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MAKING THE
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T +44 (0) 1279 216726 E operations@mast-security.com W mast-security.com

Maritime Asset Security and Training (MAST) Ltd Thremhall Park, Start Hill, Bishops Stortford, Herts CM22 7WE



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Issue 158 of the series reviews, analyses and threat assesses the fragile and conflict affected coastal states Libya, Somalia and Yemen. The Mediterranean migrant crisis, incidents affecting maritime security and influencing maritime news are also reported and analysed, focusing on the keys theatres of maritime instability.

"Making the world a safer place to live and work"



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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Editor: David Rider
www.mast-security.com

Contents:

- Mast Services
- Indian Ocean region
- Somalia
- Yemen
- Mediterranean
- Libya
- Gulf of Guinea
- South East Asia
- Central & South America
- Severe Weather Warnings

Page

- 2
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12





Indian Ocean Region

Somalia granted fishing licenses to 31 Chinese vessels to exploit tuna and tuna-like species off its coast in December 2018 in a bid to tap the sector for economic growth. The vessels are associated with the China Overseas Fisheries Association, a distant-water trawling group created in 2012 to promote the East Asian giant's competitive fishing edge abroad. Starting this month, ships will be allowed to operate for a one-year period in Somali waters, with the agreement stipulating an automatic renewal for an additional year.



Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

Top General Highlights Iran's War on Piracy

During a visit to the port city of Jask in the southern province of Hormozgan on Tuesday 1st, Major General Baqeri hailed Iran's Navy as the only self-reliant military force in the world that is fighting against piracy.

Chinese navy sees broadened horizon, enhanced ability through 10-year escort missions

As of December 24th, the Chinese navy has sent 31 escort fleets, 100 ships, 67 shipboard helicopters and more than 26,000 soldiers to escort more than 6,600 Chinese and foreign ships in the Gulf of Aden over the past decade. They successfully rescued and escorted more than 70 Chinese and foreign ships in distress and captured three pirates.

Iran's IRGC censures U.S. presence in Gulf, improves battle features of speedboats

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy commander, Alireza Tangsiri, on Monday 31st Dec. denounced the presence of U.S. naval forces in the Gulf and said that the IRGC plans to improve the battle features of its speedboats.

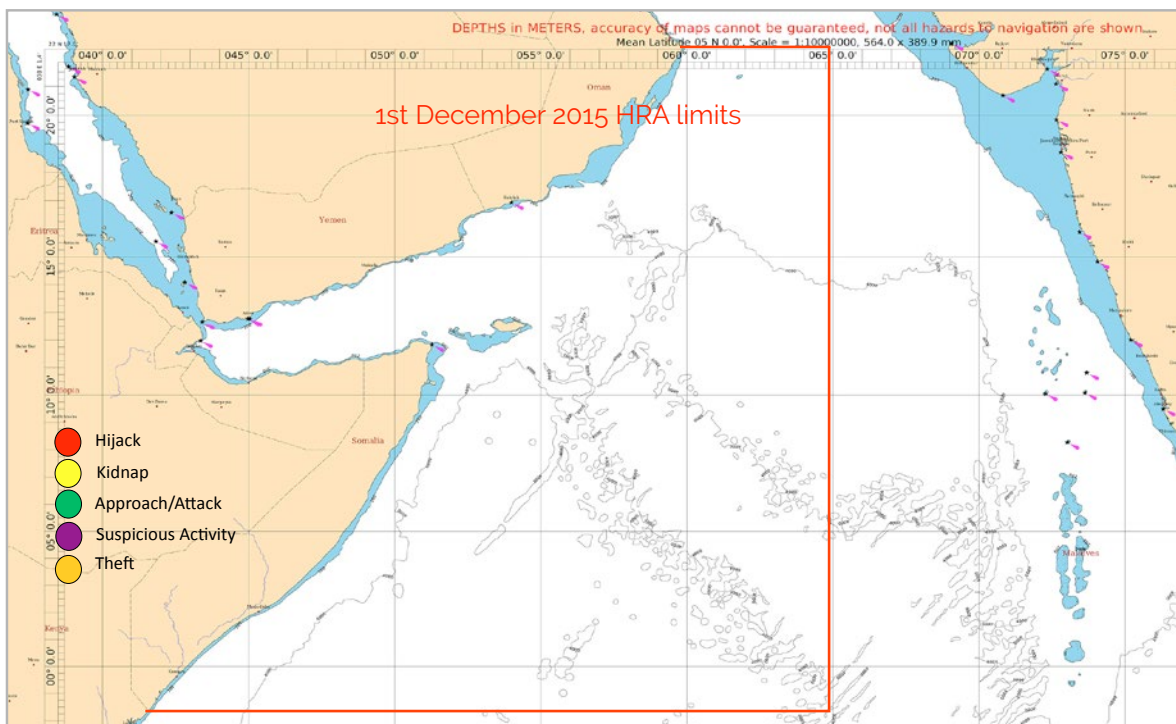
Iran Conducts Military Drills Near Strait of Hormuz

A United States aircraft carrier sailed through the Strait of Hormuz and entered the Persian Gulf on Dec. 21st. Iranian ships carrying out operation "Great Prophet 12" at the strait launched missiles into the sea in the general vicinity of the USS John C. Stennis, although the U.S. Navy stated that they were aimed away from the carrier. As the carrier sailed through the Gulf, it was followed by two Iranian speedboats. Reuters reporters onboard the U.S. carrier also noticed a drone flying nearby.

