

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)
Fourth Committee of the General Assembly



Topic

***Ensuring safety in the Gulf of
Guinea***

-Research Report-

Table of Contents

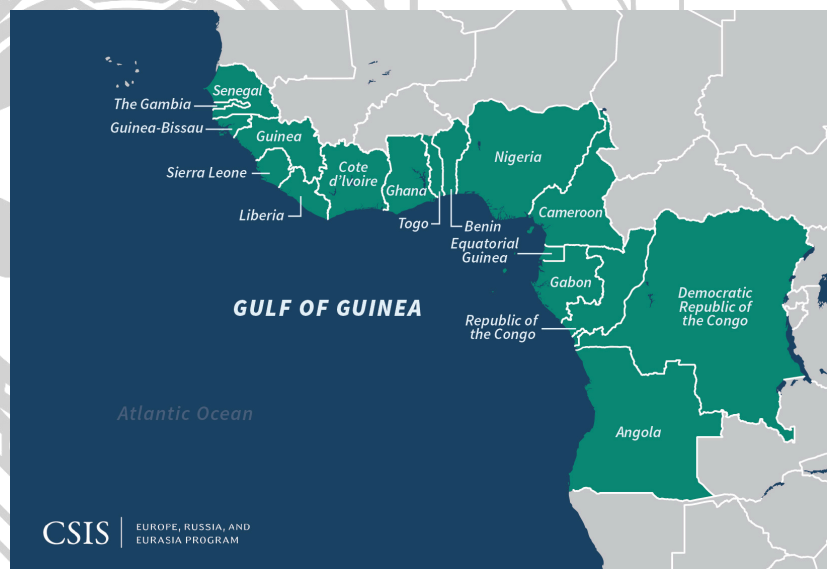
I. Introduction	2
II. Definition of key terms	3
III. Background Information	3
IV. Main Parties Involved	4
Nigeria	4
Ghana	4
Cameroon	5
Gabon	5
V. Timeline	6
• Early Stages of Piracy and Maritime Insecurity	6
• Growing Threats	6
• Piracy and Response Measures	6
• Legislative Advancements	6
VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issues	7
VII. Possible Solutions	8
VIII. Points to be Addressed	9
IX. Bibliography	9
X. Appendices:	10

I. Introduction

The Gulf of Guinea, which spans 17 nations from Senegal to Angola, is a strategically important region because of its abundant hydrocarbon, mineral (diamond, tin, and cobalt), and fishery resources. Although it is not a major international shipping route, the Gulf of Guinea contains about 20 commercial seaports, accounting for 25% of African marine traffic.

Growing marine insecurity, including widespread illicit, unreported, and unregulated fishing, piracy, armed robbery, and oil-related crimes, makes the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) a major global concern. Non-state actors who lack economic possibilities elsewhere have been drawn to the region's maritime wealth to participate in criminal activities, which are exacerbated by high unemployment, corruption, and poor governance.

The International Maritime Bureau reports that during 2019 and 2020, the number of recorded kidnappings at sea in this region rose by 40%, with the Gulf region responsible for over 95% of all kidnappings worldwide. As a result, the Gulf of Guinea has surpassed Somalia and the Gulf of Aden as the world's most important hotspot for piracy. 111 piracy incidents were reported in 2019,



compared to 25 in the Indian Ocean. Over the years, this turbulent maritime environment has endured persistent difficulties, making a careful analysis of its security environment necessary. In addition to the widespread problems, the GoG is also threatened by a variety of factors, such as environmental issues, economic vulnerabilities, and geopolitical complexity. These elements work together to increase the region's vulnerability to maritime crimes and the need for all-encompassing security measures. West African maritime pirate incidents have brought the region to the attention of the world and shown the flexibility of criminal organizations. A retrospective examination made in 2021 shows a noteworthy 54% decrease in maritime crime and overall piracy, demonstrating a positive trend from the year before. However, it is crucial to go further into the nuances of certain instances, their methods, and the names of the groups involved.

