

Piracy & Kidnapping
Advice for ships' officers and crew in the Gulf of Guinea

Preparation

1. Carry out a ship and voyage specific risk assessment as recommended by BMP: West Africa <https://www.hellenicwarrisks.com/BMPWestAfrica2020.pdf>
2. Harden ship appropriately with external measures and door hardening if possible (see section 5 of BMP: West Africa)
3. Conduct drills and rehearsals before arriving in the Gulf of Guinea, including regular checking of/familiarity with citadel comms. Ensure the whole crew is involved, and that drills and rehearsals take place at different times of day and night.
4. Watches should be enhanced with greater rotations to prevent fatigue and should be all-round but particularly aft. Heightened vigilance is key, especially at night. Night attacks are far more likely to be successful - about a 74% chance of being successful at night, against a 30% chance during daylight hours.¹
5. If a suspicious approach is observed and there is time, increase speed and issue Mayday/distress calls.
6. Ensure the attack emergency alarm is understood by all crew, and is clearly differentiated from other alarms. If the attack emergency alarm is sounded, all crew, less those required on the bridge or in the engine room, go to the citadel immediately, using internal routes.
7. During rehearsals, all crew agree and understand the password to enter the citadel (e.g., a number of knocks, or a phrase). If you can't give the password, those inside will not open the citadel door.
8. Masters, Chief Engineers and other officers/remaining crew not already in the citadel should move to the citadel if boarding appears likely. Too many Masters and other officers are needlessly being kidnapped.
9. Crew should carry urgent medicines with them (e.g., in a waist belt) whenever they leave their cabin. When they are in their cabin, the medicines should be in their bags, and crew should be ready to take the bag with them at a moment's notice. Companies should consider giving their crew anti-malarial tablets to carry while in the GoG.
10. All crew should carry on their person a laminated card showing the company's emergency telephone number. If crew are kidnapped, they should show this to their kidnapers, as time is often lost establishing communication.

¹ Source: Risk Intelligence