



# ECOWAS MULTINATIONAL MARITIME COORDINATION CENTRE



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## ANNUAL MARITIME SECURITY AND SAFETY REPORT FOR 2019

# APPRECIATION

## MMCC Zone F

“We are a premier Maritime information sharing and coordinating Centre. We are very passionate about the Gulf of Guinea maritime Security and Safety issues. We probe wider and deeper to bring a regional perspective to bare on maritime matters of interest to the ordinary person. We are committed to contributing to rid the sea of all forms of illegalities. The MMCC Zone F salutes the untiring support from various organizations agencies and individuals in ensuring that our mandate is achieved. We wish to appreciate the immense efforts of ECOWAS, Member States of Maritime Zone F and International Partners for their continuous faith and support to the Centre. Finally, our sincerest appreciation goes to the Government and people of Ghana for hosting and supporting the Centre.

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# INTRODUCTION

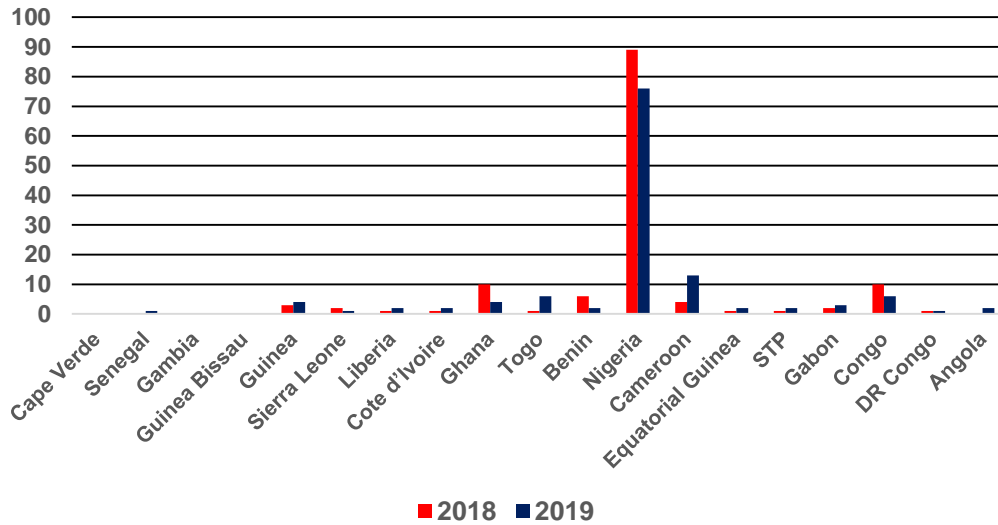
- The ECOWAS Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) Zone F is one of the 3 Maritime Centres within the ECOWAS Region established as part of the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCC) to coordinate and share maritime safety and security information with member states.
- Operationally the Centre conducts monitoring and surveillance of Maritime Zone F which stretches from Guinea to Ghana. The Centre also follows events in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) which are likely to impact on activities within Maritime Zone F.
- The focus of our monitoring covers Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery against ship, Potential acts of Maritime Terrorism, Illegal Unregulated Unreported (IUU) fishing, Relevant Information on Transnational Organized Crime and Other Illegal Activity at Sea.
- The information gathered is shared with relevant stake holders through various reports. This annual report provides a summary of the maritime situational awareness picture for the year 2019, highlights and trends of events in Maritime Zone F and the GoG and the outlook for 2020.

# PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS

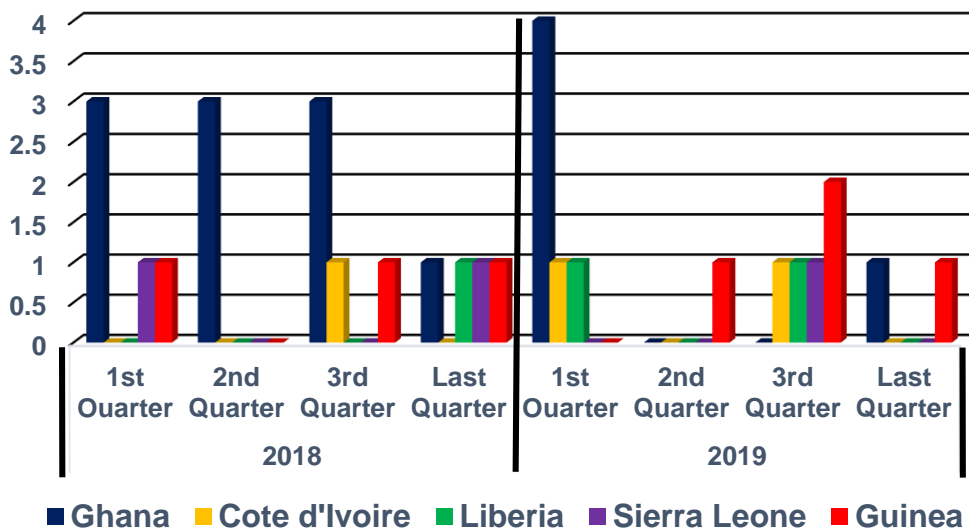
- The GoG continued to be a dangerous maritime area as compared to other maritime areas globally as far as Piracy and Armed Robbery against vessels is concerned.
- The year 2019 recorded a total of about 128 Piracy and Armed Robbery Incidents in the GoG as compared to about 132 in 2018.
- Out of the 128 recorded in 2019, 14 occurred in Maritime Zone F, one boarding incident Maritime Zone G, 85 in Maritime Zone E, 19 in Maritime Zone D and 9 in Maritime Zone A.
- The number of attacks against tanker vessels has decreased slightly from 52 (2018) to 46 (2019). The decrease in attacks against tankers could be attributed to a shift in focus from targeting the petroleum products to kidnapping of crew for ransom.
- About 20% of all the incidents against ships recorded in 2019 resulted in the kidnapping of crew members from ships. Armed robbery increased from 17% (2018) to 22% (2019). Suspicious Approaches also increased from 5% (2018) to 9% (2019).
- The majority of the attacks occurred between 0000-0400 hours during which crew vigilance level are at their lowest. Similarly, the pirates also used periods of precipitation and stormy weather to attack vessels especially at anchorages.
- For 2019 the main issues of concern against shipping in the GoG are the spike Kidnapping for ransom, violent Armed Robberies, and general increase reports of Suspicious Approaches in the GoG.
- The hijacking of tanker vessels also decreased slightly due to the enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and ability of maritime law enforcement agencies to coordinate and respond swiftly to situations. The successful arrest of the pirates in MT G DONA 1 incident by the Togolese Navy highlights the situation.
- Statistically, the number of incidents in Maritime Zone F have reduced from 17 in 2018 to 14 in 2019. Despite the decrease in the overall number of incidents, there is a sharp increase in the number of armed robberies across Maritime Zone F. Specially, the Conakry Anchorage continued to recorded the highest number of armed robberies followed by Takoradi and Abidjan Anchorage.
- Since the hijacking and kidnapping of the MARINE 711 and ESTER in Ghanaian waters in 2018, there has not been any attempted hijackings and kidnappings in Maritime Zone F. This can be attributed to the enhanced MDA and effective patrols at sea.

# PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS

Number of Incidents per Country (GoG) - 2018/2019



Number of Incidents per quarter Maritime Zone F 2018/2019



- The year 2019 recorded a decrease in number of maritime incidents as compared to the year 2018.
- Nigeria's maritime domain continued to remain the most dangerous maritime area in the GoG recording about 76 out of the 128 incidents. In percentage terms Nigeria's contribution to the number of incidents has declined as compared to 2018. The decline can be attributed to the local elections held between April and November thus suggesting there is direct link between major socio-political event ashore and incidents at sea.
- The year 2019 also recorded an increase in piracy activity area extending outside the Niger Delta area West to Togo and South to Gabon. This situation is highlighted by the sharp increase in the number of kidnappings recorded in Togo and Cameroon.
- The growing insecurity in the Anglophone part of Cameroon may have contributed to the increase in kidnappings. As a response the Cameroonians authorities have been providing free of charge armed security guards and escorts to all vessels calling at Douala Anchorage where most of the incidents took place. Most of the kidnapped crew from Douala were released in Nigeria. There is therefore the need for Cameroon and Nigeria to collaborate by sharing information on cross boarder pirate activities.
- There is a general decrease in number of incidents across Maritime Zone F for 2019 as compared to 2018. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2019 saw an increase in number of incidents. Specifically, the Takoradi and Conakry Anchorages recorded an increase in armed robbery cases. The harmattan weather conditions during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter and the rainy season during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter creates poor visibility and favourable conditions for attacks.
- Ships calling at ports within Zone F during these periods are encouraged remain extra vigilant.

# PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS

Disposition of Incidents Maritime Zone F 2019



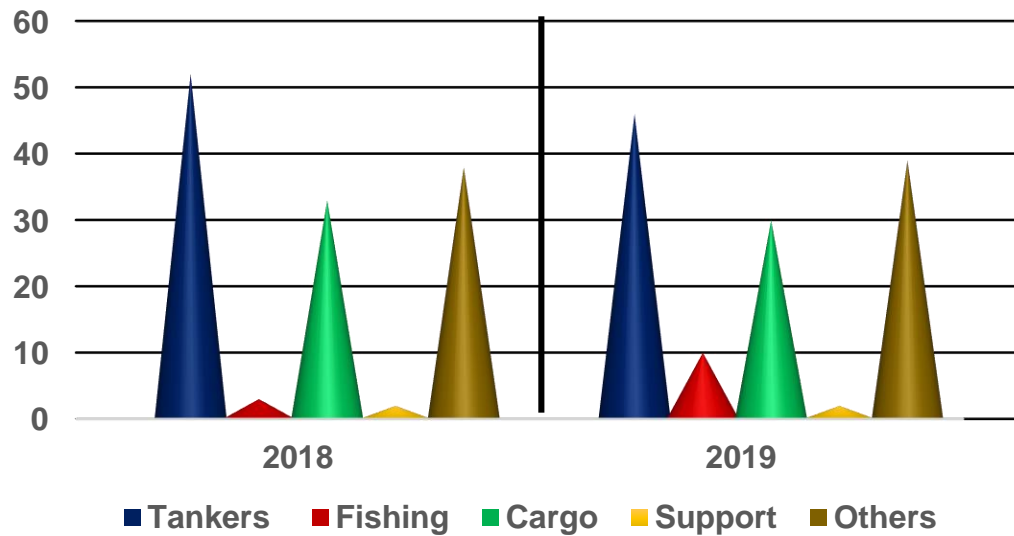
Disposition of Incidents GoG 2019



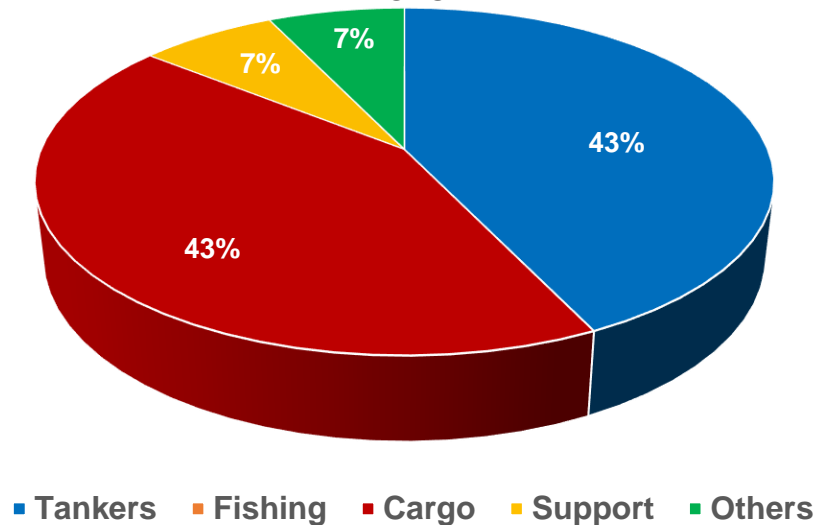
- The disposition of incidents in 2019 were recorded in Anchorages within Maritime Zone F. A total of 14 incidents recorded.
- Out of the 14 incidents, 7 were Armed Robberies against vessels. Anchored within secured anchorage area. The Conakry Anchorage recorded 4, Abidjan 1 and Takoradi 2 incidents respectively.
- The attacks are an indication that there are gaps in the security measures at the anchorages. Maritime law enforcement authorities should focus more efforts in protecting the anchorages and approaches.
- The year 2019 also saw pirates extending their activities far away from shore and attacking vessels further offshore up to 180nm. A typical example is the kidnapping of 20 crew member from the MT DUKE on 15 December 2019 at about 115 nm SSE of Lomé.
- The fact that the pirates have the ability to conduct attacks further offshore coupled with mass kidnapping per incident is an indication that the pirates could be operating with support of “Mother Vessel” or using skiffs with high speed and endurance.
- The year 2019 saw Cameroonian maritime domain, specifically, the Douala Anchorage and its approaches emerging as a hot spot for kidnappings outside Nigeria. This is followed closely by Cotonou and Lomé Anchorages.
- It is anticipated that this trend may continue into the year 2020 where the pirates will exploit and attack new areas. This calls for effective coordination and information sharing across between states and the maritime industry.

# PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS

Types of Vessels attacked (GoG) 2018/2019



Types of Vessels attacked in Maritime Zone F 2019

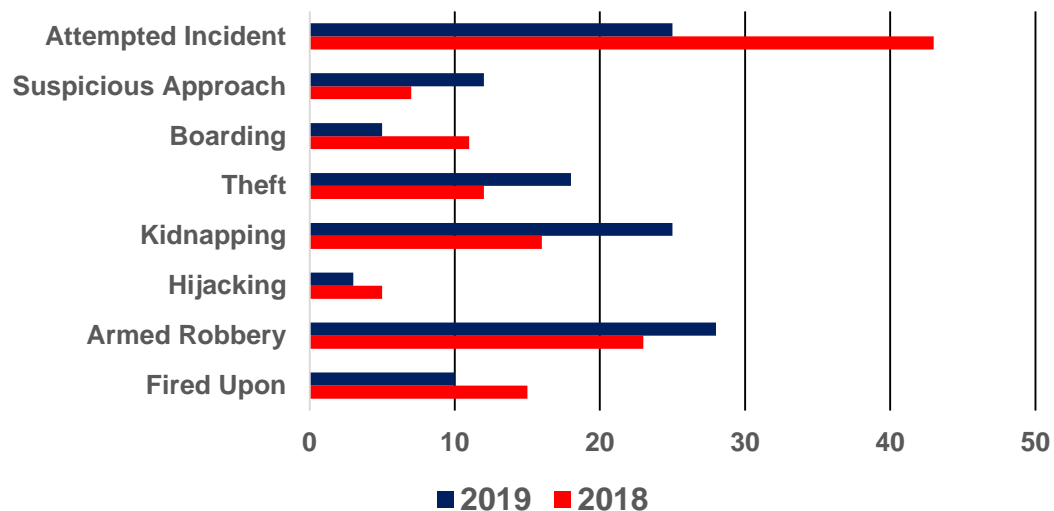


- Tanker vessels continued to remain the most targeted vessel in the year 2019, however there was a decrease in the number of attack on tankers.
- The decrease in the number of attacks may be due to the fact that the perpetrators may have discovered that the sale of stolen petroleum products from tankers is becoming a challenge due to improved information sharing and tracking of vessels across the region.
- Similarly, the price of crude oil in 2019 has dropped to about \$ 60 thus making tanker hijacking/siphoning not really profitable.
- The attacks on fishing vessels has increased from about 3 in 2018 to about 10 in 2019. The attacks on fishing vessels was simultaneously conducted against Chinese owned fishing vessels operating within Cameroonian waters.
- Previously fishing vessels were hijacked and used as “Mother Vessels” this trend appears to be changing as the pirates are now attacking and kidnapping crew from fishing vessels. The latest incident being the attack and kidnapping of, the master and the chief mate from two China-flagged fishing trawlers (GUO JI 867 and GUO JI 838) on 22 December 2019 at Libreville Anchorage.
- The rise in attacks and kidnapping of crew of fishing vessels is likely to continue and this may affect fishing and food security in general.
- The state and fishing companies need to collaborate to ensure better protection of fishing vessels at sea.

