

PIRACY FEATURE

West African Coast

Attacks on vessels in the oil rich Gulf of Guinea are on the increase with numerous reports of pirate activity. We detail on the right the nine reported incidents which have taken place over the course of the last month. Although many of the attacks were unsuccessful, with the crews operating anti-piracy techniques, there is a good deal of concern amongst owners, operators and crews as to the increase in the attacks, many of which can be extremely violent in nature. In February a Filipino crew member aboard the chemical tanker *Pyxis Delta* was shot and killed during an attack by pirates off the coast of Nigeria. The vessel was in the protection of a security team who activated anti-piracy measures and exchanged gunfire with the pirates who escaped.

The attacks are not only restricted to commercial vessels and on 13 April an oil platform on the Sengana Chevron Oil Field also came under attack and two platform employees were kidnapped. The international debate continues as to the use of force and security measures that owners can take to protect their property and personnel, with some reportedly resorting to hiring illegal armed guards. In March Foreign and Defence Ministers from Central and West Africa met in Benin to discuss the growing threat to maritime safety from piracy and pledged to take steps against the criminal gangs who are exploiting the difficulties which West African governments face in policing their coastlines. The Ministers also called upon shipowners to ensure they have taken appropriate steps to protect their property but just what owners can legally do continues to be debated. In the meantime the US, UK and France have all increased navy patrols in the area.

From an insurance perspective, the Gulf of Guinea is now rated by the London market in the same category as Somalia.



▲ Barbed wire anti piracy measures on a bulk carrier



PIRACY CASUALTIES

CMA CGM Africa Four

Containership – 2010 Built, 51,619 dwt

Date of Attack 4 May 2013

Details The vessel was attacked south west of Bonny. Vessel was able to stop the pirates boarding using increased speed and manoeuvring techniques

Frio Athens

Reefer vessel – 1988 Built, 8,800 dwt

Date of Attack 4 May 2013

Details The vessel was attacked in the same area as the *CMA CGM Four* but she appears to have been boarded. Her AIS has been switched off and the vessel's position is unknown

City of Xiamen

Containership - Built 2008, 34,328 dwt

Date of Attack 25 April 2013

Details Whilst 36 miles south of Brass, the containership was reportedly attacked by 14 pirates who boarded the vessel and forced their way into the area where the crew had taken refuge. The Master, Chief Officer, Chief engineer, 2nd and 3rd engineers were taken hostage and transferred to the previously hijacked *Utai 8*. The containership, which is operated by Maersk Line between Port Kelang, Tanjong Pelepas, Lome, Onne, Douala and Walvis Bay, was heading to Onne from Lome when the attack occurred. The pirates took control of the vessel for 24 hours and she was later reported to have proceeded to Malabo where she remains at anchor. There is some difficulty in establishing contact with the crew.

Utai 8

Offshore speed crew boat

Date of Attack 25 April 2013

Details Contact with the *Utai 8* was lost when she was 30 miles south of Brass en route to Port Harcourt. It was generally assumed that the boat had been hijacked and this was confirmed when the *Utai 8* was used in an attack on *City of Xiamen* later in the day. There is no news about the safety of the *Utai 8*'s crew.

Hansa Marburg

Containership – Built 2007, 23,419 dwt

Date of Attack 22 April 2013

Details The vessel was attacked in the Gulf of Guinea, south of Bonny. 4 of the vessel's crew were taken hostage and the vessel was allowed to go forward to her destination in Senegal

Cap Theodora

Suezmax tanker

Date of Attack 16 April and 20 April 2013

Details The vessel was attacked twice within the space of one week in the Gulf of Guinea. The vessel was able to take evasive action using water cannons and manoeuvring techniques and the pirates were unsuccessful.

JP Progress

Offshore supply vessel – 1980 Built, 1,200 dwt

Date of Attack 9 April 2013

Details The vessel was attacked near the Bonny Fairway Buoy area by a single boat with armed pirates. She radioed for assistance and a security vessel KM 1 was dispatched and was able to prevent the attack.

Gyre

Research vessel – 1974 Built, 946 dwt

Date of Attack 13 April 2013

Details The attack took place as the vessel was proceeding in convoy on the Calabar river, Nigeria. The escort boat Blue Jay was able to intercept and fire warning shots to deter the pirates. After an exchange of gunfire the pirate boat retreated.

Leon Dias

Chemical tanker – 2003 Built, 9,055 dwt

Date of Attack 8 April 2013

Details The tanker was attacked and boarded by pirates off Brass, Nigeria. The pirates robbed the crew and then left. The tanker proceeded to Douala.