Illegal maritime Activities and the Threat to Somali Sea and Ocean

According to Somali expert, Mr. Giyaajo Amalo "Legalizing stolen fish and EU Naval Force seems (to be) ignoring illegal fishing, evading a wide range of safeguards to undercut the costs of doing business". The impact of Somali fishermen on Somali's western Indian Ocean rim and Somalis complaints to International communities seems fall on deaf ears.

To see MAST's services in the Indian Ocean Region, [please click here.](#)





Somalia

An official stated that the Somali National Army (SNA) on Sunday 30th had killed 30 Al Shabaab militants, with two foreign nationals among them, in the southern town of Jilib. Ali Mohamad Bag Madow, SNA commander for Section 43, confirmed that the militants had died in a joint operation by Somali national forces and the U.S. Africa Command (Africom) close to a training camp used by the al Qaeda-connected militants in Jilib, in Middle Jubba, southern Somalia.



Somalia orders UN official to leave

The government of Somalia has ordered the top UN official in the country to leave. A foreign ministry statement accused Nicholas Haysom of breaching the appropriate conduct of the UN in Somalia.

Military Executes 6 Militants Without Trial

The Somali military has executed six Al Shabaab militants without a trial, according to officials and rights activists. The militants were executed on Sunday 30th by firing squad in the town of Bardhere, about 300 kilometers southwest of Mogadishu.

Deadly attack on army base kills 20 in Somalia

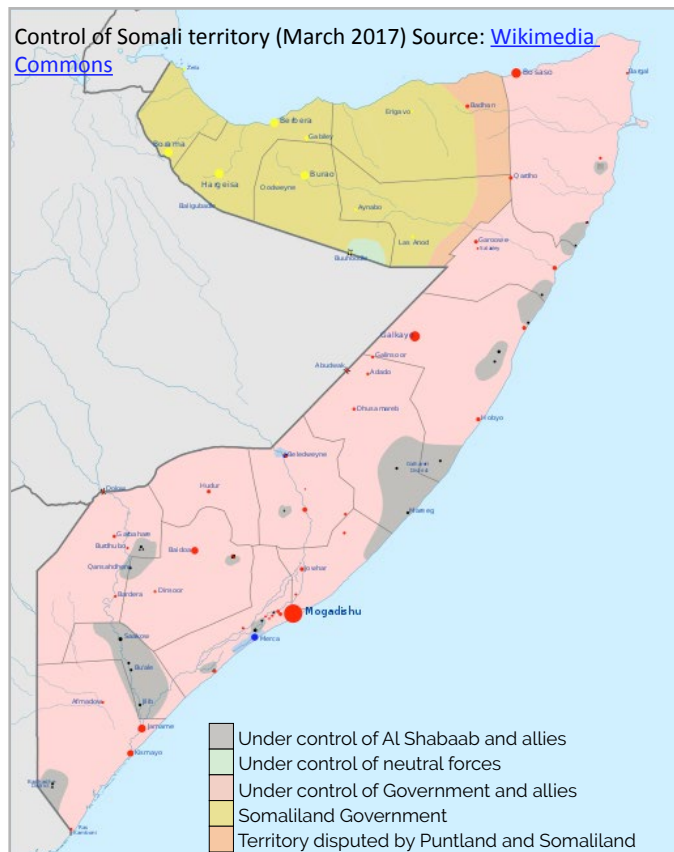
Al Shabaab fighters carried out an attack on army base near Baidoa town, some 250km southwest of the capital Mogadishu. Harun Macruf, a VOA journalist said that at least 20 people had been killed when Al Shabaab fighters briefly seized the base from the army forces

Somalia's parliament approves budget for 2019, worth \$340M

The Federal parliament of Somalia has approved its state budget for 2019, which is worth \$340 million of dollars after being proposed by the Finance ministry of Somalia. The Members of Parliament have unanimously voted to approve the proposed 2019 budget, according to speaker of the parliament, Mohamed Sheikh Mursal.

Deadly fighting kills 7 Islamic State fighters

At least 7 Islamic State (IS) fighters were killed in joint military offensive carried out by Somalia's semi autonomous state of Puntland forces in Qandala town on Dec. 26th. The military offensive triggered deadly clash between Puntland forces and Islamic State fighters in the town, according to Puntland military officer Jim'ale Mohamed.



Analysis

Al Shabaab continues to mount operations throughout the country, despite efforts by US Central Command to degrade its capabilities with ongoing airstrikes and the work done by AMISOM forces.

