



Solace Global Maritime Summary

INDIAN OCEAN



MARITIME 	PIRACY 	ARMED CONFLICT 	TERRORISM 
HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH



The Indian Ocean has enjoyed a quiet start to 2019, there have been no notable incidents of piracy. The only notable incident was a knife attack aboard a Marshall Island flagged vessel in international waters. Otherwise there was a suspicious approach near the Yemeni port of Hudaydah; however, no shots were reportedly fired.

One notable incident occurred on land, a P&O Ports manager for a port run in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland was shot dead in Bosaso. The Al Shabaab militant group were quick to claim responsibility after an initial report indicated that the manager, Paul Ferosa, was attacked by a man disguised as a fisherman, who was later killed by security guards. Ferosa was understood to have been walking to work at the time of the attack.



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The Al Shabaab militancy has been fighting for control of most Somali cities for the past few decades. However, African Union and Somalian troops pushed the Islamist militants out of Mogadishu in 2011 and continue to conduct operations to clean-up insurgent-held pockets in the countryside. Despite the progress made, the group remains strong and active and has been responsible for a number of exceptionally deadly terrorist attacks in the region; including the recent DusitD2 hotel attack in Nairobi, the 14 October 2017 bomb attack in Mogadishu (which killed 587 people) and the 2015 Garissa University attack (which resulted in 148 deaths).

The Sri Lankan Navy has begun acting against illegal poaching by Indian fishermen in the country’s territorial waters. The move comes about after a number of Indian fishermen have reportedly become aggressive toward their Sri Lankan counterparts.

Elsewhere, a French frigate that had been visiting Mumbai reportedly intercepted 670 kg of heroin in the Indian Ocean during an operation. French Defence Minister Florence Parly classed the operation as a “record” seizure and a significant blow to the financing of terrorism.

DATE	NOTABLE MARITIME INCIDENTS IN HIGH RISK AREA AND EAST AFRICA
26 January	A MV anchored just north-west of al Hudaydah was approached by a skiff containing 4 people reportedly armed with AK-47s and an RPG. Upon sighting the approaching skiff, the vessel’s Master is understood to have activated security measures and embarked AST displayed weapons as the skiff circled the MV at between 100-150m distance. Master sent Mayday call and informed Hudaydah Port Control who reported no knowledge of the armed personnel and speculated that they could be Coast Guard, despite lacking uniforms or vessel insignia. After making several approaches, the skiff left the area. The incident lasted for around 30 minutes.
4 February	The Master of the <i>STI Guard</i> , a Marshall Islands-flagged Crude Oil Tanker owned by Scorpio Tankers, was injured following an altercation with a crewmember. The incident took place while the vessel was transiting through the Indian Ocean, some 300 nautical miles southwest of Reunion. The Master of the vessel was reportedly in a critical condition and required consultation with medical advisors in Toulouse, France. Following the advice given, the vessel altered course and a helicopter from Reunion island delivered a medical team onboard the vessel prior to evacuating the captain. The attacker has been restrained and, as the attack occurred in international waters, will be judged under Marshall Island law.

