

Transnational organised crime monthly briefing | January 2015

Spotlight on Africa

United States gifts Nigerian Navy another warship to help in fight against organised crime and terrorism

The United States government continues to strengthen the capability of the Nigerian Navy by supplying it with a second warship, the NNS Okpabana, which sailed into the naval dockyard at Victoria Island, Nigeria, on 2 January after being transferred from the US Coast Guard. The huge vessel has been gifted to Nigeria by the US government with the aim of aiding Nigeria's ongoing fight against transnational organised maritime crime. As such, the ship will act as a warning to local pirates and oil thieves, in addition to protecting Nigeria from aggressors such as terrorist groups that threaten the country's peace and stability.

While the militant Islamist group Boko Haram continues its murderous domination of northeastern Nigeria in the face of ineffectual resistance from the Nigerian Army, the Nigerian Navy is trying to tackle the increasing occurrence of transnational organised maritime crime in the south. Nigeria's chief of naval staff, Vice Admiral Jibrin, told reporters that the new addition to Nigeria's navy would 'boost the country's war against maritime crimes, especially oil theft, illegal fishing, arms smuggling and piracy within the nation's waters'. In the past, an increase in piratical crime taking place in Nigerian waters and around the Gulf of Guinea has been closely linked to the poor maintenance of the Nigerian Navy's vessels. The Nigerian government hopes that the new addition to the navy's fleet will strengthen the country's ability to fight sea criminals, as well as cement the bilateral relationship between the United States and Nigeria.

In recent times, piratical crime has been targeted by a joint law enforcement operation between Nigeria and neighbouring Benin. The special task force, named Operation Prosperity, has successfully managed to reduce the incidence of sea crime. However, the threat of maritime crime and robbery remains ever present in the waters surrounding Nigeria and chairman of the Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) Rivers State, Jonah Jumbo, laments the government is not doing enough to stop the trend in maritime crime.



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In 2014, no less than 50 sea pirate activities were recorded in the territorial waters of Nigeria's Rivers State. The recent deployment of NNS Okpabana will help to strengthen Nigeria's fight against sea crime by acting as a visible deterrent, and it is therefore probable that Nigeria will see rates of maritime criminal activity fall in the future. However, the key factor likely to determine the nature of the Nigerian law enforcement response to organised maritime crime is the bilateral economic relations that exist between the United States and Nigeria. Currently, the United States is the largest foreign investor in Nigeria and under the US-Nigeria Binational Commission, the two countries liaise on key areas, including good governance, transparency and integrity; energy and investment; regional security; Niger Delta; and agriculture and food security. As long as the United States continues to invest in Nigeria, Nigeria's policymakers and law enforcement authorities are likely to remain heavily influenced by US counter-crime recommendations.

Other developments

The UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has raised concerns over the low conviction rates for human traffickers. The UN agency drew attention to the issue in its *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, which was released on 26 November 2014 by Masood Karimipour, the UNODC regional representative for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).¹ The report highlights that 40% of countries recorded few or no convictions for human trafficking. Furthermore, over the past 10 years there has been no discernible increase in the global criminal justice response to this crime, leaving a significant portion of the population in some countries vulnerable to offenders. Highlighting that almost all countries of the MENA region have laws against human trafficking, Karimipour emphasised the importance of enforcing such laws, and ensuring proper investigation, prosecution and adjudication of trafficking cases while pursuing a rights-based approach towards trafficking victims.

On 15-17 December 2014, the High Authority for the Fight against Corruption and Assimilated Offences (HALCIA) hosted a stakeholders workshop in Niamey, Niger. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) regional office for West and Central Africa supported the workshop. It was attended by representatives of HALCIA, the Ministry of Justice, the Parliamentary Network for the Fight Against Corruption, and various other supervisory bodies and civil society groups in Niger. The aim of the workshop was to familiarise participants with the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the Jakarta Principles for Anti-corruption Agencies, leading to the identification of problems with Niger's current anti-corruption legal framework and the subsequent alignment of it with UNCAC.

¹ http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP_2014_full_report.pdf.

Kenya is embroiled in crimes of terrorism and human rights violations, according to an article by Dr Peter Onyango, a law lecturer at the University of Nairobi in Kenya.² In the article, Onyango questions the legality of the country's counterterrorism efforts, and concludes that Kenya requires an improved legislative framework to deal with terrorism without infringing on human rights. He highlights the urgent need for the government to train its security forces and law enforcement officers to fight terrorism without breaching human rights law. Onyango also states that Kenya is entering a phase of 'Jihadist radicalisation of the youth', with the increased presence of the Somali militant Islamist group al-Shabaab in the country.

Also of note

- **Incidents of violent and serious crime dramatically increase in South Africa over the festive period.** South Africa's police minister, Nathi Nhleko, has launched a national police operation to crack down on crime over the Christmas season.
- **The militant Islamist movement Boko Haram has launched a series of attacks on the town of Baga and its environs in the northeast of Nigeria.** Conflicting reports place the total death toll at between 100 and 2,000 people, with thousands displaced and towns largely razed to the ground. The attacks coincide with Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan's campaign for re-election in the general election on 14 February.
- **Kwesi Aning and John Pokoo from the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Ghana have highlighted in a research paper that the proceeds of crime help to forge 'opportunistic relationships between criminals and extremist groups' in West Africa.**³
- **On 27 December 2014, the Mauritanian Army captured nine drug traffickers near the town of Ain Ben Tili.** The arrest was the result of a special operation launched by the armed forces to crackdown on drug traffickers active in the northern part of Mauritania.
- **Rhino poaching in Kruger National Park, South Africa, has dramatically increased, from 12 rhinos killed in 2007 to in excess of 1,000 in 2013.** The rise is driven by demand for the horn in Southeast Asia, according to Ken Maggs, who heads the environmental crimes unit at South Africa National Parks (SANParks).

² Published in *Sociology and Anthropology* 3(1): 1-5, 2015.

³ <http://www.stabilityjournal.org/article/view/sta.df/184>.

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