19 colleagues, are receiving medical care at a military base in the coastal town of Eyl in Puntland, located in the Indian Ocean, after a 12-day operation by UAE-funded Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF).

"I am so glad to be free at last," said Swapnil Yadav, 23, from India. "The Puntland government has freed us after fighting for us for 12 days. There was a lot of shooting and we were very scared," said the seaman, who was shot in the leg during the standoff between pirates and government forces.



"Initially when our ship was brought here we used to think our ship's owner or our governments will come for us. But as days and months went by, we thought the world had forgotten us. But it was not so as the Puntland government remembered us and came for us."

He said the pirates had verbally and physically abused them during their time in captivity.

The PMPF said they had freed the crew with the help of the UAE.

"We had the military resources to rescue them," said Mohamad Abdirahman, PMPF director.

*image - The Yemeni captain of MV Iceberg 1, Abdul Razaq, is helped by Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) officers. Courtesy of Mohamad Abdirahman, PMPF director.*

*image 2 - A Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) officer helps the ship's Yemeni chief engineer, Mohammed Ali Khan. Courtesy of Mohamad Abdirahman, PMPF director.*

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**SOMALI pirates stationed** in parts of Mudug region are threatening to kill hostages they have been holding since January 2011, reports indicate - [Bartamaha.com](#).

The pirates picked up the hostages from a ship they attacked and hijacked.

Reports reaching Mogadishu from Central Somalia indicated that the pirates had failed to secure ransom payment for the release of the hostages.

The ship crew members who were at the mercy of the pirates were said to be Philippine nationals and were being detained on the mainland.

Others reports indicated that the pirates killed the captain of Danish ship mv Leopard named Eddy Lopez from Chile.

He was also reportedly in the hands of the pirates for nearly two years.

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**HOW'S this for** a seasonal tale to warm the hearts? After almost three years in captivity, the crew of the Iceberg 1, a cargo ship hijacked by Somali pirates, are home after finally being rescued - [Business Insider](#).

For the benefit of those who haven't followed the story – and there are probably plenty, as it's had only scant coverage – the Iceberg 1 was captured back in March 2010, and has languished in pirate custody ever since.

As we reported back in the summer, the ship essentially fell between two stools. Its Dubai-based owner, who appears not to have been insured, refused to pay a ransom for it and simply went to ground, ignoring pleas for help from the hostages' families.

Meanwhile, the governments representing the different sailors on board – six Indians, nine Yemenis, four Ghanaians, two Sudanese, two Pakistanis and one Filipino – were either unable or unwilling to mount a rescue attempt. So, too, was the multinational anti-piracy force, which generally prefers hijacked ships to be freed by ransom, on the basis that freeing sailors by force carries too much risk of casualties.

All of which allowed the Iceberg 1 to gain the dubious honour of becoming the longest hijack case in modern history. And one of the grimmest.

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**THE FAMILY** of Eddie Lopez, merchant seaman born in Chile and Danish citizen, expressed concern at reports that have come confused about the state of man, who will serve two years kidnapped by Somali pirates - [Cooperativa.cl](#).

Lopez was abducted on January 12, 2011 along with the entire crew of the Danish merchant ship "Leopard", on the shores of the Gulf of Aden in the Arabian Sea.

The ship, which was carrying explosives from Oman to Jordan, was found unmanned drifting boat for NATO.

The sailor's family learned a few weeks ago that the pirates had put a price of five million dollars on his head. Besides the latest information on the Chilean is that is held by a second group of pirates who murdered the previous captors.

And those concerns joined the call that they have received the charge of Consular Relations of the Danish Embassy in Chile, Linda Bjørk

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**THE COMPANY** Ship Craft, which has two Danish sailors captured by pirates, rejects rumours of one hostage dead - [Fyens.DK](#).

The company Ship Craft denied that the company has lost an employee who was captured by Somali pirates.

In a statement on the company website:

- There have been rumours in the foreign media that one of our colleagues who has been taken hostage by criminals in Somalia, has passed away. Ship Craft has received no independent or verifiable confirmation of this information, writes the company.

Ship Craft now for almost two years has two Danish sailors held hostage by Somali pirates.

A Chilean radio station Cooperativa, writes about the Chilean-born Eddy Lopez's possible death on its website.

According to the Chilean media Consular Attached Linda Bjørk at the Danish Embassy in Chile called Lopez's family to report that a pirate hostage has died and that it might be Captain Eddy Lopez.

However, this is rejected by Ole Egberg Mikkelsen, the head of the Foreign Ministry's consular services.

*Image - MV Leopard Photo: Shipspotting.com*

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**AND FINALLY...**

Just to reiterate our thanks for subscribing to this newsletter and for all the support throughout the year. Of course, you can always sponsor the newsletter for a week in 2013!



## PIRACY INCIDENTS

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### Hijacks:

- NSTR.

