

## Heavy load carrier freed after seven pirates attack and board

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Royal Boskalis Westminster semisubmersible heavy load carrier **Blue Marlin** (IMO 9186338) was attacked and boarded by seven armed pirates from a zodiac rigid hulled inflatable boat at noon on May 5th in the Gulf of Guinea, south-west of Luba port, about 80nm off Equatorial Guinea. The ship had left Luba that morning, bound for Valetta, Malta. The Master activated SSAS and all 20 crew members mustered in the citadel. The pirates demanded that the crew surrender and give them all their money and valuables, but the crew remained in the citadel. The pirates then found a hole and fired through it into the citadel, but without injuring anyone.

Two helicopters were mobilized from Equatorial Guinea, followed by a navy vessel of Equatorial Guinea and one from the Spanish navy, part of the MDAT-GoG mission. The Operations and Surveillance Centre of the Navy (COVAM), alerted by ship's distress signal, ordered a patrol boat from the Spanish Navy, which was being deployed in an international security mission in the Gulf of Guinea, to free the hijacked ship. At dawn on the morning of May 6th a special operation team boarded the Blue Marlin and freed the ship. No pirates were found and the crew was freed from the citadel. All the crew members were uninjured.

The pirates shot several times during their time aboard the Blue Marlin and caused substantial material damage on the bridge, preventing the ship from being sailable. After the freeing of the Blue Marlin, the Spanish naval vessel left Monday afternoon, followed in the evening by the naval vessel of Equatorial Guinea. The latter vessel left five armed guards on board to protect the Blue Marlin. Boskalis has mobilized an oceangoing tug to take the Blue Marlin to a safe location.

Peter Berdowski, Boskalis' CEO, said: "I want to express my compliments to our crew for their extremely professional and adequate actions in this life threatening situation. I am extremely grateful and in particular thankful to the navy of Equatorial Guinea for their quick and decisive response, as well as to the Spanish navy for their assistance via MDAT-GoG. Because of their actions, this hijacking could be ended quickly and our colleagues were brought into safety."

“By acting quickly and professionally, all 20 crew members were able to secure themselves in the citadel... a highly secured space in the vessel equipped with various means of communication and emergency rations,” said Boskalis, adding that “through the professional response of the crew and the coordinated support from the navy of Equatorial Guinea and Spain, the violent hijacking has been ended and the crew was safely freed”. 2000-built, Malta-flagged, 51,821 gt Blue Marlin is owned by Blue Marlin BV care of manager Dockwise Shipping BV of Papendrecht, Netherlands. ISM manager is Anglo-Easter Ship Management of Hong Kong. It is entered with Standard Club (Standard Offshore division) on behalf of Blue Marlin BV.