



WEBINAR REPORT

Gulf of Guinea: Improving Maritime Security



**How can coordination on education,
training and exercises in the region
be improved?**

Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea – Webinar Report
NATO Strategic Direction -South Hub

The NSD-S HUB was established at Allied Joint Force Command Naples in order to improve NATO awareness and understanding of the opportunities and challenges from the South, while contributing to the overall coordination of NATO activities and efforts. NSD-S HUB products are developed with a direct engagement of regional experts, open-source information from governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, academic institutions, media sources and military organizations. By design, NSD-S HUB products or links to open-sourced and independently produced articles do not necessarily represent the opinions, views or official positions of any other organization.

In collaboration with the independent research, management and development firm Three Stones International, the NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub organized a Webinar on 17 February, 2021 following a pre-webinar survey.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“You can’t blame your house for letting the rain in until you put a roof on it.”
African Proverb used by webinar panelist in preparatory discussion*

The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) has become the global epicenter of piracy. The 2020’s International Chamber of Commerce - International Maritime Bureau reports that more than 95% of all seafarers kidnapped were related to incidents in the region. The increased frequency, intensity and violence of attacks have led many to call for decisive action to ameliorate the threat. While many outside the region see armed robbery against ships and piracy as the main concerns in the maritime space of West and Central Africa, stakeholders within the region recognize a variety of additional maritime crimes that threaten the stability and economy of the region. First and foremost among them is illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing which decimates fish stocks, erodes the marine environment and puts economic hardship on coastal communities. It also causes fishermen to take sometimes fatal risks to reach more abundant waters. Piracy and Armed robbery against ships may threaten the economy of the region by interfering with international maritime trade, but IUU fishing also threatens the economy of the region as well as its food security and food sovereignty.

Despite these challenges, the architecture of maritime security cooperation across West and Central Africa is extensive. A cascading set of instruments, institutions and initiatives seeks to create a truly cooperative approach to securing the territorial waters of the region. In some ways, the successes at the national, zonal, regional and inter-regional levels have actually pushed criminals to adapt their business model by moving the attacks far from the coastline (international waters) and taking crew members hostage for ransom. This stands in noticeable contrast to the situation a few years ago; when these maritime criminals found little risk in taking vessels and stealing cargo in the territorial waters, even within sight of shore. Despite the improvement in maritime security through this cooperative architecture, however, the current threat picture in the region requires a major change in order to settle the concerns of international community, including the maritime industry.

As one of the Webinar Panelists noted in a discussion before the event, an African proverb is applicable: *“You can’t blame your house for letting the rain in until you put a roof on it”*. In other words, you cannot claim that the maritime security architecture of the region – known as the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Safety and Security (YAMS) – is not working until it is fully built out and implemented. When approaching the region, therefore, the international community is strongly encouraged to work with and through the YAMS to help strengthen the cooperative efforts the states of the region have initiated. This also applies to any possible future involvement of NATO in the region.

A critical area of support – needed both to address immediate issues, and create long-term capacity – is in education, training and exercises. The still nascent navies, coast guards and law enforcement agencies of West and Central Africa, have a variety of needs and interests in this respect, most notably legal education, law enforcement training, and operational exercises. Some of these needs are being addressed by many international stakeholders, and an overarching coordination mechanism would enhance the synchronization and effectiveness of initiatives. Key areas of interest for external support include Education, Training and Exercises aimed at helping the region address:

- How to engage in multinational maritime operations with different languages and legal systems;
- How to work with the shipping industry in a clear, consistent and effective way;

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- How to harmonize standard operating procedures across multiple national jurisdictions;
- How to create inter-regional interoperability across the spectrum of maritime security needs;
- How to compile, analyze and share information in a timely manner, across a wide geographic area, to facilitate effective response;
- How to enhance the data collection and analysis, as well as research and reporting capacity of the region.

To these points, maritime security stakeholders from the International Community, including NATO entities, NATO Maritime Command (MARCOM), the NATO Shipping Center, , NATO Education and Training Facilities – particularly NATO Defense College, NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Center and the NATO Centers of Excellence – particularly Combined Joint Operations at Sea (CJOS), Confined and Shallow Waters (CSW), Maritime Security (MARSEC), and Maritime Geospatial, Meteorological & Oceanographic – should examine how to optimize the assistance needed to the region.

Importantly, there is a desire for any education, training or exercises to become sustainable. The region wants to develop the capacity to retain the knowledge and expertise so that it does not constantly have to start the process over and, consolidate a corporate memory. Part of that sustainability means finding and championing both regional experts through train-the-trainer programs, and regional institutions that can become the referent for, and host the educational, training or exercise initiatives.

There has to be an understanding that maritime insecurity originates on land, and returns to it. Therefore, to effectively address maritime crime, be it armed robbery against ships or piracy, IUU fishing or any other form, efforts to counter and fight maritime crime must be comprehensive and coordinated to address the root causes on land. Even contextualizing efforts, by recognizing that most maritime crimes are really land-based problem with maritime symptoms, can help point toward a more holistic and thus effective approach to addressing insecurity. To the extent that education, training and exercises can address these issues, they should attempt to do so.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, any stakeholders supporting the region and any other potential actor like NATO should recognize the importance of relationships. The GoG region is a crowded space of international partners, in which any new partner willing to support ongoing efforts need to cultivate and build genuine trust-based relationships with key institutions and professionals in the region.

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ACRONYMS

AIMS	Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy
AMLEP	African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership
ARSTM	L'Académie Régionale des Sciences et Techniques de la Mer
AU	African Union
CIC	<i>Centre Interrégional de Coordination</i>
COE	Center of Excellence
CRESMAC	Maritime Security Regional Center for Central Africa
CRESMAO	Maritime Security Regional Center for West Africa
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of Western African States
GGC	Gulf of Guinea Commission
GoG	Gulf of Guinea
ICC	Inter-Regional Coordination Center
IMLI	International Maritime Law Institute
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
MOC	Maritime Operations Center
MMCC	Maritime Multinational Coordination Center
NSD-S Hub	NATO Strategic Direction – South Hub
REC	Regional Economic Community
RMU	Regional Maritime University
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TSI	Three Stones International
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
YAMS	Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Safety and Security

INTRODUCTION

Maritime security in the GoG is currently at a critical juncture. The frequency and intensity of attacks at sea in the region have led to calls for a wide array of “solutions” many of which require external involvement. While not the principle focus of the webinar, this context served as the unavoidable backdrop for a discussion on existing maritime security education, training and exercising initiatives in the region, and what opportunities NATO might have in support of security and stability in the South, especially with regard to a coordination mechanism.

On February 17th 2021, the NATO Strategic Direction South Hub, with the support of Three Stones International (TSI), conducted a live online webinar to profile the complexities of the maritime environment in the of Gulf of Guinea (GoG) and to identify education, training, and exercise opportunities and good practices that may contribute to improving maritime security across the region. The NSD-S Hub and TSI invited a wide audience to take part in the dialogue sessions, comprised of participants from governments, international organizations, the maritime sector and civil society organizations who joined from various locations across the globe. The two and half-hour webinar was moderated by TSI and NSD-S Hub using the Zoom platform, with seven subject matter expert panelists and over 170 audience participants and YouTube live stream followers.

