



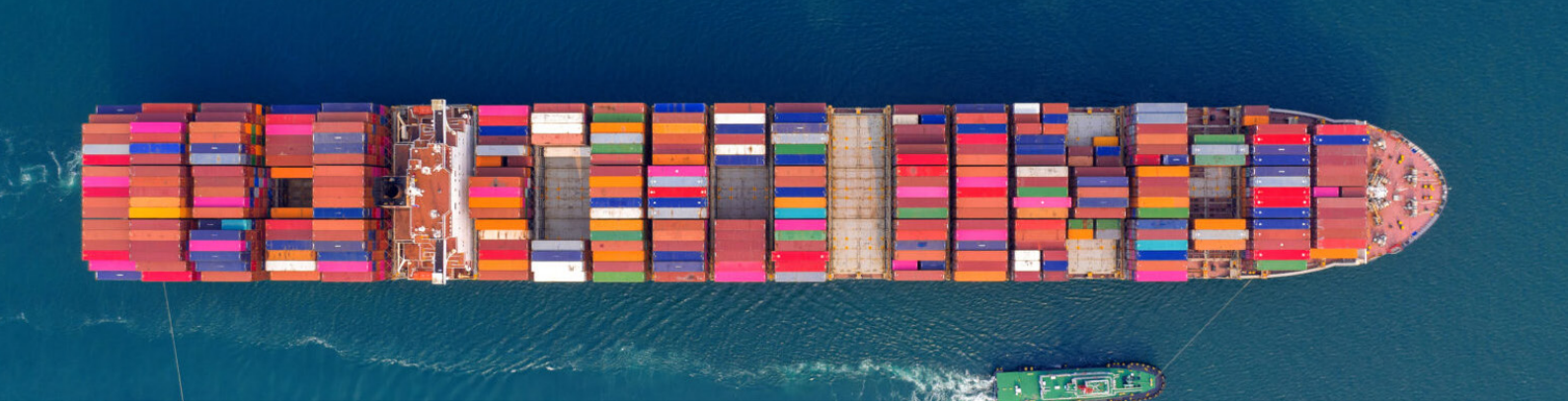
**INTERNATIONAL MARITIME
SECURITY WORKING GROUP**

Securing Vital Sea Lanes:

Threats to Global
Maritime Commerce

March 21, 2024 | 11AM GMT
Virtual: Zoom





Introduction

Maritime security is very crucial for effective functioning of global commerce, as approximately 80% of the world's trade is transported by sea. In fact, economies of all developed and developing nations and multinational corporations are more reliant than ever on global trade for their prosperity. Securing sea lanes is essential to ensure the safe and uninterrupted flow of goods and services across international waters. Sea lanes are critical conduits for international trade, connecting nations and facilitating economic growth. However, these important routes face a myriad of threats that can disrupt the global supply chain. These threats vary from weapon proliferation, trade disruption, piracy, terrorism, geopolitical tensions, and environmental challenges which pose significant risks to maritime security, necessitating a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address these issues.

One significant issue is the Bab EL-Mandeb which lies at the entrance to the Red Sea, a vital Sealine of communication (SLOC) and choke point, boarded by Yemen and Saudi Arabia to the east of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Sudan to the West and Somalia to the south. It is evident that most commercial shipping from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean and Europe must pass through the Bab EL-Mandeb and the Red Sea to the Suez canal. Likewise, most shipping coming from Europe to the Middle East, India and the Pacific must pass through this waterway. Any interference at any point along the SLOC could cause major trade disruptions, economic chaos and drastically increase insurance premiums for the shippers.

The full-scale attack on the Red Sea by the Houthis has had profound consequences for global maritime commerce, affecting key shipping and oil companies. Annually, approximately 1 trillion dollars of global trade goes through the 193-km (120-mile) waterway, run by the state-owned Suez Canal Authority, thus solidifying its status as a crucial route in the global supply chain. Soon after the attack commenced, both the United States and its allies, including the United Kingdom began collaborating to secure the vital trade route. This effort led to the formation of a coalition - Operation Prosperity Guardian - with the aim of deterring further attacks and enhancing the overall security of the maritime corridor.

At the onset of the conflict, significant shipping and oil companies were heavily reliant on the Red Sea maritime corridor. However, since November 2023, numerous commercial ships have been either attacked or delayed in the crucial maritime passage, spanning from the Suez Canal in Egypt through the Red Sea to the Bab al-Mandab strait. Consequently, these companies have opted to deviate from the Suez Canal and reroute around Africa through the Cape of Good Hope - a longer and less efficient

route. Among the affected companies are major players in commercial shipping and long-standing suppliers of global energy, such as Maersk, Hapag-Lloyd, CMA-CGM, and MSC. This shift, however, carries significant economic repercussions for global trade, ultimately leading to an escalation in the cost of imported goods.

Furthermore, the Mozambique channel which lies between Madagascar to the east and Mozambique to the west, along with the East coast is wide, deep and consists of island groups that are considered strategically important from the standpoint of maritime security since most of the countries in this region are fragile and have weak economies.

The Gulf Region shares borders with several countries grappling with governance weaknesses, corruption, economic hardships, and extensive ungoverned areas plagued by militant violence, illegal fishing, piracy, and poverty. These challenges present serious obstacles for the region: the bloc needs significant international support to secure its security and sovereignty in the short to medium term – but it also needs to progress its own global supply chain obligations as well as help other flag states fulfil their safety and welfare commitments for seafarers. This means that the Gulf Region and its member states have to balance meeting these short-term needs with building lasting alliances that support the Gulf Region's security and economic goals in the long term. Given the myriad of challenges highlighted above that threaten the maximization of regional commerce opportunities, it is essential to broaden our perspective and engage in discussions regarding the looming threats to commerce in this century. This will enable stakeholders to explore necessary trade-offs and develop counterstrategies to address similar challenges within the Gulf of Guinea.

