

Piracy and armed robbery decrease, unprecedented rise of crew kidnappings



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While 2019 saw a fall in the amount of piracy and armed robbery at sea, there was an "unprecedented" increase in kidnappings, mainly in the Gulf of Guinea, according to the just published annual report from the ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB).



There were 162 incidents of piracy and armed robbery reported down from 201 incidents in 2018. Of the reported incidents there were four hijacked vessels, 11 vessels fired upon, 17 attempted attacks and 130 vessels boarded.

The Gulf of Guinea saw a more than a 50% increase in kidnappings in 2019, with a large increase during Q4. The number of crew kidnapped increased from 78 in 2018 to 121 in 2019. The IMB said that the Gulf of Guinea now accounted for more than 90% of global crew kidnappings.

The Gulf of Guinea has also seen an increase in violence. All four vessel hijackings taking place in the region, along with 10 of the 11 vessels reported coming under fire.

Michael Howlett, Director of the ICC IMB said that 'we remain concerned that this region has recorded an unprecedented rise in crew kidnaps. These latest statistics confirm the importance of increased information exchange and coordination between vessels, reporting and response agencies in the Gulf of Guinea Region. Without the necessary reporting structures in place, we will be unable to accurately highlight the high-risk areas for seafarers and address the rise of piracy incidents in these persistently vulnerable waters.'

There were no reported incidents of piracy or armed robbery in Somalia, but the IMB PRC continued to advise that vessels and crews remain cautious when travelling through the region. The report noted that "Somali pirates continue to possess the capacity to carry out attacks in the Somali basin and wider Indian Ocean".

<https://www.icc-ccs.org/piracy-reporting-centre/request-piracy-report>

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