The leading maritime security professionals in the GoG were identified through NSD-S Hub’s professional networks to participate as panelists in the dialogue. Experts on the panel included African Union (AU) and Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) officials, senior representatives of regional maritime security institutions, civil society and academic experts and a major figure in the maritime industry. The discussion was dynamic, and audience members following the discussion were able to participate via the chat which was active throughout the event. The legal advisor to the AU intervention provided useful insight on the legal approach pursued by the AU in the matter of maritime security. Following the initial discussion by the panelists, NSD-S Hub posed questions to the panel and then opened up the discussion with questions provided by participants. Panelist were asked to present prospective recommendations for NATO to consider in engaging with the GoG region on education, training and exercises. Continued dialogue on LinkedIn and Twitter indicates the sustained interest in this topic and the desire for further engagement on the topic.

To supplement the insights from the webinar panelists, a survey was administered ahead with key questions posed to all the participating stakeholders - NATO, African Navies, maritime security experts, academics, civil society organizations and other regional and international partners. The survey consisted of 14 questions focused on the current state of education, training and exercising, as well as the needs for how to help make it more effective in enhancing maritime security. A pre-webinar video featuring the moderator, Dr. Ian Ralby, was also shared in advance of the dialogue session to mobilize response to the survey and interest to join the session. Nineteen (19) respondents shared feedback through the survey.

BACKGROUND

Over the last decade, the GoG has simultaneously experienced the greatest increase in maritime insecurity and the greatest advancement in maritime security cooperation of any region on earth. Currently, insecurity has become the main focus. The piracy situation is dire;¹ drugs are no longer just transshipped through but trafficked to the region as the market for narcotics and psychotropic substances continues to grow;² migrant smuggling and human trafficking remain major concerns;³ arms flow into the region to support various conflicts;⁴ and oil and fuel theft have reached levels that are hard to even measure.⁵ New phenomena brought about by the pandemic are also emerging, as counterfeit personal protective equipment (PPE) has become a commodity worth smuggling.⁶ And illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing poses huge environmental, economic, social and law enforcement challenges for West and Central Africa.⁷

As bad as many of the crimes are, however, piracy, armed robbery against ships and IUU fishing stand out as being the matters of greatest concern. As the saying often goes, “*no shipping, no shopping*.”⁸ West and Central Africa, like all regions on earth, rely on the maritime domain for the transport of goods. Ninety percent of world trade happens by sea and that is true, even for the landlocked states of the two regions.⁹ Goods shipments into West and Central Africa continue to support growing economies and satisfy demands among the burgeoning middle class. At the same time, goods leaving the regions – from fish to agricultural products like cocoa, nuts, and cotton to commodities like oil, palm oil, and rubber to manufactured and artisanal goods – need maritime transport for access to international markets. ECOWAS and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) member states cannot continue to develop on their current trajectories without the continued flow of international maritime commerce. This reality underscores why the maritime criminality, such as piracy, is so critical; it is not merely about crime at sea, but about interference with the drivers of economic activity on land. If piracy succeeds in deterring shipping to and from West and Central Africa, it will be difficult for both regions to maintain stability and development.

¹ “Why is Piracy Increasing in the Gulf of Guinea?” Deutsche Welle, 21 Feb. 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/why-is-piracy-increasing-on-the-gulf-of-guinea/a-56637925>.

² Changing Gear: The Global Drugs Trade Heads to West Africa, The Economist, 23 Nov. 2019, <https://www.economist.com/international/2019/11/21/the-global-drugs-trade-shifts-to-west-africa>.

³ COVID-19 Impact on Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking, INTERPOL, 11 Jun. 2020, <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2020/COVID-19-impact-on-migrant-smuggling-and-human-trafficking>.

⁴ See TSI/NSD-S Hub Report on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Oct. 2020, https://thesouthernhub.org/resources/site1/General/NSD-S%20Hub%20Publications/20201125_NU_NSDS_HUB_Webinar_Stemming_the_Flow_of_Small_Arms_Light_Weapons_in_Africa_and_the_Middle_East.pdf.

⁵ Ian Ralby, David Soud & Rohini Ralby, “Oil on the Water: Illicit Hydrocarbons Activity in the Maritime Domain,” The Atlantic Council, 2018, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/oil-on-the-water-illicit-hydrocarbons-activity-in-the-maritime-domain/>.

⁶ Illegal Trade in Fake or Faulty COVID-19 Products Booming, New UN Research Reveals, UN News, 8 Jul 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1067831>.

⁷ Ifesinachi Oakfor-Yarwood, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, and the Complexities for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Gulf of Guinea, 99 Marine Policy, Jan 2019, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X17303445>.

⁸ Ian Ralby, Enhancing Maritime Security, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 23 March 2018, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/enhancing-maritime-security/>.

⁹ Ocean Shipping and Ship Building, OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/ocean/topics/ocean-shipping/#:~:text=The%20main%20transport%20mode%20for,transport%20arteries%20for%20global%20trade> .

Five years ago, the armed robbery against ships and maritime crimes model in the region was focused on the exceptionally high quality light and sweet crude extracted from the oil rich Niger Delta in southeastern Nigeria.¹⁰ Bonny Light Crude is so low in sulfur and density that it requires very minimal refining before it can be used as fuel. Indeed, artisanal processing can be done in makeshift refineries. It is for this reason that piracy, focused on oil theft, had thrived for so long. A tanker could be attacked, some of its cargo stolen via a ship-to-ship transfer (transshipment), and after paying a small ransom, the crew and vessel would be released.¹¹ The criminals could then either resell the crude into the market via various mechanisms or return to shore for artisanal refinement and sell it as fuel. Over the last three years the model has changed dramatically.¹² Today, the focus is not on oil, but on seafarers - the people who transport the ninety percent of world trade that moves by sea. During the pandemic, the strain on merchant mariners has been particularly acute, as roughly 400,000 individuals have been stuck at sea since the COVID-19 prevention restrictions began in early 2020.¹³ The piracy phenomenon in the GoG, therefore, is a compound stress. In 2020, 135 seafarers were abducted worldwide; 130 of them were in the GoG region.¹⁴ It is for this reason that shipping companies are desperate to find solutions to reduce the threat to their employees and keep maritime commerce flowing.

As vital as shipping is, it is perhaps equally true in West and Central Africa to say: “*no fish, no food*”. Fish is the main source of dietary protein for many of the states in the GoG, and nothing undermines both food security and food sovereignty more than IUU fishing.¹⁵ Estimates vary, but tens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars of fish are stolen annually from the abundant waters of the GoG. That economic value, however, only tells a piece of the story, as the environmental impact has long-term consequences for the West African fishery sector and the onshore economic impact is staggering. Some estimates put the total losses from IUU fishing in the region to over \$2.3 billion per year.¹⁶ Beyond economic concerns, IUU fishing, like piracy, has become a matter of life and death. Local fishers are finding smaller and less plentiful catch. This is pushing them out farther from shore, sometimes beyond where it is safe for their vessels to go, accounting for a shockingly high rate of death among local fishers.¹⁷ In at least some states of the region, one out of every 15 canoes sinks each

¹⁰ Ian Ralby, “Downstream Oil Theft: Global Modalities Trends and Remedies,” The Atlantic Council, 2017, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/downstream-oil-theft/>

¹¹ Id.

¹² Gulf of Guinea Piracy: Tactical Shift from Oil Bunkering, Dryad Global, <https://dg.dryadglobal.com/nigeria-pirates-and-kidnapping>

¹³ 400,000 Seafarers Stuck at Sea as Crew Change Crisis Deepens, IMO, 25 Sept. 2020, <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/32-crew-change-UNGA.aspx>

¹⁴ Gulf of Guinea Records Highest Ever Number of Crew Kidnapped in 2020, According to IMB’s Annual Piracy Report, International Chamber of Commerce, 13 Jan 2021, <https://iccwbo.org/media-wall/news-speeches/gulf-of-guinea-records-highest-ever-number-of-crew-kidnapped-in-2020-according-to-imbs-annual-piracy-report/#:~:text=Globally%2C%20135%20crew%20were%20kidnapped,number%20of%20multiple%20crew%20kidnappings>.

