Guidelines for Owners, Operators and Masters for protection against piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea region (Version 3, June 2018)

To be read in conjunction with the Global Counter-Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers (GCPG).

Issued by ICS, BIMCO, INTERCARGO, IG P&I, INTERTANKO, InterManager, OCIMF

1. Introduction

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea region is an established criminal activity and is of serious concern to the maritime sector.

2. Area for consideration

Attackers in the Gulf of Guinea region are flexible in their operations so it is difficult to predict a precise area where a ship might fall victim to an attack. For the purpose of this guidance the area off the coasts of Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Cameroon, and Benin can be regarded as an area in which this guidance should be applied. Attacks have occurred from as far south as Angola and as north as Sierra Leone.

In addition, the LMA Joint War Committee defines the following "Listed Areas for Hull War, Piracy, Terrorism and Related Perils":

- The territorial waters of Benin, Togo and Nigeria, plus
- Nigerian Exclusive Economic Zone north of latitude 3º N, plus
- Beninese Exclusive Economic Zones north of latitude 3º N plus.
- Togolese Exclusive Economic Zone north of latitude 3º N.

The LMA Joint War Committee listed areas should be checked regularly for changes www.lmalloyds.com/lma/jointwar

3. Threat and Risk Assessment

For the purpose of identifying suitable measures of prevention, mitigation and recovery in case of piracy, ship and voyage specific threat and risk assessment as recommended in Section 4 of GCPG should be carried out prior to entering the area described in Section 2 above . Not unlike the Ship Security Assessment described in the ISPS Code, the risk assessment should include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- The threat (who are the attackers, what do they want to achieve, how do they attack, how do they board, which weapons do they use etc.?)
- Background factors shaping the situation (visibility, sea-state, traffic patterns e.g. other commercial ships, fishermen and human traffickers etc.)

- Possibilities for co-operation with military (escorting, employment of Vessel Protection Detachments, registering with authorities etc.)
- The ship's characteristics/vulnerabilities/inherent capabilities to withstand the threat (freeboard, speed, general arrangement etc.)
- Ship's procedures (drills, watch rosters, chain of command, decision making processes etc.)

In addition to the information found in this document, supplementary information about the characteristics of the threat and regional background factors may be sought from regional reporting centres, Shipping Association websites, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), commercial intelligence providers or local sources such as ships' agents.

As described in the GCPG, the risk assessment should take into consideration any statutory requirements, in particular those of the flag state and/or the coastal state. Other requirements dictated by company and insurance policies should also be taken into consideration.

Much of this risk assessment already exists in the GCPG since it provides an overall list of which actions to take to defend against attack. However, the guidance in the GCPG must be developed into specific actions and mitigation measures to apply on a ship-by-ship and voyage-by-voyage basis. For example, many attacks in the Gulf of Guinea region occur whilst ships are at anchor or drifting, in which case the GCPG self-defence measures like "evasive maneuvering" are not readily applicable. Thus, the risk assessment must reflect the prevailing characteristics of the specific voyage and ship, and not just be a repetition of advice relating to a different geographical region and a different attacking modus operandi. Detailed guidance on preparing risk assessments can be found from a variety of sources including the ISPS code.

4. Typical Attacks

Attacks within the Gulf of Guinea are varied, and include armed robbery of crew and ship's property, cargo theft and kidnap for ransom. Generally speaking, attacks in the Gulf of Guinea can be very violent and can be split broadly into the following categories:

- Armed Robbery – In general this is opportunistic, is often violent, and occurs where ships are approaching, drifting, anchored off and berthed alongside at ports. For the most part the intention is to take valuables from the safe, IT equipment, and personal effects.
- Cargo theft – This occurs throughout the area described with ships hijacked in anchorages and whilst underway further offshore. In the main it is related to product and chemical tankers but there are also attacks on general cargo carriers. Ships are hijacked for several days and cargo is transferred to a smaller ship. These incidents are well-organised, often involving a criminal element with commercial interests ashore. Cargo thefts have demonstrated that attackers often have maritime knowledge allowing them to disable communications, operate the cargo system, etc.
- Kidnapping – All seafarers and all types of ships are at risk. Instances of ships being attacked and seafarers taken ashore for ransom remain relatively common. The methodology is to take 4 to 5

seafarers – often the Master and Chief Engineer -as they command higher ransoms. However, there have been cases where 10 or more crew have been seized.

