

The background of the entire page is an aerial photograph of the ocean. The water is a deep, dark blue, and the waves are white and frothy, creating a complex, swirling pattern across the surface. The lighting is bright, highlighting the texture of the water.

## **Gulf of Guinea**

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### **Heightened Threat Warning**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is currently a **HEIGHTENED** threat of kidnap for ransom in the Gulf of Guinea. There have been three failed attacks on MVs since the 17th October 2020.

Ambrey has intelligence that there are possibly two active criminal syndicates operating in the Bight of Benin and southwest/south of Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

It is strongly advised to engage intelligence and security providers to mitigate the threat.

Enhanced security should be engaged off Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Cameroon. The recommended mix differs per jurisdiction, but includes: Security Escort Vessels (SEVs), Local National Armed Guards (LNAGs) and Liaison Officers (LOs).

Intelligence providers should be engaged to provide route risk assessments and provide practical routing guidance. Generic area assessments are insufficient to treat the threat.

Citadels should be applied as part of a layered response system. Dependence on them alone is ill-advised. A drilled naval/SEV response should remain on standby.

## THREAT SUMMARY

Criminal syndicates have attacked MVs soon after they have concluded ransom negotiations.

On the 16th October it was reported that two South Korean nationals, kidnapped from the longliner AP 703 were released by one of the syndicates.

Ambrey also understands a second negotiation has recently concluded.

The *modus operandi* of these criminals is to kidnap crew members for ransom. Criminals operating in the Bight of Benin and southwest/south of Bayelsa State have kidnapped 83 crew members from MVs and commercial FVs in the last twelve months.

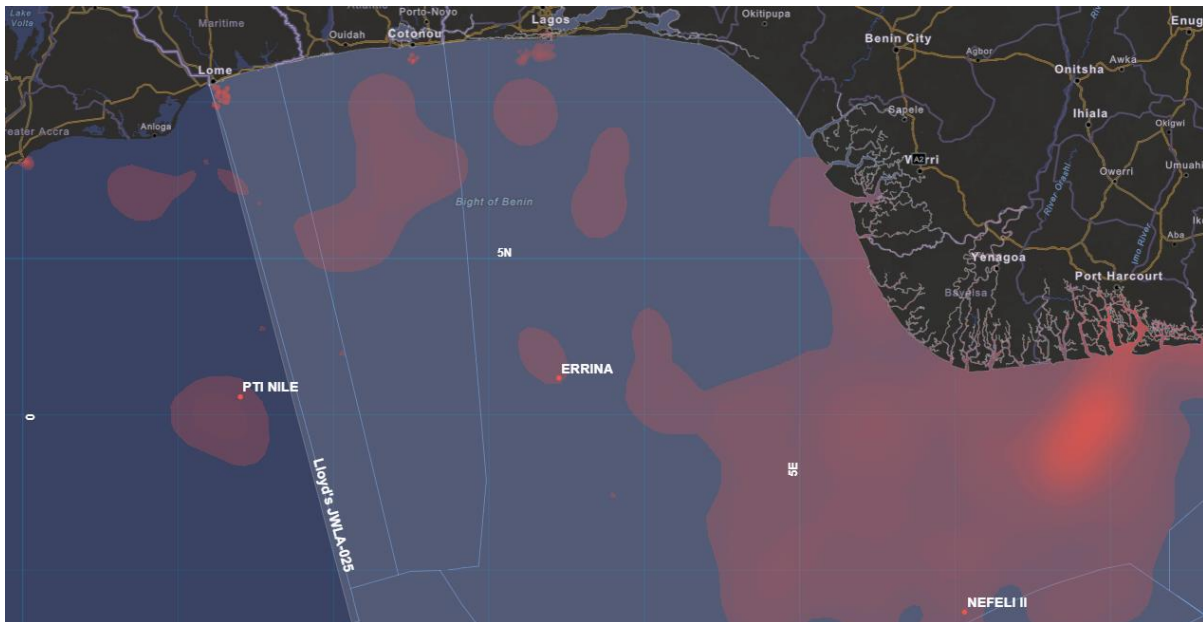
Within the same period, they have targeted MVs inside the Beninese, Ghanaian, Nigerian and Togolese EEZs; the Nigerian-São Tomé and Príncipe Joint Development Zone; international waters 210nm offshore Nigeria, Lomé Anchorage and Cotonou Anchorage.

These syndicates have targeted boxships, bulkers, cargo ships, reefers, tankers and commercial FVs.

Vessels with freeboards <10m are particularly exposed, but these syndicates have likely scaled higher freeboards. The criminals likely carry a 10m-long ladder and hooks attached to rope.

The fastest MV Nigerian criminal syndicates have boarded was underway at 19.4 knots in February 2020.

## RECENT INCIDENTS



## NEFELI II - 4th November 2020 05:25 UTC

The general purpose tanker was robbed 92nm south of Bayelsa State, Nigeria, 54nm southeast of Agbami. The vessel activated her SSAS, the crew mustered in the citadel and the vessel slowed to adrift. The criminals scaled the tanker's estimated 2.28m freeboard, stole ship's property and damaged some equipment before they escaped. Prior to the incident, the vessel had been underway unescorted through the Nigerian EEZ at 6.5 knots from Lomé to Douala. Ambrey has tracked her movements, which suggest she was approached around 24 minutes prior to activating her SSAS. She resumed her course and speed approximately 5 hours later.