Threat Assessment

The political situation has seen increased tension between regional states and the Federal Government. Should this continue, there is an opportunity for criminal organisations to return to their previous maritime activities. Al Shabaab continues to challenge the government and efforts to disrupt its operations continue, although AMISOM forces will withdraw in 2019. The trade in illegal charcoal by terror and crime groups continues, although the Combined Maritime Forces and UN are working on measures to prevent it. Youth unemployment in Somalia has not improved with 67% of Somali male youths aged between 14 to 29 unemployed. Pirate financiers offer lucrative and attractive opportunities, and were seen to be increasingly active in the last inter-monsoon period. Recent incidents off Somalia have highlighted the robust protections offered by both BMP5 and well trained, vigilant armed protection teams. Illegal fishing has returned to the region and there are wider political concerns that it could spark a resurgence in maritime crime unless checked. There is a risk that complacency in some quarters has seen a reduction in PMSC presence in these waters that could result in a piracy success. A lack of adherence to BMP5 protocol, particularly not maintaining a safe distance off the coast, has increased risks to shipping. 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 (HRA).



Yemen

Yemen's Shiite rebels have begun to withdraw from the main port in the Red Sea city of Hodeida under a truce agreement, a UN official said on Saturday 29th, while pro-government forces expressed doubt that a handover was under way. Saturday's transfer, which was confirmed by FRANCE 24's UN correspondent, was carried out under the supervision of UN monitors as part of a deal reached during peace talks in Sweden earlier this month. A UN team arrived in Hodeida earlier this week.



WFP accuses Houthi rebels of diverting food aid

The World Food Programme has demanded Yemen's rebel Houthi movement stops diverting desperately needed food aid from people in areas under its control. A survey by the UN agency said people in the capital Sanaa had not received rations to which they were entitled.

U.N. says Yemen Houthis' redeployment in Hodeidah should respect Stockholm deal

The United Nations welcomed on Sunday 30th any redeployment of Yemen's Houthi forces away from the port city of Hodeidah, but said this should be independently verified to ensure it is in line with the Stockholm ceasefire agreement.

Houthi shelling in Hodeidah reported after handover accord

Concerns are growing in the Yemeni port city of Hodeidah, where reports of violations of a UN-backed truce are emerging. Some residents accuse Houthi Rebels of failing to hand over control of the port city as they had promised to do, as part of the recently signed agreement in Sweden.

UN monitors arrive in Hodeidah

Retired Dutch general Patrick Cammaert, the head of a United Nations advance team charged with monitoring the ceasefire, arrived in Hodeidah last week. Under the deal, international monitors are to be deployed in Hodeidah and a Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC) including both sides, chaired by Cammaert, will oversee implementation. The committee started its meetings this week.

Saudi Arabia recruited Darfur children to fight in Yemen: NYT

Saudi Arabia recruited children from Sudan's conflict-ravaged

Darfur region to fight on the front lines in Yemen, the New York Times has reported. The kingdom offered desperate Sudanese families as much as \$10,000 to enlist their children to fight in the nearly four-year-old war against Iran-aligned Houthi rebels, the NYT said on Friday 28th December.

Road corridor to open from Hodeidah

Representatives from President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi's government and al Houthi movement agreed to open the road linking al Hudaydah city to the capital Sana'a on Dec. 28th, according to al Hadath news.

Action against AQAP in Mahfad region

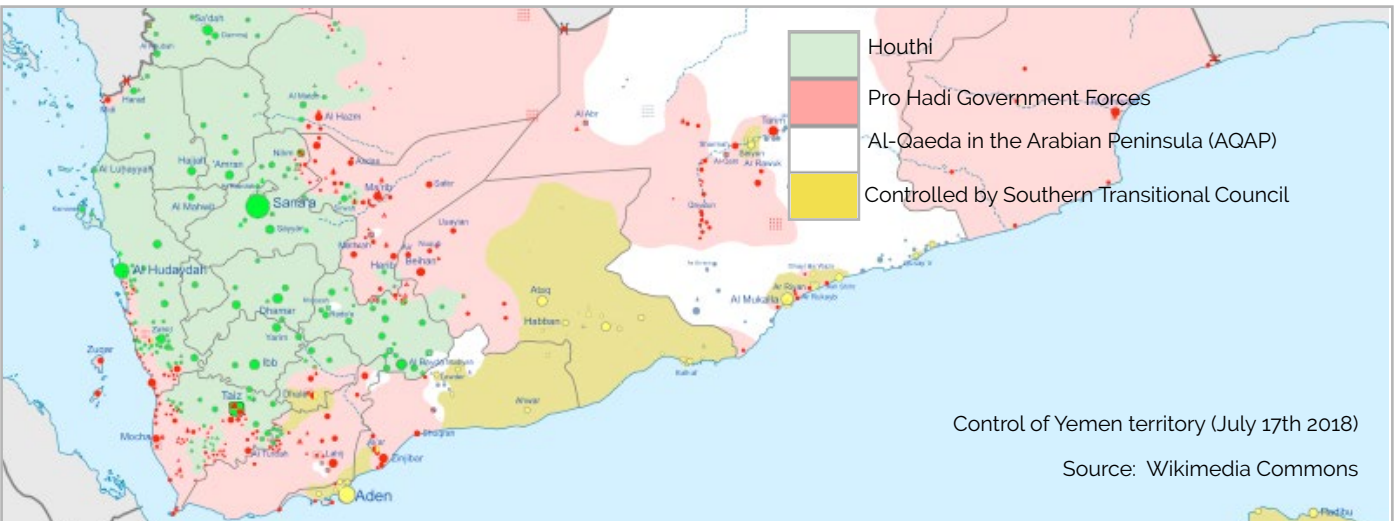
Emirati-backed al Hizam Security Forces conducted a clearing operation in search of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) militants in al Mahfad district, northwestern Abyan governorate, southern Yemen on Dec. 27th.

