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The Maritime Intelligence 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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Indian Ocean Region

A special court on Friday 11th convicted 27 of the 28 Somali pirates who were caught in Indian waters in 2011. The case was abated against one accused who died during trial. Special judge Jayendra C Jagdale sentenced the accused to seven years’ imprisonment on charges of attempt to murder and kidnapping. This marked the third such case in recent weeks.

Incidents:

1. MV reported sighting 7 skiffs at 1550 UTC in the vicinity of 13:12.38N - 042:58.25E around 16nm SW of Mocha, Yemen, Red Sea. 2 skiffs closed to 1 cable then withdrew. Vessel and crew reported safe. Reported August 10th (UKMTO).

UKMTO issues updated guidance
New guidance for vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden and Bab el-Manbeh Strait has been issued by UKMTO. For full details, please click here.

Tehran Plans to Send Ships to Atlantic
Iran plans to send ships to western Atlantic Ocean in the near future, Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said. According to Tasnim news agency, the move is aimed to highlight the Iranian navy’s “powerful presence in international waters.”

Somali refugee arrested over 2011 tanker hijack
Italian police have arrested a 24-year-old Somali asylum seeker on charges of being one of a gang of pirates who seized an Italian oil tanker, Savina Caylyn, in the Persian Gulf in 2011. Police used fingerprint records to identify him.

Iran votes to boost military defence by $500m
Iran’s parliament has voted in favour of boosting investment in its missile defence and foreign operations programmes by more than $500m (£386m).The bill, which received overwhelming approval, is in response to the latest round of US sanctions against Tehran.

Migrants “murdered” off Yemen
At least 69 migrants are presumed to have drowned in two separate incidents after refugees were forced from boats into rough seas off the coast of Yemen by smugglers in what may be a worrying new trend, the UN migration agency has said.

Iranian drone comes close to U.S. aircraft carrier
An Iranian drone came within 1,000 feet (300 meters) of a U.S. aircraft carrier while it was in international waters in the Gulf conducting flight operations, a spokesman for the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command said on Monday 14th.

Threat Assessment
To read about MAST’s services in the Indian Ocean Region, please click here.
A renegade leader of Somalia’s Al Shabaab has defected to the regional government, severing ties to the armed group that has been carrying out attacks in the country, according to a Somali military official. Al Jazeera has learned that Mukhtar Robow has been airlifted to Mogadishu, after surrendering earlier on Sunday 13th to Somali forces in the government-controlled town of Hudur in the country’s southwest.

US drone strikes target Al Shabaab fighters in Somalia
No details were provided by U.S. Africa Command as to specific targets of the airstrikes on August 10th, which were the fourth offensive airstrikes carried out against Al Shabaab in Somalia since President Trump authorized such actions in March. Previously, only self-defence airstrikes could be carried out in Somalia in support of American advisers and Somali troops.

Suicide Bombing Leaves at Least Two Deaths in Somalia
A suicide bombing on August 11th killed two people and injured many in a Somalia penitentiary, the government said. The suicide bomber was one of those killed when he detonated his explosives in a mosque at the main entrance of the central prison in Mogadishu, police said.

Cambodians rescued from Thai boat in Somalia
The Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Cambodian embassy in Bangkok are helping to repatriated 18 migrant workers who are on a Thai fishing boat in Somalia. Thai police considered the case to be human trafficking and had ordered two Thai fishing boats to dock at Basaso port in Somalia. Thai police asked Interpol to send the men to Kenya in order to bring them back to Thailand.

Al Shabaab in a major split over mistrust
A Kenyan intelligence report has revealed that Al Shabaab is on the verge of collapse due to acute mistrust among its members, leading to emergence of splinter cells. The report adds that while some splinter groups have confessed allegiance to ISIS, others remain affiliated to al Qaeda.

Al Shabaab/ISIS
- Al Shabaab militants detonated a car bomb targeting Jazeera Palace Hotel in Mogadishu on August 14th.

Analysis
Al Shabaab continues to mount operations against civilian and military targets in Somalia, seizing military bases and equipment before being driven off by AMISOM forces. The group has been increasingly active in recent weeks, despite combined action against them from Somali, African Union and US forces.