## ERRINA - 22nd October 2020 06:50 UTC

The handysize tanker reported a suspicious approach and triggered her SSAS. Her AIS transmissions had not been received since she departed Limboh Terminal and communications with the vessel were lost after she reported the approach. Initially the SSAS position was given as 264nm offshore Nigeria but Ambrey Intelligence identified the true location was 128nm south of Lagos. Ambrey immediately requested a SEV passing through the area on task to investigate. The SEV located the tanker in the early hours of the following day and informed the owners. The owners informed MDAT-GoG who coordinated with the Italian Navy's ITS FEDERICO MARTINENGO. The frigate deployed a helicopter and made contact with the tanker. The Nigerian Navy's Western Command also arranged for two SEVs to respond. The vessel had been boarded by six armed criminals. However, all the crew had safely mustered in the citadel. Whilst onboard, the criminals "ransacked the crew's cabins" and "destroyed some bridge equipment". The tanker eventually called Lagos General Anchorage almost 47 hours after the incident began.

## PTI NILE - 17th October 2020 20:03 UTC

The MR tanker was boarded while underway 123nm south of Lomé, Togo, inside the Ghanaian EEZ and outside the new Lloyd's Listed Area. Several people onboard "more than two" speedboats approached and the whole crew mustered in the citadel. The criminals boarded the vessel and stole a walkie-talkie, a laptop and a mobile phone. The vessel had an estimated 8.9m freeboard and had been underway at a little over 10 knots towards Lomé prior to the attack. Following the attack, the vessel slowed to adrift. Ambrey has observed that the Togolese-flagged patrol boat AGOU was in the vicinity the following morning. No-one was kidnapped.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Citadels have proven to be physically effective:** In each of these recent incidents no-one was kidnapped because the crews managed to secure themselves inside the citadels. Nigerian criminal syndicates have consistently failed to break into citadels. Crew members have been kidnapped when some have remained outside the citadel and/or when crew members have been coaxed out of it.
- **Detection and delay remain essential:** Crew members need to afford themselves the time to reach the citadel safely. They must detect the approaching threat and reach the citadel before the criminals have the time to board.
- **SEVs likely deter attacks:** No vessel has been attacked while escorted by an SEV in the last 18 months. None of the vessels attacked recently were under escort. In the hours prior to the latest attack there was another MV that passed nearby but it was under escort and did not report an incident.
- **Security services need to adapt to the extended threat:** As evidenced by the PTI NILE and several other recent attacks, the threat has extended into areas in which SEV or armed guard services have not been supported by local partners. National escorts are available up to 50nm off Tema, Lomé and Cotonou. Private SEVs, manned by local Navy personnel, are available within Nigeria's and Cameroon's waters. LNAGs are available within Beninese, Cameroonian, Ghanaian and Togolese territorial waters.
- **Criminals typically leave vessels within two hours:** The criminals typically leave vessels after searching for crew members and stealing ship's property. The NEFELI II resumed her course within approximately 5 hours of the attack and did not await a response to check for criminals.
- **Covert location systems and/or citadel communications systems are required:** The true location of the ERRINA was unknown for several hours because her AIS transmissions had not been received since departing Limboh, she did not have any external communications in the citadel, and the reported SSAS position was incorrect.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Harden vessels per BMP5:** Apply BMP5 principles to detect, deter and delay an approach and boarding. Conduct a Ship Security Assessment prior to entry into the region. LOs may be engaged to review vessel hardening and improvise hardening measures for vessels already in the region.
- **All crew muster in the citadel:** If approached, all crew members, including the Bridge team, are strongly advised to muster in the citadel. Even if threatened and/or the criminals have other crew members, do not open the citadel. The crew should be drilled in reaching the citadel and responding to threats while inside the citadel.
- **Citadel equipment:** Equip the citadel with CCTV command and control systems and external communications systems so that the crew can communicate with, and support, responders.
- **Location systems:** AIS should be switched on at all times. This will afford responders a last known position. However, criminal syndicates, including the one that boarded the AP 703, have switched off AIS. Covert tracking devices may be employed to mitigate this threat.

