The sharp rise of maritime piracy in ATLAFCO zone

Fight against piracy: What solutions for the eradication of acts of maritime piracy in the ATLAFCO zone?

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Introduction

- In stark contrast, maritime piracy in Africa is on the rise again.
- Having peaked at 293 attacks in 2011 before falling to just 35 in 2015, the numbers more than doubled in 2018.
- In East Africa, international counter piracy efforts and regional cooperation structures have led to a decline in piracy since 2010.
- In West Africa, however, political and economic instability is increasingly encouraging criminal groups to conduct violent attacks at sea.
Gulf of Guinea

Political Geography
- South-Eastward from Cape three Points in Western region Ghana (4.744°N 2.089°W) to Cape Lopez in Gabon (0°38'S 8°42'E)
- Estimated 6,000 KM Senegal to Angola
- Northern Boundaries: The Sahel-Sahara belt from Mauritania to Somalia
- Population: 0.350 - 0.849 Human Development Index rang
- Unemployment in Countries: 40% Unemployment rate, 60% Youth Unemployment

Economy
- GDP: $112 Billion
- Economic Base: Fishing, Oil Drilling, etc...
- Ecowas, ECCAS, GGC AU: Regional Cooperation Interest
- 5.4 Million Barrels of Crude Oil per Day
- USA's Oil Supply: 15%
- Europe Imports: 10%
- China, Japan, France, etc...

GGC - Gulf of Guinea Commission
- Established in 2001
- Angola, Congo, Gabon, Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo

UNODC - 7 Million Small Arms and Light Weapons (SAWL) in circulation
- $350 Billion/yr Illegal Fishing

Challenges
- Area: Vast area with weak surveillance and uncoordinated security patrols
- Economy: Increased armed robbery at sea and piracy; theft of hydrocarbon resources on the high seas, etc...
- Environmental: Pollution from exploration and accidental oil spills
- Political: Maritime domain becomes a good breeding ground for dissent to grow and fester
- Legal: Unclear definitions of piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as an inadequate legal framework for prosecuting criminals
- Regional Efforts: Uncoordinated policies and responses between the RECs

Responses
- 2 UNSC Resolution on Piracy and Armed Robbery
- ECOWAS: Conflict Prevention Framework 2008
- Pan-Sahel Initiative: After 9/11
- Trans-Saharan Counter-terrorism initiative: 2004
- TSCTi launched in Jan 2005
- Trans-Saharan Counter-terrorism Partnership: 2006
Understanding the Dynamics of Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

- Incidents of piracy in the region have evolved throughout the years both in terms of geographical expansion and level of sophistication.

- Piracy in the form of hijacking and kidnapping for ransom payments was also common off the coasts of Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, Congo and Cameroon.

- Piratical activities have progressed from low-level armed robberies and oil siphoning in the Niger Delta to more refined assaults including hijacking and cargo theft within the territorial waters of neighboring countries.

- Attacks are gradually becoming well-coordinated and more violent targeting not only commercial vessels but crewmembers as well.
What is piracy in the context of West Africa?

- A strict definition of maritime piracy only includes attacks on shipping on the high seas - that is, more than 12 nautical miles off the coastline and not under the jurisdiction of any state.

- Inside a country’s territorial waters and within port facilities, these attacks are defined as armed robberies at sea.

- However, according to the data from the latest report (The State of Maritime Piracy, One Earth Future) combines these two sets of data to give an overall picture of incidents at sea both inshore and offshore.
How is piracy in the context of West Africa?