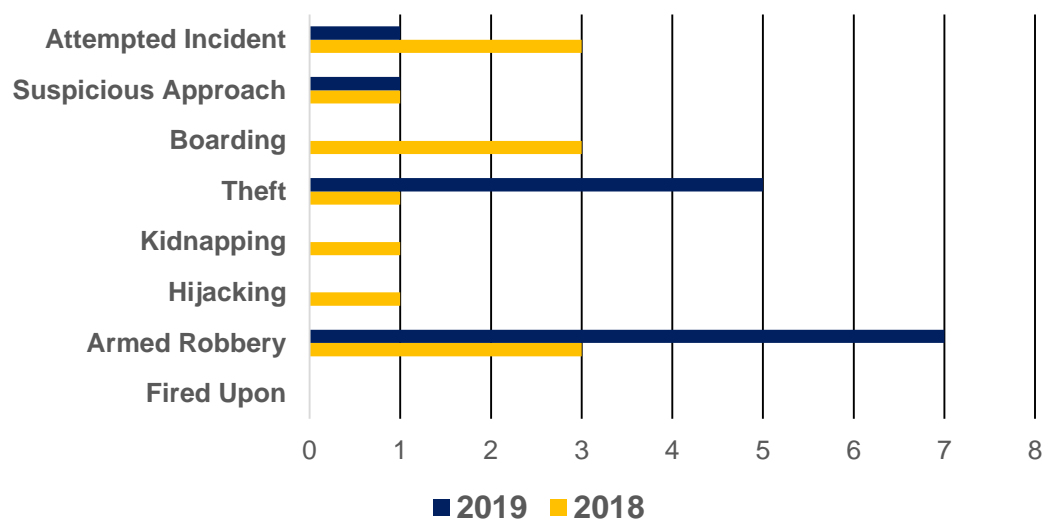


# PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS

## Types of Incidents GoG 2018/2019



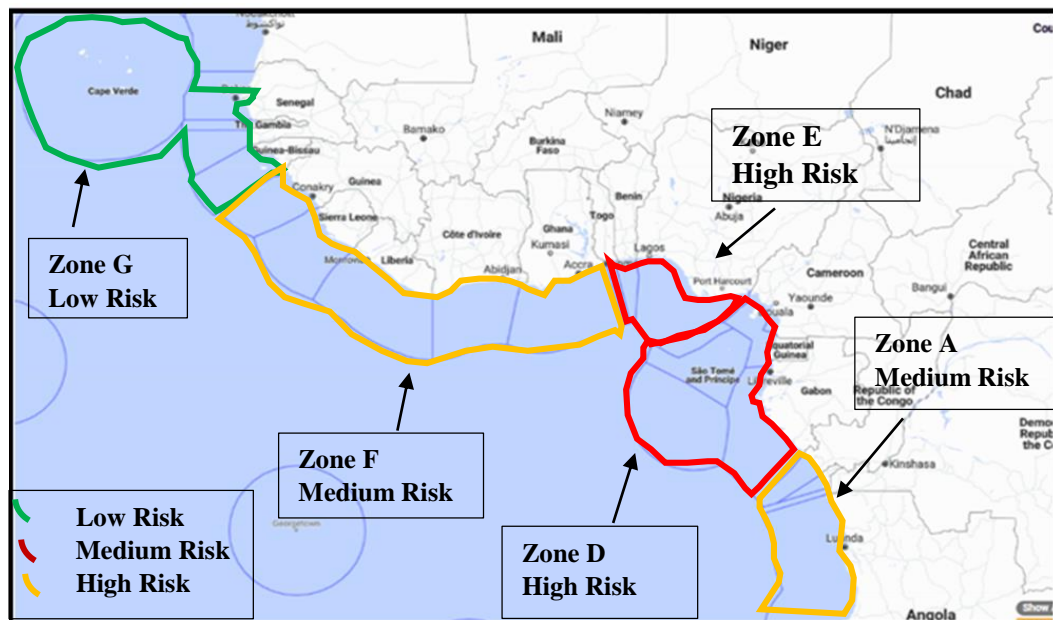
## Types of Incidents Maritime Zone F 2018/2019



- The year 2019 saw an increase in number of kidnappings in the GoG. A total of 122 crew members were kidnapped from ships. Out of the total number kidnapped 103 are foreigners while 19 are African.
- 2018 recorded 18 kidnappings while 2019 recorded 25. In percentage term there is a 28 % increase in kidnappings.
- Another striking issue about the kidnappings in 2019 is that there is an increased number of abductions per incident. A point in case is the kidnapping of 20 crew members on board MT DUKE off Lomé on 15 December 2019.
- The increase in number of kidnappings of expatriate crew is likely to continue into the year 2020. The MMCC Zone F believes that vessels owners and companies appear to be paying ransom to secure the release of kidnapped crew thereby making kidnapping of expatriate crew more lucrative.
- There is the need for states to share more information to enable identification of pirates networks and dismantle them.
- Armed Robbery and theft incidents in Maritime Zone F increased in 2019 as compared to 2018. The increase may be due gaps in security measures at Anchorages.
- Another area of concern is the lack of prompt report of incident by vessels to authorities of the coastal states. This may be due to lack of trust in the ability of coastal states to respond to their need.
- There is the need for regular dialogue between the coastal states and commercial maritime actors in order to build trust.

# PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS

Risk and Threat Level in the EEZ (GoG)



- The risk and threat level is based on the frequency and types of incident recorded over a specific area of interest or zone within the GoG. The risk and threat profiles for the various areas in 2019 is as shown on the chart.
- Maritime Zone D and E is considered high risk area (red). Threats include hijacking, kidnaping, armed robbery and theft.
- Maritime Zone A and F may be considered medium risks (yellow) areas but could degenerate into high risk. Threat include periodic armed robberies and theft.
- Maritime Zone G is considered as a low risk area (green).