II. Definition of key terms

- **Piracy** - Acts of robbery or criminal violence at sea, typically involving hijacking ships, kidnapping crew members for ransom, or stealing cargo; they are also linked to organised crime networks.
- **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing** - Fishing activities that violate international laws, including operating without a license or overfishing, threatening the economies of coastal nations.
- **Oil Bunkering** - The illegal siphoning, transportation or sale of crude oil, often involving organised crime groups.
- **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** - A maritime area extending up to 200 nautical miles from a country's coast, where it has special rights to explore and use maritime resources.
- **Deep Blue Project** - A Nigerian government initiative aimed at reducing piracy and improving maritime security; it includes naval assets, surveillance aircraft, and collaboration with other international partners.
- **Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs)** - Firms that provide armed guards and security services for ships and ports.

III. Background Information

Piracy and armed attacks at sea constitute serious challenges. The Gulf of Guinea has been continually thought to be one of the world's most piracy-bound waters. Criminal gangs seize ships, hold crew members hostage for ransom and rob them of their cargo. They present a starkly different picture from the piracy crisis observed in Somalia since early 2000, which focused predators' hits on hostage-taking. The current status of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea involves violent attacks on crew and despoiled cargoes.

Illegal, Unreported & Unregulated (IUU) fishing exacerbates local and regional insecurity problems through excessive depletion of fish stocks. Such action undermines local subsistence and creates even more lingering economic uncertainty. Unregulated, thus slipping many foreign vessels out of the ballistic framework of regional authorities, gives them the thrust of unrestricted operations without being vigilantly watched or facing criminal prosecution from time to time. Many fishermen who resort to violence come into conflict

with international operations. Organized crime syndicates take advantage of instability to be arms smugglers, drug traffickers, and human exploitation runners.

International attempts to deal with these pressing issues are strong, while regional cooperation began in this respect. For that reason, the Yaoundé Code of Conduct was established in 2013 to provide a platform for countries in West and Central Africa to augment coordination of maritime security operations. This specialization has involved states sharing patrols, sharing intelligence, and providing legal frameworks to handle prosecution of maritime crimes. These tasks have further been made stronger by the inputs from such key organizations as the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC). These efforts face a number of challenges as sporadic implementation is caused by general poor resourcing problems further complicated by the endemic pall of corruption and bad governance in several coastal states.

Some international actors, notably the United Nations, members of the European Union, and prominent maritime nations, are engaged in close cooperation with security initiatives in this region. The UN Security Council recognizes the need for a worldwide effort to combat these threats. EU and U.S. coalition navies, along with assistance from other countries, have been focusing on providing combined surveillance assistance along with training. Some parties want to counteract these measures, while at the same time stating that the security challenges in the Gulf of Guinea are still present; thus, greater collaboration is still needed to achieve long-lasting stability in this area.

IV. Main Parties Involved

Nigeria

Nigeria is the most significant player due to its large coastline, oil industry, and history of piracy. The Niger Delta is a hotspot for oil theft and maritime crime. Playing a central role in securing the Gulf of Guinea, and combating piracy and maritime crime, Nigeria is the only country in the region with a dedicated legal framework for prosecuting piracy (*Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Act 2019*). Operationally, the Deep Blue Project, launched by NIMASA, deploys surveillance and response assets, contributing to a decline in piracy incidents. The Nigerian Navy and NIMASA lead enforcement efforts, working with international partners like the European Union or the United States through joint patrols and intelligence sharing.

Ghana

As a participant in the Yaoundé Architecture, Ghana collaborates with neighboring states to combat piracy and illicit activities. It benefits from EU-funded projects aimed at enhancing naval patrol capabilities and intelligence gathering, while the Danish Maritime Security Programme provides training and operational support to its navy. Domestically, Ghana invests in maritime security capacity development, focusing on implementing regional and international protocols. The country's approach balances national efforts with strong international partnerships, improving its ability to address maritime threats effectively.

Cameroon

Ever since piracy began to escalate in the Gulf of Guinea, Cameroon has strengthened its maritime security framework through various legal reforms. The Maritime Security Law, adopted in 2022, grants authorities the power to prosecute piracy and other maritime crimes with severe penalties, such as life imprisonment. To enhance better security, Cameroon deploys armed guards at key locations like the Douala anchorage and participates in the Yaoundé Architecture, a regional framework for coordinated anti-piracy efforts. At an international level, the country benefits from EU-funded projects, including improved naval patrol capabilities through advanced equipment.