A bank divided: Yemen's financial crisis hits food imports

The central bank of Yemen, split into two rival head offices reflecting a country divided by war, has been slow to finance imports of food needed to fend off widespread hunger, sources with knowledge of the matter have told Reuters.

To see the latest threat analysis and Yemen port information in MASTOPDEIA, [please click here](#).

MAST recommends BMP measures be enforced and watches strengthened during transits in the region.





Mediterranean

The Royal Moroccan Navy rescued 367 irregular migrants from the Mediterranean on Dec. 28th, including women and children, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa. The migrants were aboard several inflatable boats in trouble, according to a military source. The royal navy brought the migrants safely back to Morocco. The Moroccan navy rescued 202 irregular migrants aboard unsafe bots in the Mediterranean Sea on Dec. 22nd and 23rd.



French police stop 14 at port

French police say they have stopped 14 migrants from crossing the Channel on a stolen fishing trawler after they were found in the port of Boulogne. A local prosecutor told AFP that police were called when "those seeking to help them on their way" were seen breaking into a boat on the French coast.

Ship carrying more than 300 migrants docks in Spain after week at sea

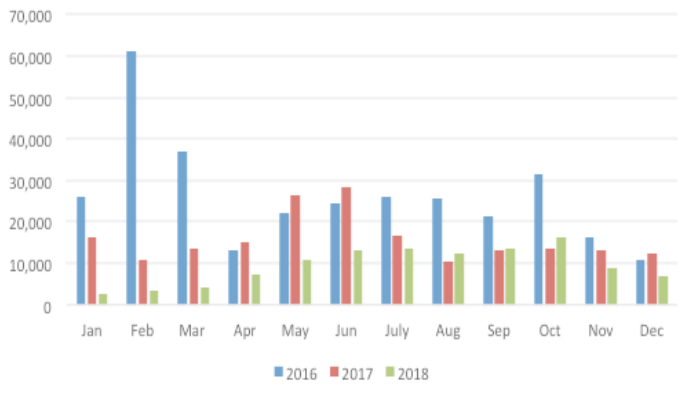
A ship carrying more than 300 migrants rescued off the coast of Libya last week arrived in Spain on Friday 28th. The rescue vessel, operated by the Spanish charity Proactiva Open Arms, had earlier been denied entry by Italy and Malta, the charity said.

British volunteer appeals for help saving 32 migrants in Mediterranean as storm bears down

The government is under pressure to intervene after a ship carrying 32 migrants was denied entry to Mediterranean ports amid worsening weather. Robin Jenkins, an RNLI volunteer for 20 years, said the Sea-Watch vessel still has "nowhere to go" eight days after it picked up the group of men, women and children off the coast of Malta.

Malta rescues 249 migrants in 24 hours

Malta's armed forces saved 180 migrants in two rescue operations in the Mediterranean on Monday 31st Dec., less than 24 hours after picking up another group of 69, Reuters reported.



Migrant crossings 2016-2018. Source: UNHCR

The current migrant smuggling situation

Final, confirmed figures for December crossing attempts should come through shortly, but it would appear as though the number of attempts will be lower than in previous years. We are encouraged to note that NGO rescue missions have returned to the Med as weather conditions worsen; the UK has withdrawn two Border Force cutters in order to patrol the English Channel, so the Frontex deployment may be affected, making the NGO presence doubly valuable. As weather and sea states worsen, crossing attempts may slow but, as the UK's deadline to leave the EU approaches, it is likely that more migrants will attempt to cross from France.





Libya

LNA leader, Khalifa Haftar, has sent additional troops to south Libya after his forces were attacked on the Chadian border on 28th Dec. Chadian opposition fighters seized military vehicles belonging to Haftar's armed forces after killing an officer and injuring 12 others. The pro-Haftar militias are located in three military bases: Tamant Al-Hind, Al-Waw and Brak Al-Shati. Local media quoted eyewitnesses who said that a significant number of armed forces, equipment and weapons arrived at the bases.



Haftar forces in Libya say they freed 19 kidnapped by IS

Associated Press reported on Jan. 1st that forces under the command of the LNA, had freed "nearly 20" hostages being held by ISIS fighters who had been abducted during attacks in central Libya.

Two ISIS suicide bombings rock southern Libya in one day

Three Libyan army soldiers were killed and another injured on Tuesday 2nd in two suicide bombings suspected to be carried out by ISIS, in crowded areas in Ghadwa, near the southern city of Sabha. Interim Interior Minister Ahmed Baraka said the soldiers were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up near the Ghadwa police station.

Libya releases oil revenue figures, painting mixed picture

In a statement released on Dec. 28th, Libya's National Oil Company (NOC) announced that Libya's total revenue from oil sales amounted to about \$2.4 billion in November, compared to \$2.87 billion in October. This was due to a decline in production from 1.115 million barrels per day (bpd) in October to 1.104 million bpd in November, according to OPEC figures.

Armed Chadian group attacks forces loyal to Haftar in Southern Libya

A Chadian armed group attacked a military camp of forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar in southern Libya on Thursday, killing one and injuring 13 others, a local official said on Dec. 27th.

