

War risks claims environment as at November 2016

Yemen

On 1 October 2016, a high-speed civilian logistics ship deployed to perform humanitarian transport operations, was struck by a missile whilst underway near the Yemeni port of Mokha in the Mandeb Strait. The ship was severely damaged and subsequently sank. So far, the relevant authorities have not confirmed whether there were any casualties but reports indicate that up to 22 personnel on board may have been killed. The missile was fired by Iranian backed Houthi rebels who are fighting Arab coalition forces in Yemen.

The incident was followed a fortnight later by two separate missile attacks by the Houthi rebels against a US Navy destroyer which was forced to take defensive countermeasures to avoid being hit.

Two attacks on commercial shipping in the Bab al-Mandab waterway have seen the security situation off Yemen deteriorate even further in recent weeks. The first involved an LNG carrier which was fired upon by attackers using a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launched from a skiff near Perim Island on 25 October. Two days later, on 27 October, a chemical tanker was also fired upon by attackers, using an RPG, whilst transiting the same waterway. Although neither attack led to any significant hull damage or casualties, a more direct hit in either case could have seen a vastly different result given that both ships were laden at the time. It is unclear as to whether the Houthi rebels were behind these attacks or whether others were involved.

Philippines

The continued hijackings and crew kidnappings by the Philippines based Islamist terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf, remain of grave concern. On 20 October, 10 Abu Sayyaf gunmen boarded a heavylift ship off Tawi-Tawi Island whilst she was en-route from Korea to Australia. After forcing all crew into the mess room, the terrorists kidnapped the master and a rating and abandoned ship. Both men remain hostages of the group. This attack marks a departure from Abu Sayyaf's previous practice of targeting slow moving tug and barge combinations and could be the start of more daring attacks against larger seagoing ships.

Gulf of Aden

October saw the first reported attack by Somali pirates in two and a half years. On 22 October, a chemical tanker was attacked by six armed pirates in a fast moving skiff off the coast of Somalia. A number of shots were exchanged between the pirates and armed guards stationed on board the ship before she was able to evade the skiff by increasing speed, altering course and rigging fire hoses to prevent boarding. The International Maritime Bureau has previously warned that just one successful hijacking by Somali pirates could result in a resurgence of pirate activity in the area. Given this recent hijacking attempt, the managers recommend that members continue to exercise extreme caution when trading in or near Somali waters and comply with the latest version of *Best Management Practices for Protection against Somalia Based Piracy* and other related guidance.

West Africa

Piracy off West Africa, in particular Nigeria, continues to be of significant concern and the class's crisis management consultants, NYA International, are currently maintaining their highest 'Severe' threat level rating for the region.

SWRM claims activity

There have been no notified claims on the facility since inception in February 2015.