

MONTHLY MARITIME SECURITY UPDATE

Jan 2024

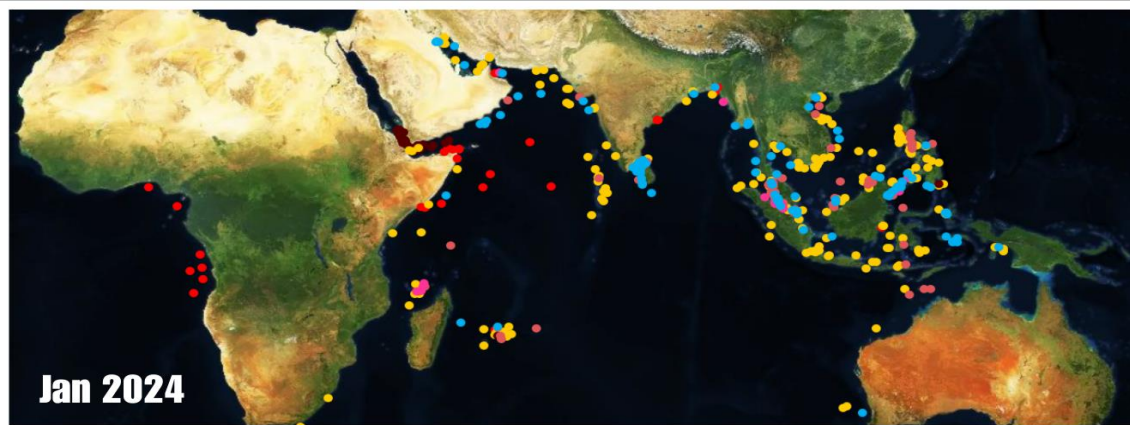


INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE
INDIAN OCEAN REGION

Disclaimer

Information collated in the IFC-IOR's reports have been derived from various internal and external linkages such as partner nations, other maritime stakeholders, agencies and open sources. The report aims to undertake analysis of incidents by establishing trends and anomalies to ensure safety and security of mariners and seafarers. While due care and effort has been taken to ensure veracity of data, due diligence may be exercised for subsequent usage of information contained therein. The positions of incidents depicted in some cases may be approximate or indicative. IFC-IOR requests and seeks assistance of all stakeholders to report incidents in the region to undertake accurate predictive and prescriptive analysis so as to build a comprehensive picture of existing threats in the maritime domain. The information contained in the report and the analysis thereon, is not reflective of the views of the Government of India or Indian Navy in any manner.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Jan 2024

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY

36

CONTRABAND SMUGGLING

80

IRREGULAR HUMAN MIGRATION

12

MARITIME INCIDENTS

151

MARITIME SECURITY THREATS (HYBRID)

34

MARINE ENVIRONMENT POLLUTION

02

IUU FISHING

60

CYBER SECURITY THREATS

Nil

Overview

The Centre monitors, records and analyses maritime security incidents in nine categories: piracy and armed robbery, contraband smuggling, Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing, Irregular Human Migration (IHM), maritime incidents (MI), maritime security threats (hybrid), cyber security, marine environmental pollution and climate change and security. **A total of 375 maritime security incidents in the wider IOR were recorded in Jan 24.**

Piracy and Armed Robbery

36 incidents of piracy and armed robbery (actual and attempted) were monitored in Jan 24, a significant increase compared to 12 incidents last month. Sea thefts and hijacks were the most frequently reported incidents.

Contraband Smuggling

80 contraband smuggling incidents were monitored in Jan 24, a 5% increase compared to Dec 23 (76 incidents). Drugs and fuel smuggling were the top contributors of contraband smuggling incidents.

IUU Fishing

60 IUU fishing incidents were recorded in Jan 24, a 5% decrease compared to Dec 23 (63). Among these, 50 incidents were local and 10 incidents were of poaching.

IHM

12 incidents were recorded in Jan 24, a 43% decrease compared to Dec 23 (21). These involved 463 migrants and 41 smugglers/ traffickers. No migrant fatalities or (missing) individuals were reported in this month.

Maritime Incidents

151 maritime incidents were recorded by the Centre for Jan 24, a slight increase compared to 138 incidents in Dec 23. Vessel detained and mechanical failures were the most frequently reported incidents.

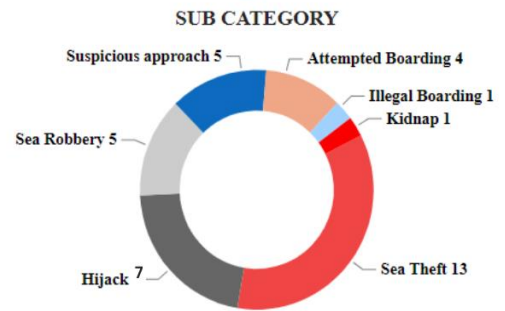
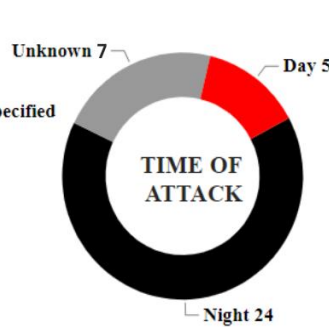
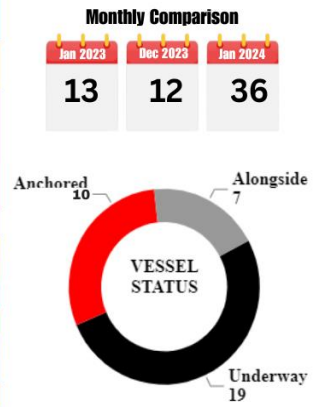
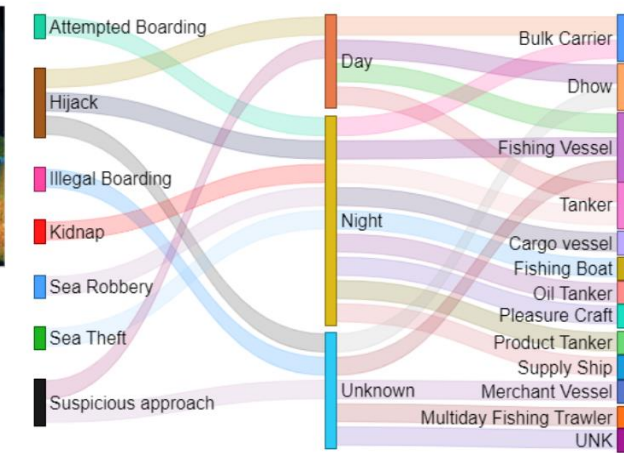
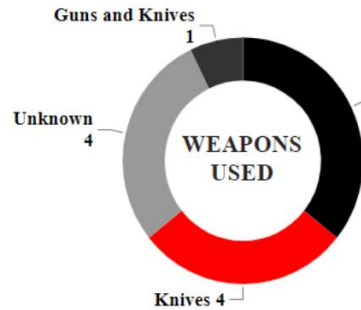
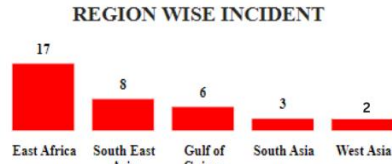
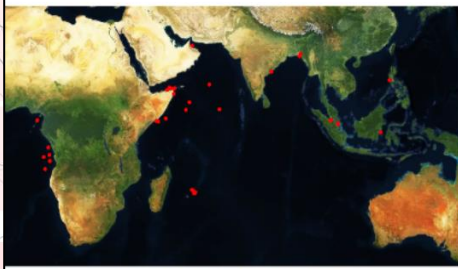
Maritime Security Threats (Hybrid)