Life on the Run No Bar to Qaddafi Son Leading Libya, Russia Says

The son of deposed Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi has the right to run for president next year despite facing charges of

crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court, a top Russian official said on Dec. 27th.

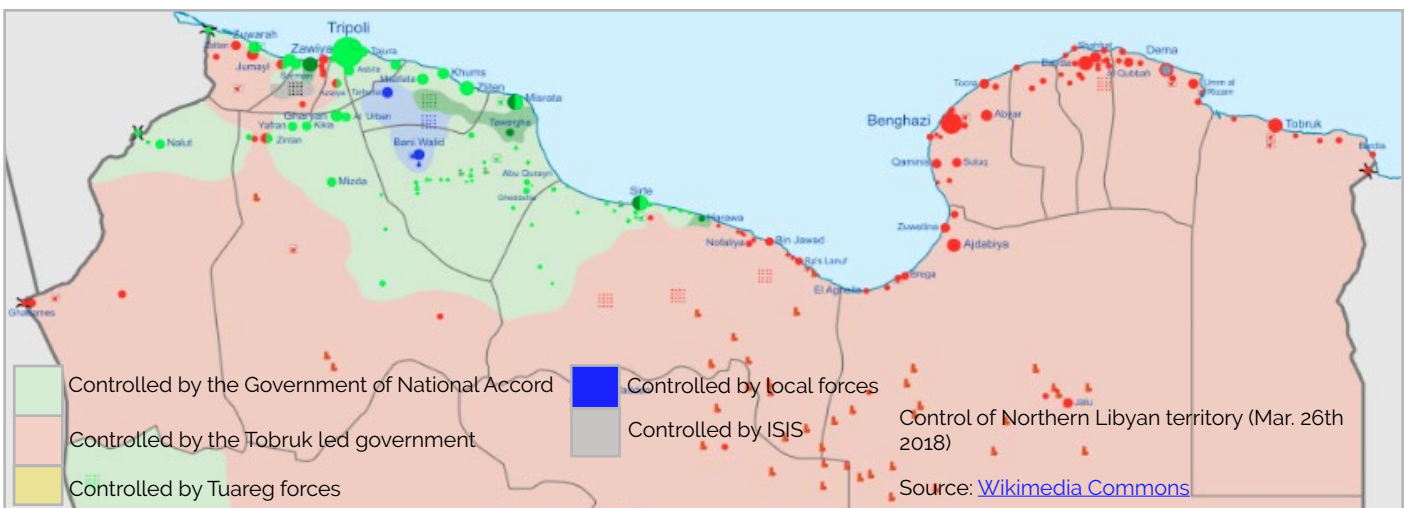
WHO warns repeated attacks could close key Libya hospital

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has strongly condemned an armed attack on Al Jala Hospital in Libya's second-largest city of Benghazi, which took place on Tuesday 25th. The global health body warned that further assaults could shutter the key facility.

Mass Grave of Ethiopian Christians Killed by Daesh Found in Libya

A mass grave of 34 executed Ethiopian Christians was found in Libya on 23rd Dec. after information was obtained during an investigation of arrested Daesh members, the Libyan Express newspaper reported citing sources close to the Libyan government. The grave appears to be located on a farm near the coastal city of Sirte, 170 miles southeast of Misrata.

To read MAST's Libyan Country report on MASTOPEDIA, please [click here](#).





Gulf of Guinea

The Nigerian Navy said on Dec. 30th that it had increased its surveillance in the country's maritime domain with the refurbishing of its old vessels and the acquisition of new ones, which would end the rate of oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta. The naval force warned naval personnel not to engage in any form of partisan politics, noting that the statutory duty of the Nigerian Navy was to assist civil authority to ensure that the election was free and fair.



Incidents:

1. MV attacked at 0001 UTC in position 05:28N - 002:21E, around 55nm south of Cotonou, Benin. Awaiting further details. Reported (MDAT) 2nd Jan.

2. Four armed robbers boarded an anchored container ship via the anchor chain at 0059 UTC in position 04:44.9S - 011:45.4E, Pointe Noire Anchorage, Republic of The Congo. General alarm raised, crew mustered in citadel and rocket flares were fired. The robbers escaped. Upon investigation, ship's stores were reported stolen. Incident reported to Pointe Noire Port Control via VHF. Reported (IMB) 22 Dec.

Nigeria's daily crude oil production increases by 9%

Nigeria's daily crude oil production increased by about 2.09 million barrels in 2018, translating to a nine per cent rise when compared with the 2017 average daily production of 1.86 million barrels. The Group Managing Director, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Maikanti Baru, said the nation had maintained a line of consistent year-on-year improvement in its daily crude oil production.

Delta militant groups end ceasefire agreements

The Niger Delta Creek Warriors, a coalition of agitators in Niger Delta region, has called off its ceasefire with the Federal Gov-

ernment and Pan Niger Delta Forum, PANDEF, over alleged failure of Federal Government to meet its demands, it was reported on Dec. 31st.