Threat Assessment
Pirate action groups remain a threat to shipping in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean. Approaches in the BAM and Red Sea remain commonplace and all vessels should update their Risk Assessments accordingly. The current monsoon period will see smaller vessels seek more sheltered waters, meaning coastal areas in the Gulf of Aden and BAM remain perilous. We anticipate an increase in reports as legitimate pattern of local life traffic is wrongly identified as hostile as a result.

Pirate attacks off Somalia and suspicious approaches in the Gulf of Aden continue to be a cause for concern. The ongoing threat to shipping in the region has been made clear by the military bodies which monitor the region. A lack of adherence to BMP4 protocol, particularly not maintaining a safe distance off the coast, has increased risks to shipping. BMP4 advises: “non-Somali fishing vessels should avoid operating or transiting within 200nm of the coast of Somalia, irrespective of whether or not they have been issued with license to do so”. 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.
Yemen

The current diplomatic efforts by the UN envoy to Yemen is the last-ditch attempt to convince Iran-backed Houthi rebels to leave the western city of Hodeidah or face a military operation, military and political experts said. “If these efforts reached a deadlock and Al Houthi militias did not agree to pull out of Hodeida, we are ready to escalate our military pressure until we recapture it,” Brigadier General Abdo Abdullah Majili, a Yemeni army spokesperson, told Gulf News.

Yemen’s Houthis target coalition warship

The Houthi-controlled state news agency SABA said the Houthi navy targeted and hit a warship belonging to the coalition inside the port of Mokha. The Saudi coalition spokesman, Colonel Turki al-Malki, said the Houthis attempted to attack the port in the early hours of Saturday 12th, using a remote-controlled boat packed with explosives. There are no further details at this time.

AQAP/Houthi-Saleh

• A U.S. airstrike targeted two suspected AQAP militants in al Maroun area in southern Abyan governorate on August 13th.

Threat Assessment

On June 14th, a UAE coalition warship was struck by a missile as it left the port of Mokha in Yemen. The attack was claimed by Houthi rebels and video claiming to be of the night attack was posted on social media channels, showing a large explosion on impact. The coalition reports that one crew member was injured during the incident and that the ship suffered minimal damage. There is industry speculation that the type of missile used in the attack was not fit for purpose against a warship, and could in fact have been an anti-tank missile. The successful attack on June 14th and two attacks against military vessels in July demonstrate that the Houthi’s retain the capability to accurately launch missiles from shore to sea. It should be noted that all missile attacks to date during the Yemen civil war have been directed at military targets, not commercial vessels. However, the risk of mistargeting or collateral damage remains.

To read the MAST assessment of the incident, please click here.

July saw three suspected approaches involving multiple skiffs off the Yemen coast in the Bab el-Mandeb, with weapons were sighted on board the majority of the vessels which shadowed and followed MVs. Media reports that Houthi rebels have been planting sea mines in the waters around Hodeidah Port are a clear concern for merchant vessels transiting the region and CSOs should ensure their risk assessments are updated. Accounts of suspect activity, including approaches have been recorded in the eastern IRTC within the vicinity of al Mukallah.

Advice from the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), recommends that merchant traffic transiting the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea are advised to pass through the area between 44 00 East in the Gulf of Aden and 13 00 N in the Southern Red Sea during the hours of darkness and exit the Traffic Separation Scheme to the West of the Hanish Islands in daylight hours.

The frequency of these incidents, where vessels are approached and in some cases attacked by armed men in small boats, indicates that the threat assessment remains ‘Substantial’ – an attack is a strong possibility. The Yemen civil war is on-going and there has been some spill over into the maritime domain. Houthi’s have specifically targeted the Saudi coalition with precision weapon systems. The apparent continued use of locally produced moored mines by the Houthi’s off the Port of Hodeidah is of concern, given that sea mines are more indiscriminate in terms of their potential targets. These mines might become a threat to shipping should they float free into the BAM shipping lanes. Reports that Houthi rebels attacked a ship off Mokha on June 26th remain unconfirmed.

MAST recommends BMP measures be enforced and watches strengthened during transits in the region. In the Gulf of Aden, MAST’s advice for passage planning is to follow the guidance laid down by UKMTO/MSCHOA and the latest from the CMF. Vessels should keep clear of al Mukallah and remain in the IRTC, where warship protection is more likely.