34 maritime security threats (hybrid) incidents were recorded by the Centre in Jan 24, a 48% increase compared to Dec 23 (23). Missile and drone attacks saw an uptick during this month.

Marine Environment Pollution

One incident each of marine environmental pollution was monitored in South East Asia and East Africa in Jan 24.

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY



Overview

36 incidents of piracy and armed robbery (actual and attempted) were monitored in Jan 24, a significant increase compared to 12 incidents last month. Sea thefts (13), followed by hijack (07), sea robbery (05), illegal boarding (05), suspicious approach (05) and kidnap (01) were the most frequently reported incidents under this category. The detailed analysis of the subcategories and regional analysis is elucidated in the succeeding paragraphs.

Sea Thefts/ Robberies

Sea thefts and robberies (18) (actual/ attempted) accounted for 49% of the overall piracy and armed robbery incidents in Jan 24. Most of the incidents were reported on anchored vessels (08) followed by vessels alongside (07) and underway (03). Equal number of incidents (09) were monitored during the day and dark hours. The number of perpetrators involved in these incidents varied from a minimum of one to a maximum of six. Items such as ropes, spare parts etc. were reportedly stolen in these incidents.

Hijack and Kidnap

Hijack and kidnap (08) accounted for 22% of the overall piracy and armed robbery incidents, a significant increase compared to Dec 23 (04). 86% (06) of the hijack incidents were reported onboard fishing vessels, followed by tankers (01). The incident of kidnap was reported onboard a Tuvalu-flagged product tanker *Hana I* in the Gulf of Guinea. During the last two months, IFC-IOR has monitored 08 incidents involving fishing dhows and foreign-flagged fishing vessels being hijacked by perpetrators in the Arabian Sea, East of Somalia.

Suspicious Approaches

Suspicious approaches (05) accounted for 14% of the overall piracy and armed robbery incidents in Jan 24 compared to two incidents in Dec 23. Incidents were mainly reported on vessels underway during dark hours in West Asia and off East Africa.

Illegal Boarding

Illegal boarding (05), both actual and attempted, accounted for 13% of the overall piracy and armed robbery incidents in Jan 24, a notable increase

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY

compared to Dec 23 (nil incidents). Tankers (03), bulk carriers (01) and fishing vessel (01) were among the targeted vessels in these incidents. All incidents were reported during dark hours and within 12nm from the coast except for one incident of illegal boarding, which was reported 70 nm into the sea from the coast off Abo, Somalia.

Regional Distribution

South East Asia accounted for 08 incidents, compared to two in Dec 23. Five sea robberies/thefts, both actual and attempted, and three incidents of attempted boarding were reported in this region. Knives and guns were the choice of weapons of the perpetrators. In few incidents, the perpetrators tied up crew members and stole ship's items. However, no injury to the crew members was reported in these events.

South Asia accounted for three incidents, sea thefts (02) and attempted boarding (01). All incidents were reported on vessels at anchor. The perpetrators were monitored stealing the ship's items, such as ropes, spare parts, etc. No crew injury or vessel damage was reported in these incidents.

East Africa accounted for 17 incidents; a significant increase compared to Dec 23 (03). Sea theft (06), followed by hijack (05) and suspicious approach (05) were the most frequently reported incidents this month. All incidents of sea thefts were reported on pleasure crafts anchored off Mauritius. All incidents of hijacking and suspicious approaches were reported off Somalia's coast. A total of five fishing vessels/ dhows were hijacked in this month. The perpetrators are likely to have use these hijacked dhows as mother ships in attacking/ hijacking other vessels.

West Asia witnessed two hijack incidents in the Arabian sea compared to six incidents in Dec 23. Piracy and armed robbery remains low in West Asia. However, the uptick in maritime security threats (hybrid) incidents in this region is an alarming trend and covered in the latter part of this report.

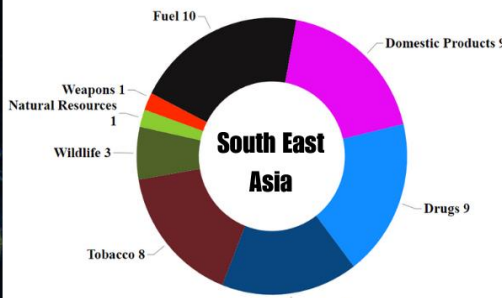
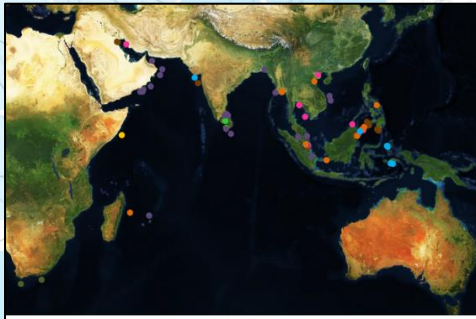
Gulf of Guinea accounted for 06 incidents, compared to one incident in Dec 23. Sea thefts (05) and kidnap (01) were the reported incidents this month. Tankers (05) and cargo vessel (01) were the most targeted vessels. All incidents of sea theft were reported on vessels while at anchor. The incident of kidnap was reported onboard the Tuvalu flagged tanker *HANA 1* about 46 nm SW of Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. Six armed perpetrators boarded the vessel and kidnapped two crew members.