Purpose of the Meeting

The event aims to explore perspectives from IMSWG experts on the Red Sea crisis. It will address key questions about how nations can come together to safeguard Sea lines of communication, taking into consideration the current state of affairs in the Red Sea, assess how the Gulf region can restore its freedom of navigation, and evaluate whether security deployments are meeting expectations. The meeting seeks to enhance discussions and inform future strategies in maritime security, safety of shipping, and great power politics.

Objectives

1. Discuss how geopolitical tensions among nations impact the security of sea lanes and global maritime trade?
2. Examining the evolution of Houthi attacks in the Red Sea
3. Assessing Great Power Politics and Diplomacy in the Gulf Region
4. Evaluating the impact of the Red Sea crisis on global supply chains and exploring the implications for alternative routes through the Gulf of Guinea
5. Deliberating on the role of commercial shipping in mitigating associated risks in the Red Sea maritime corridor

The International Maritime Security Working Group

The International Maritime Security Working Group (IMSWG) serves as a platform that convenes diverse members and stakeholders, including the general public, for discussions aimed at addressing critical issues impacting the maritime space of the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The overarching goal is to bolster safety and security at sea in support of sustainable development efforts. Managed by GoGMI and operating under the Chatham House Rule, IMSWG ensures that information shared during meetings can be reported by participants without attributing it to specific individuals or sources.

In each forum, members and participants are engaged in in-depth discussions on a wide range of topics under the theme, and offer suggestions for the promotion and development of ocean governance and the sustainable blue economy. These discussions are available in reports and recommendations on the Institute's website and serve as a repository for policymakers and institutions working on maritime safety development in the Gulf of Guinea region.

Invited Guest

1. Dr Osei Bonsu Dickson, Deputy National Security Coordinator
2. Mr. Albert Derrick Fiatui, Executive Director, CIMAG
3. Rear Admiral Nuno António de Noronha Bragança, Coordinator, Atlantic Centre
4. Ghana Navy
5. Ghana Maritime Authority
6. Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority

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Meeting Agenda

Times are shown in Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)

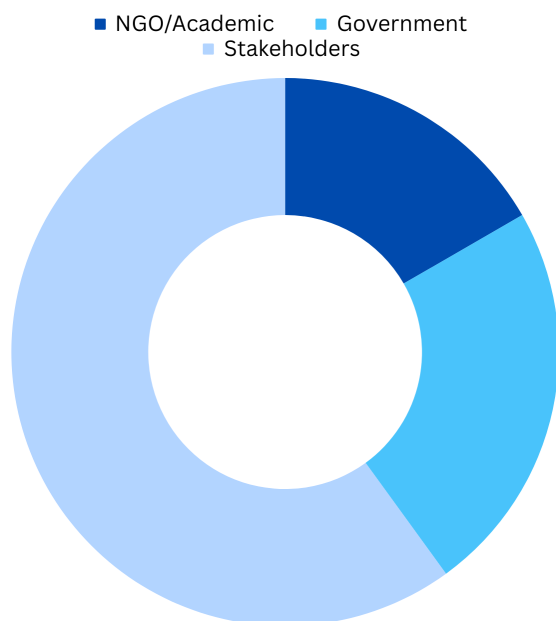
Moderator: Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute	
10:00 – 11:00	Registration of Participants
11:00 – 11:10	Welcome, Meeting Agenda, and Introduction of Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none">Organising Team (Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute)
11:10 – 11:30	First Round: Moderator addresses one personalised question to each panelist to draw out key messages building on their own experiences (5 minutes each). <ol style="list-style-type: none">In your opinion, what is the nature of the Houthis? What is their motivation for attacking vessels passing through the Red Sea? What is the likelihood of the Red Sea situation escalating within the region? Dr. Ian Ralby, CEO, I.R. ConsiliumIn your opinion, what makes the Red Sea such a crucial chokepoint for global supply chain outcomes? Capt Phillip Heyl, IMO ConsultantIn your opinion, what do you think are the consequences of shifting away from the Red Sea to alternative routes via the Gulf of Guinea? AVM Frank Hanson, Executive Director, GoGMIIn your opinion, have international efforts to address the Red Sea attack been largely successful? What are the factors that influenced the formation of Operation Prosperity Guardian? TBC
11:30 – 11:50	Second Round: Moderator addresses the same question to all panelists (3 minutes each) <ol style="list-style-type: none">"Is there a comparable risk of maritime trade disruptions in the Gulf of Guinea, similar to those observed in the Red Sea?"What strategy or approach needs to be acted upon to maintain the critical freedom of global trade in the Red Sea and advance alternative models for global order?
11:50 – 12:25	Moderated Q&A Session
12:25 – 12:30	Concluding Remarks



Previous organizations in attendance include:

Ghana Navy, Ghana Maritime Association, Ghana Ports and Harbour Authority, Risk Intelligence, University of Copenhagen, NIMASA, Interregional Coordination Center (ICC), Nigeria Navy, EU GoGIN, Canada Coast Guards, Africa Blue Economy Institute, SWAIMS, Maritime Organisation for West and Central Africa, Woman in Shipping Trade Association.

Who Attends?



Why Attend?

1. Engage with a dynamic community to exchange ideas and offer relevant recommendations to organizational leaders and policymakers, aiming to enhance reforms and strategy development comprehensively.
2. Play an active role in promoting the development of maritime safety and security across the globe
3. Foster communal consensus to advance social and economic prosperity

Join the International Maritime Security Working Group Today!

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