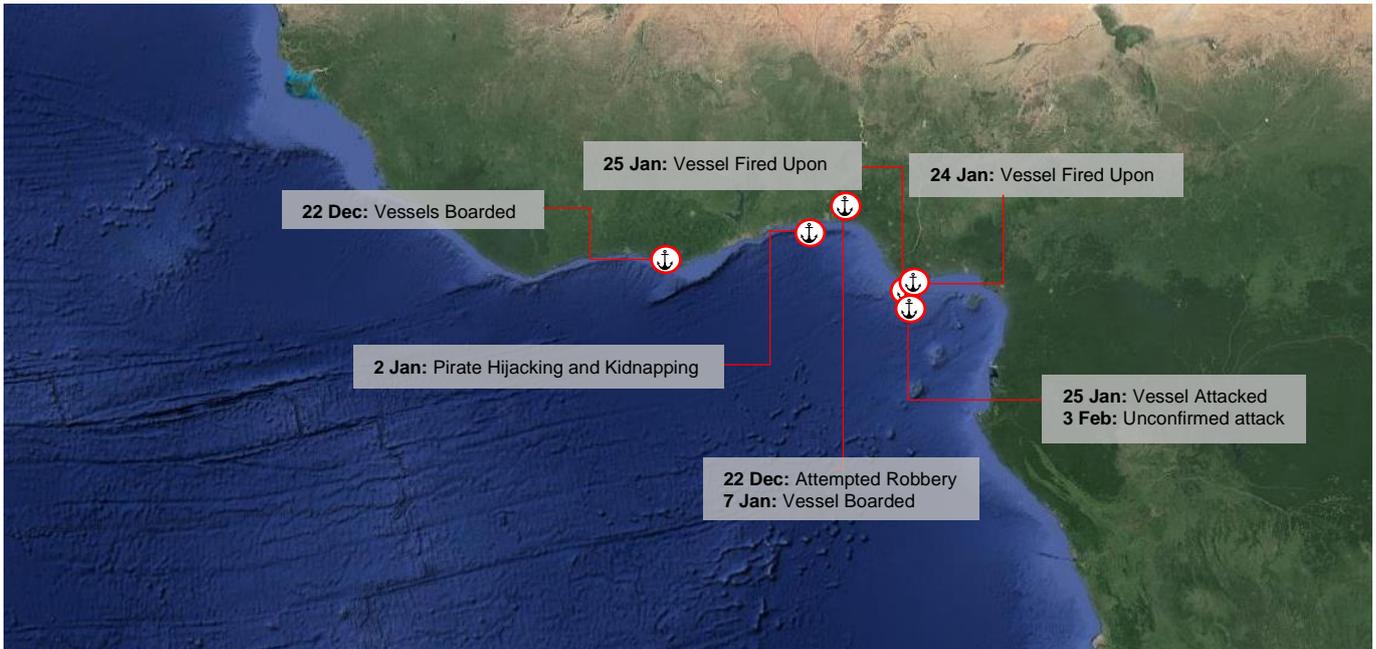


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GULF OF GUINEA AND WEST COAST OF AFRICA



MARITIME 	PIRACY 	ARMED CONFLICT 	TERRORISM 
HIGH	SEVERE	MODERATE	HIGH



In view of the continued attacks in the region, we have increased the piracy risk level for the Gulf of Guinea to **Severe**.

West Africa has started 2019 how it ended 2018; with a large number of attacks. Though released, six Russian sailors were kidnapped during a hijacking while multiple vessels have also been fired upon. The majority of the incidents occurred in, or in proximity to, Nigerian waters. However, the response by Nigeria has been slow in coming, the country is currently focused on its upcoming elections. Elsewhere a dispute saw a vessel seized in Cameroon over a payment disagreement. Additionally, on 5 January, two Ukrainian sailors were released after being taken hostage in October 2018.

The six Russian sailors seized by pirates near Benin’s territorial waters in early January during an attack in the early hours of 2 January against the container ship *MSC Mandy*, have been released in Nigeria, according to the Russian embassy in Nigeria. The vessel, which was flying the Panamanian flag had 24 people onboard; most of whom were Russian. It remains unclear if any ransom was paid to the kidnapers, who were almost certainly Nigerian, after the owners of the vessel stated that they were intending to hire intermediaries. The sailors have now returned to Russia.

The Nigerian elections are vitally important for security in the region. Should there be a significant upsurge in countrywide unrest, we may see an increase to the already high levels of pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea. Indeed, connected to the elections, a new militant group has emerged in the Niger Delta intent on stopping, or disrupting, the elections. The new militant group, known as War Against Niger Delta Exploitation or WANDE, want the government to show commitment to developing the region.

In a more positive development, the theft of fish in sensitive areas vital for the breeding and spawning of some of Namibia’s fish resources by foreign-flagged fishing trawlers, has stopped. The Namibian Navy Ship, *Elephant*, was spotted in the area between Cape Fria and the Kunene River mouth shortly after fish pirates were caught decimating horse mackerel breeding stocks in the shallow water at Foz de Kunene.



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Finally, a court in Cabo Verde remanded 11 Russian sailors in custody on 3 February after a Panama flagged vessel made an emergency stop at the islands while sailing from Panama to Morocco. One of the crew members onboard has reportedly died from an unknown cause while local police reportedly found 9.5 metric tons of cocaine on the vessel. At this time, no charges against the sailors have been brought just yet, the Russian Embassy in Praia reported.