Significant Incidents

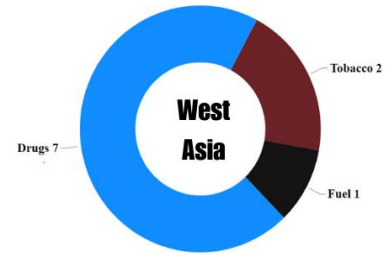
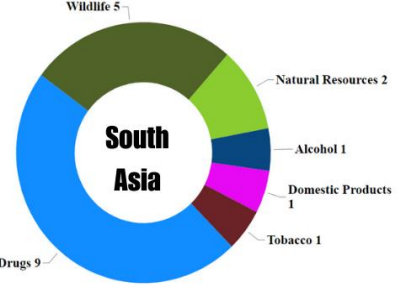
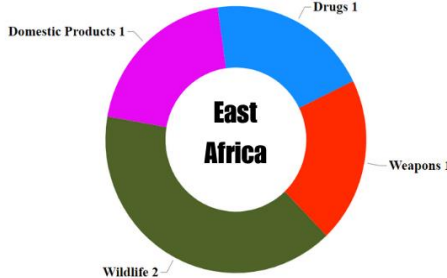
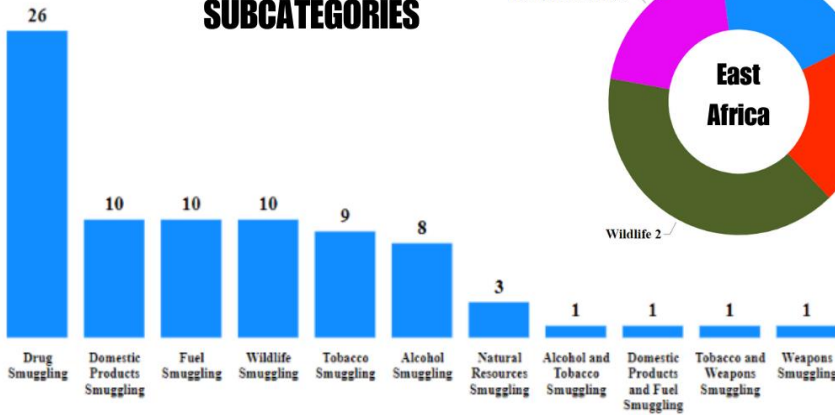
✓ On 28 Jan 24, an incident of hijacking was reported onboard the Iran-flagged fishing vessel *IMAN* off the East Coast of Somalia. An unknown number of perpetrators boarded and hijacked the vessel. Indian Navy warship, *Sumitra*, intercepted the vessel and, following established SOPs, coerced the pirates for the safe release of the crew along with the boat. All 17 crew members were rescued. Subsequently, the vessel was sanitised and released.

✓ On 29 Jan 24, an incident of hijacking was reported onboard another Iran-flagged fishing vessel *AL NAEEMI* off the East Coast of Somalia. 11 armed perpetrators boarded and hijacked the vessel with 19 Pakistan fishermen. Indian Navy warship, *Sumitra* intercepted the fishing vessel on PM 29 Jan 24. Through coercive posturing and effective deployment of integral helo and boats, the warship compelled the safe release of the crew and the vessel. All 19 fishermen were rescued and the 11 perpetrators were apprehended.

CONTRABAND SMUGGLING



SUBCATEGORIES



Overview

80 incidents of contraband smuggling were monitored in Jan 24, a 5% increase compared to Dec 2023 (76 incidents). Drugs (26), followed by fuel (10), domestic products (10), wildlife (10), tobacco (09), alcohol (09) and natural resources (03) smuggling were the most frequently reported incidents.

Domestic Products

10 incidents of domestic product smuggling were recorded this month, compared to nine incidents in Dec 23. The products seized in these incidents involved a shipment of ammonium nitrate, used clothes, bags, cooking oil, cosmetics, food products, general goods, medicated oil, rice and woven fabric items.

Analysis of Incidents

Drugs

26 drug seizures were recorded in Jan 24, a 13% increase as compared to Dec 23 (23 incidents). 13 incidents were reported inside ports and harbours. The seizures in ports/ harbours included 150 kg of methamphetamine, 142 kg of cocaine and 199 kg of cannabis. The remaining 14 incidents were reported at sea, involving seizure of 49 kg of hashish, 1773 kg of methamphetamine, 65 kg of heroin, 350 kg of cannabis and 3,580 packages of khat.

Wildlife

10 incidents of wildlife smuggling were recorded in Jan 24, which was twice the number of incidents in Dec 23. The species seized were abalones, birds, sea cucumbers and shellfish.

Tobacco

09 incidents of tobacco smuggling were recorded, a notable increase compared to four incidents in Dec 23. A total of 3,58,114 kg of tobacco (chewing tobacco and cigarettes) were seized.

CONTRABAND SMUGGLING

Fuel

10 incidents of fuel smuggling were recorded, a slight decrease compared to 13 incidents in last month. These incidents involved the seizure of approximately 141 kl of diesel, 2,000 kl of fuel and 110 kl of petrol.

Natural Resources

Three incidents of natural resources smuggling were recorded, a significant decrease compared to Dec 23 (14). The seizures involved 639 kg of kendu leaves and 900 cubic meters of sand.

Alcohol

Nine incidents of alcohol smuggling were recorded in Jan 24. A total of 2078 litres of liquor were seized in these incidents.

Weapons

One incident of weapon smuggling were recorded. Law enforcement agencies seized ballistic and cruise missile components and guns in these incidents.

Regional Distribution

East Africa accounted for 6% of contraband smuggling incidents, similar to Dec 23. Two incidents of wildlife smuggling and one incident each of drugs, weapons and domestic products were monitored in this region.

West Asia accounted for 13% of contraband smuggling incidents. Drugs (07), tobacco (02) and fuel (01) smuggling incidents were monitored in this region.

