

Circular From GARD**Date: 31 July 2018****West Africa remains a piracy hotspot**

The first six months of 2018 saw a significant rise in the number of recorded piracy and armed robbery incidents in the Gulf of Guinea region compared to the same period in 2017 with Nigeria topping the list.

The second quarterly report from the ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) shows an increase in global piracy, with 107 incidents recorded in the first six months of 2018 compared to 87 in the same period in 2017. Most alarming is the increase in the number of incidents recorded in the Gulf of Guinea region, which has gone from 16 in the first half of 2017 to 46 so far in 2018 with 31 incidents recorded in Nigerian waters alone. Pirates and robbers were armed with guns in almost half of the Nigerian incidents and vessels were fired upon in eight of them.

On the positive side - the IMB reports that the number of crew kidnappings has decreased from 41 by the second quarter in 2017 to 25 so far in 2018. However, all 25 crew kidnappings reported this year are from six incidents in the Gulf of Guinea, emphasizing even further the higher risks in this region.

A positive development is also that the IMB reports of fewer piracy and armed robbery incidents in piracy hotspots other than the Gulf of Guinea. No incidents were recorded off the coast of Somalia in the second quarter of 2018 and while the number of incidents reported by vessels at berth/anchorage in Indonesia and Bangladesh remains high, the situation in the Philippines has improved. Abductions of crew from vessels in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and waters off Eastern Sabah have also improved, with no such successful incidents recorded in the first half of 2018. According to the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), the first six months of 2018 saw the lowest number of piracy and armed robbery incidents in Asia at that time of the year for the past ten years.

The 2018 second quarterly report from the IMB is available [here](#) and ReCAAP's 2018 half-year report is available [here](#).

Recommendations

The effect of piracy on crew and their safety continues to be a cause for concern and transiting West African waters remains particularly challenging. Members and clients must therefore ensure that crews of vessels operating in piracy hotspots remain vigilant and closely monitor the situation by staying in close contact with relevant regional authorities. A risk assessment should be conducted prior to entering a risk area and the relevant preventive measures adopted, taking reference from the [BMP5](#) as well as regional guides such as the [Guidelines for Owners, Operators and Masters for protection against piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea region](#) and the [Regional Guide to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia](#). The potential consequences of not following industry best practices may be severe.

Source of Information: Gard P&I Club