Attacks in the Gulf of Guinea region usually involve approaches made by high-powered speedboats. The use of motherships is not widespread, although there is evidence that small cargo ships and fishing ships that have already been hijacked have been used to launch attacks against larger merchant ships.

The risk of an attack is higher when the ship is at anchor or is approaching or drifting off a port e.g. close to pilot station. Another vulnerable situation arises when STS operations and the two ships are adrift and moored alongside each other.

For the tanker sector, cargo theft results in stolen oil products being sold in the region. For the dry cargo and other sectors, violent robbery is more common. Attacks, both outside and inside territorial waters, appear to be the result of well executed planning, with particular products such as gasoil or gasoline being targeted in well-coordinated operations. Companies and ships operating regularly in the region are likely to be at increased risk of falling subject to intelligence collection operations and subsequent attack.

5. Ship Movement Reporting Procedures

Although this may change in the future, at present the Yaoundé reporting framework is not fully operational, with voluntary ship movement and reporting procedures handled by the MDAT-GoG. Masters have a number of options for reporting incidents and particularly:

Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG):

MDAT-GoG is a service operated by the French and UK navies from centres in Brest, France, and Portsmouth, UK and aims to develop, maintain and share details of the maritime domain picture of the waters off Africa's western seaboard. The MDAT-GoG administers a Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) scheme under which merchant ships are encouraged to report position information while operating in the VRA.

The VRA, as shown on Admiralty Chart Q6114, has been issued to clearly define an internationally recognised area, so ship operators and ships transiting, trading or operating in West Africa can join a trusted reporting scheme. The provision of Admiralty Chart Q6114 to all ships operating in the VRA is strongly recommended.

Suspicious activity and incidents reported to MDAT-GoG by shipping in the VRA, using the forms on the Chart and repeated at Annex B, assist in the creation of a detailed and accurate regional maritime domain picture. The analysis is used to produce security recommendations that are shared with seafarers, ship operators and law enforcement agencies to enhance risk awareness and improve incident response.

The MDAT-GoG provides a 24-hour manned service of military experts. The MDAT-GoG receives reports, shares important updates and provides guidance on ship operating patterns and security risks with the Gulf of Guinea maritime community.

- The MDAT-GoG has no influence over the deployment of local military assets to assist merchant ships which are attacked but is linked with national and regional maritime operations centres and may be able to help direct them to the scene of an incident.

- Dedicated naval staff collate data from a variety of sources to aid their understanding of the maritime environment. The voluntary position reports from ships operating within the VRA are an important input to greater understanding of maritime activity - the information reported is used to inform other regional governmental organisations and inform recommendations to enhance security planning, incident response and investigations.

Owners and operators should bring this reporting scheme to the attention of their ships to encourage ships entering the VRA to report, make daily reports during transit and log a departure report when leaving. The contact details and details of the report format are shown at Annex A.

Reporting:

Ships are encouraged to send regular reports, using the MDAT-GoG reporting forms as below:

WHEN	WHAT
On entering the VRA	Initial Report
Daily**	Daily Position Report
On Departing the VRA	Final Report
By Exception	By Exception Report

** At 0800 if convenient to daily routine**

How to Report?

The MDAT-GoG reporting forms (see Annex B), should be used to make the reports described above.

Email is the preferred method of communication but alternatively telephone, (see Annex A for contact details).

Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres:

These are established at Monrovia and Lagos and are important points for safety reporting. See Section 13 for more details.

International Maritime Bureau (IMB):

Ships are encouraged to report all incidents to the IMB reporting centre in order to accurately reflect the number and types of incident. See Section 13

Yaoundé Framework

The Yaoundé framework is establishing a number of other reporting centres. It is expected that the Inter-regional Coordination Centre in Yaoundé will soon be operational.

Individual flag states may well have their own national ship movement reporting procedures. Any flag state reporting requirements should be clarified and complied with.

The above guidance is the best available at the time of publication but is likely to change as new reporting centres become operational and regional coordination and cooperation increases. Owners and Operators should monitor the developing situation in order to ensure that ships operating in the region are aware of reporting options available to them. It is essential that each and every incident is reported in order to maintain pressure on coastal states to meet their obligations under UNCLOS and encourage the international community to support infrastructure and capacity building in the region.