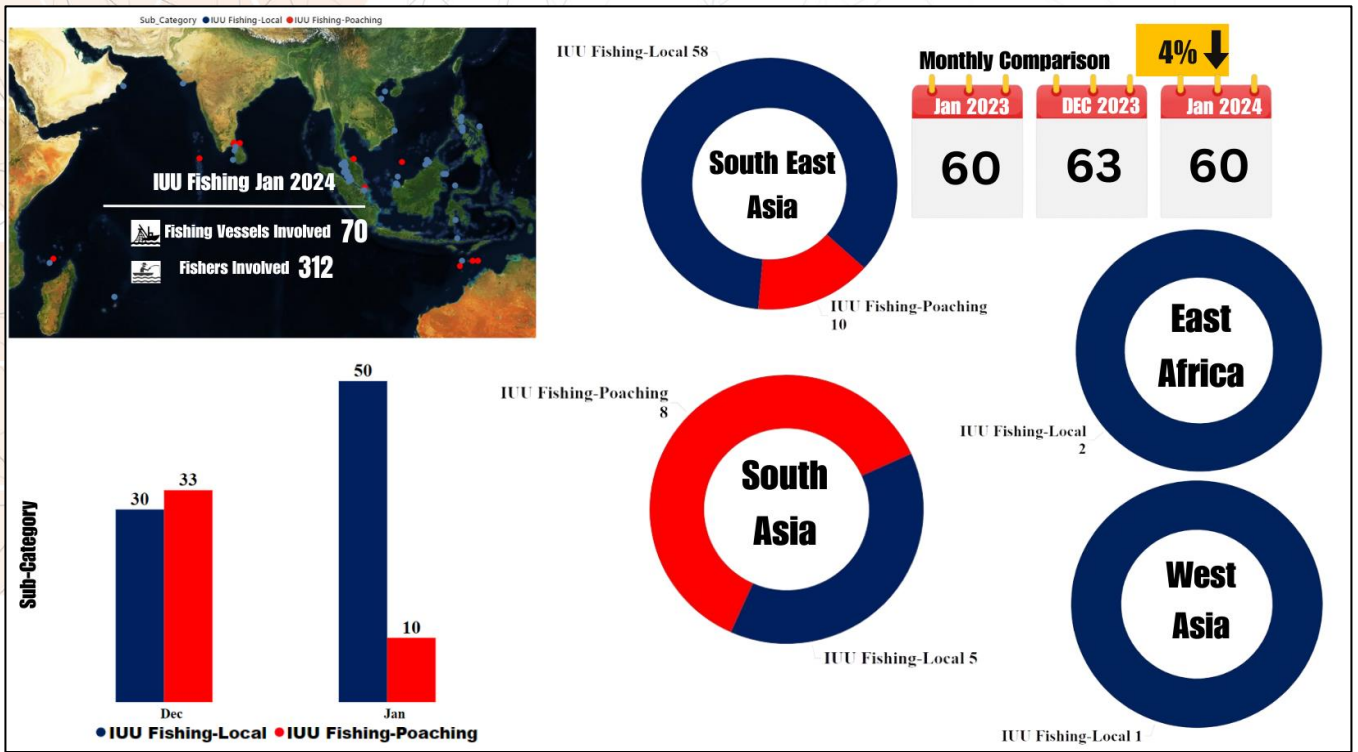
South Asia accounted for 24% of contraband smuggling incidents, similar to Dec 23 (19). Drugs (09), wildlife (05), natural resources (02) and one incident each of domestic products, alcohol and tobacco smuggling incidents were monitored in this region.

South East Asia accounted for 57% of contraband smuggling incidents, a slight increase compared to Dec 23 (41). Fuel (10), domestic products (09), tobacco and alcohol (08 each), drugs (06), wildlife (03), natural resources and weapons (01 each) smuggling incidents were monitored in this region.

Significant Incident

On 11 January 2024, U.S. CENTCOM forces conducted a night-time seizure of a dhow carrying weapon parts near the coast of Somalia. Seized items include propulsion, guidance and warheads for medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs), anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) and air defence components. Reportedly, these components were intended for weapons to be used by non-state actors to threaten and attack commercial ships transiting through the Red Sea.

ILLEGAL UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING



Overview

60 IUU fishing incidents were recorded in Jan 24, compared to 63 incidents in Dec 23. Among these, 50 incidents were local and 10 incidents were of poaching. The total illegal fish catch recorded was 1,600 kg, with Malaysian authorities seizing 1,550 kg. A seizure of approximately 26 m of banned nets was also reported off Mauritius.

Poaching – 10 incidents of poaching involving foreign fishing vessels were recorded, a significant decrease compared to 33 incidents in Dec 23. 97 fishermen were apprehended and 16 boats were seized by the authorities. The decrease in the number of poaching incidents in North West Australia and the seasonal weather, especially the NE monsoon affecting fishing yields in Southeast Asia, is one of the major reasons for this decrease in overall figures.

Analysis of Incidents

Local IUU Fishing – 50 incidents of local IUU fishing were recorded in Jan 24, a significant increase compared to 30 incidents in Dec 23. These incidents involved violations of fishing licenses by local fishermen, illegal fishing techniques, banned fishing methods, use of blast fishing, etc. 215 fishermen were apprehended and 54 boats were seized by the authorities.

Regional Distribution

South East Asia (50) accounted for 83% of the IUU fishing incidents, a significant increase compared to Dec 23 (42). 90% (45) of these incidents were local IUU fishing and 10% (5) were poaching. These incidents were recorded in the waters of Malaysia (37), Philippines (04), Australia and Vietnam (03 each), Indonesia (02) and Thailand (01). A total of 53 boats were seized and 232 fishermen were apprehended.

ILLEGAL UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING

South Asia (08) accounted for 13% of the IUU fishing incidents, a notable increase compared to Dec 23 (04). Three of these incidents were local IUU and five were poaching. A total of 16 boats were seized and 78 fishermen apprehended in this region. These incidents were recorded in the waters of Sri Lanka (07) and one incident off Maldives.

East Africa accounted for two local IUU fishing incidents, compared to four in Dec 23. These incidents were reported in the waters of Mayotte (01) and Mauritius (01).



Fishing Bans Monitored

Region	Duration	Remarks
Palawan	01 Nov 23 – 31 Jan 24	Galunggong
Philippines	15 Nov 23 – 15 Feb 24	Sardine
Mauritius	01 Dec 23 – 31 Mar 24	Lobster
Oman	01 Dec 23 – 31 Aug 24	Shrimp

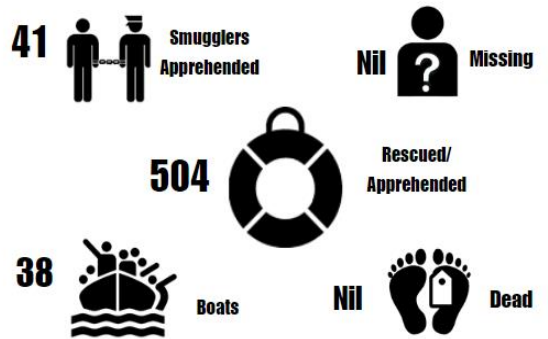
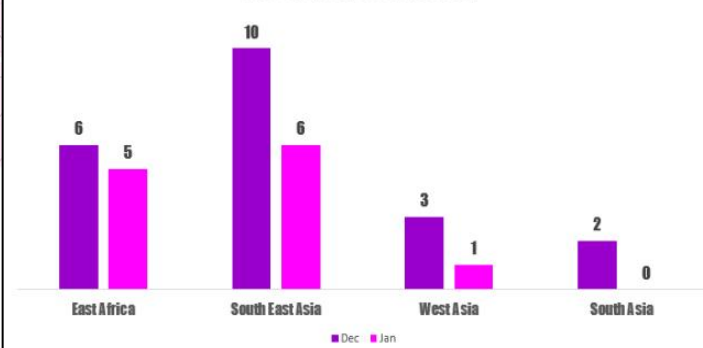
IRREGULAR HUMAN MIGRATION



Monthly Comparison



Regional Distribution



Overview

12 incidents were recorded in Jan 24, a 43% decrease compared to Dec 23 (21). These involved 463 migrants and 41 smugglers/ traffickers. No migrant fatalities and individuals were reported missing in this month.