Control of Yemen territory (Aug. 14th 2017)

Source: Wikimedia Commons
UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM)

The UN’s Secretary-General has decided to institute a UNVIM for the facilitation of commercial imports to Yemen, at the request of the Government of the Republic of Yemen and in line with Security Council resolution 2216 (2015).

UNVIM is operational with immediate effect. Shipping companies or vessel owners shipping commercial goods or services to any port not under the direct control of the Government of Yemen (Salif, Mokha, Hudaydah and associated oil terminals) need to apply for permits upon departure of the port of origin of their cargo. For further details click here.

UN arms embargo imposed by UN Security Council Resolution 2216 of 2015 is in place.

Port Aden:
• The port of Aden is under the protection of the Republic of Yemen security forces.
• Merchant vessels wishing to enter Yemeni ports must first apply for a permit through the Yemeni Ministry of Transportation; contact: yemen.transport@gmail.com for more information.
• Final clearance to enter Yemeni ports (with permits in place) is authenticated by the coalition guard ship.

Port Ash Shihr: Fully operational.

Port Salif: Fully operational.

Port Hudaydah: Fully operational.

Port Mokha: Status - Closed: Currently classified as ‘Not Safe’.

Port Al Mukalla: Fully operational.

Port of Balhaf: Status - Closed: LNG terminal remains closed. Now under control of Saudi and Yemeni forces.

Port of Ras Isa: Status - Closed. Safer oil terminal remains closed, Safer Company (SEPOC) does not allow vessels to berth at Safer Marine Terminal if they do not have an agreement signed by them according to the protocol between buyer and Yemeni government.

Mokha port has seen several attempted attacks in recent weeks and extreme caution is advised when entering and leaving the area. Saudi forces have suggested that military action to take the port of Hodeidah is now close, as negotiations seem to have reached an impasse.
Three NGOs have suspended migrant rescues in the Mediterranean because of the increasingly hostile stance of the Libyan authorities and coastguard. Save the Children and Germany’s Sea Eye have joined Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) in halting operations because they feel their crews can no longer work safely in what Sea Eye called a “changed security situation in the western Mediterranean”.

Italy may ask for EU help after three NGOs suspend rescues
Italy may call on the EU to help save migrants off vessels in distress in the Mediterranean after three humanitarian NGOs suspended operations there, Italian media reported Monday 14th. The Italian government may request search-and-rescue assistance from EU Operation Triton, a border control mission, and EU Operation Sophia, an anti-human trafficker mission, Italy’s public broadcaster RAI reported.

Far-right ship ‘refuses help’ from rescuers
A German migrant rescue group said on August 11th that a vessel carrying far-right activists that ran into trouble in the Mediterranean had refused their help. The Sea-Eye charity says it was asked by the Italian coastguard to assist the C-Star ship because it was in distress.

Spain could top Greece for 2017 migrant sea arrivals
Spain could surpass Greece this year as a gateway for migrants entering Europe by sea, international monitors warned on Thursday 10th, as the number of arrivals swells to treble that of 2016.

Drop-off in migrant rescues by Irish Naval Service
Figures released by the Defence Forces show that in 2015 three ships deployed by the navy in the Mediterranean Sea carried out 57 rescue operations during which they brought 8,631 migrants onboard. Last year three ships were involved in 41 operations, rescuing 6,837 migrants.

The current migrant smuggling situation
NGO rescue missions have faced a difficult week, with the Italian Code of Conduct causing problems, only for that to be overshadowed by the new Libyan Search & Rescue exclusion zone set up by the Government of National Accord (GNA). This has seen several charity groups ceasing rescue operations amid reported threats from Libyan Coast Guard elements that they could be targeted. The NGOs state that they can’t work with Libya given the lack of human rights guaranteed to migrants in the country and the dangers posed to them. The inevitable end results are a greater threat to the lives of those making crossings and renewed strain on EUNAVFOR Med and Frontex operations who will now be expected to fill the gaps left by the NGO ships. Currently, MSF, Save the Children and Germany’s Sea Eye have all suspended rescues after being threatened by the Libyan CG. Libya has asserted its right to operate well beyond the territorial limit of 12 nautical miles, defending the move as necessary in order to control the rescue operations.

