

Lessons learned case 2 – Piracy attack while waiting for berth

Please discuss the following key learning points with your group:

- Best management practices should be followed and need to be adapted to every different area the vessel is visiting. It is essential that a piracy risk assessment for the trading area has been completed as described in 'Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy 5 (BMP5)' and 'Guidelines for Owners, Operators and Masters for Protection Against Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea'.
- It is not common for pirates in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) to use ladders, but in this attack, ladders were used to board the vessel, so preventive measures should be analysed and implemented. Physical barriers which increase the height will make it more difficult for the pirates to attach the ladders. A proper risk assessment needs to be completed.
- It is imperative that all required equipment is working condition. In this case, a number of floodlights were broken.

Ships operating in the GoG area are strongly urged to plan according to the following:

- Arrive at the pilot station, port, anchorage or STS area 'just in time'. Plan transit times with consideration to safe speed and maintaining distance offshore or use an offshore waiting area.
- 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 200 NM). Do not give away waiting positions. Do not drift and keep engines ready for immediate manoeuvres.
- Vessels should proceed within the 200 NM range at full speed.
- Anchoring – where practicable, a prolonged stay at anchorage is to be avoided.
- Minimise use of VHF and use e-mail or secure satellite telephone instead. Where possible, answer only known or legitimate callers on the VHF, bearing in mind that imposters are likely and may even appear in uniform.
- The greatest risks of piracy are at night, and these need to be factored into all planning. Where possible, operations should start and end during daylight hours.
- The use of privately contracted armed guards on board is banned in Nigerian waters.



- If using an armed escort, due diligence on the company providing this service must be conducted to ensure strict adherence to the MOU issued by the Nigerian Navy and Nigerian Maritime Administration & Safety Agency (NIMASA).
- Shipowners and managers must have a means of verification that hardening measures are available and in place on vessels prior to entering the GoG area.
- Spot checks for verification at ports within the GoG area are an additional option to consider.
- Nigerian naval armed guards can protect merchant ships utilising patrol boats to escort ships in the region.
- Maintain all-round visual look-outs & good radar watch.
- Report to MDAT-GoG (the Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea, operated jointly by French and UK Navies); watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org, emergency tel: +33(0) 298 22 88 88.
- The MDAT-GoG will liaise directly with the navies in the region in the event of an attack. If a ship does not report to the centre, then there is likely to be a delay in the response from the regional navy. Alerts and warnings will be issued by MDAT-GoG, and they will also contact vessels in the immediate vicinity of an incident.