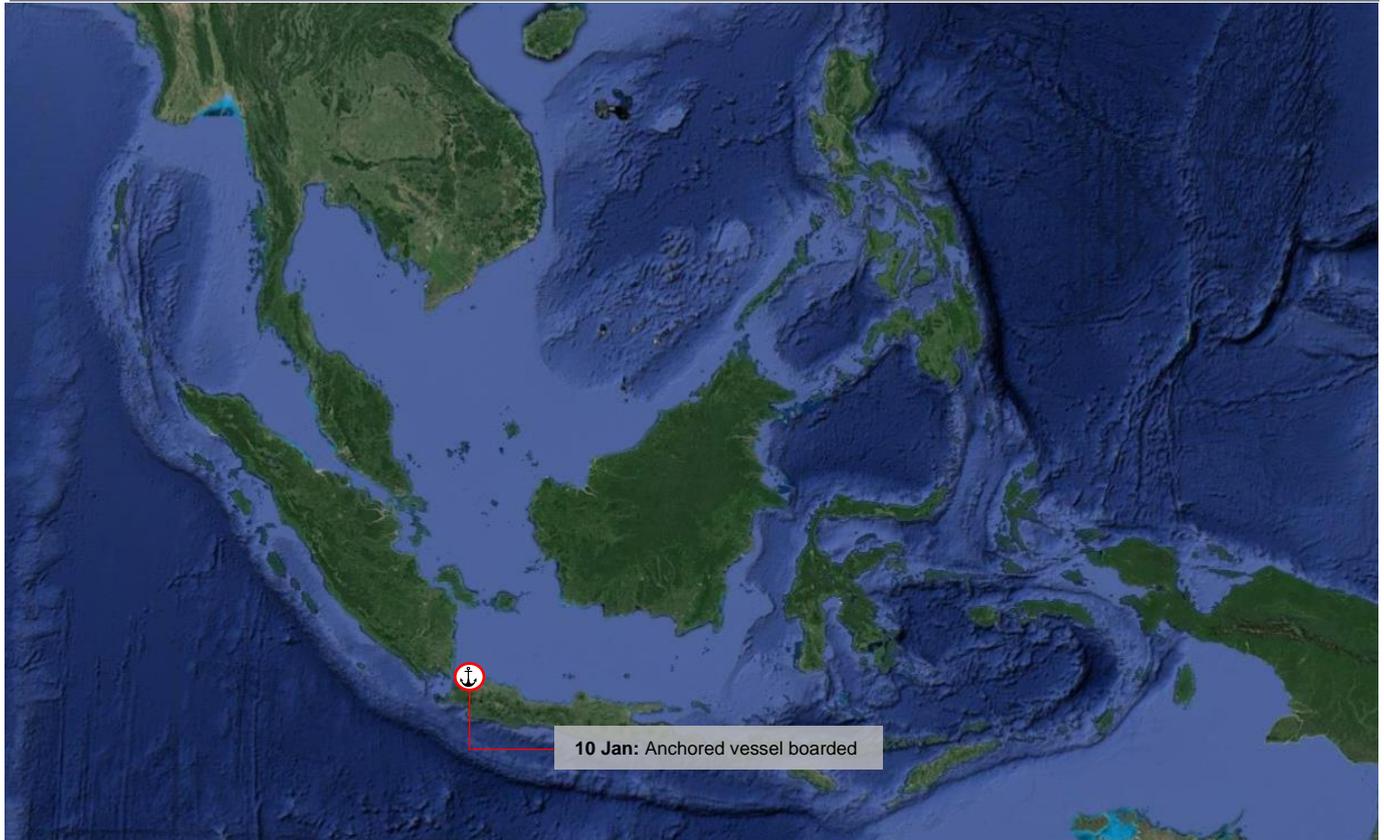
DATE	NOTABLE MARITIME INCIDENTS IN GULF OF GUINEA AND WEST AFRICA
2 January	Six Russian sailors were captured by the pirates near Cotonou, Benin. Up to nine armed pirates intercepted and then boarded the container ship <i>MSC Mandy</i> which was drifting in the Gulf of Guinea. The pirates then plundered the vessel before departing with six members of the crew; the captain, senior assistant captain, 3rd mate, boatswain, fitter and cook. There were no reported injuries among the 18 crewmembers left onboard.
7 January	Around 4-5 robbers in a small skiff came alongside an anchored product tanker south of Lagos and threw two ropes attached with hooks onto the tanker's railing. Duty crew on routine rounds heard voices near the bow and noticed the hooks and the skiff. Alarm raised. Non-essential crew members mustered in the citadel. Master requested assistance from the Nigerian Navy patrol boat which immediately responded. Hearing the alarm, the robbers moved away. The patrol boat searched the waters around the tanker.
7 January	Two robbers with plastic hoses boarded an anchored tanker during STS operations in Lagos STS Anchorage. They connected the hoses to the ullage ports of the forward cargo tanks and attempted to steal cargo. Duty crew noticed the robbers and raised the alarm resulting in the robbers escaping. The incident was immediately reported to the Nigerian Navy patrol boat who came to the location and carried out a check on the surrounding waters. Nothing reported stolen.
19 January	In Abidjan Anchorage, Ivory Coast, two robbers armed with long knives boarded an anchored product tanker. Duty OS on routine rounds noticed a ladder hooked to the ship's rail and two robbers near the poop deck winch. The OOW notified and alarm raised. Master directed the searchlight towards the poop deck resulting in the robbers escaping with stolen ship's stores.
24 January	A product tanker was fired upon while underway 35NM south of Brass. General alarm raised, non-essential crews mustered in citadel and vessel conducted evasive manoeuvres. Due to the hardening measures, the pirates moved away. Incident reported to the Nigerian Navy.
25 January	Around 45NM south of Brass, Nigeria, five to seven armed pirates in a skiff chased and fired upon a bulk carrier underway. The vessel's general alarm was raised, deck lights switched on, speed increased while crew mustered in the citadel. Armed guards onboard the vessel managed to repel the attempted attack. This incident was followed later by an attack 76NM SSW of Brass when around seven to eight armed pirates in a skiff chased, fired upon and tried to board a tanker underway. General alarm raised, non-essential crews mustered in the citadel and Master commenced evasive manoeuvres. Due to the hardening measures, the pirates moved away. Vessel and crews reported safe.
3 February	Though unconfirmed at this stage, three crew were kidnapped when a Landing craft was attacked around 135nm SW of Brass, Nigeria.
4 February	The M/T <i>Barents Sea</i> , a Singapore-flagged Aframax tanker, has been seized by private militiamen off the waters of Cameroon. According to Eastern Pacific Shipping, the vessel was seized by men wielding AK-47s while performing standard discharge operations. The vessel had been anchored off the coast of Cameroon from mid-December due to a financial dispute.



