Best Management Practices West Africa

The International Group, in partnership with other shipping industry associations, have launched new best management practices to deter piracy and enhance maritime security off the coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea.

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The recently published ***Best Management Practices (BMP) West Africa*** is a new addition to the established [BMP series](#) and provides enhanced threat mitigation guidance on counter-piracy/armed robbery at sea. Building upon existing guidance and drawing upon the experience gained by ships operating in West Africa, the new BMP aims to help ship operators and masters plan their voyages and to detect, deter, delay and report attacks while operating in the Gulf of Guinea region.

The *BMP West Africa* is free to download from:
https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/geography/gulf-of-guinea/

BMP fundamentals

The fundamental requirements of the new BMP West Africa are:

1. Understand the regional threats.

2. Conduct a ship-specific pre-voyage threat and risk assessment to identify appropriate ship protection measures (SPMs).

3. Implement relevant SPMs, e.g. in terms of ship hardening, briefing and training of crew, enhanced lookout as well as specific advice from local government bodies and military forces.

4. Register with the Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade-Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG) upon entering the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) and provide daily reports on the ship's movements while operating within the VRA.

5. Cooperate with other shipping, military forces, law enforcement bodies and welfare providers in the region when necessary - both before, during and after an attack.

It is also pointed out that a proper lookout is the most effective method of ship protection. It can help identify a suspicious approach or attack early on, which allows defenses to be deployed.

Gulf of Guinea – world's most dangerous piracy hotspot

There is no doubt that the Gulf of Guinea presents a serious and immediate threat to the safety and security of crews and vessels operating in the region. According to statistics provided by the International Chamber of Commerce's International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Center (IMB PRC), the total number of incidents of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea region doubled over the five-year period from 2015 to 2019 and the number of crew involved in kidnappings increased six-fold over the same period. The region also accounted for all four vessel hijackings that occurred in 2019, as well as 10 out of the 11 vessels that reported coming under fire. See our alert "[2019 in review: Piracy and armed robbery at sea](#)" of 24 January 2020 for additional information.

The potential consequences of not following industry best practices may be severe when transiting areas prone to piracy.

Note: The new BMP West Africa replaces the third edition of the type: asset-hyperlink id: bac6844f3a634d858ce1d23d884c1e06.