Gabon

As another nation that plays an important role in Gulf of Guinea maritime security through its strategic geographic location, Gabon makes securing maritime trade routes essential due to its oil-dependent economy. Having a strong dialogue with the Western Powers, Gabon collaborates with the United States through State Partnership Programme, focusing on military training and maritime security, while France conducts joint naval exercises to combat piracy and smuggling. As a member of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Gabon also participates in the Yaoundé Architecture, contributing to regional initiatives against piracy.

V. Timeline

- **Early Stages of Piracy and Maritime Insecurity**

1970s: Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea begins to escalate due to its increasing international trade and shipping traffic; the region becomes a hotspot for hijackings, cargo theft, and other illegal activities.

1980s-1990s: Piracy is not formally recognised as a significant threat in the region until later. The international community begins to take action through the *United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS), which lays down the framework for an international maritime law, though it is not immediately enforced in the gulf.

- **Growing Threats**

2000: *The Yaounde Declaration* is signed by Gulf of Guinea states, laying the foundation for cooperation in addressing maritime security issues.

2006: *The International Maritime Organisation* (IMO), recognising the growing threat in the gulf, calls for enhanced regional cooperation to tackle maritime crimes.

2008: *The Gulf of Guinea Initiative* (GoGI) is launched to address piracy and maritime crimes, focusing on sharing information and joint naval patrols.

- **Piracy and Response Measures**

2011: Piracy incidents in the Gulf of Guinea reach alarming levels, particularly off the coast of Nigeria and the waters surrounding Sao Tome and Principe.

2013: *The Yaounde Architecture* is formalised, creating a regional framework that supports initiatives like joint operations and information sharing between member states.

2014: The UN Security Council holds a session focusing on piracy in the gulf.

- **Legislative Advancements**

2016: The African Union endorses the *Yaounde Code of Conduct*, a set of guidelines for cooperation between Gulf of Guinea states in addressing maritime security threats.

2017: The *Deep Blue Project* is launched by Nigeria to address piracy within its waters; this complex project includes the deployment of naval assets, creating new surveillance infrastructure, and renewing law enforcement capabilities.

2020: The *Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Act* (SPOMO) is enacted by Nigeria. It is the first law in the region specifically dedicated to piracy.

2022: Cameroon adopts its *Maritime Security Law*.

VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issues

There are different strategies that have come up over the years in order to tackle the problems the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) and West and Central Africa are facing regarding maritime security. Mostly, the previous programs that aimed at solving this issue helped by building up regional cooperation, strengthening enforcement measures, and taking international assistance to fight piracy and related threats. Yet, even with these measures, there are still considerable difficulties regarding the discussed issue.

One major step toward a safer Gulf of Guinea has been the signing of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, in 2013, which saw the coming together of 25 West and Central African countries with the purpose of strengthening maritime security through joint patrols, sharing intelligence, and setting up legal frameworks. Although this agreement provided a basis for cooperation, its effectiveness is undermined by imperfect enforcement and lack of capacity.

The ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States) strategies were also constructed to enhance regional maritime patrols, build legal frameworks, and enhance government coordination, yet political and logistical challenges have restricted the effective role these corporations had.

The United Nations (UN) and foreign naval missions have acted decisively, training local forces and effecting the security patrols with strategic support from the European Union and the United States of America. Although they have joined up in such time-constrained efforts to impart returns in relative short-term security, how sustainable these would be in the long term depends upon the regional voices stronger than ever leading to self-sufficient security systems.

The Deep Blue Project (2021) is a great national effort in Nigeria to fight against piracy and other maritime threats using aerial, land, and maritime resources. The encouraging results so far have indicated a decrease in piracy incidents within the Nigerian waters. But there are fears about its sustainability and the need for joint regional engagement to ensure availability across the borders of Nigeria.

Nevertheless, beyond bringing this issue somewhat up to speed on vessel security with closer cooperation between governments, shipping companies, and the IMO (International Maritime Organization), these projects leave by the wayside deeper structural issues related to economic downturns and governance problems.