Risk and Threat Level in Ports/ Anchorage and EEZ for (Maritime Zone F) 2019-2020

Port/Anchorage/EEZ	Piracy	Armed Robbery	Hijacking	Kidnapping	Theft	Boarding	Suspicious Approach
Conakry	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
Freetown	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
Monrovia	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
San Pedro	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
Abidjan	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
Takoradi	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tema	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
Guinea EEZ	●	-	●	●	●	●	●
Sierra Leone EEZ	●	-	●	●	●	●	●
Liberia EEZ	●	-	●	●	●	●	●
Cote d'Ivoire EEZ	●	-	●	●	●	●	●
Ghana EEZ	●	-	●	●	●	●	●

● Low

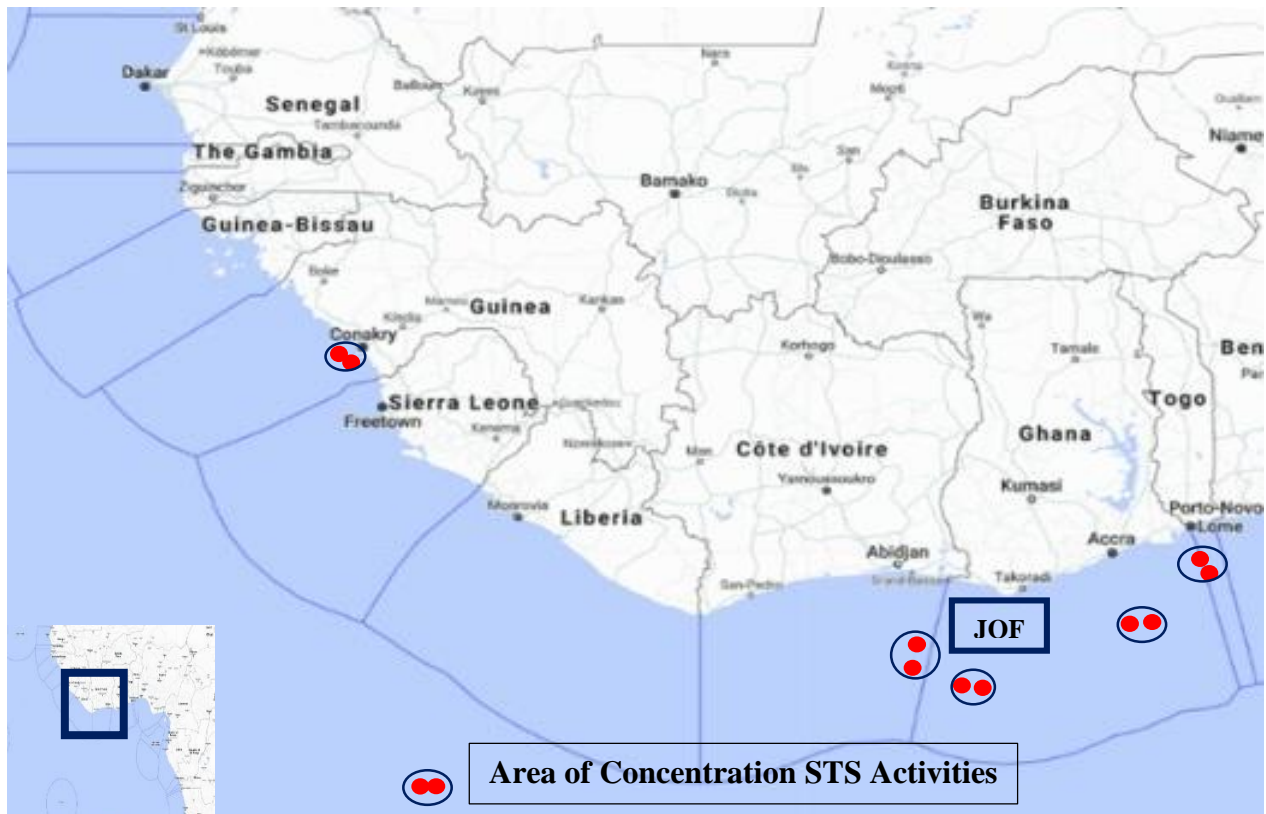
● Medium

● High

# ILLEGAL UNREGULATED UNREPORTED (IUU) FISHING

- Illegal Unreported unregulated (IUU) fishing continues to be a matter of concern in the GoG. The MMCC Zone F has been working in collaboration with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO) such as The Fisheries Committee for West Central Africa (FCWC) to provide fisheries intelligence to support the work of law enforcement agencies.
- The main concerns of IUU fishing in Maritime Zone F boarder on issues of Illegal (Transshipment, Dumping of Catch), Under Declaration of Catch, Falsification of Documents, Unapproved Fishing Methods and Fishing in Prohibited Zones.
- For the year 2019, two major IUU incidents occurred in Liberia and Ghana. The incident in Ghana related to the use of Unapproved Fishing methods. Specifically, LU RONG YUAN YU 956, was tracked and arrested by the Ghana Navy for fishing with unapproved fishing gear. The vessel was fined \$1 million to serve as a deterrent to others.
- The incident in Liberia involves falsification of document and under declaration of fish catch by (M/V) Hai Feng 823 a refrigerated cargo vessel (Sierra Leone flag) to the Liberian fisheries authorities. The vessel arrived from Sierra Leone to discharge fish in Monrovia port. The Hai Feng 823 was given a letter of authorization from Sierra Leone, permitting the vessel to export 24,000 cartons of fish in Sierra Leonean waters. The vessel had presented documents indicating an amount of 21409 cartons of fish on board.