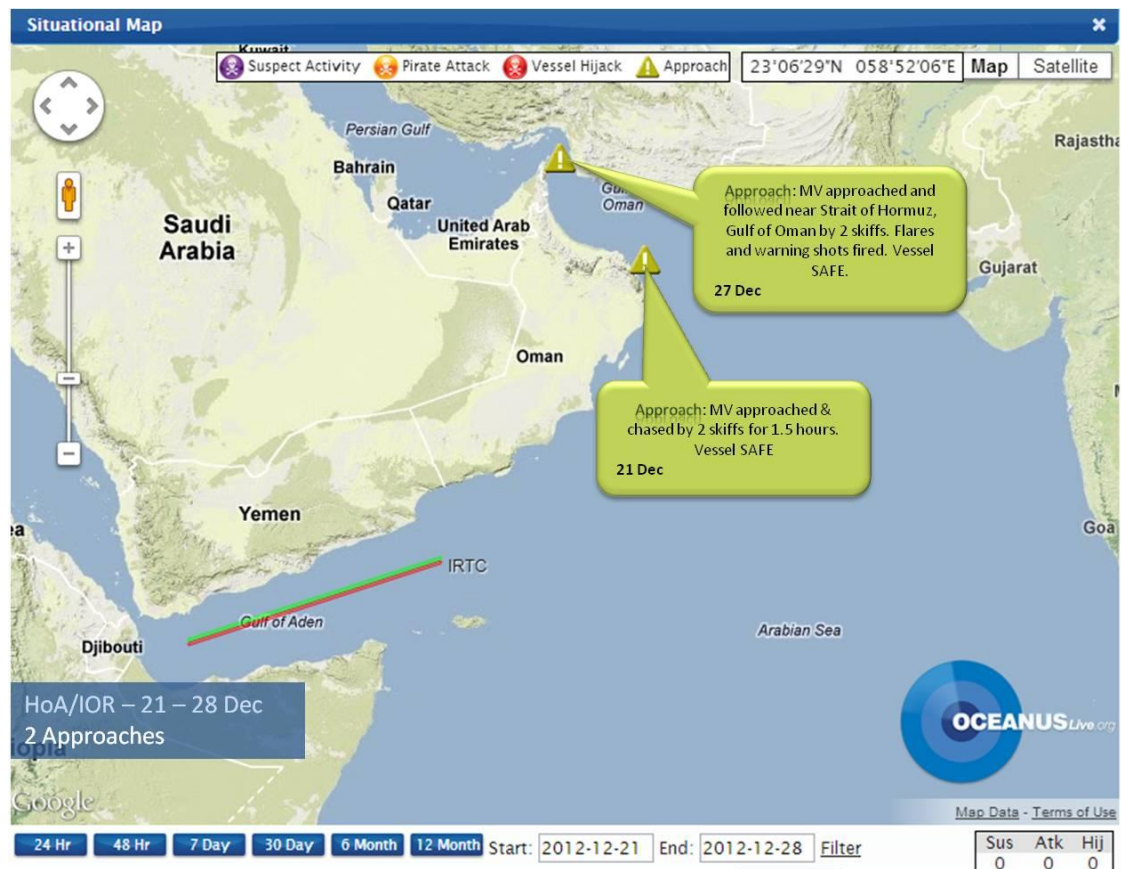
### Unsuccessful Attacks/Robberies (All regions):

- SE Asia - Robbers boarded an anchored chemical tanker receiving provisions at 2235 LT in position 03:57.0N - 098:46.9E, Belawan anchorage, Indonesia. Robbers stole ships property and escaped unnoticed. Upon investigation it was found that the robbers gained access to the forecastle by breaking through the razor wire. Local agent and the port authorities informed. Reported (via IMB) 20 Dec.
- Gulf of Oman - Merchant vessel transiting in Gulf of Oman at 0845 UTC in position 23:22N - 059:26E was approached and chased by 2 skiffs for approx 1.5 hours. Vessel confirmed as safe. Reported 21 Dec.
- Gulf of Guinea - LATE Report | Malta-flagged tanker, **Manon**, boarded by pirates using a hook at 2240 UTC in position 06:18.74N - 003:24.47E, Lagos anchorage, Nigeria. They opened a cargo tank and attempted to use a hose to bunker cargo. On watch deck crew spotted them and alerted the OOW. The pirates/robbers jumped overboard into the sea. Vessel is SAFE. Reported 21 Dec
- Gulf of Guinea - Pirates armed with guns attacked, boarded an Italy-flagged offshore supply vessel, **Asso Ventuno**, underway at 1945 LT in position 004:01N – 005:14E, 40nm from the coastline, Bayelsa region, Nigeria. Pirates kidnapped four crew members. No injuries to crew members and vessel continued passage to a safe port. Reported (via IMB) 23 Dec.
- Gulf of Oman - MV sighted two skiffs at 0535 UTC in position 26:17N - 056:43E, near Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman. First skiff approached to within 500 metres; possible weapons sighted. Vessel's armed security team fired flares and skiff moved away. Second skiff then approached to within 200m. Vessel fired another flare but there was no response from the second skiff. Vessel's armed security team then fired two warning shots to the side of the second skiff. Skiff then broke off. Vessel is safe. Reported (via NSC) 27 Dec.

**VESSEL and hostage** numbers - IMB - vessels: 9; Hostages: 147 (as at [3 Dec](#) - not updated); NATO states - vessels: 5 and Hostages: 114; UKMTO - 11 vessels (including dhows & FVs), 143 hostages.

## SITUATIONAL MAP

An interactive version of this situational map is available through registration of verified access to [OCEANUSLive](http://OCEANUSLive.org)



OCEANUSLive.org permits the reproduction of this image providing source and link are published (Map ToU)

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