Map depicting major migrant routes in the Mediterranean (Aug. 15th 2017). Source: UNHRC
Libya

Ongoing security concerns have seen Libyan oil production drop unexpectedly following an improvement in supplies over the last week. Output at Sharara was down to 200,000 barrels a day on Sunday, compared with 300,000 barrels a day about a week ago, as workers were kept from certain areas for their own safety, while Zueitina oil terminal has ceased loading cargos as port workers protest, demanding better working conditions and improved security.

Haftar Meets Lavrov, Shoigu In Moscow
Libyan military commander Khalifa Haftar has met with Russia’s foreign and defence ministers in Moscow. Russia backs the efforts by Haftar and the Prime Minister of Libya’s UN-recognized government, Fayez al-Sarraj, to reach a peace agreement, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told the Libyan strongman in remarks released by the Foreign Ministry after the two men met on August 14th.

Analysis
Threats by Libya’s Government of National Accord (GNA) Coast Guard to fire on NGO rescue vessels outside the country’s 12 mile TTW are a serious cause for concern, although the rival House of Representative (HoR) government has threatened to repel Italian naval vessels in their waters, leaving migrants stuck in the middle. The drop in oil output, fuelled by insecurity at National Oil Company (NOC) sites will irritate Haftar, who controls the Oil Crescent. It is likely he will boost security in order to maintain his hold on oil production. The renewed ties between Haftar and Russia will once again raise concerns in the region that the EU and other nations have perhaps not engaged enough with the HoR in the East. Haftar, meanwhile, will continue to play all sides in order to secure the best deals for himself and his forces.

There has been no news on when peace talks between the HoR and GNA may take place. However, it is possible that rival militia are again challenging Haftar’s forces on behalf of the GNA. Further fighting over the country’s oil crescent will undermine the economy and Haftar will respond with significant force; his control of airbases allows him to attack enemies from the air and ground and it is likely that the field will return to his control in the coming days. Anything else would be seen as a political failure on his part.

Ports currently operational in Libya are: Mellitah, Zawiyah, Tripoli, Misrata, Marsa El Brega, Tobruk, Al Khoms, Marsa El Hariga, Farwah, Bouri, Zuwarah, Zueitina (currently offline) and Es Sider.

Threat Assessment
With Libya’s focus on maintaining oil output in order to feed the economy, there are risks to the oil and gas sector from militias loyal to the GNA unity government who have attacked terminals and pipelines in the past. Recent calls by the National Oil Company (NOC) to the EU, asking for EUNAVFOR engagement in anti-fuel smuggling interdictions are unlikely to be met by the EU. Instead, further equipment and training has been offered to the Libyan Coast Guard. The suggested Code of Conduct for NGO rescue missions operating off the coast of Libya would see the Coast Guard given more control over rescue missions, and further equipment and funding has been promised by the EU this week. This may see an increased CG presence in the region and Masters should be aware.

Vessels should ensure they have the correct permission from the appropriate authority before entering Libyan waters. There have been reports of Libyan Coast Guard vessels abusing their power, particularly concerning migrants. The majority of vessels calling at Libyan ports are trouble free, however there is scope for vessels to encounter local issues. It is advised that before visiting a risk assessment is conducted on the area of operation and the fast moving political and military situations monitored closely.

MAST is able to provide risk assessments and crew training to improve situational awareness and risk appreciation. The additional threat to shipping should not be taken lightly.
Gulf of Guinea

Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta and Coordinator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme, Brig Gen. Paul Boroh (Rtd), has justified the reason behind the Federal Government’s decision to recruit unemployed Niger Delta youths for pipeline protection. Boroh had revealed that over 10,000 youths would be recruited to protect oil installations in the region, a decision that overturned the earlier policy of the government to cancel the previous contracts given to some militant groups to protect oil pipeline, by the previous government.

Incidents:
1. Duty AB onboard a berthed tanker noticed two robbers trying to insert a flexible hose into 1P / 1S cargo tank at 2240 UTC in position Folawiyo Terminal, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria. He immediately informed the duty officer who raised the alarm. Seeing the alerted crew the robbers escaped with their flexible hose. A search was carried out throughout the tanker. Nothing reported stolen. Port control informed. Reported August 7th (IMB).