¹⁵ Björn Schulte-Herbrüggen, Guy Cowlshaw, Katherine Homewood & J. Marcus Rowcliffe, Rural protein insufficiency in a wildlife depleted West African farm-forest landscape, PLOS, 13 Dec. 2017, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0188109>

¹⁶ Alkaly Doumbouya, Ousmane T. Camara, Josephus Mamie, Jeremias F. Intchama, Abdoulie Jarra, Salifu Ceesay, Assane Guève, Diène Ndiaye, Ely Beibou, Allan Padilla & Dyhia Belhabib, Assessing the Effectiveness of Monitoring Control and Surveillance of Illegal Fishing: The Case of West Africa, Frontiers in Marine Science, 7 March 2017, [https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2017.00050/full#:~:text=IUU%20in%20the%20waters%20of,West%20Africa%20\(Table%20202\)](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2017.00050/full#:~:text=IUU%20in%20the%20waters%20of,West%20Africa%20(Table%20202)).

¹⁷ West Africa’s Missing Fish, porCausa, 2016, <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10665.pdf>

year, and one out of every 200 fishers is lost at sea.¹⁸ IUU fishing, like piracy, is a complex and multidimensional threat in the GoG.

As acute as these problems are, the region has not been idle. In fact, the architecture for maritime security cooperation in the GoG is perhaps the most ambitious on earth and has already become an inspiration for other regions around the world. The instruments and institutions of maritime security cooperation form a cascading set of strategic and operational initiatives that, if fully operational, would maximize the effectiveness of maritime security and law enforcement across all nineteen coastal states of ECOWAS and ECCAS.¹⁹ At the continent-wide level, the AU has produced the Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS) 2050,²⁰ setting forth the vision for how the blue economy is to be secured, governed and developed.²¹ The Lomé Charter supplements AIMS 2050 with more specific objectives and annexes yet to be adopted.²² The work of the GoG supports the vision and objectives of both AIMS 2050 and the Lomé Charter.

In 2013, the heads of state of all members of ECOWAS and ECCAS – coastal and landlocked – adopted the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, better known as the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.²³ The Code mandates cooperation between the states to address the full spectrum of illicit activities in the maritime domain. It also creates a clear architecture of cooperation, and the three regional bodies, ECOWAS, ECCAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, serve as the political oversight of that architecture.²⁴

The Inter-regional Coordination Center (ICC or sometimes known by its French acronym as Centre Interrégional de Coordination - CIC), based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, serves as the coordinating body between the two regions. Each region, in turn has a Maritime Security Center – Maritime Security Regional Center for West Africa (CRESMAO) in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire and Maritime Security Regional Center for Central Africa (CRESMAC) in Pointe Noire, Congo. The states are then organized into zones A, D, E, F and G – there is no B or C. Zone A is not yet operational, but will include Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo. Zone D, which includes Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe, is the most operational, conducting regular combined operations at sea, with a Maritime Multinational Coordination Center (MMCC) in Doula, Cameroon. Zone E is operational on paper and has a manned MMCC in Cotonou, Benin, but has not conducted operations on the water. It includes Nigeria, Benin and Togo, plus the landlocked state of Niger, which has provided marine patrol aircraft to support operations in the future. Zone F is gaining momentum with its member states of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and the landlocked state of Burkina Faso and an MMCC in Accra, Ghana. And Zone

¹⁸ Fishing Among the Most Dangerous of All Professions, Says ILO, International Labor Organization, 13 Dec. 1999, https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_071324/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁹ Ian Ralby, "The Case for a Whole-of-Africa Maritime Dialogue," IGAD Maritime Affairs Newsletter, Vol. 3, Jul. 2018, retrieved at: <https://irconsilium.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/IMAN-July-18.pdf>.

²⁰ Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy 2050, African Union, <https://au.int/en/documents-38>.

²¹ Timothy Walker, "Reviving AU's Maritime Strategy," ISS Policy Brief, Feb. 2017, <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/36352/1/policybrief96.pdf?1>.

²² Barthélemy Blédé and Timothy Walker, "Fulfilling the Promise of the Lomé Maritime Summit," ISS, 21 Oct. 2016, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/fulfilling-the-promise-of-the-lome-maritime-summit>.

²³ Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa (Yaoundé Code of Conduct), June 2013, http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Security/WestAfrica/Documents/code_of_conduct%20signed%20from%20ECOWAS%20site.pdf.

²⁴ Ian Ralby, David Soud, Rohini Ralby, "The Gulf of Guinea is Ready for Maritime Security," CIMSEC, 2019, found at: <http://cimsec.org/the-gulf-of-guinea-is-ready-for-maritime-technology/39790>.

G most recently appointed a director from Senegal to serve in the forthcoming MMCC in Praia, Cabo Verde. It includes both states, plus the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and the landlocked state of Mali.

Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Safety and Security

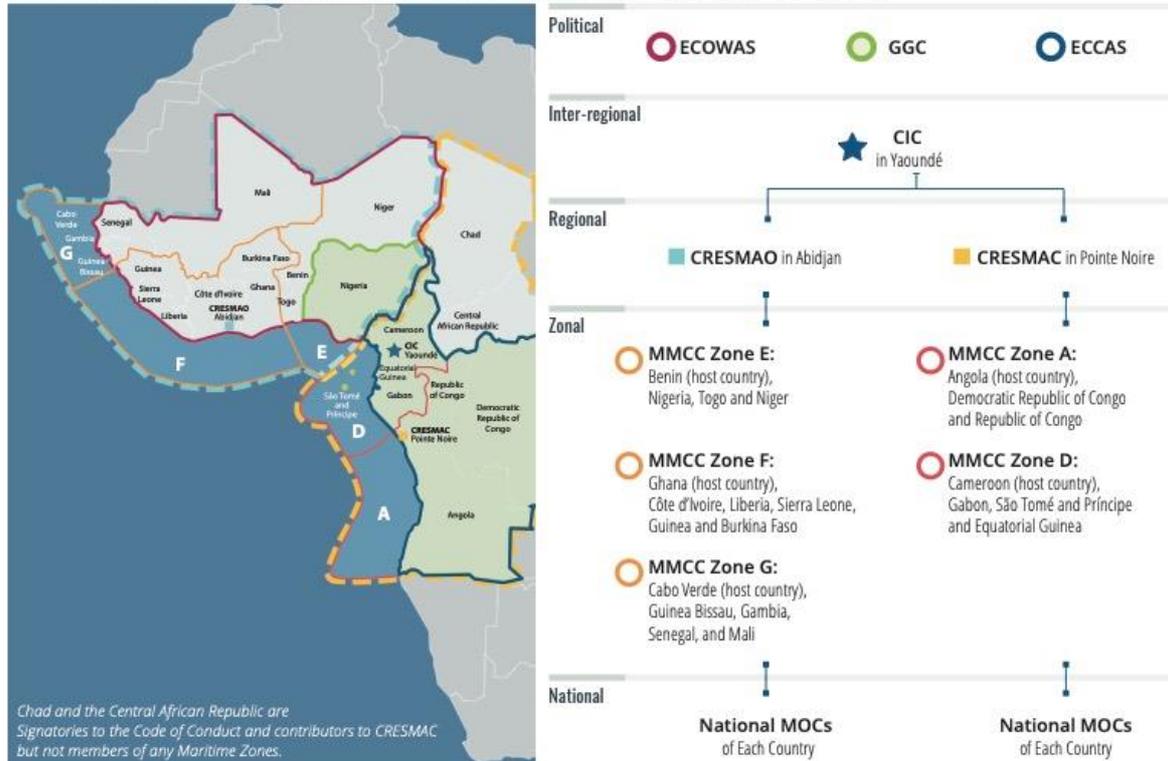


Figure 1: Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Safety and Security. Map Credit: I.R. Consilium

The maritime operations center (MOC) of each country therefore has layers of zonal, regional and inter-regional support that can help enhance the effectiveness of national law enforcement through collaboration, cooperation and coordination.