West Asia. One incident of irregular human migration was reported in Jan 24, compared to three incidents in Dec 23. On 15 Jan 24, Oman authorities seized a boat off North Batinah, Oman and apprehended two suspected smugglers, 18 irregular migrants.

Regional Distribution

East Africa. The region witnessed five incidents of irregular human migration, similar to Dec 23. Regional law enforcement agencies seized 36 boats and apprehended 32 suspected smugglers. Notably, there has been a 70% decrease in the number of individuals attempting to enter Mayotte illegally via sea routes during this month as compared to the last month. Among the five incidents, four involved migrants from Comoros attempting to enter Mayotte illegally, while in one incident, a group of Somali nationals successfully landed on one of the beaches in Mayotte.

South East Asia. The region witnessed six incidents of irregular human migration; a 40% decrease compared to Dec 23 (10). Indonesia (04) and Malaysia (02) were the destination country for the migrants. During this month, there was a notable 85% decrease witnessed in the region with only 112 migrants being apprehended or rescued by law enforcement agencies, compared to the 765 recorded in Dec 23. One boat was seized and seven suspected smugglers were apprehended by the law enforcement agencies.

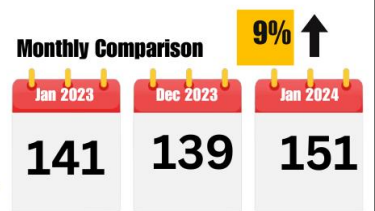
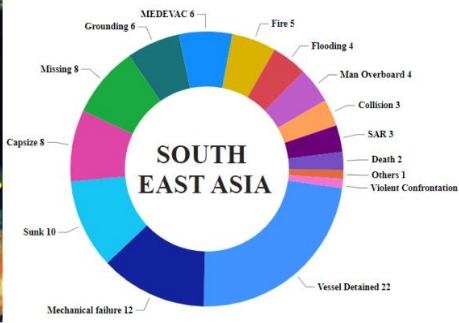
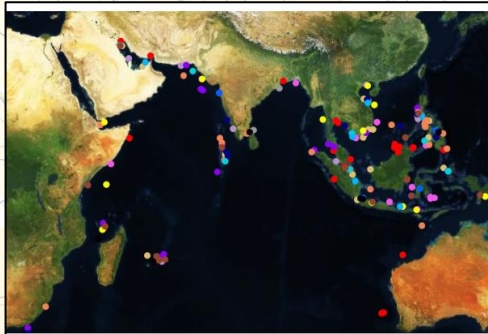
IRREGULAR HUMAN MIGRATION

Migration Trends

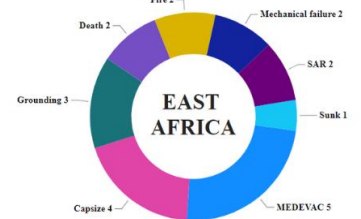
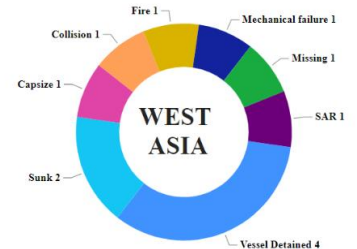
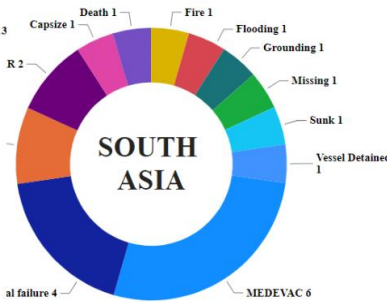


Region	No. Of Incidents	Rescued/ Apprehended	Smugglers Apprehended	Boats Involved
East Africa	05	333	32	36
West Asia	01	18	02	01
South East Asia	06	112	07	01

MARITIME INCIDENTS



SUBCATEGORIES



Overview

151 maritime incidents were recorded by the Centre in Jan 24. Vessels detained (28) constituted the highest number of reported incidents, followed by mechanical failure (19), MEDEVAC (17), sinking of vessels (14), capsizing (14), grounding (10) and missing (10).

Capsize and sinking of vessels - 14 incidents of capsizing and 14 incidents of sinking were recorded, a significant decrease compared to 31 incidents in Dec 23. Most of the incidents involved fishing vessels. 08 individuals were reported to have lost their lives in these incidents in Jan 24.

Analysis of Incidents

Vessel detained - 28 incidents of vessels being detained were monitored in Jan 24, a notable increase compared to 12 incidents in Dec 23. The majority of the vessels failed to comply with the requirements of international maritime conventions, such as the non-availability of SOLAS equipment, non-compliance with MARPOL regulations, not having relevant documentation etc.

Fire and flooding – 14 incidents of fire and flooding were recorded in Jan 24. Cause of fire in the reported incidents included explosions, fire in machinery/ engine room compartment, electrical fires caused by short circuits and non-compliance with standard operating procedures (SOPs) during fuel transfer.

MEDEVAC and SAR – 17 MEDEVAC and 08 SAR incidents were recorded in Jan 24. Most of the incidents of MEDEVAC involved fishing vessels and small boats. A few incidents also involved crew members being evacuated from vessels such as tankers, passenger vessels, etc.

MARITIME INCIDENTS

The incidents of SAR were mostly attributable to machinery breakdown onboard small vessels and heavy weather in South East Asia.

Man overboard, death and missing – 19 incidents were recorded in Jan 24. In which a total of 09 lives were lost, 41 individuals went missing and 02 individuals were rescued.

Mechanical failures - 19 mechanical failure incidents were recorded on fishing vessels, passenger ships, cargo vessels, pleasure crafts and sailing yachts, a 30% decrease compared to Dec 23 (27). The majority of incidents during this month were reported due to engine failure. In most incidents, the ship's crew addressed the defects, but in a few cases, vessels sought assistance from local authorities. Regular inspections, timely repairs and following recommended operating procedures can significantly reduce the risk of mechanical issues.