6. Company Planning

Company planning procedures outlined in Section 5 of GCPG should be applied in the Gulf of Guinea region. The following important advice should be noted:

- Communications with external parties should be kept to a minimum, with close attention paid to organising rendezvous points and waiting positions. For e-mail correspondence to Agents, Charterers, Chandlers etc. it is strongly recommended that address lists are controlled and that information within the e-mail is concise, containing the minimum that is legally required in order to fulfil requirements or contractual obligations.
- Contractual arrangements should be put in place with a view to keeping ships out of harm's way.
- Know your agents and avoid or minimize requirements where possible. Unnecessary interaction with other parties creates opportunities for information regarding the ship's position to be compromised.
- If the ship trades regularly in the region it is recommended to occasionally alter arrangements to make it harder for criminals to predict where operations might take place.

In terms of the availability of armed escort ships, the Nigerian Navy are known to offer licenses to certain companies to employ naval personnel on board their escort ships.

7. Master's Planning

Many of the Master's planning procedures described in Section 6 of GCPG also apply to the Gulf of Guinea, although there are no Group Transit schemes or national convoys. Given the modus operandi of the attackers operating in the Gulf of Guinea region, the Master should plan according to the following:

- Rendezvous - Where possible, avoid waiting and slow steaming. Consider offering several alternative rendezvous points and advise rendezvous points at the last minute. If waiting, keep well off the coast (up to 200nm). Do not give away waiting positions. Do not drift and keep engines ready for immediate maneuvers.
- Anchoring - Where practicable, a prolonged stay at anchorage is to be avoided.
- Minimize use of VHF and use e-mail or secure satellite telephone instead. Where possible only answer known or legitimate callers on the VHF, bearing in mind that imposters are likely and may even appear in uniform.
- Within anchorages and ports, the greatest risks of piracy and robbery are at night due to criminals being able to operate under the cover of darkness.

- Further offshore, attacks can occur at any time of day or night, as pirates are able to operate more freely further away from military forces and law enforcement.
- For ships approaching pilot stations, curfew times at anchorages and on rivers should be factored into all planning to ensure minimal waiting time drifting or at anchor. Where possible, operations should start and end during daylight hours.

8. Ship Protection Measures

The ship protection measures described in Section 7 of GCPG also apply in the Gulf of Guinea region. When STS operations are expected to be conducted, extra attention should be paid to the use of physical protection measures. Although barbed wire can potentially make it very difficult to complete an STS operation, other protection measures should be considered to protect the ship from attack in these cases.

- Ship hardening can be effective in this region and a moving ship also makes an effective deterrent.
- During STS operations or when adrift, equipment such as fenders, anchor chains and hawse pipes can potentially provide a vulnerable point of access for attackers, and entry should be physically blocked.
- Attackers detect and target ships by sight and by the use of AIS. Therefore limit the use of lighting at night and reduce the power of AIS. Unfortunately, this has a major drawback in that it may reduce the likelihood of an intervention by "friendly forces" if attacked. Consequently, **AIS must be switched on immediately if the ship is boarded**.
- The use of citadels or safe muster points is an owner's/master's choice but it should be borne in mind that their successful use in the Indian Ocean was predicated upon their being a strong chance of a Naval Intervention. The principles of citadel construction and use are outlined in GCPG. Given the levels of violence perpetrated by attackers, and if control of the engines can be maintained from the citadel, many think that this option is the safest and also one that prevents the ship from maneuvering in order to prevent cargo theft. If a citadel is constructed, ship operators should make sure that it includes VHF communication as this is often the only available means of communication with regional naval ships in the event of a military response.
- Owners should consider the placement of hidden position transmitting devices as one of the first actions of attackers is to disable all visible communication and tracking devices and aerials.

9. Attack

The guidelines in GCPG Section 8 are applicable.

In the event of an attack in the Gulf of Guinea region, the best way of alerting the local authorities of an attack is via the MDAT-GoG and by sending out a distress message. Maintain contact with the MDAT-GoG preferably by telephone for as long as it is safe to do so. On receipt of information in relation to an attack, the MDAT-GoG will inform the appropriate national maritime operations centre and local authorities and will ensure all other ships in the immediate vicinity are aware of the event.