There have been successes. The tanker MAXIMUS²⁵ in 2016 and the fishing vessel HAI LU FENG 11²⁶ in 2020 were both vessels that were recaptured through cooperative efforts after they were taken by pirates across multiple jurisdictions. Furthermore, national capacity across the region has benefited from enhanced information sharing and the community of practice that has developed throughout West and Central Africa. As this improvement has occurred, it has helped change the risk-reward calculus. No longer can pirates, as they did a few years ago, operate in broad daylight, in sight of the shore, and expect to get away with impunity. This has led to attacks farther from shore and farther from Nigeria – a clear phenomenon of the last year²⁷.

²⁵ Ian Ralby, “Learning from Success: Advancing Maritime Security Cooperation in Atlantic Africa,” Center for International Maritime Security, 17 Sept. 2019, https://cimsec.org/learning-from-success-advancing-maritime-security-cooperation-in-atlantic-africa/?fbclid=IwAR0qlr2I3Vn_wQhTc_Gu-JsuDjiTrZl8DYr5cQT3fsr4I1DqDa0iYQr5Xzq.

²⁶ Ian Ralby, “Nigerian Navy Thwarts Hijacking of Chinese Fishing Vessel,” The Maritime Executive, 18 May 2020, <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/nigerian-navy-successfully-interdicts-maritime-kidnapping-attempt>

²⁷ Crew Kidnapped in Furthest-Out-To-Sea-Yet Attack in Gulf of Guinea, Insurance Marine News, 20 July 2020, <https://insurancemarineneews.com/insurance-marine-news/crew-kidnapped-in-furthest-out-to-sea-yet-attack-in-gulf-of-guinea/>

NATO'S POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

According to survey participants, the current role of international community in the GoG is largely in assisting the region through funding and provision of technical expertise. International actors act as a support for the YAMS and initiate regional education, training programs and exercises. As several panelists and survey respondents indicated, the support is often short term and imposed from the top down, rather than developed through a context sensitive lens relevant to the needs of the region and existing security situation.

At the moment, NATO has limited engagement with the GoG on maritime security. The NSD-S Hub has been engaged and curious by trying to gain a better understanding of these complex challenges to stability in the region. For panelists and survey respondents, NATO has numerous institutions whose capacity and expertise has the potential to support relevant education, training, and exercises activities in the GoG . These include:

- NSD-S Hub, serving as a conduit for connecting, sharing and collaborative thinking and coordinated research;
- NATO Maritime Command (MARCOM), regarding NATO maritime security operations;
- NATO Shipping Center, regarding cooperation with the maritime industry;
- NATO Education & Training Facilities
 - NATO Defense College, regarding leadership education and research,
 - Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Center, regarding multinational maritime interdiction operation and training in boarding, search and seizure of vessels;
- NATO Centers of Excellence:
 - Combined Joint Operations at Sea (CJOS), regarding multinational maritime operations;
 - Confined and Shallow Waters (CSW), regarding maritime law and legal finish;
 - Maritime Security, regarding the role of maritime security in national security;
 - Maritime Geospatial, Meteorological & Oceanographic, regarding exploitation of environment in order to optimize the employment of sensors, logistics, equipment and personnel.

To engage, however, all these institutions would need to do so through the principles outlined below.

DISCUSSION

“Piracy...is a crime that is not to be talked about in the abstract... The victims are innocent seafarers who are just doing their job every day. And their job is of great benefit to the region or they wouldn't be there in the first place. And to be violently attacked, ripped from their ships, terrorized, at times severely injured in a physical and/or psychological way, and in some cases... deaths result from that. This is a humanitarian crisis that we cannot just stand by and let happen.” – Webinar Panelist

The current situation with piracy in the GoG is untenable. As several panelists noted repeatedly, this is fundamentally a human issue with human lives at stake and the current status quo has to change. Piracy, however, is not the only problem, and as the webinar participants noted repeatedly, the efforts to address maritime insecurity cannot focus exclusively on piracy. IUU fishing is at least as pervasive a problem, particularly when considering the expanse of its geographic impact, affecting every coastal state in the GoG; armed robbery against ships and piracy are still more localized. The maritime leaders of West and Central Africa, as well as the AU, all recognize that there is an immediate need to address the current security situation. But there is also a need to build for the future. Education, training and exercising can contribute to both the near-term and long-term efforts of the region.

It is for this reason that panelists emphasized that any initiative on education, training or exercise in the region has to be sustainable. This regional sustainability requires maintaining the appropriate level of competence in the trainers while ensuring that professional rotations and promotions have no impact in the continuity and quality of the learning activities. Effective sustainability can be achieved through train-the-trainer activities and with regional institutional capacity building that keeps expertise and corporate knowledge in a manner to proliferate it.

The region also needs to generate new insights and knowledge, and for this, the Yaoundé Code of Conduct actually provides direct instruction. Article 14 of the Code is focused on “Training and Education” and reads as follows:

1. *The Signatories intend to co-operate on the development and promotion of training and educational programs for the management of the marine environment, particularly for the maintenance of safety and law and order at sea, the preservation and protection of the marine environment, and the prevention, reduction and control of marine pollution. Such cooperation might include:*
 - a. *the offer of places on national training courses to other States, subject to payment of relevant costs;*
 - b. *sharing curriculum and course information;*
 - c. *the exchange of naval and law enforcement personnel, scientists and other experts;*
 - d. *the exchange of views on maritime issues;*
 - e. *holding conferences, seminars, workshops and symposia on maritime subjects of common interest; and fostering cooperation among maritime training institutions and research centres and the offer of places on national training courses to other States, subject to payment of relevant costs and training provided by the International Seabed Authority.*
2. *Signatories are invited to institute regular meetings to enhance cooperation and coordination in their maritime enforcement activities.*

The framework, therefore, exists for the region to work cooperatively on training and education, and further to coordinate with external partners.

Importantly, however, working with West and Central Africa on education, training and exercises for maritime security requires working *through* the architecture, institutions and mechanisms that have been set up by the region. As the region works to put the proverbial roof on its house, international partners are encouraged to help the process. New mechanisms and institutions were generally not welcome, as the focus is still on trying to get the current ones to mature.

“No need for new ones. They need to be better supported, through finance and staffing, including necessary training to be better able to coordinate training and education needs at the regional level.” – Survey Respondent

Rather than creating more institutions, which may encourage loopholes, existing institutions should be better supported through finance, staffing and capacity building to develop the knowledge and skills that will empower them to coordinate at a regional level. Funding the YAMS and other maritime security institutions is already an issue, so consolidation of efforts and centralization of funds can help increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Examining education, training and exercise in turn helps to identify what the necessary requirements are and how international partners could potentially provide meaningful support.

Education

Globally, there is a lack of maritime education, especially in legal aspects of the maritime domain. Human society suffers from sea blindness (a lack of awareness of and appreciation for the importance of the maritime domain), so many people never really learn about the maritime domain or how to protect, govern and develop it. Furthermore, the niche nature of maritime law makes it a very small field with limited opportunities to enter or advance, even despite the general need for such expertise.