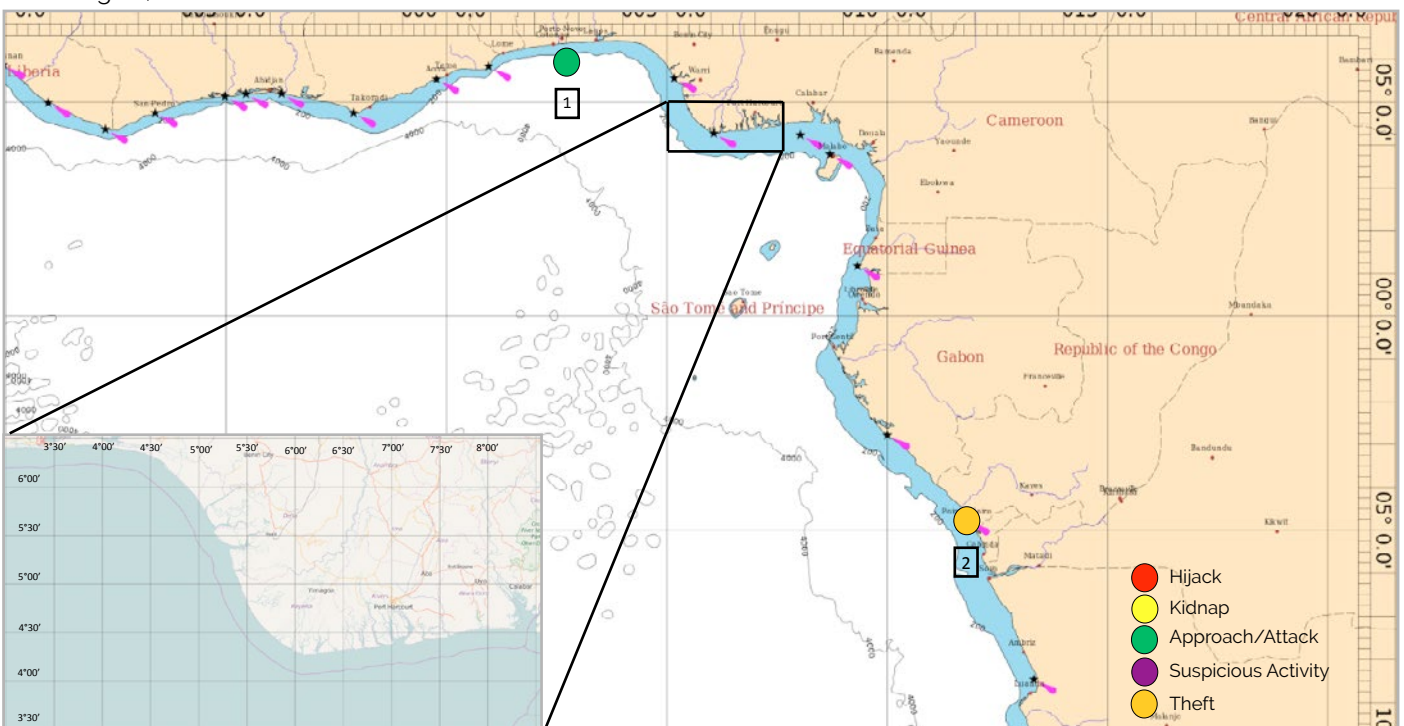
Fish pirates disappear as Namibian Navy takes action

The theft of fish in sensitive areas vital for the breeding and spawning some of Namibia's most precious fish resources by foreign flagged fishing trawlers prompted direct action by Namibia. The Namibian Navy Ship, Elephant, was spotted in the area between Cape Fria and the Kunene River mouth shortly after fish pirates were caught decimating horse mackerel breeding stocks in the shallow water at Foz de Kunene.

New group emerges in Niger Delta, vows to stop elections

A new militant group, War Against Niger Delta Exploitation, WANDE, has sprung up in the oil rich region. The new group has consequently threatened to disrupt the 2019 elections, unless the government showed commitment to the development of the region. The group made the threat in a seven-point communiqué it released on Wednesday 26th Dec. in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital.

To see MAST Services in the region, [please click here](#). And and to read Nigeria's country report, [please click here](#).





South East Asia

There has been no development in the kidnapping case involving three fishermen at Pegasus Reef waters, off Kinabatangan early this month. State Police Commissioner Datuk Omar Mammah said on Dec. 31st that other than the call to one of the victim's wife, there have been no other calls or form of contact. Omar who was met at the Sabah Police Contingent's family day at Kepayan today said this when asked for the latest development on the kidnapping case.



Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

'Pabuk' lashes Terengganu with 50km/h winds

Tropical storm Pabuk, which lashed the coastline of Terengganu with thunderous rain and nearly 50km per hour winds from noon on Jan. 2nd, is not letting up. State MMEA director Capt Muhammad Suffi Mohd Ramli advised local fishermen and boat operators to stay clear of the South China Sea until the storm passes through by Friday.

Abu Sayyaf Group frees son of Zambo Norte mayor

Abu Sayyaf group (ASG) released the son of a town mayor in Zamboanga del Norte they kidnapped in September last year, police said on Monday 31st Dec. Authorities said Jed Quimbo, 28, was freed on Friday afternoon in Patikul, Sulu and handed over to his brother Justin, who reportedly sought assistance from local leaders to fetch the victim in Barangay Anuling.