SOUTH EAST ASIA



MARITIME 	PIRACY 	ARMED CONFLICT 	TERRORISM
MODERATE	HIGH	MODERATE	HIGH



The majority of incidents that have occurred in the South East Asia region in the past month are robberies of anchored vessels. Two of these incidents have occurred in Chinese anchorages; and the rise of incidents in these areas should be monitored. Additionally, a number of announcements have been made by naval powers in the region which may have an effect on the security cooperation in the region.

From a more geopolitical standpoint, experts have stated that they expect Beijing will build four nuclear aircraft carriers in a deliberate drive to catch the US Navy. China is expected to have at least six aircraft carrier battle groups by 2035. The move will also see a modernisation of their fleet with the nuclear carriers likely to be equipped with electromagnetic launch catapults similar to those the US Navy plans to adopt. Beijing is keen to expand its aircraft carrier battle groups to fulfil its global naval ambitions and defend its growing overseas interests.

The Philippines Navy plans, for the first time, to send a vessel to participate in the Chinese Navy's fleet review in April. The announcement came as the PLA Navy concludes its four-day goodwill visit to Manila. Chinese guided-missile frigates Wu Hu and Han Dan, as well as replenishment ship Dong Ping Hu, docked at Pier 15 in South Harbour of the Philippine capital. The Philippines and China have made strides in cooperation in the past months despite the two countries, as well as several of South East Asian countries, having overlapping claims in the South China Sea.

The move is interesting after the United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration issued a ruling in July 2016 in favour of the Philippines,



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invalidating Beijing's nine-dash line claim over the contested waterway. The Philippines, under the Duterte administration, has yet to assert the arbitration ruling in its negotiations with China while the latter refuses to acknowledge the landmark decision. The Philippines is also in talks with Japan for a joint military exercise.

Elsewhere, the Japanese have been making strides towards retrofitting their Izumo-class helicopter destroyers into aircraft carriers. As well as this, Tokyo has purchased two Aegis Weapon Systems (AWS) and associated equipment from the United States. Under the deal, the US Government and contractor representatives will visit Japan multiple times to provide technical reviews, support, and oversight for around eight years. The announcement comes after a continued spat over an alleged radar lock-on incident between Japanese and South Korean vessels has resulted in Tokyo cancelling a port call in South Korea.