- Not just the huge tankers exporting oil and gas from Nigeria and Ghana that are targeted
- **Commercial ships from smaller countries** are also in the sights of the pirates
- The Gulf of Guinea led the world in piracy in 2018
- The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) recorded 201 incidents in 2018, up from 180 in 2017
- The gulf accounted for:
  - 6 hijackings
  - 13 of the 18 ships took fire
  - 130 of the 141 hostages
  - 78 of 83 seafarers taken for ransom worldwide
- The statistics above are the ones reported
- The IMB believes half of attacks go unreported
- Piracy should be a concern for corporations that go through the Gulf of Guinea.
- Asian and Latin-American pirates are less aggressive, resulting in petty theft and robbery.
- The pirates in the Gulf of Guinea used to take oil from the tankers, but now since oil prices have dropped, **kidnap for ransom (KFR)** is the tactic of choice.
Piracy infests West African waters

West Africa’s Gulf of Guinea is the world’s most pirate-infested sea, according to the International Maritime Bureau, with 72 attacks in 2018 – up from 28 in 2014 – and at least 30 recorded so far in 2019.

Sources: The Economist, ICC International Maritime Bureau

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Nature of Maritime attacks

West Africa Pirate Attacks (2019)
- Hijacking
- Boarding
- Fired upon
Reported attacks on merchant shipping in Gulf of Guinea Jan-March 2019

Attacked & boarded
- Container ship: 2 Jan
- Landing craft: 3 Feb
- Tanker: 2 March
- Product tanker: 3 March
- Offshore support vessel: 9 March
- Container ship (at anchor): 30 March

Attempted attack/fired upon
- Product tanker: 24 Jan
- Bulk carrier: 25 Jan
- Container ship: 21 Feb
- Product tanker: 27 Feb
- Offshore support vessel: 28 Feb
In 2018, pirates in the Gulf of Guinea extended their range of attacks in the region, making attacks highly unpredictable.
This graphic represents the nationalities of 763 of the estimated 2,012 seafarers exposed to piracy and armed robbery at sea in 2018.

**WEST AFRICA: KNOWN NATIONALITIES of Seafarers Exposed to Piracy/Armed Robbery Incidents**

- Philippines: 49%
- India: 17%
- Ukraine: 7%
- Nigeria: 7%
- Turkey: 3%
- Georgia: 3%
- Russia: 2%
- Other: 12%

**WEST AFRICA: CREW HELD HOSTAGE**

- Hostages kept for one day or less on a hijacked vessel: 93
- Hostages held for more than one day on a hijacked vessel: 89 (Captivity, where release could be confirmed, ranged from 3 to 10 days.)
- Crew members kidnapped: 102 (A considerable increase. Duration of captivity was 8 to 67 days for cases where release could be confirmed.)
Why are attacks rising?

- Most of the attacks have been against ships involved in oil and gas transportation, such as tankers, bulk carriers and tugs.
- Fishing vessels have also been targeted.
- The coastline off Nigeria saw the most attacks in 2018.
- This is partly because of "petro-piracy", targeting tankers from Nigeria’s rich oil and gas fields.
- There were also incidents reported at the loading and anchorage facilities in the Nigerian port of Lagos.
West Africa is becoming the world’s new piracy hotspot with 54 incidents occurring in 2015, 95 in 2016, 97 in 2017 and a worrying 112 in 2018.

The increase has occurred for a number of reasons including:
- Poverty,
- Political instability,
- A lack of proper law enforcement,
- A long list of lucrative targets.

The last point is true of Nigeria which experienced the most attacks due to an increase in “petro-piracy” which has targeted vessels involved in oil and gas transportation. Another simple reason for West Africa’s rise is the downward trend in other regions, particularly East Africa and Asia.
Signs of improvement

- IMB PRC reports “a welcome and marked decrease” in attacks in the Gulf of Guinea for the second quarter of 2019.

- Commending the Nigerian navy for actively responding to reported incidents by dispatching patrol boats.

- While recognizing that many attacks go unreported.
- IMB recorded 21 incidents around Nigeria so far in 2019, down from 31 in the same period of 2018.

- Increased naval presence from Nigeria where boats patrol every hour deters pirate activity from happening.

- Better cooperation and data sharing between African nations prevents piracy and increases response times.

- United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) exercises increase naval presence in the region while training is happening.

- Training by AFRICOM also increases readiness to prevent piracy and neutralize piracy threat.