

Piracy at Sea Decreasing Worldwide in 2019, Report Shows



A visit, board, search and seizure team from the guided missile destroyer USS Pinckney approaches a suspected pirate vessel after another vessel, Nordic Apollo, reported being under attack and fired upon by pirates. U.S. Navy

LONDON – Global incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea have decreased across the first nine months of 2019 when compared to the same period in 2018, according to the London-based International Maritime Bureau (IMB).

In its 2019 third-quarter report, the IMB said 119 incidents had been reported to its Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) compared to 156 in 2018.

According to the report, the 119 incidents included: four vessels hijacked; 95 vessels boarded; 10 attempted attacks; and 10 vessels fired upon.

The IMB noted also a decline in seafarers being seized (119 in 2019, against 151 in 2018).

<https://twitter.com/SafetyatSeaMag/status/1186212235758231559>
Despite reduced attack numbers, the report indicated that incidents involving weapons remain constant, with 23 knife-related and 35 gun-related incidents reported compared to 25 and 37 in 2018.

“These statistics confirm IMB’s concerns over continued threats to the safety and security of seafarers,” the IMB said in a statement.

The report highlighted the Gulf of Guinea as an enduring hot spot, even though attack numbers there declined. According to

the IMB, 86 percent of overall crew hostage-taking (where seafarers are held on ship) and 82 percent of crew kidnappings (where seafarers are taken ashore) occurred there.

“Although incidents are down, the Gulf of Guinea continues to be a concern for piracy and armed robbery-related activities with kidnappings of crew members increasing in both scale and frequency,” IMB Director Pottengal Mukundan said.

“These statistics confirm IMB’s concerns over continued threats to the safety and security of seafarers.”

International Maritime Bureau statement

Of the attacks, 29 took place off Nigeria, including: two hijackings; 17 successful boardings; one unsuccessful boarding; and nine ships fired upon. Eleven incidents also occurred at Nigeria’s Lagos port, the highest number for any port. Incidents at Lagos included opportunistic attacks and cargo-theft attempts, an IMB spokesperson told *Seapower*.

Within the global total of four hijackings, the two other incidents also took place in the Gulf of Guinea, off Togo and Equatorial Guinea.

Other areas of recent shipping security concern include Southeast Asia and Somalia.

For Southeast Asia, the report noted a decline in incidents around Indonesia, reflecting what the IMB said has been a gradual five-year reduction in attacks there. The report counted 20 incidents, compared to 86 for the same period in 2015. “The reduction in incidents off Indonesia is mainly due to increased patrolling,” the IMB spokesperson said. Indonesia and other regional countries have been co-operating in conducting patrols.

Off Malaysia, 10 attacks occurred (slightly up from nine in

2018).

For Somalia, the report said “no piracy-related incidents [were] recorded for the first nine months of 2019.” However, the IMB said that “Somali pirates continue to possess the capacity to carry out attacks in the Somali basin and wider Indian Ocean.”

“The IMB PRC advises ship owners to remain cautious when transiting these waters,” the statement continued.

Another recent hot spot has been Venezuela, where 11 attacks took place in the first nine months of 2017. However, for the same period in 2019, six occurred.

The IMB reiterated the role of reporting in enabling more effective incident response. “It is important that shipmasters and owners continue to report all actual, attempted and suspected incidents to ensure that an accurate picture of these attacks emerges and action is taken against these criminals before the incidents further escalate,” Mukundan said.

Cooperation also remains critical to reducing risk and tackling incidents. In the Gulf of Guinea, for example, the IMB PRC has relayed incident reports to the Nigerian navy, which has then deployed vessels to assist ships under attack, the IMB spokesperson told *Seapower*.