Sabah's east coast curfew extended over kidnapping and other threats

The dawn-to-dusk curfew in Sabah's east coast has been extended another two weeks from Thursday (Dec 27), amid continuing threats from Abu Sayyaf-linked cross-border kidnap groups and other criminal elements. Sabah Police Commissioner Datuk Omar Mammah said that the extension was necessary due to the continuing threat of kidnap-for-ransom

groups and other criminals from neighbouring Philippines.

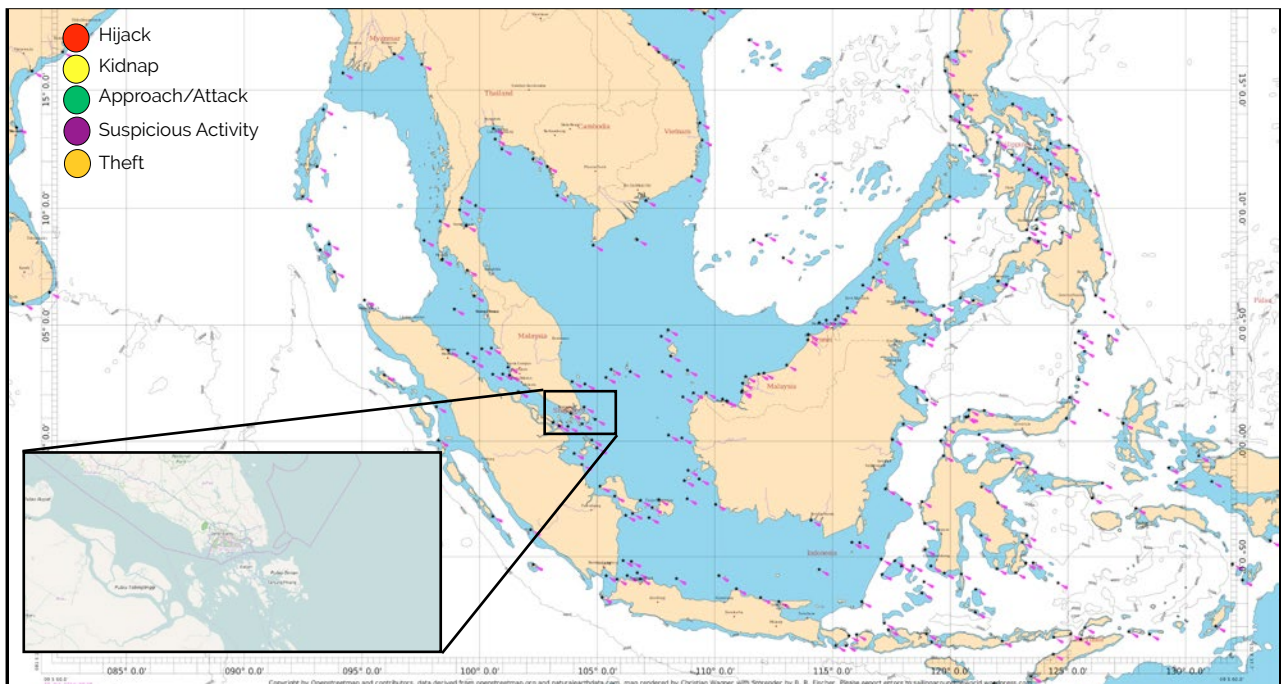
Abu Sayyaf gunman reportedly seeking kidnap targets

After successfully snatching three Indonesian fishermen in Sabah waters in early December, rising Abu Sayyaf gunman Al Mujir Yadah is back on the prowl along the sea border of eastern Sabah, local media reported on Dec. 28th. Al Mujir, who is a member of the notorious Abu Sayyaf group under sub-commander Hatib Hajan Sawadjan, is believed to be lurking in the Tawi Tawi chain of islands that straddles along Sabah's east coast.

Abu Sayyaf leader Janjalani found guilty over 2000 Basilan mass kidnapping

A Pasig City court has convicted Abu Sayyaf leader Hector Janjalani over the mass abduction of students and teachers in Basilan 18 years ago. Hector is the brother of Abu Sayyaf founders Abdurajak and Khadaffy Janjalani who were killed in 1998 and 2006, respectively.

To see MAST's services in the region, [please click here](#).





Central and South America

Nothing significant to report.

