

U.S. MARITIME ADVISORY 2021-008
Threat Type: Piracy/Armed Robbery/Kidnapping for Ransom
Geographic Area: Gulf of Guinea

This revised advisory cancels U.S. Maritime Advisory 2021-002

1. Reference: None.
2. Issue: Piracy/Armed Robbery/Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR) continues to serve as a significant threat to U.S. flagged operators with vessels transiting or operating in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG).
3. According to the Office of Naval Intelligence's "Shipping Threat Reports" website at <https://www.oni.navy.mil/News/Shipping-Threat-Reports/>, 24 reported incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea occurred in the GoG region this year as of 30 June 2021. This is a 55 percent decrease in the total number of incidents from the same period in 2020, with the number of kidnappings and hijackings declining in 2021 by 53 percent. While boardings and attempted boardings to steal valuables from ships and crews are the most common types of incidents, a third of all incidents involve a hijacking and/or kidnapping. Approximately 38 percent of all incidents of piracy and armed robbery are taking place off Nigeria, which is a decrease from 42 percent in the first 6 months of 2020, and indicates pirates continue to travel further to target vessels. So far in 2021, there have been six kidnappings and two hijacking/kidnapping combinations in the GoG, compared to 14 kidnappings, two hijacking/kidnapping combinations and one hijacking for the same timeframe in 2020. U.S. flagged operators with ships operating in or through the GoG Voluntary Reporting Area designated on Maritime Security Chart Q6114 (chart info available at <https://www.admiralty.co.uk/maritime-safety-information/security-related-information-to-mariners>) should transit with extreme caution and vigilance.
4. During the first six months of 2021, pirates and armed robbers operated off seven of nine countries in the Gulf of Guinea (Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Sao Tome and Principe, and Gabon) targeting a variety of vessels to include tankers, container ships, general cargo vessels, fishing vessels, passenger vessels, and numerous vessels supporting oil drilling/production. Criminals/armed KFR groups have used motherships to support operations up to 200 nautical miles from shore. It is not uncommon for these groups to fire upon vessels during boardings and attempted boardings. Previously, KFR groups would generally kidnap two to six high-value crew members to include the master, chief engineer, and any Western or foreign crew members, but in 2021 there were three incidents where ten or 15 crew members were kidnapped at one time. Kidnapped crew members are normally taken ashore in the Niger Delta region where KFR groups demand ransom payments in exchange for the safe return of the crew members.
5. Guidance: Mariners transiting this area should visit the new Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade-Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG) website at <https://gog-mdat.org/home> (does not currently load in Internet Explorer browsers) and the NATO Shipping Centre website at <https://shipping.nato.int/nsc/operations/global-maritime-risk/west-africa-gulf-of-guinea> for additional information on threats and specific recommendations for their vessels. U.S. flag

vessels anchoring, transiting, or operating in this region must comply with their approved Vessel Security Plans. Additionally, the “Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security Off the Coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea” (available under the Geography – Gulf of Guinea pull-down menu at <https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/> provides additional guidance and resources for operating in this area.

6. Mariners operating near this area are also advised to consult the Department of State Travel Advisories for this area at <https://go.usa.gov/xUKs2>.

7. All suspicious activities and events involving US vessels or persons must be reported to the U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center at 800-424-8802 in accordance with 33 CFR 101.305.

8. Contact Information: MDAT-GoG is operated by the navies of France and the United Kingdom. This center receives reports, shares important updates, provides guidance on vessel operating patterns, and reviews security risks with the Gulf of Guinea maritime community. Note that MDAT-GoG does not coordinate responses to vessels under attack. MDAT-GoG can be contacted via email at watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org or telephone at +33(0)2 98 22 88 88. For any maritime industry questions about this advisory, contact GMCC@uscg.mil . Supplemental information may also be found on the MARAD Office of Maritime Security website at <https://go.usa.gov/xUKsb>.

9. Cancellation of Prior Advisories: This message cancels U.S. Maritime Advisory 2021-002 and will automatically expire on January 4, 2022.

For more information about U.S. Maritime Alerts and Advisories, including subscription details, please visit <https://go.usa.gov/x6QJc>.