

# Evaluation of the Characteristics of Maritime Security within the Gulf of Guinea

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**Abstract**— The study analysed the nature of maritime piracy and armed robbery (MPAR) incidents that have occurred within the waters of the 18 Countries that make up the Gulf of Guinea and recommendations are made for the effective tackling of the problem. Documentary method of data collection was adopted to obtain the relevant information in this study. The data used for this research was collected from website of International Maritime Bureau and Nigerian Maritime and Safety Agency (NIMASA) from 2008 – 2018. The data collected were analysed and presented by tabular and graphical forms with the aid of Microsoft Office Excel and Minitab statistical software. Results from the analysis shows that; Nigeria recorded the highest distribution by types of piracy and armed robbery attacks among the 18 African countries investigated; when compared to the rest of the world, boarding of vessels is highest in the GOG than the rest of the world; most of pirates and armed robbers used guns to attack the vessels during the period studied; across the 18 countries studied within the GoG, Nigeria recorded the highest in the types of violence experienced by crew members on-board vessels during the period studied. The study therefore, recommended that, Nigerian should as a matter of priority establish a Maritime Security Organization to function as the American Coast Guard and be provided with all the necessary resources in line with global standard and initiate a regional cooperation agreement amongst the countries within the Gulf of Guinea for effective synergy and collaboration on security issues within her waters.

**Index Terms**— Characteristics, Maritime, Security, Piracy, Armed Robbery, Gulf of Guinea.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Maritime piracy and armed robbery have influenced global economic development, altered activities within the maritime domain and shipping operations, which require re-routing, leading to efficiency loss, it has shown that there is a substantial economic loss as a result of maritime piracy (Nana, 2018). Moreover, there are direct costs to the immediate piracy victims, where crews may be injured or killed; ships and cargoes may be stolen; and companies may experience higher operating costs and higher insurance costs. The indirect costs of piracy are also significant, especially in relation to humanitarian considerations (Mohamed, 2018).

South East Asia accounted for 8 of the 66 sea robberies recorded worldwide in the first three months of 1999. Of these, 18 attacks were in Indonesian waters, where piracy has

long been endemic. At least 10 others were in the straits of Singapore, a narrow curving channel separating Indonesia and Singapore which has been largely free of piracy until recently (Bradford, 2005).

In 1998, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reported that, all but one of the 67 people murdered at sea were killed in South East Asia, this has raised the concern of Port Authorities and Shipping Companies of the level of insecurity in our waters as crew onboard vessels are being killed, kidnapped or locked up (Rosenberg & Chung, 2008).

Reports of IMB, (2008), shows that with an estimated 5.9 merchant ships attacked for every 1,000 voyages in 2007, there was an average of one reported pirate attack roughly every thirty one hours. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) began producing annual reports in 1998 and monthly reports in mid-2000, since then it has documented over 3,500 attacks through September, 2008 (IMB, 2009).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Piracy in the West African coast has evolved over time in both dynamics and scope, though there is no exact date of transition and progression (Alli, 2015). However, there seem to be noticeable patterns in its progression, which have been interpreted, differently by scholars of maritime piracy in the region. Alli (2015a), identifies seven phases in the evolution of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG): 1) opportunistic sea robbery; 2) hijacking using speedboats by gangs armed with heavy weapons; 3) surgical operations and organized crime; 4) hunt for vessels to attack with great violence; 5) Full scale piracy characterized by the use of mother-ship to launch further attacks; 6) regional threat and development of piracy networks; and 7) use of sophisticated weapons such as machine guns as attacks became more daring. Elsewhere, he identifies three piratic phases namely the; opportunistic phase, insurgency-piracy phase and full scale piracy (Daquet, 2009, Gottschalk, 2009b, IMB, 2009).

Like its twin crime; oil theft, petro-piracy in the Gulf of Guinea can be seen as part of an organized crime (Onuoha, 2012; Alli, 2015), with the Niger Delta at its centre (Onuoha, 2012). Like Somalia piracy (Percy and Shortland, 2013), the GoG piracy is a land-based organized criminal act with a complex business structure, and feeds into a larger range of organized crimes on both land and sea (Alemika, 2013). Onuoha (2012) adds further that, oil piracy in the region is a well-organized and lucrative criminal enterprise, ‘‘sometimes

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highly sophisticated illicit taking of oil” (Attah, 2012), conducted by criminal gangs, mostly operating from Nigerian waters. “It is a vocation that compares to any other enterprise where money is made illegally. Gulf of Guinea pirates are driven to the sea on the conviction of having a comparative advantage over their targets; buoyed by incentives, means and opportunities”. They carry out a cost-benefit analysis, to justify embarking on risky ventures into the sea. Rewards from such risky ventures are expected to be higher than the costs.