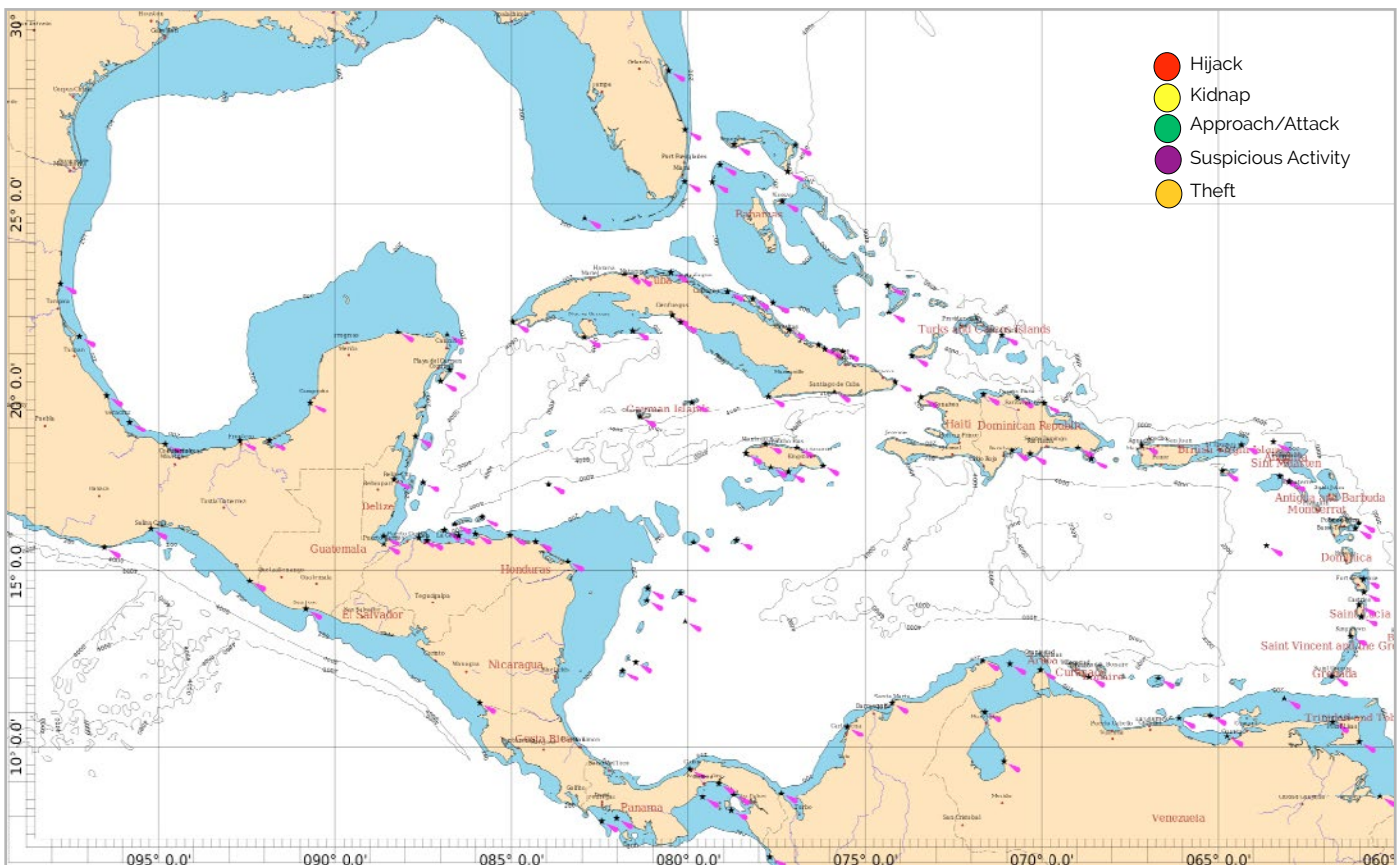


Incidents: Nothing significant to report.

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.



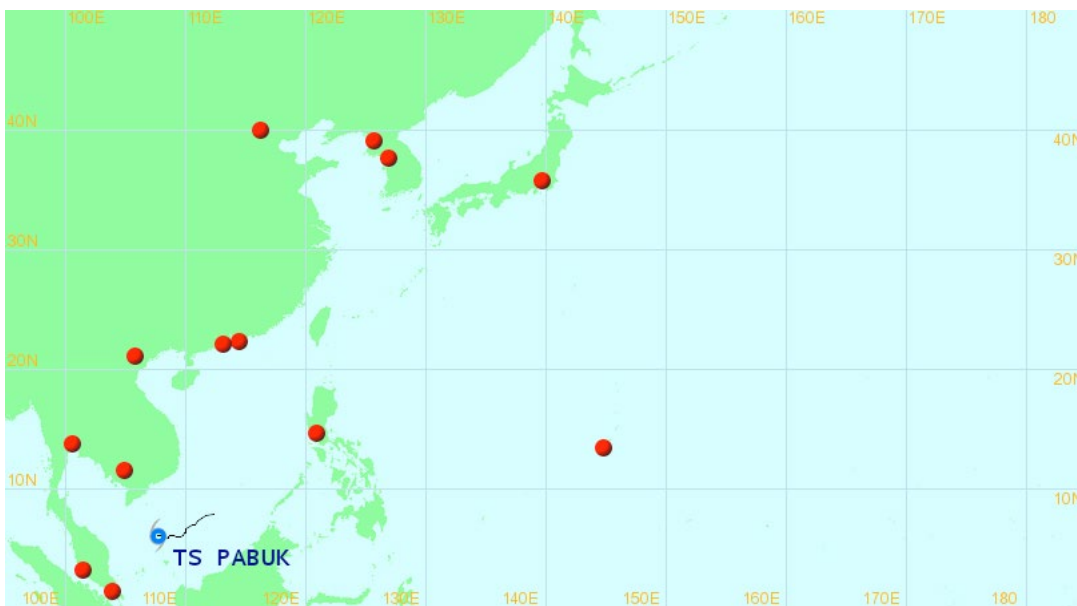


Severe Weather Warnings

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](#).



Western North Pacific Ocean and South China Sea



Note: The forecasts are correct as of the day before publication. For latest updates please follow the provided links.