The Regional Maritime University (RMU) in Tema, Ghana, and *L'Académie Régionale des Sciences et Techniques de la Mer* (ARSTM) in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire both provide maritime educational opportunities for West African states – Anglophone and Francophone. There are no corollary institutions in Central Africa or for Lusophone states. Furthermore, the main focus of these institutions is on educating merchant mariners, not security or legal professionals. Naval, coast guard or marine police officers are likely to be educated at a national naval or police academy, often outside the region. Moreover, lawyers are likely to be general practice lawyers who may then study outside the region at one of the few institutions that deals with maritime law as a law enforcement matter, or at the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) in Malta.

There is a need to substantially expand the educational opportunities for West and Central African maritime professionals. This includes education for lawyers who wish to specialize in prosecution of maritime crimes – something which does not yet exist at the moment. Legal finish – the final disposition of a matter through either a prosecution or administrative procedure - is critical to the deterrent effect of maritime law enforcement operations, regardless of the infraction involved, so having competent maritime lawyers is vital to applying maritime law consistently and successfully. This may require setting up recruitment programs for younger students so they can see and select the opportunity to pursue such education.

Panelists noted that legal education was not limited to lawyers only. Operators, regardless of their roles in maritime security, need to understand the law. For example, the watchkeepers in a MOC need to know whether the information they receive indicates illegal behavior. There

is a substantial proportion of maritime activity that, while undesirable, is not illegal. And even if it is illegal, the operators need to know whether they have the authority and jurisdiction to do something about it. One crucial training requirement is the education of operators on basic Knowledge on the International Maritime Law to enable them to understand the legal framework and associated limitations. Currently, although present in some curriculum, the importance and emphasis is not sufficient.

When it comes to maritime security education, there is a need for a common core curriculum. Having such a harmonized educational approach would provide an essential tool to improve interoperability and enhance cooperation and coordination in operations across the wider GoG. A common core curriculum is essential for the sector to streamline approaches and evolve through a common standard of professionalism. While law is one component, this curriculum has to span the full range of critical maritime issues and include environmental, commercial, and safety matters, in addition to main security topics.

“[A common core curriculum for maritime security education is] highly essential because the maritime security sector has to evolve to meet the challenges of a new green economy. Digitalization, decarbonization and emerging crimes are common issues that have to be addressed by maritime security uniformly.”- Survey Respondent

Finally, emphasis was placed on creating maritime culture where there is an understanding and appreciation of the vitality of the maritime domain, both in its own right and in its contribution to life on land. Thanks to the prevalence of sea blindness, the maritime space is often ignored. Education – at every level – can help overcome that, and can engender greater maritime security. Throughout the webinar, it was repeatedly emphasized that holistic approaches to maritime security are needed, and addressing root causes of insecurity on land can help diminish insecurity on the water.

Training

There are countless training programs that occur every day across West and Central Africa on maritime security. They vary greatly in length, depth, quality and relevance. Many African maritime security professionals have complained about training being expensive and a time waster – flying to another country to be trained by someone who lacks substantive expertise or contextual understanding only interferes with normal workflows. During the webinar, several speakers emphasized the need for training to be more cost-effective and efficient. The COVID-19 pandemic, as was noted during the webinar, has changed the culture to allow for virtual engagement, opening up a range of new low-cost training options. As one panelist emphasized, the willingness to engage in training over web platforms should be used to enhance the offering. Indeed, that has been one of the most significant changes during the pandemic.

“The most important thing that needs to happen is working with the relevant agencies /region to identify the training needs without coming from the position of 'we know what you need'. There is also a need to ensure that nonmilitary institutions such as Fisheries Agencies, Ports authority and drug enforcement agencies and local communities (representative of fisheries organization) are accounted for in some of the training and education and or maritime exercises.” – Survey Respondent

While it has already been noted that there is a need to educate non-lawyers in maritime law, there is also a training component to this. A key comment brought forward by a panelist was to consider ways to create training programs in maritime law that strip away the legal jargon and focus on the concepts not the legal terms, and train operators in what they really need to understand to be effective. This is a major component that is currently lacking.

Many divides – linguistic, subject matter, regional – were identified by the panel as potential hindrances to maritime security. Training was offered as a way to address the divides in two ways: 1) the training could instruct on how to bridge those gaps, and 2) the training process itself, if done jointly, could create the relationships and common understanding needed to overcome differences. One panelist emphasized the value of training together – across the divides.

At the moment, there are very few initiatives that are currently helping bridge the Anglophone-Francophone-Lusophone divide. Perhaps more important than the linguistic challenges, however, is the need to establish a common understanding of legal framework and methods of collaboration between regional partners while involving different communities within the GoG. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is currently prompting common approaches across ECOWAS and ECCAS, and the simulated trials are helping with converting cooperative operations at sea into meaningful prosecutions on land.

“There should be more focus on cooperation in local/regional languages which is rarely mentioned but is often easy to do, especially among neighboring countries.” Survey Respondent

One of the biggest divides noted was between the different maritime agencies within the same government. Many maritime matters require interagency cooperation, but there is a lack of trust and cooperation between agencies. This dynamic is even more acute when working at both the interagency and multinational levels. While most survey respondents and participants indicated that interagency training is key, there is a level of skepticism among many. It seems that some believe such an approach is good in theory but ineffective in practice. Several speakers emphasized the need for mutual trust and understanding born of stronger personal relationships. Knowing each other can help close the gap between agencies, and training together is a great way to get to know each other. Overall, from those that commented, most believe that such training is critical to strengthening coordination and cooperation among the agencies in the area.

“Inter-Agency training, especially at entry levels promotes trust, coordination, collaboration and cooperation as well as increase efficiency and the reduction of waste [of resources].” Survey Respondent

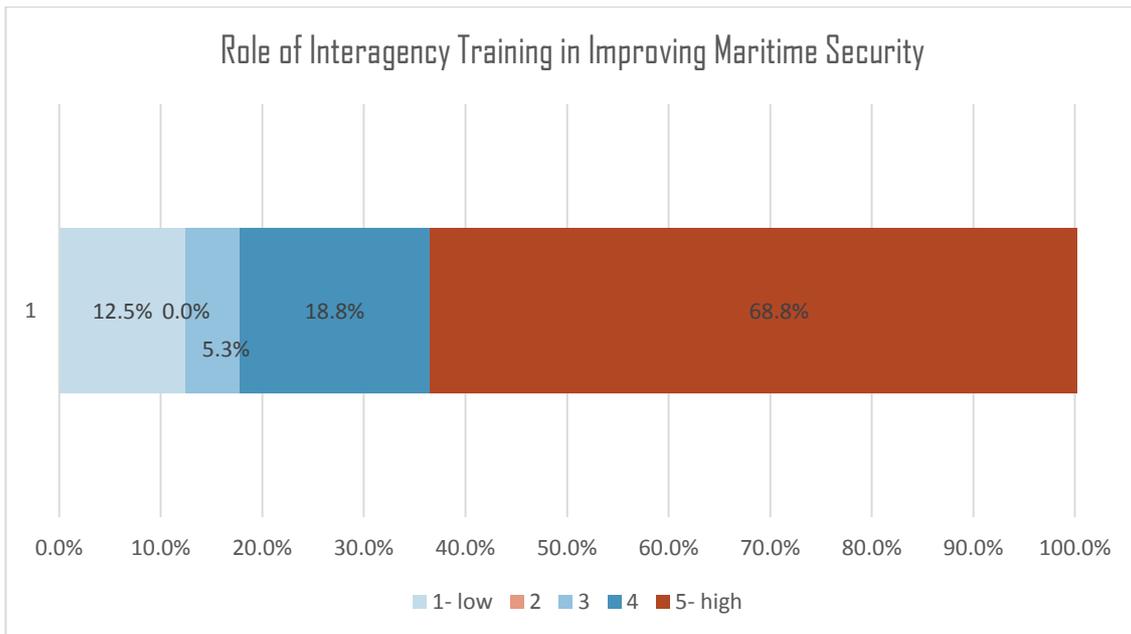


Figure 2: Survey Respondents' sense of how interagency training can improve maritime security.