According to Onuoha (2012), piracy in the GoG, unlike Somali piracy which relies on low technology to sustain the illicit business (Percy and Short-land, 2013), is characterized by violence and the use of sophisticated arms and weapons, and is mostly carried out by transnational mafia groups (Omeje, 2013). These groups finance and facilitate the operations of pirates whose targets are the oil tankers, and also give out useful information on names of vessels, and movement schedules, among others. Omeje (2008), identifies several explanatory factors for maritime piracy in the region, such as widespread poverty, ease of access to arms and navigational tools such as speedboats, and congestion at port facilities which slows cargo movement especially offshore. However, he is quick to add that poverty is not the main driver, submitting that, if it were, Africa would be a land of pirates. Ukeje and Ela (2013) note further that causes of piracy in the region “stem from decades of bad governance and truncated developmental aspirations for the vast majority of citizens living in the GoG are often overlooked”

Contrary to Sullivan (2010) postulation in regard to Somali piracy, piracy benefits from improved business environment and economic stability, the GoG piracy thrives on the disorderliness surrounding the region’s energy industry and instability in the Niger Delta of Nigeria and the GoG. Joab-Peterside (2009) observed that the GoG piracy feeds largely on the region’s oil industry.

The number of lives lost and the cost implication of maritime piracy are significant. In 2006 fifteen sailors were killed in pirate attacks, 188 were taken hostage, and 77 were kidnapped and held for ransom (IMB, 2007). According to

the International Maritime Organizations. Since 1995, over 350 sailors are reported to have lost their lives in pirate attacks worldwide; this has translated to roughly thirty sailors each year. While the 240 attacks reported in 2006 represent the lowest number of attacks reported, in 1998, and the fifteen deaths in 2006 represent the lowest level of casualties since 2002, seventeen sailors lost their lives in pirate attacks in first’s months of 2007 alone (IMB, 2008, 2009, 2010).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a documentary method of data collection to collect the data analyzed. The data used for this research was largely collected from website of International Maritime Bureau, Even though shipping activities as well as maritime piracy and armed robbery have been in existence long time before the establishment of International Maritime Bureau (IMB) in 1981. However, the highest frequencies of the incidents were recorded in these recent decades within the study area.

The researchers used the available data on shipping activities, piracy and armed robbery in the GoG from 2007 to 2018. The data collected were analysed using the Correlation Analysis and Ordinary Least Squared Method (OLSM) of Linear Regression Analysis. The analysis was performed with the aid of Microsoft Office Excel and Minitab statistical software.

The study area of this research work cut across fourteen countries based on water connectivity and it lies between latitudes 10 0 ° N to 40 0 ° E of the Equator and longitudes 10 0 ° E 400 ° E of the Greenwich Meridian. The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) covers a surface area of 2,350,000 km2 (910,000 sq. mi) with basin in the borders of eighteen countries: Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome Principe, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Angola.

Data Presentation and Analysis

IV. ANALYSIS OF TYPES OF MARITIME PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY (MPAR) ATTACKS WITHIN THE GOG

Table 1: Types of MPAR Attacks by Countries within the GoG, Cumulative from 2007 -2018

S/N	Years	Months Boarded	Hijacked	Fired Upon	Attempted Boarding	Tot al	%
1	Senegal	0	0	0	1	1	0.2
2	Gambia	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Guinea Bissau	0	0	0	1	1	0.2
4	Guinea	27	0	3	4	34	5.6
5	Sierra Leone	11	0	0	0	11	1.8
6	Liberia	5	1	0	0	6	1
7	Cote D'Ivoire	20	4	0	1	25	4.1
8	Ghana	29	5	0	2	36	5.9
9	Togo	6	6	1	17	30	4.9
10	Benin	16	12	0	2	30	4.9

11	Nigeria	211	17	71	50	349	57.2
12	Cameroon	17	0	1	2	20	3.3
13	Equatorial Guinea	1	0	0	0	1	0.2
14	Gabon	2	1	0	0	3	0.5
15	Sao Tome Principe	0	0	1	1	2	0.3
16	Republic of Congo	31	2	1	1	35	5.7
17	DRC	18	0	0	1	19	3.1
18	Angola	5	1	0	1	7	1.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>399</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>%</b>		<b>65.41</b>	<b>8.03</b>	<b>12.78</b>	<b>13.77</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: IMB (2007 - 2018)

Table 1, reveals the distribution of types of MPAR attacks within GoG. It can be seen from the table that Nigeria has the highest boarded attacks of 211, followed by Republic of Congo, Ghana and Guinea with 31, 29 and 27 boarded piracies and armed robberies. In terms of number of ships hijacked, Nigeria also emerges the highest with 17 cases, followed by Benin, Togo and Ghana which recorded 12, 6

and 5 hijacked vessels. Looking at the MPAR where vessels were fired upon, Nigeria again emerges the first, with up to 71 cases. Other countries like Guinea, Togo, Sao Tome and Principe, and Republic of Congo also recorded few of such. On the other hand, Nigeria has the largest number of attempted boarding MPAR, followed next by Togo, Ghana and Cameroon.