- The Liberian Coast Guard uncovered an unofficial set of documents indicating that the vessel had 25459 cartons of fish on board. The Liberian Coast Guard officers arrested M/V Hai Feng 823 on suspicion of lying, presenting of falsified documents and conspiring to violate the tax and customs law of Liberia. The vessel was subsequently processed and ordered to return to Sierra Leone for necessary action in accordance with Due Process.
- The outcome of the two incidents is encouraging news because of the collaboration between Sierra Leone and Liberia as well as the successful prosecution of the vessels. It is hoped that more successes will be chalked in 2020 as countries work towards the implementation of the Zone F MoU for Joint operations at Sea.
- Additionally, the FCWC is also working to acquire a regional Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and the compilation of the regional fisheries register. This is to enable easy access tracking of fishing vessels and access to data.

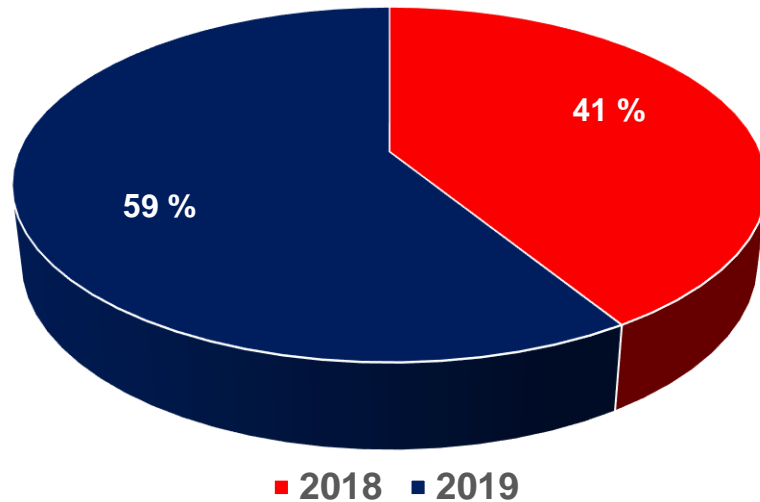
# ILLEGAL SHIP TO SHIP (STS) ACTIVITIES



- Ship to Ship (STS) transfers is where two or more vessels rendezvous for purposes of transfer of goods including petroleum products. Within Maritime Zone F a number of STS transfers were observed over the period.
- The concentration of these activities are located along the Ghana- Togo and Ghana-Cote d'Ivoire Maritime Borders as well as in and outside Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire EEZ.
- Specifically, tanker vessels from different parts of Nigeria and other parts of the GoG rendezvous cargo and sell fuel to them. Additionally, the tankers also sell fuel to fishing vessels at sea.
- Checks with the relevant authorities indicates that some of the vessels engaged do not have the appropriate permits to conduct STS activities. Further checks reveal that there are gaps in supervision of STS activities by the relevant authorities. The trend in illegal sale of fuel at sea is on the increase in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire maritime domain.
- The effective regulation of STS activities requires the collaboration and coordination between all the relevant agencies Ghana and Coted d' Ivoire. The success of such collaboration is evident in the arrest of the ANUKET AMBER and MSC MARIA by the Ghanaian and Ivorian Navy respectively.
- Given the urgency of the situation regarding the potential negative consequences of illegal STS activities at sea, Ghana and Cote d' Ivoire should work more closely to address the situation quickly.