There have not been any further Abu Sayyaf related piracy incidents in the past four to five weeks. The group however, carried out an attack on the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady Mount Carmel in Jolo. The group regards Jolo as a stronghold and the bombing has resulted in the Philippine army engaging the group in a prolonged battle to try and flush out their fighters. Numerous protracted firefights have occurred with numerous soldiers and militants being reported dead.

It is important for clients and vessel masters to note that the ongoing firefight increases the risk of attacks by Abu Sayyaf militants on vessels in the region. Continue to employ a heightened level vigilance in the Celeb and Sulu seas and in the southern Philippines, eastern Malay and eastern Indonesian ports.

A St Kitts and Nevis-flagged oil product tanker, *Sea Frontier*, capsized near Tanjung Penyusop, Malaysia, in the evening of 30 January. The vessel was attempting to dock at the time of the incident. However, the vessel managed to hit a rock during the docking operation, causing hull damage that led to considerable water ingress. By 21:15 local time, the vessel was reported to be 75 percent underwater. The 11 crewmembers aboard the *Sea Frontier*, all aged between 23 and 55, were successfully saved by a motorized tanker that had been operating in the area that managed to respond to the distress call.

A Chinese vessel, *Zhong Xing 689*, sailing off the coast of Zhangzhou reportedly sunk on 22 January. China's Fujian Maritime Safety administration immediately launched a search and rescue operation, that involved a number of ships and helicopters, and was supported by local fishing vessels operating in the area. According to reports, eleven members of the crew were rescued while one remained missing and is now presumed dead.

DATE	NOTABLE MARITIME INCIDENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA
10 January	During routine rounds, duty crew onboard an anchored cargo vessel in Ciwandan Anchorage, Indonesia, noticed the lock to the Engine store broken and ship's spares missing. Incident reported to local agents.
12 January	Two robbers, armed with a steel bar, boarded an anchored bulk carrier in Cao Fei Dian Anchorage, China. Duty crew noticed the robbers and raised the alarm. Hearing the alerted crew, the robbers escaped without stealing anything. Incident reported to port authorities.
29 January	Duty crew onboard an anchored ore carrier noticed an unlit barge alongside and raised the alarm in the Jingtang Anchorage, China. Two robbers wearing masks were seen lowering hoses and escaping from the quarter deck. On searching the ship, oil stains were noticed near the MDO tank sounding pipe. All tanks were sounded. Nothing reported stolen.



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AMERICAS



MARITIME 	PIRACY 	ARMED CONFLICT 	TERRORISM 
LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW



The Americas have seen a number of robberies in the past month. The most significant incident occurred off the coast of Mexico when the MV *Farley Mowat* was attacked by around 50 assailants posing as fishermen. The incident occurred in the upper Gulf of California, near the Vaquita Refuge, where a group of assailants aboard 20 high-speed craft, attacked the patrol vessel belonging to the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS).

The *Farley Mowat*, an Island-class patrol vessel belonging to the SSCS fleet, was conducting a routine maritime conservation patrol of the upper Gulf of California, in an effort to protect the critically endangered Vaquita Porpoise from extinction, when the attack occurred. The assailants threw a range of projectiles, including lead weights, large stones and Molotov cocktails at the vessel. As a result, the vessel's windows were shattered, and one side of the *Farley Mowat* caught on fire, during the attack.

The *Farley Mowat* crewmembers fended off the attackers using emergency fire hoses while the Captain also attempted to carry out anti-piracy manoeuvres. Mexican Navy and Federal Police officers stationed aboard the vessel resorted to opening fire into the air and sea in order to deter the attackers. Additionally, two navy inflatable boats that arrived at the scene in an attempt to aid in the defence of the vessel were also attacked by the poachers. The *Farley Mowat* eventually escaped by making its way toward the Mexican naval frigate *Barrera* that was nearby.

Elsewhere, 28 Haitians are understood to have died when their migrant vessel sank near the Bahamas on 2 February. The US



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Embassy in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, said officials managed to rescue 17 people, including two who were found stranded on a reef off the coast. Officials discovered the ship after residents reported seeing bodies floating in the sea near the entrance of Marsh Harbour in Abaco.

Finally, the crisis in Venezuela continues as the Venezuelan military has blocked a bridge on the border with Venezuela. The move is in anticipation of humanitarian aid shipments. The insecurity in the country continues the risk of seaborne attacks by Venezuelans that have no choice but to turn toward illegal means to survive. As such attacks on Trinidadian fishermen are likely to increase in the coming weeks and months, as will the increase in narcotic shipments through the country. A US-led invasion of the country also cannot be ruled out.

