Niger Delta Weekly: Spotlighting Piracy and Sea Robbery in Rivers State

June 14-20, 2020

Description

This weekly update spotlights piracy and maritime crime in the Niger Delta with particular focus on sea robbery in Rivers State. Emerging trends indicate an upsurge in incidents of sea robbery in the state, mainly involving attacks on commercial boats for robbery and kidnapping for ransom. According to data (see map below), piracy and sea robbery reportedly caused over 45 fatalities in Rivers State between January 2016 and May 2020. In April 2020, for example, sea robbers reportedly attacked a commercial boat, robbed the passengers and made away with the boat along the waterways in Bille community, Degema LGA. In May 2020, robbers reportedly clashed with four policemen who were escorting a commercial boat, abducted two civilians and made away with a rifle belonging to one of the policemen at Egelegele River, Degema LGA. In a recent incident, on June 03, 2020, a commercial boat was reportedly attacked by sea robbers who forced some of the passengers to jump into the river and abducted two women including a nursing mother and her baby at the Namasibi axis of the New Calabar River, Degema LGA.
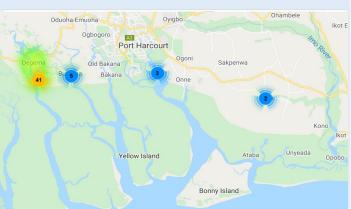
Why it Matters

Growing incidents of piracy and sea robbery in the waterways could undermine maritime safety and heighten insecurity in the State, especially considering that maritime insecurity affects security on land. This could disrupt maritime activities with wide-ranging social, economic and political implications for the State and the Niger Delta.

Social: The impact of sea robbery could be socially disrupting and agonizing. It could aid the proliferation of arms which can reinforce other forms of criminality including militancy and gang violence. Sea robbery and piracy could also result in clashes between criminal gangs and public security forces which sometimes cause collateral damage among travelers and residents. This could create a feeling of insecurity which can threaten the welfare of travelers and residents.

Economic: Sea robbery could have far-reaching impact on the economy of the state. As a coastal state, sea robbery and piracy could impede trade and transportation of persons, goods and services between upland and riverine communities. Sea robbery could increase the cost of waterborne transport and commerce which could be the cost of disrupted trips or loss of goods. This could disrupt the local economy and jeopardize livelihoods of many coastal communities.

Political: Increasing incidents of piracy and sea robbery could present additional security challenges for the state. Profits from sea robbery could be used to fund criminal networks such as militant groups, oil bunkering syndicates and cult gangs which could cause instability in the state. This could lead to increased spending on public security.

Fatalities Heat Map of Piracy and Sea Robbery in Rivers State, Nigeria

Heat Map shows concentration of reported fatalities caused by piracy and sea robbery in Rivers State from January 2016 - May 2020. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Prognosis

Piracy and sea robbery in Rivers State remain frequent and unpredictable. Stakeholders should continue to monitor the situation and respond appropriately. Piracy and sea robbery could intensify, especially in the context of the current COVID-19 crisis. Peace and development actors should collaborate with security agencies and the state government to strengthen ongoing efforts to mitigate piracy and include measures to address the underlying causes and drivers of robbery and kidnapping in the waterways of the state.