# STOWAWAY

Stowaway Incidents 2018/2019



- The MMCC Zone F continue to receive a number of stowaway incidents in Ports and harbours in Maritime Zone F.
- The stowaway incidents involve young men who capitalize on security gaps within Ports and Anchorages, and on board vessels.
- For 2019, a total of 10 stowaway incidents occurred in Ports and Anchorages as compared to 7 in 2018. In percentage terms, there is 18% increase in stowaway in 2019.
- For 2018/2019 the Takoradi Port and Anchorages recorded the highest number of attempted stowaway incidents in Maritime Zone F. The most recent being an attempted stowaway by 2 Ghanaians on board the Singapore flag cargo vessel, MARITIME VOYAGER.
- The trend of attempted stowaways in Ports and Anchorages within maritime Zone F is likely to continue. Port authorities and vessels are encouraged to improve on security measures to prevent future attempts.
- Additionally, stowaway culprits should be prosecuted to serve as a deterrent to others.

# SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) AT SEA

- The MMCC Zone F monitored Search and Rescue (SAR) activities at sea within Maritime Zone F and the rest of GoG for the year 2019. The major issues of SAR recorded within the year are the sinking of a fishing vessel, a helicopter crashed at sea and the missing of a fishery observer at sea.
- The first incident is the missing of a Ghanaian fishery observer on board a trawler MV MENG XING 15 on 26 July 2019. The case is still under investigation and prosecution.
- The second incident involved a military helicopter which crashed into the sea at the Conakry anchorage on 6 August 2019. The Guinean Authorities conducted a search and recovered the bodies of 2 crew on board as well as the helicopter wreckage.
- The third incident involved the sinking of a French flag tuna-fishing vessel AVEL VOR about 170 miles off Monrovia. All 22 crew members on board the vessel were safely rescued by another fishing vessel from the same company.
- The coordination and management of the 3 SAR incidents at the national and regional level was generally satisfactory. In all the 3 cases the MMCC Zone F, coordinated and shared information amongst the relevant stakeholders at the national and regional level.
- Significantly, the Centre participated in the joint investigations into the helicopter crash in Guinea. The participation enabled the Centre to draw lessons learnt and share with other countries.

# OUTLOOK FOR 2020

- The year 2019 ended with an uptick in number of kidnappings and armed robbery despite a decline in the overall number of incidents as compared to 2018.
- 2019 witness an alarming uptick increase in crew abduction most of it occurring in ports and anchorages.
- Indeed, the last quarter of 2019 recorded a total of 53 kidnappings in 7 incidents. In all a total of 122 crew had been kidnapped in the GoG. This represents a 50 % jump as compared to 2018.
- This trend is likely to continue into the first quarter of 2020 as law enforcement agencies are reviewing strategies to deal with the situation.
- Additionally, the prevailing Harmattan weather is creating low visibility and calm sea state which are favourable for pirate activities. The rest of the year 2020 might see an improvement in the situation.
- Attacks against tanker and cargo vessels sailing between Angola and Cote d'Ivoire is likely to continue but may decrease.
- Attacks against vessels in secure areas such as Anchorages are likely to spread further westwards to Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.
- The kidnapping of crew of fishing vessels is expected to increase as they are more vulnerable.
- The mass kidnappings of crew are expected to continue as shipping company continue to pay good ransom to secure release of crew.
- Successes chalked in the fight against IUU fishing in Liberia and Ghana is expected to spread to other areas within Maritime Zone F.
- STS activities are expected to increase in Maritime Zone F especially Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire EEZ.
- Stowaway incidents within Maritime Zone F is expected to decrease due to swift repatriation and prosecution of offenders.

# SOURCE OF INFORMATION

- Maritime Operation Centre (MOC) Ghana
- Maritime Operation Centre (MOC) Cote d'Ivoire
- Maritime Operation Centre (MOC) Liberia
- Maritime Operation Centre (MOC) Sierra Leone
- Maritime Operation Centre (MOC) Guinea
- Fisheries Committee West and Central African (FCWC) West Africa Task Force (WATF) Report 9
- Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade (MDAT) Centre
- Inter-Regional Coordinating Centre (ICC)
- Regional Centre for Maritime Security in West Africa (CRESMAO)