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COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT

RESEARCH REPORT

**COMMISSION ON CRIME PREVENTION AND
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
(CCPCJ)**

**ESTABLISHING MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GULF
OF GUINEA**

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Basic Overview of the Issue

Despite the recognition of crimes and pirate operations in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) as worldwide concerns for over a decade, the region continues to play a significant role in political, social, and economic advancement and stability. The Gulf's enormous natural riches, strategic significance, and position at the intersection of trade routes emphasize its vital position in the world economy. The region is home to major oil-producing nations like Nigeria, which has a big effect on the global energy market. The use of these resources is essential to maintaining global energy security in addition to boosting the economies of coastal countries. The Gulf of Guinea is a vital connection for trade and business in addition to being a significant center for global banking. Due to its strategic location at the meeting point of three continents (Asia, the Americas, and Europe), it serves as a major trading hub and facilitates the transfer of goods. Moreover, the thriving fisheries sector in the coastal waters of the Gulf provides a living for millions of people. The effective use and management of the region's maritime resources are strongly linked to its economic development, requiring a careful balance between exploitation and conservation.



Figure 1:Gulf of Guinea. Photo Credit: International Chamber of Commerce

This coastal area, which runs the full length of West Africa's coast, has been ravaged by many. In the past, the Gulf of Guinea served as a hub for trade, intercultural communication, and the extraction of natural resources. However, the socioeconomic landscape of the region has been affected by the impact of colonialism. The rush for resources during the colonial era created the conditions for political unrest, economic



disparity, and bad governance, all of which facilitated illegal marine activities. The two main problems with marine security are piracy and armed robbery. Taking advantage of the vulnerabilities in the area, criminal organizations and militias attack ships with the aim of kidnapping, hijacking, and illegally seizing cargo which has increased in frequency and severity. This poses a serious risk to everyone on board and puts a heavy financial weight on shipping companies, who have to work their way through a convoluted web of negotiations and payments to free their crew members. The current wave of criminal activity will not only harm the world economy but also the hundreds of kilometers of coastline that locals live, as well as those who work in the maritime industry.

Explanation of Important Terms

Trafficking

Human, drug, and weaponry smuggling are all examples of illegal commercial flows (United Nations). Human trafficking allows migrants to be trafficked across interregional domains. In addition, sex and labor trafficking are two common human trafficking concepts that entail the trade of people for sexual and labor exploitation.

Piracy

Piracy is defined as assisting any illegal conduct on private vessels, crew, or passengers (International Maritime Organization). Piracy acts may seek to seize control of the vessel, the crew, the passengers, or the property being transported.

Maritime Security

Maritime security stands for the protection of ships both within and outside of maritime borders. Ships and marine operations confront a variety of hazards, including terrorism, piracy, robbery, illicit trafficking of commodities and people, illegal fishing, and pollution.

Oil Bunkering

Oil bunkering is the illegal diversion, theft, or smuggling of oil.

Detailed Background of the Issue

Since the postcolonial era in the region, piracy and criminality in the Gulf of Guinea have posed persistent issues. This subject has a complex background, with numerous



underlying reasons. For instance, the socioeconomic standing of the local populace is below the United Nations (UN) extremely low revenue threshold of 1.9 USD per capita daily due to ongoing national and regional political tensions. Due to its strategic location on international trade routes, potential for fish farming, scientific significance, and lack of proper surveillance, the Gulf of Guinea fosters an environment where the financially disadvantaged can engage in marital-based crime, as seen in regions like East Africa and the Caribbean (United Nations).

Piracy

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is driven by a deeply interwoven web of factors, moreover, because of the underdeveloped jurisdictional and judicial systems in many Gulf states, piracy is rife. Concerning amounts of piracy were mostly seen between 2018 and 2021. For instance, In 2019, the Gulf saw the kidnapping of at least 121 sailors; in 2020, the region was the scene of 130 out of 135 kidnappings worldwide. The number of kidnappings that occurred during this time was exceptional and unheard of anywhere else in the world. Furthermore, forty crew members were abducted globally in the first four-month period of 2021, all of them in the Gulf. In addition, the attack that occurred in 2021 that was the farthest away was the kidnapping of fifteen crew members of a Maltese chemical tanker, which occurred more than 390 kilometers south of Cotonou, Benin's industrial hub. The pirates' ability to assault at such a distance also indicates their superior equipment for carrying out tougher hijackings. Seafarers suffered numerous injuries and, in some cases, even lost their lives during these attacks.

The act of corruption is a major factor in making the problems more severe. It appears as though billions of dollars have vanished into the international bank accounts of some politicians. The Niger Delta's oil exports and production operations are one specific location where corruption flourishes. Although it is difficult to draw clear links between these officials and piracy, there is greater evidence of corruption in the Nigerian Navy.