The divide between different agencies and the failure to integrate security, governance and development were also identified as major problems. In other words – it is not just a security problem. This was a recurring theme during the webinar – namely, that it is vital to look beyond the military and security roles to address economic development issues if maritime security is going to be truly addressed. Speakers emphasized that NATO should be creative in how it incorporates non-military training, given its importance for targeting the root causes of insecurity.

Exercises

At the moment, there are two inter-regional annual exercises in the GoG each year: Obangame Express, organized by the United States Navy, and Grand African NEMO, organized by the French Navy. Both are similar in that they are operationally focused, but Obangame Express also includes a Senior Leadership Symposium for the Chiefs of Naval Staff of all states of the region, and a simulated trial to help connect the operational exercise to a legal exercise. Subregional exercises also occur regularly, the most notable of which is Operation Junction Rain, organized by the United States Coast Guard as part of the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership (AMLEP) program. There are currently no exercises that coordinate with maritime industry and few that work at both the interagency and international levels simultaneously.

Regarding the adequacy of exercises, survey respondents were asked to rank different sorts of maritime exercises on a scale from 1 being low to 5 being high. The majority of respondents do not believe that at the national and regional level, the following exercises occur or operate at a sufficient or high level. Of the rated exercises Live Operational exercises score the highest, while Public Private Exercises score the lowest, with most of the rated exercises scoring in the middle.

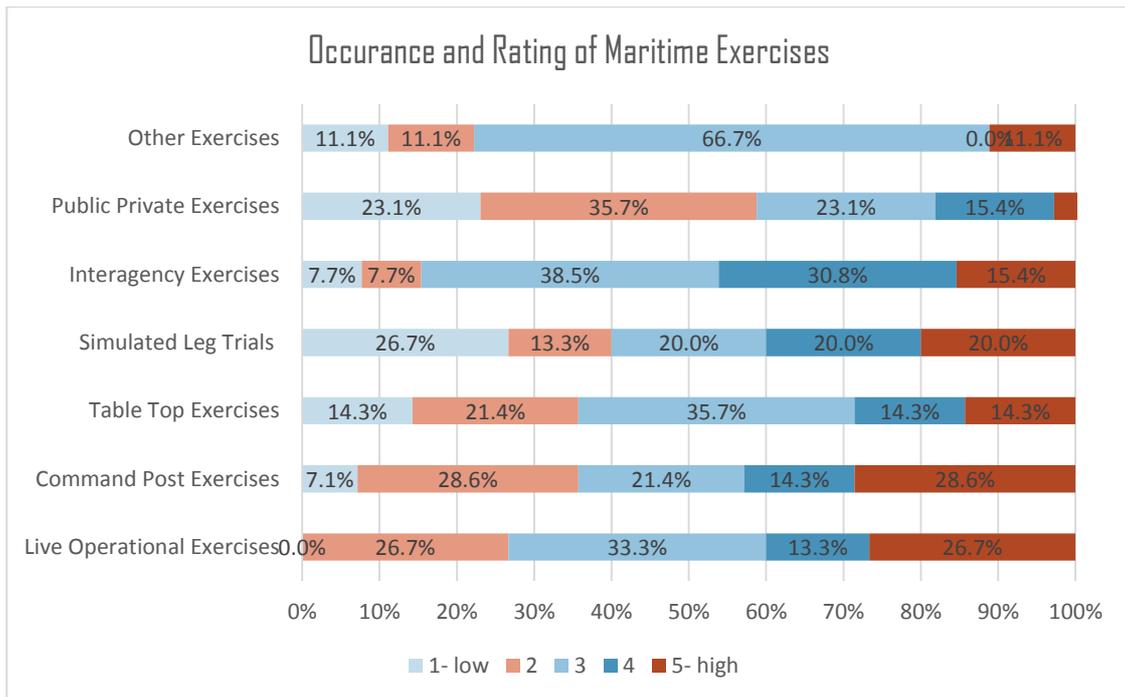


Figure 3: Survey Respondents' sense of how adequate current exercises are at different levels.

Perhaps more than education or training there is room for substantial improvement in maritime exercises, as relatively few occur. That said, quantity is not the key metric – it is adequacy. Adequacy requires having the right content that is fit for purpose, and to achieve this there must be consultation with regional professionals throughout the planning process.

“The most important thing that needs to happen is working with the relevant agencies /region to identify the training needs without coming from the position of 'we know what you need'. There is also a need to ensure that nonmilitary institutions such as Fisheries Agencies, Ports authority and drug enforcement agencies and local communities (representative of fisheries organization) are accounted for in some of the training and education and or maritime exercises.” – Survey Respondent

Areas where exercises could help the region improve include focusing on risk analysis, operational planning, crisis management, sharing of information and intelligence at regional and national levels and working with relevant authorities. When approaching those issues, it has to be done in an inclusive fashion and in a manner that will work in West and Central Africa.

Finally, there is an immediate need to initiate exercises to tackle gaps and enhance cooperation and collaboration across different divides. Currently, the divides between foreign navies, regional navies and the private sector are perceived to be growing. The public-private split is particularly acute. Exercises – even tabletop exercises – could be used to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to standardize response to piracy and any other maritime incident. If those SOPs are then harmonized across the region, and practiced through regular exercises, there can be greater consistency in how maritime issues are identified, analyzed and handled. That consistency, as well as the relationships born of the exercises themselves, can help build trust across the public-private divide and ultimately help save human lives.

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“More exercises would certainly be better in the sense that they create ties and networks in the region and strengthen interregional understanding on threats, priorities and approaches.” Survey Respondent

Networking is vital for making maritime security in the region a reality, and trust is critical to those relationships, so education, training and exercises should seek, among other objectives, to help build a community of trusted professionals.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY INSIGHTS

The strong consensus among both the surveyed participants and the panelists is that there are opportunities for NATO to contribute to the maritime security education, training and exercise of the GoG region. The current state of affairs is inadequate to meet the maritime security needs of the region and NATO could help remedy that. Importantly, however, the overwhelming sentiment was that any engagement needs to be highly cooperative with the region to ensure that there is not duplication or conflicting effort. Furthermore, any additional international support to ongoing initiatives should be directed through the YAMS in order to strengthen the cooperative institutions that the region has sought to develop. The following are key findings arising out of the discussion and the survey, grouped by theme:

Work Through Existing Structures

1. Use the YAMS as the vehicle for delivering training; partners are encouraged to work through the region's institutions.
2. Focus on zones, rather than bilateral engagements so that capacity builds in a harmonized fashion throughout the zone.
3. Work to bridge the Anglophone-Francophone-Lusophone divides so that there is common understanding across all the states, including with regard to differences in legal systems.
4. Encourage greater collaboration with the region to help shape the exercises and training programs to be more useful and avoid pitfalls of duplicating effort or wasting money.
5. Interagency training is important, and education, training and exercises can actually help build interagency relationships that will enhance the effectiveness of those agencies.
6. External stakeholders actors should familiarize with the instruments of maritime security cooperation, particularly the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, to understand the basis and scope of the cooperative mechanisms, and draw on some of the mandates that already exist.