Violent Confrontation - An incident of violent confrontation between two fishing groups was reported in South East Asia on 24 Jan 24. A group of fishermen pelted petrol bombs at a fishing vessel while at anchor, causing an explosion and fire onboard. No injuries to the fishermen were reported.

Regional Distribution

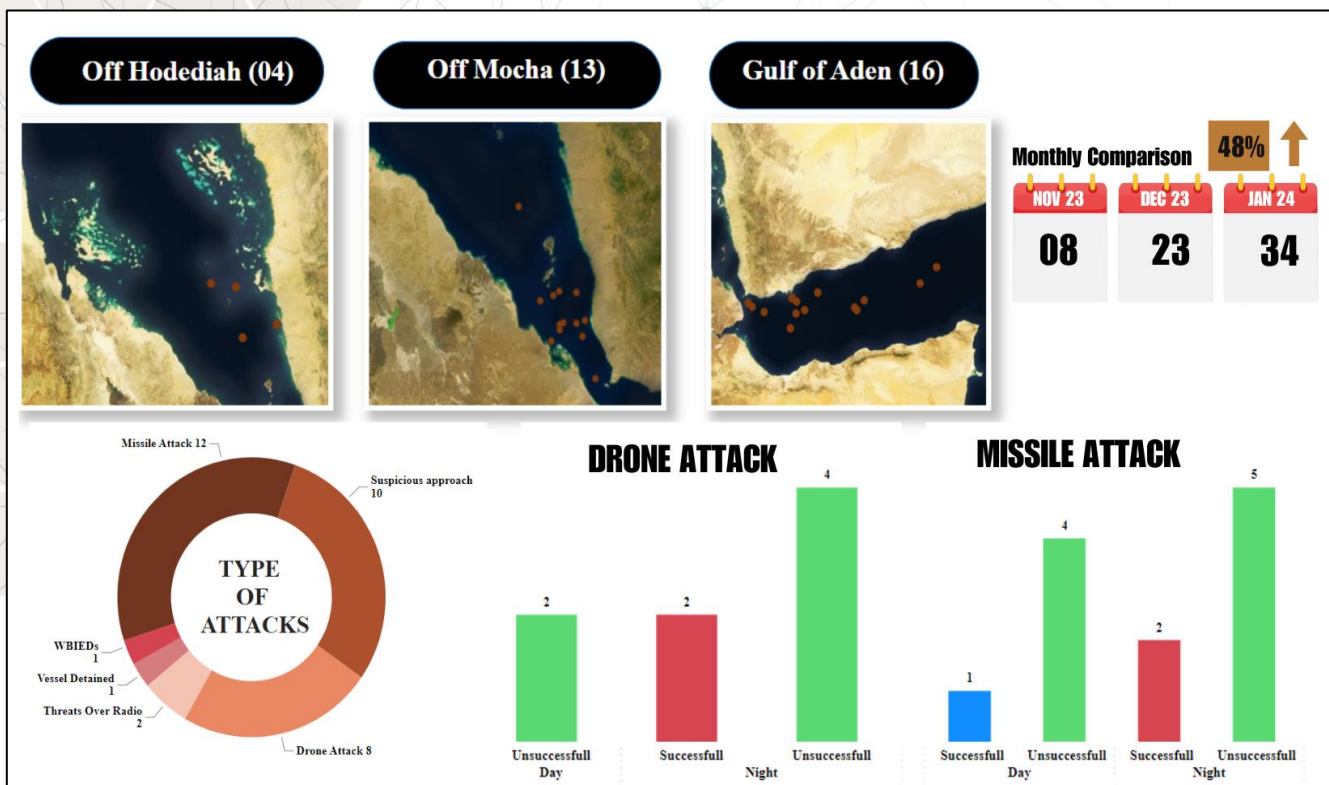
East Africa accounted for 21 incidents. MEDEVAC (05) followed by capsized (04), grounding (03), SAR (02), death (02), mechanical failure (02), fire (02) and sunk (01) were the reported incidents in this region.

West Asia accounted for 12 maritime incidents compared to five incidents in Dec 23. Vessels detained (04), sunk (02) and one incident each of missing, capsized, collision, SAR, fire and mechanical failure were the reported incidents in this region.

South Asia with 22 incidents witnessed a 31% decrease compared to Dec 23. 06 incidents of MEDEVAC and 04 incidents of mechanical failure were the reported incidents in this region.

South East Asia accounted for 96 incidents; an 18% increase compared to Dec 23. These included vessel detained (23), mechanical failure (12), sunk (10), capsized (08), missing (08), grounding (06), MEDEVAC (06), fire (05), man overboard (04), flooding (04), collision (03), SAR (03), death (02), one incident each of violent confrontation and others.

MARITIME SECURITY THREATS (HYBRID)



Overview

34 maritime security threats (hybrid) incidents were recorded by the Centre in Jan 24, a 48% increase compared to Dec 23 (23).

Location of Incidents

The incidents related to drone and missile attacks by non-state actors witnessed an expansion in the scope and geography of attacks. A marked shift of attack location from the Red Sea to the western Gulf of Aden was monitored during this month. The non-state actors in West Asia have reportedly targeted Israel-owned, operated and managed vessels. Also, a few incidents of drone/ missile attacks were monitored on US and UK-flagged vessels.

Drone Attacks

08 drone attacks were monitored in Jan 24, similar to Dec 23 (07). Six of these were reported during dark hours. In majority (06) of the incidents, international forces operating in the area were successful in shooting down the drones. However, two drone attacks were successful and caused damage to the vessels. No injury to the crew was reported.

Missile Attacks

12 missile attacks were monitored in Jan 24, compared to eight attacks in Dec 23. 07 incidents were reported during dark hours and five incidents during day time. 03 of the 12 incidents of missile attacks were successful inflicting damages to the targeted vessel. In 03 incidents, the missiles were reportedly engaged and brought down by international forces.

MARITIME SECURITY THREATS (HYBRID)

Water Borne Improvised Explosive Devices

One incident of unmanned surface vehicle attack was monitored off Yemen in the Red Sea. Reportedly, the unmanned surface vessel exploded without any damage to any vessel or causing injury to the crew.