Oil Bunkering

Yet another major problem in the area is "oil bunkering", which refers to taking, distracting, or transporting oil without permission. According to recent research from 2023, bunkering has harmed communities nearby economically and created environmental problems, costing



Nigeria's GDP 2.184 trillion naira. Nigeria's oil industry makes up 90% of exports and accounts for 9% of GDP, which gives pirates an incentive. Hence, between 6% and 10% of the nation's productivity is lost as a result of this occurrence.

Illegal Fishery

The act of illegal fishery is another example of the challenges the Gulf faces. The higher earnings associated with illicit fishing attract fishermen. As was first seen in Somalia, illicit fishing harms ecosystems and local populations, driving people into the ranks of pirates to make thousands of times more money than they would by working in waters that are already overfished. Local governments are predicted to lose 1.5 billion dollars a year as a result of illegal fishing. When there is inadequate proficient management and execution of fisheries, unethical participants could misuse marine resources without considering ecological responsibility, endangering livelihoods and enhancing conflicts among coastal communities.

Uncertainty in Politics

There is always an upturn in violence and terrorist activity around election seasons. This happens because politicians are afraid of the unstable political systems they are an element of, so they plan attacks on their rivals. Along with political rivalry, piracy increases when a regime changes as pirate leaders strive to assert their dominance to win over the new local elite. This situation motivates pirates to attack more rapidly and violently before the possible establishment of new regimes, implementations, etc.

Unemployment

Another major problem within the region is the significant rate of unemployment. According to Statista Reports, the unemployment rate has reached 6.8 percent, especially among the young generation in the regional nations. Young individuals facing a current lack of income opportunities are seemingly drawn to other sources of employment, serving criminal organizations in recruiting (GIS). The current state of affairs is not encouraging for the social and economic future of the area. Therefore, it can be argued that reducing incentives is more important than just fighting the pirates who have already embraced the cause.



Extensive degrees of maritime insecurity, transnational organized crime, illegal fishing, and smuggling could jeopardize the region's economic prospects by endangering maritime trade in the short term and the stability of coastal states in the long run. Above all, weak political institutions, corruption, conflicts fueled by resource control, and demographic pressure are major elements encouraging the issue of maritime security to continue and, therefore, should be tackled greatly for the future well-being of the region.

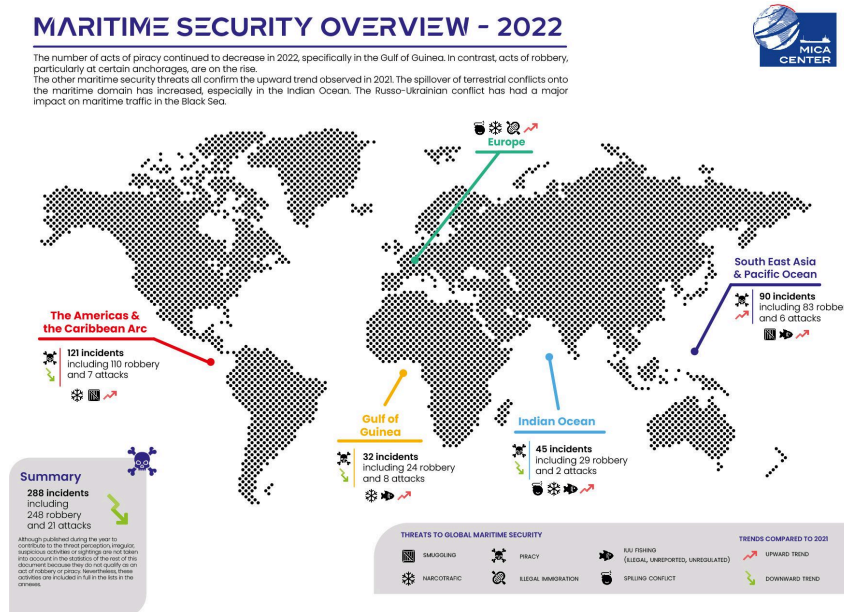


Figure 2: French Navy's 2022 Report On Global Maritime Security

Major Parties Involved

Cameroon

The Yaoundé Summit was held in Cameroon's capital city when the Yaoundé Conduct was signed. The city is home to the Inter-regional Coordination Centre (ICC), one of the primary control mechanisms in the Conduct.