The following list of actions below should be considered if an attack is imminent:

- If underway speed should be increased as much as possible to open the distance between the ship and the attackers. Try to steer a straight course to maintain maximum speed. Consider evasive actions if the circumstances dictate.
- Initiate the ship's pre-prepared emergency procedures.
- Activate the Emergency Communication Plan.
- Sound the emergency alarm and make an announcement in accordance with the Ship's Emergency Plan.
- Report the attack as soon as possible to MDAT-GoG by phone and follow up with call to the Company Security Officer if the situation permits.
- Activate the Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) which will alert your CSO and Flag State. Make a 'Mayday' call on VHF Ch. 16.
- Send a distress message via the Digital Selective Calling system (DSC) and Inmarsat-C, as applicable.
- Ensure that the Automatic Identification System (AIS) is switched ON.
- All crew, except those required on the bridge or in the engine room, should move to the Safe Muster Point or Citadel if constructed. Any Safe Muster Point should provide the crew with as much protection as possible should the attackers get close enough to use firearms.
- If possible, alter course away from the approaching craft. When sea conditions allow, consider altering course to increase an approaching craft's exposure to wind/waves.
- Activate water spray and other self-defensive measures.
- Confirm external doors and, where possible, internal public rooms and cabins, are fully secured. If possible pull-up external ladders and fenders.
- Place the ship's whistle/foghorn/alarm on Auto to demonstrate to any potential attacker that the ship is aware of the attack and is reacting to it.

If communication is lost or difficult alternative options include:

- The Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (RMRCC) in Lagos; or
- The RMRCC Monrovia if in the western extremities of the GoG.

The Lagos centre covering all coastal states from Benin to the DRC is run by the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and can be contacted via details shown in Section 13 of this Guidance. The Monrovia centre covering the area from Guinea to Ghana is run by the Liberian Maritime Administration and can be contacted via details at Section 13.

When contacted, the Lagos and Monrovia RMRCC will alert the military and/or coast guard forces in the region who will initiate a response if the necessary resources are available at the time of the alert.

10. If Attackers Take Control

The advice in Section 9 of GCPG is also applicable. MDAT-GoG, Lagos RMRCC or Monrovia RMRCC should be contacted.

As previously mentioned the attackers operating in the Gulf of Guinea region often use violence in order to subdue the crew. Therefore it is extremely important not to engage in a fight with the attackers, because this will entail great risk of the crew getting hurt or killed.

Violent shipboard robberies can take place as a result of a previously unsuccessful attack on another ship. Therefore:

- Great care needs to be taken if your ship is boarded, as life is little valued by robbers. Compliance/submission to attackers is essential once they have taken control of a ship.
- Generally minimizing cash carried will make ships less attractive in the longer run.

Kidnap and Ransom in the Gulf of Guinea region is an established practice. Experience shows attackers will board a ship and loot the ship's stores and steal personal belongings. Once this has been done they may kidnap key individuals e.g. the Master and Chief Engineer.

Kidnap can serve two key purposes for the attackers:

- Help the attackers escape. The presence of hostages may reduce the likelihood of security forces to engage in a firefight and;
- For ransom. To maximise their profits from the attack or hijack.

Each company or organisation will have a policy in place to cover the eventualities of Kidnap and Ransom.

11. In the Event of Military Action

Section 8.7 of the GCPG applies.

12. Post Incident Reporting

All piracy incidents ought to be reported to the IMB in accordance with Annex A to this Guidance (for contact details, see Section 13).

In addition, incidents in the GoG should be reported to Interpol via the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) Regional Bureau in Abidjan. (see Section 13 for contact details)

The relevant reporting format can be found in Annex B.

13. MDAT-GoG Contact details

- Website: development in progress

E-mail: watchkeepers@mdat-gog.orgTelephone (24hrs): **+33(0)2 98 22 88 88**

INTERPOL Command and Coordination Centre

- Website: www.interpol.int
- E-mail: os-ccc@interpol.int
- Telephone (24hrs): +33 (0) 47244 7676

Lagos Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (RMRCC)

NIGERIA

- Telephone (24hrs): +234 (1) 730 6618
- The Lagos MRCC covers nine countries (Benin, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, São Tomé & Príncipe and Togo).

Monrovia Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (RMRCC)

LIBERIA

- INMARSAT C Terminals: # 580-460173-111 AOR-E
- INMARSAT C Terminals: # 580-460199-019 AOR-W
- International Fax: # (+231) 2430-0011
- International Landline: # (+231) 770-092229
- International Cellular & SMS: # (+231) 573-0144
- VHF-DSC Radio
- Monrovia covers the territorial waters of Liberia and her four neighboring countries - Guinea, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire.

International Maritime Bureau – IMB Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB PRC)
ICC IMB (Asia Regional Office),
PO Box 12559,
Kuala Lumpur,
50782,
Malaysia.