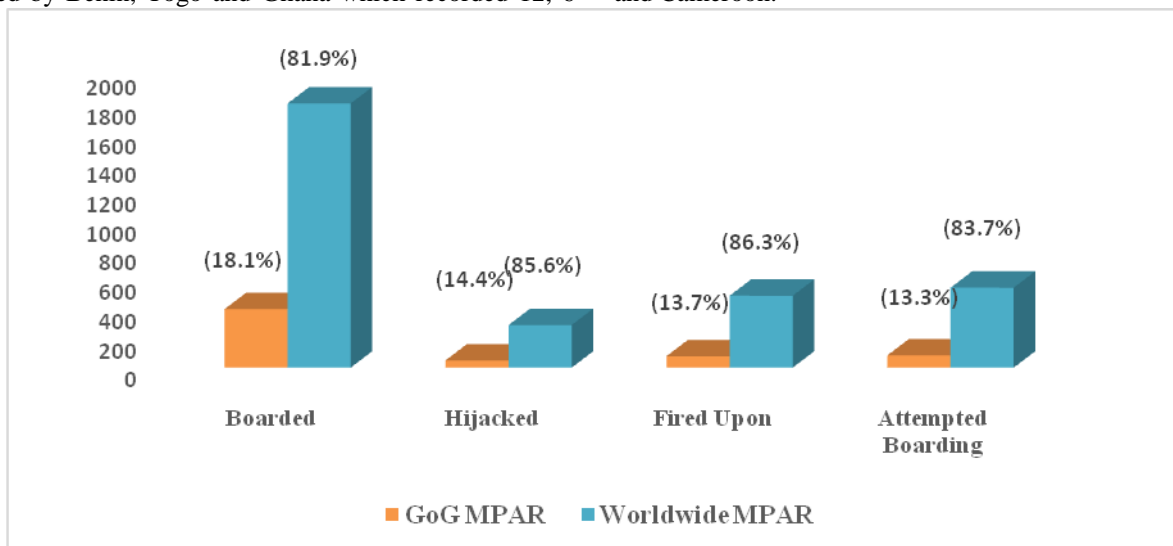


Fig.1: Comparison of Types of MPAR Attacks in GOG and Rest of the World

Source: IMB (2007 - 2018)

Fig. 1 above shows a comparison between MPAR attacks in GoG and the rest of the world. The MPAR attacks that took place on board a ship within GoG were up to 399 (18.1%), while a total of 1,805 (81.9%) happened in other waters around the world. Vessels hijacked in GoG were up to 49 (14.4%) against a total of 291 (85.6%) in other countries. The figure further shows that out of the entire vessels fired upon, GoG

alone had 78 (13.7%) and the rest of the world recorded 491 (86.3%). Attempted boarding MPAR were found to be 84 (13.3%) in GoG and the rest of the world accounted for 546 (83.7%).