Cameroon and Nigeria had the most assaults near their shores. As a result, Cameroon's government is one of the most proactive in the Gulf of Guinea when it comes to marine security. Cameroon has proven political will to prioritize and incorporate maritime concerns into the framework of national security. This activism is depicted by a military surveillance program that uses radar, radio, and coastal and territorial waters with an



operational center in Douala, the state's economic capital; the use of Rapid Intervention Brigades; and military deployment in the field in conjunction with armed group infiltration in response to the escalation of maritime insecurity.

Nigeria

Nigeria confirms its commitment to countering piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, highlighting \$195 million in Deep Blue Project investments. The state underlines the country's efforts to prosecute pirates and armed robbers under domestic law. It highlights the importance of using enhanced naval capabilities to combat illegal, unreported, and uncontrolled fishing, strengthen sovereignty, and protect important food sources. It additionally calls for ongoing international technical and material help to combat marine crime and develop sustainable blue economies, emphasizing the importance of local shipbuilding in fostering inter-navy coordination under the Yaoundé Conduct.

Somalia

There were 160 Somali occurrences registered in 2011, and the overall number increased to 358 between 2010 and 2015. However, these figures declined dramatically over the next six years (from 2016 to 2021); although the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre continues to advise shipmasters to exercise caution, particularly along the Somali coast, attacks have become extremely rare.

In 2018 there were just two cases of piracy; in 2021, only one happened in the Gulf of Aden. As far back as 2013, the United States Office of Naval Intelligence recorded nine vessel attacks throughout the year, none of which resulted in successful hijackings despite the countermeasures implemented. A frequently overlooked and critical aspect of counter-piracy is avoiding attempts and reducing the likelihood of a successful hijacking; two incidents in the Gulf of Guinea this year specifically involved hijackings, as crews are not as well prepared to combat such assailants.

Ghana and Angola

According to data from the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB PRC), Angola and Ghana have emerged at the top of the list of reported piracy occurrences in the Gulf of Guinea. Although Angola and Ghana have experienced a rise in piracy, the IMB clarified that the heightened deployment of naval ships and collaboration



among coastal authorities in the Gulf of Guinea region has had a beneficial effect on mitigating reported pirate incidents in Africa (Awal).

United Nations (UN)

To guarantee the preservation of global peace and security, the UN Security Council (UNSC) is essential. In order to achieve its goal, the Council has identified maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea as a danger to global peace and security over the years. Since 2011, the Council has generally chosen a militarized approach to combating the threat of piracy in the region through Resolutions 2018 and 2039. Furthermore, The Secretary-General assists governments and subregional organizations in organizing the joint summit through the United Nations Office of West Africa (UNOWA) and the United Nations Office of Central Africa (UNOCA). The UNODC (UN Office on Drugs and Crimes) Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP)⁷ are millions of EUR budgeted programs, focused commonly on improving maritime security and surveillance through connecting the various organizations in the Yaoundé Code of Conduct hierarchy with more enforcement and regulatory nodes.

Yaoundé Code of Conduct

On June 25, 2013, in Yaoundé, Cameroon, representatives from 25 states gathered to consolidate the summit's resolution with the framework, the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. With the creation of a network of naval centers known as the Yaoundé Architecture (YA), its maritime security architecture seeks to direct attempts to address armed transnational carried out robbery, piracy, and other illicit activities throughout the maritime domains of Central and West Africa.

Yaoundé Architecture (YA)

By encouraging information sharing, coordinating activities through cooperative patrols, standardizing standards, and ultimately acting as a channel for carrying out the Code of Conduct's tenets, the YA seeks to foster greater collaboration. The YA is divided into tactical and strategic layers, each of which has a specific role to play in stopping illegal maritime activity in the area. The Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC), which organizes and disseminates information between the Regional Maritime Security Centres for West Africa (CRESMAO) and Central Africa (CRESMAC), makes up the strategic layer of YA. Within the naval domain, there are five operating divisions, each having a marine



Multinational Coordination Center (MMCC). Maritime Operational Centers (MOC) provide a focal point for all parties involved in coordinating state actions at sea at the federal level.

The Deep Blue Project (DP Project)

The Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure, widely referred to as the Deep Blue (DB) Project, is the Federal Government of Nigeria's maritime security intervention project. To address maritime instability in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea, a comprehensive marine security architecture was required. This architecture will integrate paramilitary, military, and civil agencies for enhanced cooperation. In addition to a Command, Control, Communication, Computers, and Intelligence Operation Center with satellite communication, an aerial mission management system, and an intelligence system, the Deep Blue project comprises skilled civil and military personnel. The Falcon Eye liaison unit, ships, armored vehicles, helicopters, interceptors, special mission planes, and an intervention team are further elements.