Tel: + 60 3 2078 5763
Fax: + 60 3 2078 5769
E-mail: **imbkl@icc-ccs.org** / **piracy@icc-ccs.org**
24 Hour Anti Piracy HELPLINE Tel: + 60 3 2031 0014

ANNEX A

MDAT-GoG Reporting Forms

Once a ship has transmitted an Initial Report to MDAT-GoG, MDAT-GoG will reply and request that Daily Reports be transmitted. Upon exiting the VRA, ships should complete and transmit a Final Report. The following forms are used:

- Initial Report Format
- Daily Report Format
- Final Report Format
- By Exception Report Format.

Masters and operators should check either by email to the Watchkeeper or check with the MDAT-GoG website for the latest information regarding the Voluntary Reporting Area. The MDAT-GoG accepts forms by e-mail.

MDAT-GoG Ship Position Reporting Form - Initial Report

01	Ship Name	
02	Flag	
03	IMO Number	
04	INMARSAT Telephone Number	
05	Time & Position	
06	Course	
07	Passage Speed	
08	Freeboard	
09	Cargo	
10	Destination and Estimated Time of Arrival (including anchorages etc)	
11	Name and contact details of Company Security Officer	
12	Nationality of Master and Crew	
13	Armed/unarmed security team embarked	

MDAT-GoG Ship Position Reporting Form - Daily Position Report

01	Ship's name	
02	Ship's Call Sign and IMO Number	
03	Time of Report in UTC	
04	Ship's Position	
05	Ship's Course and Speed	

06	Any Other Important Information	

MDAT-GoG Ship Position Reporting Form - Final Report

01	Ship's name	
02	Ship's Call Sign and IMO Number	
03	Time of Report in UTC	
04	Port or position when leaving the VRA	

MDAT-GoG By Exception Report (Suspicious Activity)

01	Own Ship name	
02	Ship's Call Sign and IMO Number	
03	Time of Report in UTC	
04	Own Ship Position	
05	Own Ship Course and Speed	
06	Sightings of Illegal Unlawful Unregulated (IUU) fishing or other assessed illegal activity. Time, Position, brief description of craft and activity witnessed	

ANNEX B

PIRACY ATTACK REPORT, SHIP

General Details

01 Name of Ship:

02 IMO No:

03 Flag:

04 Call Sign:

05 Type of Ship:

06 Tonnages:
GRT:
NRT:
DWT:

07 Owner's (Address & Contact Details):

08 Manager's (Address & Contact Details):

09 Last Port/Next Port:

10 Cargo Details: (Type/Quantity)

Details of Incident

11 Date & Time of Incident:
LT UTC

12 Position:
Lat: (N/S)
Long: (E/W)

13 Nearest Land Mark/Location:

14 Port/Town/Anchorage Area:

15 Country/Nearest Country:

16 Status (Berth/Anchored/Steaming):

17 Own Ship's Speed:

18 Ship's Freeboard During Attack:

19 Weather During Attack (Rain/Fog/Mist/Clear/etc, Wind (Speed and Direction), Sea/Swell Height):

20 Types of Attack (Boarded/Attempted):

21 Consequences for Crew, Ship and Cargo:
Any Crew Injured/Killed:
Items/Cash Stolen:

22 Area of the Ship being Attacked:

23 Last Observed Movements of Pirates/Suspect Craft:

24 Type of vessel (Whaler, Dhow, Fishing Vessel, Merchant Vessel)

25 Description of vessel (Colour, Name, Distinguishing Features)

26 Course and Speed of vessel when sighted

Details of Raiding Party

27 Number of Pirates/Robbers:

28 Dress/Physical Appearance:

29 Language Spoken:

30 Weapons Used:

31 Distinctive Details:

32 Craft Used:

33 Method of Approach:

34 Duration of Attack:

35 Aggressive/Violent:

Further Details

36 Action Taken by Master and Crew and its effectiveness:

37 Was Incident Reported to the Coastal Authority? If so, to whom?

38 Preferred Communications with Reporting Ship:
Appropriate Coast Radio Station/HF/MF/VHF/INMARSAT
IDS (Plus Ocean Region Code)/MMSI

39 Action Taken by the Authorities:

40 Number of Crew/Nationality:

41 Please attach with this Report – A Brief Description/Full Report/Master – Crew Statement of the Attack/Photographs taken if any.

42 Details of Self Protection Measures.

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