Niger Delta Group Vows To Resume Bombings
A coalition of Niger Delta agitators has said that they are set to resume the bombings of major oil and gas installation in the coastal region on September 10th.

MEND Withdraws From Pan-Niger Delta Forum
The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has declared that it has withdrawn its support and representatives from the Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF). The announcement of withdrawal was made via a statement signed by Jomo Gbomo, the group’s spokesperson. The group believes that parties in the organisation are out to enrich themselves rather than the region and its people.

PANDEF condemns quit notice issued to Northerners, Yorubas
The Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF) has condemned reports credited to the so-called Coalition of Niger Delta Agitators’ of its plan to attack oil facilities. The group’s condemnation came in a statement by its Coordinating Secretary, Dr. Alfred Mulade, on Sunday 13th in Warri.

Nigerian Navy wants $1.3 billion acquisition programme
The Nigerian Navy needs $1.3 billion to acquire new hardware to secure its territorial waters, according to Navy Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) Vice-Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas, who is seeking the acquisition of at least five new ships.

Threat Assessment
To read MAST’s current Threat Assessment on the Gulf of Guinea region, please click here.
South East Asia

An Abu Sayyaf leader from Sulu who was linked to kidnappings in Sabah, Malaysia, has been killed, the military said on Sunday 13th. Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu commander, identified the dead Abu Sayyaf leader as Badong Muktadil, who together with his brothers was linked to cross-border kidnappings in Sabah since 2013.

Incidents:
1. Robbers boarded anchored Liberia-flagged container ship at 1740 UTC in position 14:32.70N - 120:55.30E, Manila anchorage, Philippines. Robbers entered the forecastle store and were spotted by security guard on routine rounds who raised the alarm. On seeing alerted crew, the robbers escaped with stolen ships’ stores. Reported 9th August (IMB).

2. Unnoticed robber(s) boarded an anchored tanker, stole ship’s properties and escaped. The theft was noticed by the deck crew the following day at 2300 UTC in position 01:24N - 104:33E, around 10nm North of Tanjung Berakit, Pulau Bintan, Indonesia. Reported 2nd August (IMB).

3 Zamboanga workers escape Abu Sayyaf
Three of the 4 Zamboangueño workers held for ransom by the Abu Sayyaf Group escaped from their captors early Friday, August 11th. Brigadier General Cirilito Sobejana of Task Force Sulu said rescue operations conducted by the military created pressured on the bandits, giving the kidnap victims a chance to escape.

Swift response by MMEA on illegal fishing draws praise
The Miri Fishermen Association has congratulated the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) for its swift action in detaining 38 Vietnamese nationals for illegal fishing on August 10th. Its chairman Councillor Jamali Basri said local fishermen had spotted the fishermen on board two foreign vessels fishing in Sibuti and Miri waters and immediately notified the authorities.

Chinese Navy eyes Indian Ocean as part of PLA’s plan to extend its reach
China’s Navy wants to join hands with India to maintain the security of the Indian Ocean, amid growing concerns in New Delhi over the increasing presence of the PLA fleet in India’s backyard.

Threat Assessment
To read MAST’s current Threat Assessment on the South East Asia region, please click here.

MAST is able to provide an armed protection solution to clients transiting the region. Please contact us for further details.
Central and South America

A move to hike tariffs on vessels transiting the Panama Canal, approved by the Cabinet Council of the Republic of Panama, is unlikely to significantly alter export decisions or even shipping routes for LNG cargoes loading on the US Gulf Coast, according to S&P Global Platts data. For LNG vessels, the revised toll structure effectively raises the cost of transiting the canal to an estimated 23 cents/MMBtu, representing a 15% hike over the current tariff of 20 cents/MMBtu, data compiled by Platts Analytics show. The revised fees become effective October 1st.

Incidents:
1. 05.08.2017: 2000 UTC: Posn: Esmeraldas Port, Ecuador.
   Unnoticed by crew, robbers boarded a berthed container ship, stole brass sounding pipe covers and escaped. The theft was noticed by duty crew on routine rounds. Reported by IMB. (Not shown on map)

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.

Nothing significant to report.