Portugal

Several countries in the Gulf were formerly Portuguese. For instance, Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe. These states are members of the Portuguese Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP). Portugal is supporting the development of their naval capability. To attain this purpose, the Portuguese Navy developed the "Mar Aberto" (Open Seas) initiative in 2008, which carries out a variety of tasks, the majority of which are part of bilateral defense cooperation with these countries. Among the operations are search and rescue, professional technical services, humanitarian help to the community, and lectures to raise awareness and promote a maritime culture. The operations have focused on increasing capacity for maritime surveillance, monitoring, and inspection actions through joint exercises and the deployment of forces from the visited countries' forces and coastguards.

Chronology of Important Events

Date	Description of Event
December 10, 1982	Adoption of "the United Nations



	Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)".
June 25, 2013	Adoption of the "Yaoundé Code of Conduct" by the Gulf of Guinea states.
January 2018	MT Barrett oil products tanker hijacking. First hijacked after a year of piracy absence in the region.
March 2019	Hijacking of the Maltese vessel.
June 10, 2021	Nigeria's official launch of the Deep Blue Project.
May 31, 2022	Adopting resolution 2634 in UNSC's 9050th session.
March 25, 2023	The assaults of a Danish-owned tanker, in the Gulf of Guinea while carrying the Liberian flag and refueling other nearby ships.
October 11, 2023	the ICC International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) warning about a resurgence of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Relevant International Documents

- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 10 December 1982,
- Yaoundé Code of Conduct, 25 June 2013,
- United Nations Security Council Resolution, 31 May 2022
- Adopted by the Security Council at its 9050th meeting, 31 May 2022 (**S/RES/2634**)



Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Many previous attempts have been made to remedy this issue. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was signed in 1982 by member governments to reduce overall criminality in maritime regions. This agreement addressed numerous current issues in the maritime zones. Its primary focus was on territorial seas, the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the geological attributes of sea basins, and crimes committed along international and regional maritime borders. However, this convention failed to address crime loopholes and specific illicit activities, like human and drug trafficking, piracy, and armed robbery, which continue to undermine seafair, global trade, regional and global economies, and maritime security. The Yaoundé Code of Conduct was formed in 2013 to address these issues. Even if this was the appropriate start toward alleviating regional instability, many governments and organizations do not fully comply with the convention's provisions. Only less than one-third of Gulf of Guinea nations have enacted legislation criminalizing piracy to the full extent required in the Convention. Only five countries (Senegal, Togo, Cabo Verde, Nigeria, and Liberia) have established universal jurisdiction over piracy and penalized it under the Convention's provisions 105 and 101. The European Union also intervened, attempting to create a variety of supportive bodies for the conduct.

Additionally, Nigeria launched the Deep Blue Project, which employs a variety of fast interceptor boats, drones, special mission planes, helicopters, and special mission vessels to patrol the shipping routes off its coast. In order to stop the rising trend of piracy in the area, the nation passed the Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offenses Act in 2019. Although the project represents a significant step forward towards tackling the region's pressing maritime security issues, its ability to permanently eradicate piracy and ensure long-term progress beyond this year is uncertain unless the fundamental factors that fuel armed robbery and piracy are explicitly addressed. Inadequate governance and a lack of economic prospects have emerged as major motivators for piracy and other illegal activities.

Nonetheless, the procedures and conclusions outlined in these organizations or conventions have yet to be effectively executed, rendering long-term resolutions ineffectual.



Solution Alternatives

Although an administrative hierarchy structure has been developed in the convention and other organizations, a more solid and structured system is required to control and implement the prescribed procedures and methods. The resolutions enacted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the 2020s address current challenges and should be supplemented with additional solutions. Surveillance satellites can be placed into geostationary orbit to provide simultaneous monitoring of the West and Central African maritime zones, allowing for rapid laser-end connections equipped with radar imaging technology and close-up photography. Combining rapid monitoring with increased law enforcement can be a realistic component of your solution ideas. Coastal states ought to cooperate with gas and oil companies to guarantee that profits benefit local communities directly through social programs, infrastructure projects, and job creation. These institutions could provide entrepreneurship training or apprenticeships.

Useful Links

- Yaoundé Architecture Regional Information System:
<https://www.gogin.eu/en/yaris-platform/>
- Africa Center for Strategic Studies – Decennial Anniversary of the Yaoundé Protocol:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrtGswie6Jg>
- A Decade of Maritime Security (African Defence Forum):
<https://adf-magazine.com/2023/07/a-decade-of-maritime-security/>
- Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS):
<https://www.mitags.org/>
- Analysis of Nigeria's Deep Blue Project:
https://commons.wmu.se/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3099&context=all_dissertations
- Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis for Coastal States (UNODC):

https://www.unodc.org/documents/Maritime_crime/UNODC_Pirates_GoG_A_Cost_Analysis_for_Coastal_States.pdf



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