Threats Over Radio and Suspicious Approaches

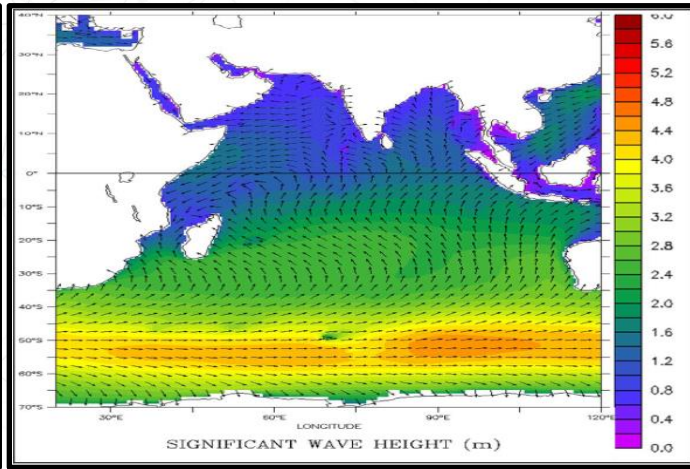
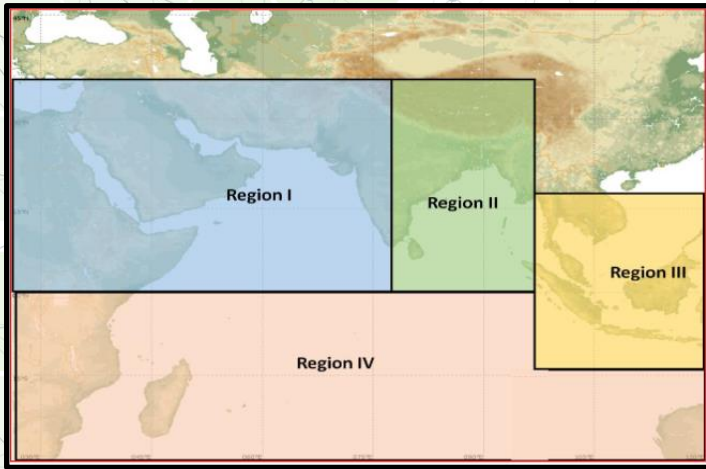
In the incidents of suspicious approaches and threats over radio, vessels transiting through the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden have reported being hailed by unknown entity claiming to be the Yemeni Navy or Yemeni Coast Guard, ordering them to alter course. Vessels are recommended not to respond to these calls and continue their passage in an expeditious manner.

Significant Incident - On 26 Jan 24, an incident of a missile attack was reported onboard Marshall Island Flagged crude oil tanker *MT Marlin Luanda* (IMO No 9829899) in the GoA (approx. position: 080 Djibouti 160 nm). *MT Marlin Luanda* was enroute to Fujairah, UAE from Port Said, Egypt,

carrying 87000 MT of Naphtha, a highly flammable liquid hydrogen mixture and 1500 MT of bunkers. Subsequent to the missile strike, a significant fire broke out in one of the cargo holds. The vessel raised a distress alert, which was monitored and responded to by INS Visakhapatnam, USS Carney and FS Alace operating in the area. The warships supported the firefighting effort by providing large quantities of high-efficiency foam concentrate to fight the fire. Based on the request from the master, a firefighting team from INS Visakhapatnam comprising 10 Indian Naval personnel with specialised firefighting equipment embarked on the vessel on 27 Jan 24 to assist the ship's crew in augmenting firefighting efforts. The coordinated efforts of the ship's crew and the firefighting team from the Indian Navy resulted in effective control of the fire. IFC-IOR actively coordinated the operations through constant communication between the vessel, the Company Security Officer and the Indian Navy to ensure necessary assistance and support to the vessel during this incident



WEATHER FORECAST – FEB 24



Region I: Arabian Sea (AS) – North Arabian sea is characterized by the passage of western disturbances and induced Lows across northern latitudes from West to East, which result in moderate winds and fall in temperature to North of 20°N. In this month, the average pressure in the SE Arabian Sea is about 1011 hPa. Tropical disturbances do not occur in the Arabian Sea in this month.

Region II: Bay of Bengal – Fair weather generally prevails over North Bay, Central Bay and adjoining coastal areas. The weather over South Bay sometimes deteriorate due to passage of lower tropospheric easterly waves which move from east to west over the lower latitudes, giving rise to rainfall activity between 0 – 10°N. Tropical cyclones may occur at any time of the year, but are least frequent in the month of February over this region. The mean sea surface temperature in the Bay of Bengal reaches a minimum of 24° to 25°C in February. Throughout the region, deviations from the mean temperature are small and seldom exceed 2° or 3°C.

Region III: Southeast Asia – During February, the mean sea level pressure values continue to be high over the northern parts (island territories) and weak pressure gradient of the order of 4-6 hpa is observed during this month. In general, isolated localised thunderstorms/ showers due to convective activity are seen over Sumatra island and Straits of Malacca. Occurrence of low visibility conditions with fog is rare over the open sea area, although visibility may fall during thunderstorms. Swell waves of 1.0 – 2.0 m height from N and NE direction is a common phenomenon over the region. The mean air temperature over open waters lies between 26.5°C and 28.5°C throughout the year.

Region IV: South Indian Ocean – In the month of February, the high pressure area is seen between 35° - 40°S. Pleasant weather is generally witnessed in this belt, but isolated showers may occur, especially during the passage of any system. Below the sub-tropical high pressure belt, there is a zone of strong westerly winds associated with precipitation over the region. Tropical disturbances are common occurrence during these months. They originate around 15°S and 95°E and move in a westerly direction. Some of them recurve southerly/ south-westerly and further south-easterly beyond 15°- 20°S and have a tendency to weaken and dissipate over the sea.

Note. The above weather report is also published on the IFC-IOR website and available at the link below for download and reference.

https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/ifc-ior/static/data/reports/weather/IFC_IOR_Weather_Forecast_Feb_2024.pdf

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Riveting Tale of Intrigue, Resourcefulness and Multinational Response

Mauritius and Sri Lanka ILO at IFC-IOR Perspective

On 27 Jan 24, an incident of hijacking was reported onboard the Sri Lanka-flagged multiday fishing trawler **LORENZO PUTHA 04** about 955 nm East of Mogadishu, Somalia. The perpetrators approached the vessel from the astern sector and fired gunshots whilst making an approach to threaten the crew. Subsequently, the perpetrators boarded and hijacked the fishing vessel. The ingenious perpetrators quickly infiltrated the fishing vessel. Upon boarding, one of the perpetrators exercised authority and ordered the crew member to set a 'waypoint' towards Somalia. Subsequently, the perpetrators had full control of the vessel. They implemented a complete zip-lip protocol onboard, with no crew member allowed to communicate on satellite phone or MMB Ch 16. However, the skillful crew tampered the compass system and manipulated the compass dial using a magnet, redirecting the vessel towards Seychelles. Reportedly, the perpetrators lacked expertise in navigation and other systems fitted onboard the fishing vessel in this particular incident. Exploiting this vulnerability, the crew discreetly recalibrated the compass dial during the absence of perpetrators in the bridge thereby successfully navigating the fishing vessel into Seychelles waters. Further, the crew of the hijacked fishing vessel managed to raise an alert and communicate the situation to another nearby fishing vessel during a short window of opportunity they had in the absence of perpetrators being on the bridge.