Principles for Engagement

7. The COVID-19 pandemic has created new opportunities for virtual engagement, creating the possibility for more frequent, lower-cost, multinational opportunities. These include education, training and even exercising opportunities, as table-top exercise can be virtual.
8. Education, training and exercising must be designed to meet the needs of the region, while also has to be broad enough to address the interconnectedness of different issues of security, governance and development. Building trust and finding sustainable solutions for security issues are closely connected with the economic and social issues in the GoG States. The trainings, education, and exercises should include how development and governance challenges affect security, as well as how security affects governance and development. This nexus of issues should be part of the needs assessment process and the process of planning and deciding the content of the education, training and exercises. Given how they both affect the situation and are affected by it, communities – particularly coastal and fishing communities – also need to be integrated into education, training and exercises.
9. Military education, training and exercising cannot stand alone, as maritime insecurity is always rooted in problems on land, so the littoral divide has to be covered. The

public-non-state divide must also be covered, involving civil society and industry, as well.

10. Engagements have to be results-oriented; training for the sake of training is not helpful, as there is no time to waste.
11. Education and training must be enduring, sustainable and graduated. Capacity needs to be built within the region in order to ensure that the level is sustained through personnel rotations and is built to have lasting effect.

Needs for Education, Training and Exercises

12. Maritime education and training is needed at every level – strategic, operational and tactical.
13. One of the greatest needs is in law enforcement training and education at the tactical and operational levels, (including understanding the law, conducting operations legally, and collecting and processing evidence in a manner that can be used at trial) as well as at the prosecutorial and adjudicative levels.
14. Legal language needs to be reframed into standard operating procedures (SOPs), which can then be practiced through exercises.
15. Public-private cooperation is desperately needed and SOPs for industry engagement with navies could help improve law enforcement response and build relationships that are useful when dealing with emergencies; a public-private table top exercise could help with developing those SOPs.
16. There is a need for more in-depth education beyond 3-day trainings, as there are some capacity and capability gaps that need to be filled, including in legal education.
17. Capacity building done ashore is required to tie together security, governance and the maritime economy.
18. Piracy cannot be the only focus; there is an urgent need to address other security concerns as well, and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
19. Not only is there a need for a common operating picture through maritime domain awareness, there is a real need for improving maritime analysis to understand the situation in deeper and more actionable ways.
20. There is a need for enhanced maritime research – as mandated in the Yaoundé Code of Conduct – and the understanding that comes from that research should then be the basis of shaping engagements for education, training and exercising. This, in particular, provides opportunities for meaningful engagement with all maritime stakeholders in pursuit of a more holistic approach to maritime security. Joint research between NATO and GoG institutions could help survey the spectrum of actors focused on maritime security, maritime governance and the development of the maritime economy to discern how to more effectively integrate all three pillars. Military and government actors engaging with communities and industry for research can also, in turn, help build meaningful relationships that make significant impact on the security of the maritime domain.

General Findings

21. Information sharing cannot improve without relationships building – the best time to build them is when there is not an urgent emergency; confidence building should be approached from regular interaction.

22. To create the trust-based relationships needed, as several panelists emphasized, we have to be honest about the situation – convenient narratives or attempts at making the situation seem better than it is will not help resolve the crisis. Human lives are at stake; this is a human issue, both in terms of the problem and the solution.
23. Demonstrating success of and through interagency and inter-regional cooperation will help build the political will to further enhance maritime security.
24. There is a need to create a maritime culture across the region where the whole of society understands and appreciates the role of the maritime domain in life on land, and works, as a result, to improve the security and sustainability of the maritime space.

International Cooperation and NATO's Role

In terms of the role that international stakeholders should play, survey respondents and participants suggested they should continue to provide financial and technical support however they must encourage opportunities for successful and creative approaches that build trust and cooperation between entities, and work with the YAMS to help identify training needs, rather than dictating solutions.

“International partners should continue to provide financial and technical support to educational institutions and agencies who are engaged in maritime security efforts. International partners should also embark on activities that will contribute to trust building between the shipping industry and the national navies.” – Survey Respondent

Most respondents and participants identified NATO as having a critical role in contributing to training, improving crisis management, risk analysis and management and operational planning. Providing training expertise is the most cited way NATO can support efforts in maritime security in GoG, however a number of respondents highlighted that any support and training requirements must be dictated by the region to avoid the mistakes of other international partners that waste resources and money.

Other areas noted include rethinking the gender approach in the maritime sector, facilitating collaboration with stakeholders and institutions, provide naval forces to conduct regional activities focused on capacity building, engage training providers in GoG region to jointly develop training packages in emerging maritime areas, encourage NATO member states to support the ICC, build the capacity of GoG trainers and centers and instill confidence within the maritime industries and Navies in the area.

“NATO should engage with training providers in the Gulf of Guinea region and jointly develop training packages in emerging maritime areas to ensure that both the civil and military maritime actors have the needed capacity to confront the challenges being experienced in the region.” Survey Respondent

Based on these findings, NATO can provide value to the region by using training, education and exercises to help the region address:

1. How to engage in multinational maritime operations with different languages and legal systems.
2. How to work with the shipping industry in a clear, consistent and effective way.
3. How to harmonize standard operating procedures across multiple national jurisdictions.

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4. How to create inter-regional interoperability across the spectrum of maritime security needs.
5. How to compile, analyze and share information in a timely manner, across a wide geographic area, to facilitate effective response.
6. How to enhance the data collection and analysis, as well as research and reporting capacity of the region.

ANNEX A WEBINAR INFORMATION

Date: 17 February 2021

Time: 12:00 – 14:45 GMT

Link to webinar video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOjoV5hWkoU>

Ahead of the live dialogue the following prompts were posed to the Panelists:

1. What are the real needs for education, training and exercising to improve maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea?
2. What is the current situation in relation to education, training and exercises in the Gulf of Guinea?
3. What is the status of coordination and cooperation in relation to education, training and exercises in the Gulf of Guinea?
4. How can NATO support the maritime security education, training and exercise efforts in the Gulf of Guinea?

ANNEX B BIOGRAPHIES PANELIST

MODERATOR – Dr. Ian Ralby

Dr. Ian Ralby is founder and CEO of I.R. Consilium, a family firm that provides leading advice and assistance on maritime and resource security. He is a globally recognized expert in five main areas: 1) maritime law and security, especially identifying and addressing evolving threats; 2) maritime strategy that integrates security, governance and the maritime economy; 3) recognizing and countering resource-related crimes; 4) regulating, governing, and overseeing private security companies; and 5) certain aspects of international law including the legal regimes around floating armories, protection of submarine cables and the use of force by armed contractors. He is a Senior Fellow at the Global Energy Center of the Atlantic Council, and previously spent three years as a Maritime Crime Expert for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's Global Maritime Crime Program, and four years as an Adjunct Professor at the U.S. Department of Defense's Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Having worked in more than 80 different countries, Dr. Ralby maintains close relationships with leading professionals around the world in a variety of different disciplines. He continues to serve as an expert advisor to and consultant for various government agencies, international organizations, and private sector entities. He earned a B.A. in Modern Languages and Linguistics and an M.A. in Intercultural Communication from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; a J.D. at William and Mary; and both an M.Phil. in International Relations and a Ph.D. in Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge.