These obstacles, such as poor enforcement, corruption, disjointed cooperation, and economic distress, will still intervene in their way, even with these initiatives in place. For sustained

maritime security in the region, an effective plan must be a combination of sustainable funding, good enforcement, and economic development initiatives.

VII. Possible Solutions

Effective maritime security requires, on the part of West and Central African states, sustained procurement of funds, reforming policies, and enhanced cooperation among neighboring states. A few measures could sustain a lasting solution.

1. **Strengthening Regional Cooperation**-countries in the region ought to proceed beyond on-paper agreements to operationalize their cooperation through joint sharing of real-time intelligence, coordination of patrols, and harmonization of legal frameworks/expertise decisively by facilitating the conviction of maritime crimes.
2. **Enhancing Enforcement Capacity**-this includes investment in modern surveillance technology, increasing coastal patrol vessels and training for coast guards. Nations should also ensure local law enforcement personnel are adequately equipped and motivated to carry out their functions professionally.
3. **Tackling Corruption**-within law enforcement and government agencies against maritime crimes, the most significant shortfall is corruption at the core. Transparency in oversight and accountability by punishing malfeasance will lessen corruption.
4. **Improving Economic Stability**-this factor exists as one of the significant root causes of maritime insecurity. Most times, people resort to piracy and smuggling out of desperation and poverty. Long-term solutions ought to create local employment and develop trade, which addresses and invests in coastal communities.
5. **Clever Use of International Support**-while these foreign support may be welcomed, the nations must take charge of their security arrangements. International partnerships would do better in knowledge and technical transfers, capacity building, and infrastructure provision than in persisting on life-breath supplements or even depend on crucial support outside the nations themselves.

Encouraging Private Sector Involvement-the shipping industry and private companies can make investments into ships' tracking systems, utilizing best security practices, and working with governments to create safer sea lanes.

VIII. Points to be Addressed

- What are some ways in which countries can strengthen maritime safety?
- What are the root causes of maritime insecurity and how can they be combated?
- How effective are the current laws ruling over the Gulf of Guinea?
- How important could organisations like ECCAS in combating maritime threats be?
- What are the risks of dependency on foreign aid and the importance of building local capacity?
- What are some technological solutions in improving maritime situational awareness?
- What is the economical impact of piracy in the region and how can the damage caused by illegal activities like oil spills from bunkering be addressed?
- How adequate are national navies and security joint forces in the Gulf of Guinea?
- What are some sustainable solutions that balance immediate security needs?

IX. Bibliography

1. Morcos, P., 'A transatlantic approach to address growing maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea', CSIS, 1 February 2021 (<https://tinyurl.com/4ynxth8p>)
2. United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General, 'Situation of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and its underlying causes', S/2022/818, 1 November 2022 (<https://tinyurl.com/55e52kc7>);
3. IMO, 'Maritime security in West and Central Africa' (<https://tinyurl.com/p4a5h8kw>).
4. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/joint/diplomacy-a-peace/why-gabon-matters-strategic-significance-along-the-gulf-of-guinea/>
5. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/security-situation-in-the-gulf-of-guinea-robust-response-to-combat-maritime-insecurity-and-piracy/>
6. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Africa/0312_confreport_maritimesecurity.pdf
7. <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/vessel-protection-against-piracy-in-the-gulf-of-guinea-a-public-private-hybrid>
8. https://commons.wmu.se/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3164&context=all_dissemtations
9. <https://www.ics-shipping.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/security-in-the-gulf-of-guinea.pdf>
10. <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/an-in-depth-analysis-of-maritime-security-in-the-gulf-of-guinea/>
11. <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/piracy-gulf-guinea/>
12. <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15113.doc.htm>
13. <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15331.doc.htm>

14. <https://www.gcsp.ch/publications/maritime-security-piracy-gulf-guinea>
15. https://www.unodc.org/conig/en/from-sea-to-land_tackling-maritime-crime-in-the-gulf-of-guinea.html

X. Appendices:

<https://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/briefs/deep-waters-maritime-security-landscape-gulf-guinea>

<https://luanda.mfa.gov.gh/ghana-and-the-gulf-of-guinea-commission/the-gulf-of-guinea-commission/>

<https://onu.delegfrance.org/we-are-conducting-several-actions-notably-in-cote-d-ivoire-and-gabon>