DATE	NOTABLE MARITIME INCIDENTS IN AMERICAS
3 January	Deck watchmen onboard an anchored container vessel in Mamonal Anchorage, Colombia, noticed three robbers near the forecabin and informed the duty officer. Alarm raised, crew mustered inside the accommodation and all doors were locked from inside. Master reported the incident to the coast guard and requested assistance. A coast guard boat arrived and searched the waters around the vessel. Ship's properties were reported missing
3 January	In Puerto La Cruz Anchorage, Venezuela, duty crew onboard an anchored tanker noticed robbers attempting to board using a grappling hook hooked to the guardrails of the poop deck. Alarm was raised and ship's horn sounded. Hearing the alerted crew, the robbers aborted the boarding attempt and escaped in their boat.
17 January	Unnoticed robbers boarded a tanker anchored off Puerto Jose, Venezuela. They stole ship's stores and escaped. The theft was noticed by the duty crew during routine rounds.
31 January	The M/V <i>Farley Mowat</i> was ambushed by a group of poachers posing as fishermen while the ship was conducting maritime conservation patrols in a vaquita refuge in Mexico's Gulf of California. This was the second such attack in less than a month. Sea Shepherd said the side of the <i>Farley Mowat</i> caught fire and its windows shattered because the attackers were hurling molotov cocktails and projectiles such as lead weights and large stones at the vessel.



EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN & BLACK SEA



 MARITIME	 PIRACY	 ARMED CONFLICT	 TERRORISM
LOW	NEGLIGIBLE	MODERATE	NEGLIGIBLE

Europe enjoyed a quiet month. However, there has been a noticeable increase in migrant attempts when compared with the same period last year. Prominently, a Spanish Navy vessel is understood to have violated Gibraltar waters whilst playing the Spanish national anthem on loudspeakers. The incident resulted in the Royal Navy intercepting the vessel and warning it off. The incident, however, is not unusual for the waters with the Spanish Navy regularly carrying out similar actions in the past. The incidents rarely last longer than two hours and often result in vessels circling each other and making statements.

An explosion and a fire involving two tanker ships near the contested Kerch Strait, the waterway separating Crimea from mainland Russia, left at least 11 sailors dead on Monday and several missing, according to Russian news reports. Although the exact cause of the episode that ignited the tankers was not immediately known, fuel from one was being transferred to the other, the Russian news agency RIA said. Initial reports suggested that a fire and an explosion on one ship had spread to the second. The sailors killed were from India and Turkey, the reports said, with 12 survivors jumping into the water.

Some 10 ships were involved in rescue operations, according to Interfax, another Russian news agency, which said the press service of the country’s Federal Agency for Maritime and River Transport announced the toll of victims and survivors. Television footage from the shore showed flames erupting and thick black smoke engulfing the ships. Both tankers were registered in Tanzania and were anchored just off the southern shore of the Crimean Peninsula and just outside the Kerch Strait.

Shipbuilding company Fincantieri has launched the Italian Navy’s latest multi-mission European frigate (FREMM) *Spartaco Schergat* at a ceremony at the integrated shipyard of Riva Trigoso in Genoa. The newest frigate is the ninth of a series of ten FREMMs being built by Fincantieri within the framework of an Italo-French cooperation programme. Fincantieri will continue fitting activities at the integrated naval shipyard of Muggiano, La Spezia. The Italian Navy is expected to receive the vessel next year.

The Italian navy continues to be involved in migrant operations in the Mediterranean. The navy are understood to have staged a rescue operation on Friday with a helicopter coming to the aid of three people suffering from hypothermia. The number of migrants and refugees landing on European shores had almost doubled in the first 16 days of this year to 4,216 against 2,365 over the same period in 2018.

The French navy has also moved to bolster its fleet with a deal to build four new logistic vessels. The ships are meant to provide long-term support for France’s blue-sea combat fleet, supplying fuel, ammunition, spare parts and food. The ships will be built in Saint-Nazaire on France’s Atlantic coast, and the first two will be delivered by 2025 to start replacing the last three Durance-class command and supply ships in line to be phased out of the French Navy. The French Navy has also received the first Dassault Rafale combat aircraft to be upgraded to the latest F3R standard. The new aircraft are part of a fleet air arm upgrade.

DATE	NOTABLE MARITIME INCIDENTS IN EUROPE
N/A	There have been no notable piracy, armed robbery or other maritime incidents in Europe in the past month.