PANELISTS FOR THE DIALOGUE

Ambassador Hadiza Mustapha is currently the Advisor of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Peace, Security and Governance. She previously worked in the Nigerian Foreign Service, where she retired after 35 years of service. Before her retirement, she served as the High Commissioner of Nigeria to Cameroon (2012-2016) and in various Nigerian foreign missions in the United Kingdom (1988-1992), Zimbabwe (1998-2000), South Africa (2000-2002) and USA (Washington DC 2010-2012). Amb. Hadiza holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science, a Masters of Science degree in Strategic Studies and she is a Fellow of the National War College, Nigeria. She also attended the Senior Executives Education in National and International Security at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, USA. She has equally obtained several on the job training in Conflict Management, Social and Humanitarian Affairs as well as women in peace and security and development.

Rear Admiral Boniface Konan (Côte d'Ivoire Navy) is the Acting Director of the West African Regional Center for Maritime Safety and Security (CRESMAO) since September 2016. In this position, he coordinates the actions of the centers for maritime zones E, F and G for the implementation of the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy (EIMS), in the framework of the June 2013 Yaoundé summit for maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. He held several command positions in Cote d'Ivoire including the Ivorian Unit of Marines (1998-2009), the Lagoon Base of Adiake (2005-2009), and the Ivorian task-force of the Theater of Operations (2007-2011). He is the Navy Inspector general since 2012. He contributed in the Ivorian post-crisis reconstruction as part of the DoD team for the security sector reform. RADM Konan graduated from the Special Course of the French Naval Academy (1989). He then attended the USMC Basic School, Quantico-USA (1991-1992), and later the Infantry Captain Career Course, Fort Benning-USA (1999). He is a 2008

graduate in Diplomacy from the National School of Administration of Abidjan-Cote d'Ivoire. He attended the National Defense University of China from where he is a War college graduate since July 2014.

Mr Bud Darr is an experienced global maritime leader in the areas of policy, government, and related law. He is Executive Vice President, Maritime Policy and Government Affairs of MSC Group which operates in 155 countries. Having served in the US Navy, Merchant Marine, and Coast Guard, as well as being an accomplished ocean yacht racer, Bud's longstanding connection with the sea and ships is both personal and professional. Bud began his education in Submarine Nuclear Engineering and later obtained his formal undergraduate education at the US Merchant Marine Academy, where he was trained as a Deck Officer. During his service with the US Coast Guard, he studied law at the George Washington University Law School. He most recently led the Maritime Policy efforts of the Cruise Lines International Association prior to joining the MSC Group in 2017. Today, Bud is engaged across MSC's Cargo and Passenger divisions, developing the company's central Government Affairs function, based at the Group's headquarters in Geneva. He is closely involved in MSC's response to developments in environmental public policy and regulation and other industry-wide issues such as greenhouse gas emissions, maritime security, safety at sea, and international shipping policy. He serves on the Boards for the UK Chamber of Shipping, BIMCO, International Chamber of Shipping, Liberian Shipowners' Council, and Society for Gas as a Marine Fuel.

Dr. Kamal-Deen Ali (CAPT Ghana Navy Rtd) is the Executive Director of the Centre for Maritime Law and Security Africa. He was previously the Director of Legal Affairs of the Ghana Navy and the Director of Research of the Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College. He has since 2003 been engaged in ocean governance capacity building and maritime security policy shaping at the national, regional and global levels. He has participated in several global initiatives, regularly providing expert input/support to the activities of international partners in the sub-region, including the Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Abidjan Convention Secretariat and the UN Economic Commission on Africa (UNECA). He served as a technical expert to the Global High-Panel on Sustainable Ocean Economy and co-authored Blue Paper 16 (2020) – "Transnational Organized Crime in the Fisheries Sector," which is part of a series of high-level policy papers commissioned by the Panel. He holds a PhD in Law, Master of Laws and Master of Arts in International Relations. He is a Fellow of the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security and an Associate of both the Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy, United Kingdom, and the Africa Security Sector Network (ASSN). He has published extensively and his book "Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges" (Brill/Martinus Nijhoff 2015) is rated as a cutting-edge contribution to knowledge and research in maritime studies.

Captain Emmanuel Bell Bell (Cameroon Nay) Joined Cameroon navy in 1991 through the France naval academy from where he graduated in 1993. Upon completion of this training, he returned home and embarked on board Cameroon Navy Ship Bakassi. He served aboard as navigator, chief engineer, and later Executive officer. Meanwhile, he attended the French navy engineering school in France in 1995 and the International Maritime Officers' course (IMOC) in Yorktown, Virginia, USA in 1999. In 2002, he fled to France to attend the French Engineering School (ENSTA) in Brest and was trained as a naval architect. In 2006 he started working as staff officer within the Navy Surface Forces Headquarters in Douala. In 2007, he was appointed Head of the state action at sea office. Additionally, in 2011, he was appointed operations officer and Head of the Douala Maritime Operations Center (MOC). In

2013, he acted as Technical Inspector within the Navy Headquarters. In 2014, he was selected as staff of the inter-regional working group in charge of elaborating Inter-regional Coordination Center (ICC) basic documents. After ICC inauguration in September 2014, he served as staff of the ICC launching team in charge of finalizing the ICC basic documents. At the end of the launching period in November 2015, he was appointed ICC coordinator prior to the operationalization of ICC in February 2017. Since then, he has been serving as Head of Information management and communication Division at ICC. Since February 2020, he has been the acting Head of division in charge of training and practice. As the GoGIN project is developing a software called YARIS for maritime information sharing among the centers of the Yaoundé architecture, Captain Bell Bell has been selected as a trainer. After having attended trainings on that software, he is now among trainers that will train operators working in the various maritime operational centers in the Gulf of Guinea.

Captain Tukur Toro Mohammed (Nigerian Navy) a career Naval Officer from the Nigerian Navy, recently disengaged from the services of the Nigerian Navy. He was born on 21 July 1972 in Nigeria. The officer is presently in the service of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security as the Programme Officer Maritime Security and Safety. Part of his schedules include the Implementation and Operationalisation of ECOWAS Maritime Security Architecture in responding to Piracy and other Transnational Maritime Criminalities in the Gulf of Guinea. Tukur also, participated in the Yaoundé processes, starting with the Summit of the Heads of State and Government in Yaoundé in 2013 where important strategic documents were adopted. His previous Operational experience in the Nigerian Navy includes Deputy Command Operations Officer in Western Naval Command and also a Commanding Officer of a ship. He also served as the Operations Officer, Forward Operating Base IBAKA, coordinating Operations along Nigeria/Cameroun International Maritime Boundary. Tukur holds Bachelor's degree in Economics from the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna and Master's degree in Project Management from the University of Sunderland, United Kingdom. He has attended various courses on peace, security and stability.

Dr Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood is a Lecturer in Sustainable Development at the School of Geography and Sustainable Development, the University of St Andrews in Scotland. Her research to date has generated critical insights on natural resource governance, the blue economy and maritime safety, and security. She is continuing to advance the understanding of sustainability as a question of resource management, environmental justice, and the disproportionate effects of depleting resources on security, poverty, and inequality. Dr Okafor-Yarwood has consulted for regional and international organizations on ocean governance, peace and security in the African continent. She is the lead author of the Stable Seas: Gulf of Guinea report, commissioned by the One Earth Future: Stable Seas, Colorado, U.S.A. She contributed to the Blue Paper 16: Organized Crime in the Fisheries Sector, a report commissioned by the High-Level Panel on Sustainable Blue Economy, a global initiative led by 14 Heads of Governments. Dr Okafor-Yarwood is also a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Strategic Research and Studies, National Defence College, Abuja, Nigeria and a Maritime Security expert, for the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Critical Maritime Route (CRIMSON III) project.