- **Route risk mitigation:** All routes to or from Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo should be planned with an intelligence provider or using intelligence software, such as Ambrey's MRI Platform.
- **Drifting positions:** If drifting, maintain at least 250nm offshore Nigeria. Regularly check the relative position of your vessel to other drifting vessels. Change position frequently.
- **Nigeria:** Engage a compliant SEV through Nigerian waters: There are strict rules for maritime security companies offering services in Nigeria. Failure to abide by these rules and regulations will expose vessels, crews and companies to the risk of fines, asset detention and imprisonment. SEVs may enter port limits but must handover to terminal security at the offshore terminals. It is advised for some HIGH risk terminals for the SEV to remain on standby outside the terminal. All rendezvous positions, release positions and routes must be compliant and should reflect the threat.
- **Benin:** It is mandatory to carry embarked armed guards if calling a Beninese port. If you do not carry armed guards on reaching territorial waters, Benin LNAGs must be engaged. It is advised to embark a LO to liaise with the LNAGs, review vessel hardening, improvise vessel hardening, drill the crew and enhance the watch. A national SEV service is also available up to 50nm from Cotonou.
- **Cameroon:** It is advised that the Cameroonian authorities will provide LNAGs for free at Douala Anchorage. MVs should take advantage of this. A LO is also advised to liaise with any LNAGs, review vessel hardening, improvise vessel hardening, drill the crew and enhance the watch. A SEV service is also available in Cameroon's waters.
- **Ghana:** It is advised to embark LNAGs at Tema. At a minimum, it is advised to embark a LO. The LO will liaise with any LNAGs, review vessel hardening, improvise vessel hardening, drill the crew and enhance the watch. A national SEV service is also available up to 50nm from Tema.
- **Togo:** It is advised to embark LNAGs at Lomé and Kpeme. A LO is also advised to liaise with any LNAGs, review vessel hardening, improvise vessel hardening, drill the crew and enhance the watch. A national SEV service is also available up to 50nm from Lomé.

## AMBREY

### Who we are

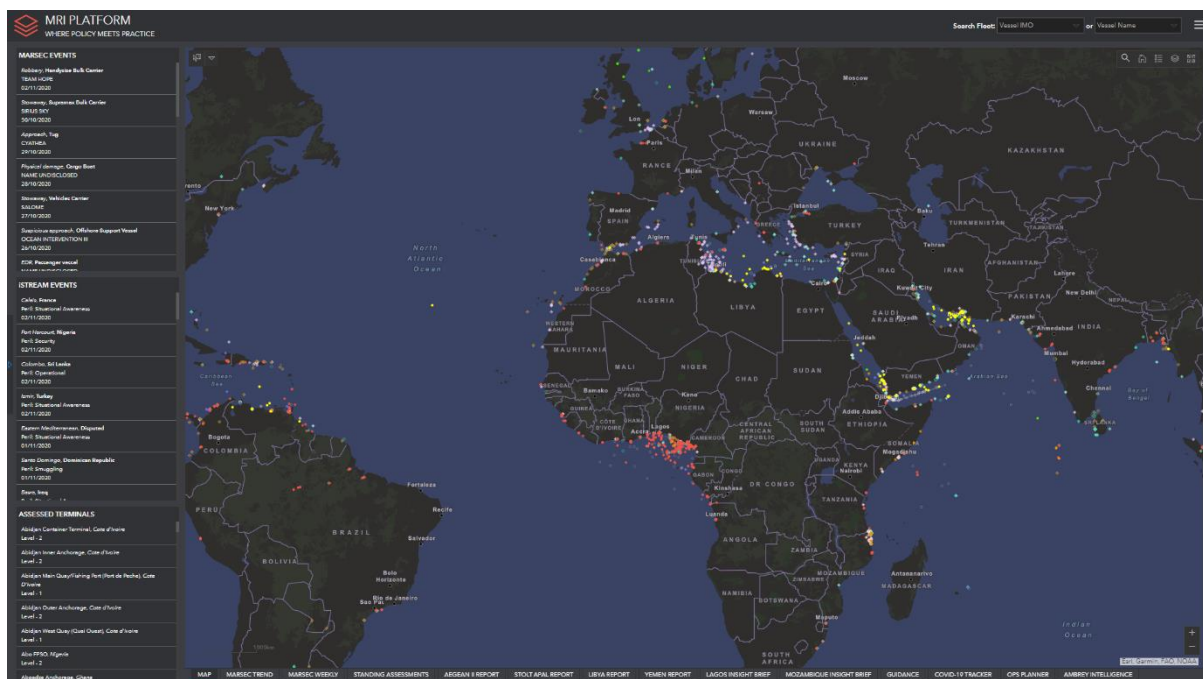
We are a global risk management company providing safety and security solutions for those operating at sea or on land. Our strengths lie in commercial shipping safety, security and risk management solutions, including marine kidnap and ransom. Operating in over 30 countries with 17,000 tasks+ successfully completed to date including embarked tasks and K&R response. Services are supported with Ambrey's fully owned supply chain including vessel armoureds, maritime training, intelligence, safety vessels, response and crisis management services.

### Intelligence Services

We offer tailored products to help you manage uncertainty, leveraging privileged sources and proprietary methodologies to deliver original content when you need it. Drawing on our in-house expertise in geospatial analysis, we reliably use threat-based information to forecast when and how a threat will be realised. Through our understanding of local dynamics we are able to evidence a proportionate response to challenges and exploit opportunities.

### MRI Platform

The MRI Platform is a single, secure portal, driven by market-leading analytics software, proprietary data and integrated asset-tracking. Test and adjust policies in real-time to promote a best-in-class security function across your organisation. Exploit our authoritative platform to safeguard vessels, crew and reputation - whenever & wherever you operate.



For MRI access and enquiries, to stay ahead of the threat and the competition, please contact us at:

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