#### V. Analysis of types of Weapons used by the MPAR Attackers within the GoG

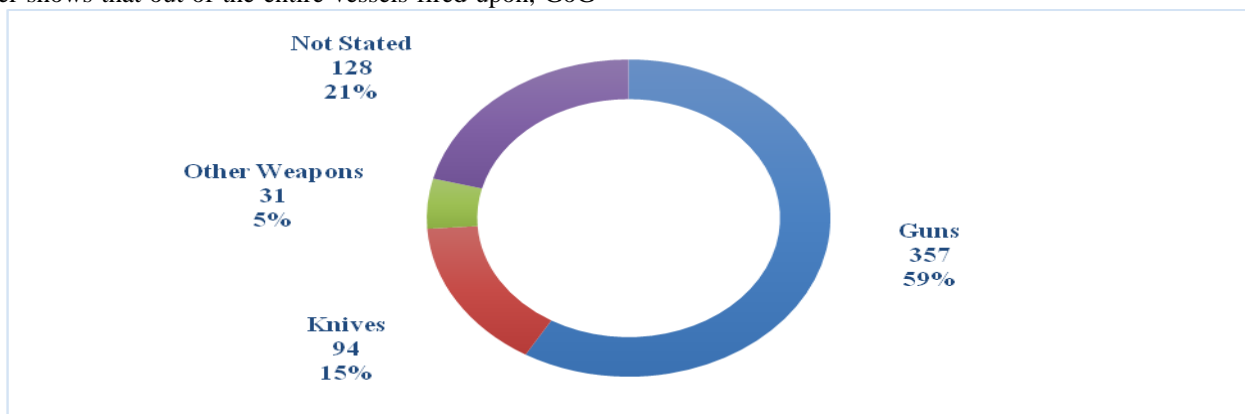


Fig. 2: Types of Weapon used by the Attackers within GOG Waters

Source: IMB (2007-2018)

Figure 2 shows the types of weapons used by the pirates and armed robbers within the waters of GoG. The figure indicated that 357 attacks (59%) were done successfully using guns, 128 (21%) with other weapons not stated or recognized by the victims, 4 (15%) with knives and other 31 (5%) with other

weapons that might have been made locally. By this, it can be generally said that, maritime pirates and armed robbers use to be well-armed with guns, knives and other sophisticated weapons.

**VI. Analysis of Types of Violence to Crew during MPAR Attacks within the GoG**

**Table 2: Types of Violence to Crew Members during the MPAR Attacks within the GoG, Cumulative from 2007 to 2018**

S/N	Country	Violence to Crew					Kidnapped	Total	%
		Taken Hostage	Crew Threatened	Crew Assaulted	Crew injured	Crew killed			
1	Senegal	0	7	0	5	0	3	15	0.9
2	Gambia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
3	Guinea	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0.2
	<b>Bissau</b>								
4	Guinea	53	3	9	5	0	0	70	4.3
5	Sierra Leone	2	3	0	4	1	7	17	1.0
	<b>Leone</b>								
6	Liberia	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0.2
7	Cote D'Ivoire	89	5	0	2	0	2	98	6.0
	<b>D'Ivoire</b>								
8	Ghana	182	2	0	1	1	3	189	11.5
9	Togo	112	0	0	6	3	2	123	7.5
10	Benin	96	16	0	6	2	5	125	7.6
11	Nigeria	339	6	14	141	15	320	835	50.9
12	Cameroon	5	0	0	5	0	24	34	2.1
13	Equatoria	0	2	0	2	0	0	4	0.2
	<b>l Guinea</b>								
14	Gabon	24	0	0	2	0	0	26	1.6
15	Sao Tome and Principe	0	1	0	4	1	1	7	0.4
16	Republic of Congo	20	0	0	1	0	12	33	2.0
17	DRC	1	5	7	3	5	7	28	1.7
18	Angola	27	0	0	1	0	1	29	1.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>950</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Percentage Worldwide</b>		<b>57.9</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Worldwide Incidents</b>		<b>6,163</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>7,201</b>	
<b>% of GoG in the Worldwide Incidents</b>		<b>15.4</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>50.9</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>22.8</b>	

Source: IMB (2007 - 2018)

Violence to crew members varies from one country to the other, as shown by table 2 above. Nigeria has the highest number of crew members taken hostage, where 339 crew were affected, followed by Ghana and Togo with 182 and 112 crew members taken as hostages by the MPAR attackers. Statistics of crew threatened has its peak record in Benin, Nigeria, Cote D'Ivoire and DRC. Also in terms of crew assaulted, crew injured, crew killed and crew kidnapped, Nigeria has the highest record in the GoG with 14, 141, 15 and 320 cases recorded respectively, between 2007 and 2018.

**Recommendations and Conclusion**

Nigerian Government should as a matter of priority establish a Maritime Security Organization to function as the American Coast Guard and be provided with all the necessary

resources in line with global standard then, initiate and establish a regional cooperation agreement amongst the countries within the Gulf of Guinea for effective synergy and collaboration for an effective tackling of security issues within her waters.

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea is characterized with an upward trend over time with more than half of damages within Nigerian waters, affecting negatively, the number of vessels coming to the ports of the Gulf of Guinea member Countries and increased in Insurance premiums of the vessels and cargoes coming into the region, resulting to the high cost of goods and services, thus decrease in the standard of living of the people. However, contrary to what happened other parts of Africa and the world, success of eliminating MPAR cannot be built solely on international warships, but will depend on the strength of national and

other international forces to enable an integrated, regional maritime security force. Promote expansion of good governance and well-established institutions in the region will help target the root causes of these cases and guarantee long-term steadiness. Until there is political volition in each Central and West African country to protect the region's waters, the Gulf of Guinea will remain with serious security gap.

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