Operational Response

In a coordinated multinational response to the hijacking of the Sri Lankan fishing vessel, the Sri Lanka Navy, in collaboration with the Seychelles Defence Forces and Indian Navy successfully intercepted and rescued the hijacked vessel. The Seychelles Coast Guard vessel *Topaz* intercepted the hijacked fishing vessel on 29 Jan 24. An exchange of gunshots was reported between the perpetrators and the Coast Guard vessel. However, the Seychelles special military forces boarded the fishing vessel, took control of the vessel in Seychelles EEZ and rescued the crew. All three perpetrators surrendered and all six crew members were safe.

Operational coordination and information sharing between the Sri Lanka and Seychelles International Liaison Officers at IFC IOR, Gurugram was a key contributor in the interception of the hijacked fishing vessel by SCGS Topaz in Seychelles EEZ on 29 Jan 2024.



ARTICLES OF INTEREST

LATEST INDUSTRY TRANSIT ADVICE: SOUTHERN RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

The interim industry transit advisory by the shipping industry comprising stakeholders from BIMCO, Cruise Lines International Association, INTERCARGO and INTERTANKO, IMCA, and OCIMF highlights the following:-

- ✓ *Threats to vessels include anti-ship missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles, water-borne improvised explosive devices (WBIED), and drones. Mines are near entrances to Houthi-controlled ports and on rare occasions, those mines that have become detached from their tether, have drifted into the traffic lanes. Most recently, unmanned undersea vehicles have been reported, but no vessel has been attacked using these.*
- ✓ *The current maritime threat is more significant where Houthi forces are present, in the vicinity of the Yemeni Red Sea coastline. However, it should be noted that Houthi forces have demonstrated their ability to target and attack ships in the Gulf of Aden as far as one hundred nautical miles from the coast. The threat level to ships with Israeli, United Kingdom and United States interests remains high. However, all owners, operators, and crews should be cognisant that their vessel could be misidentified and understand the risk of collateral damage.*
- ✓ *Ship owners, operators, managers and staff should regularly evaluate the risks to their ships, including navigation and collision avoidance, and plan routes accordingly.*
- ✓ *Switching off AIS makes it marginally more difficult to track a ship but may also hinder the ability of the military to provide support or direct contact.*
- ✓ *Limiting the information in AIS data fields or switching off AIS could make a ship harder to locate but it is unlikely to ultimately prevent an attack. Limiting AIS data to the mandatory fields and omitting the next port of call (NPOC) could be considered.*
- ✓ *As per BMP 5, ships planning a passage through the Southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden should conduct a thorough ship and voyage specific threat and risk assessment considering any additional advice from their flag State.*
- ✓ *The industry recommendation to use the Maritime Security Transit Corridor (MSTC) remains unchanged in light of the recent attack.*

Source: BIMCO

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

THE RED SEA SHIPPING CRISIS IS HAVING A 'DRAMATIC' IMPACT: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)

UNCTAD in a conference highlighted the fact that the attacks against shipping in the Red Sea by Houthis are devastating for global trade and supply chains, already reeling under the impacts of the war in Ukraine and climate change-linked conditions in the Panama Canal. According to Jan Hoffmann, Chief of Trade Logistics at UNCTAD, the attacks are not only adding to geopolitical tensions but also raising costs and leading to increased greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions. Further, these disruptions underline their vulnerability to geopolitics, tensions and climate changes. During a press conference, the Chief of Trade Logistics also highlighted the following:-

✓ **Attacks and Counter Strikes**

- *Also known as Ansar Allah, Houthi rebels control large parts of Yemen, including the Red Sea coast.*
- *Since November, they have intensified attacks against ships passing through the narrow waters towards the Suez Canal, claiming they have been targeting those heading to Israeli ports.*

✓ **A Crucial Link**

- *The Suez Canal is a vital link for international shipping and accounts for between 12% and 15% of global trade and about 20 % of container trade.*
- *Disruptions in the Suez canal have a catastrophic and cascading effect worldwide, as seen during the Mar 21 grounding of the vast Ever Green container ship that blocked the waterway for days.*
- *Given the risk of attacks, ships are avoiding the route, traveling along the much longer passage around the southern tip of Africa.*
- *Container ship transits are down 67% compared to a year ago. The largest impact is on liquefied natural gas (LNG) carriers, which have stopped altogether since 16 Jan 24.*
- *Prior to the crisis, normally two or sometimes three gas carriers used to pass through the region daily.*

✓ **Global shipping in crisis**

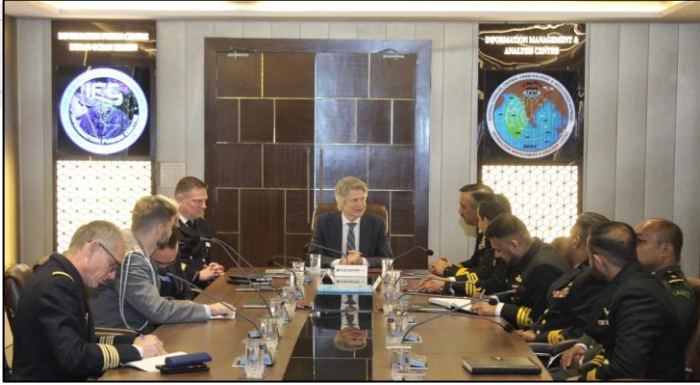
- *The challenges come on the back of pre-existing disruptions to global trade caused by the war in Ukraine and the abnormally low water levels in the Panama Canal due to climate change impacts.*
- *Low water levels have caused a decrease of 36% in ship transits compared to a year ago and are almost 62 % down on two years ago.*
- *Average shipping cost rates from Shanghai have more than doubled since early Dec 23, those to Europe over tripled and those to the US west coast also increased even though they don't go through the Suez Canal.*

Source: UNCTAD and IMO

VISITS AT IFC-IOR



Visit of Chief of Staff, Royal Saudi Naval Forces - 12 Jan 24



Visit of the Political Director, Federal Ministry of Defence, Germany - 19 Jan 24


*** End of Report ***




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