

## Only international action will stop increase in piracy, says BIMCO

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Independent shipowners association BIMCO has noted that the latest annual report from the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has shown that attacks in West Africa had helped push up piracy numbers in 2018.

BIMCO said that, in terms of military and law enforcement, an international operation would not be complicated, but what was needed above all was the will to act.

As well as a rise year on year from 180 incidents to 201, the report also showed that the region off West Africa saw a considerable spike in violence in the last quarter of the year, with 40 kidnappings in the waters off Nigeria alone. In West Africa, there appeared to be challenges with underreporting, which was estimated at as much as 40%, the IMB report said.

Jakob P. Larsen, BIMCO Head of Maritime Security, said that the will to act and get both local and international involvement and cooperation might be harder to achieved than the ensuing operation in terms of military and law enforcement. "To be honest, unless we see international naval support and close cooperation between international navies and local law enforcement, I doubt that we will see the numbers go down in any significant way," Larsen said, adding that "significant capacity building is going on in the region and naval forces are being trained, but these initiatives are all aimed at the longer term and do not solve the problem right now. Therefore, we need to step up the effort. Only then can we really turn the tide on piracy in the region".

Larsen said that what was needed was to combine the capacity building with more assets at sea and in the air in order to achieve a more robust local law enforcement.

Larsen said that the local navies were doing a tremendous job with the resources they had available, but that, battling insurgencies, terror organizations and other criminal activities meant that there were not enough law enforcement resources to fully tackle the piracy threat. The result was that pirates continue to strike in the Gulf of Guinea and continue to constitute a big threat to commercial shipping. In the light of the new report, showing that piracy rose in 2018. "We are once again calling for international navies to deploy to the region of West Africa primarily, and to cooperate closely with law enforcement from the region," Larsen said, adding that "this is in the interest of everybody. It is obviously in the interest of the seafarers, but each and every one of the naval powers in the world have a

strategic interest in this region, since there is a lot of strategic commodities that comes out of the Gulf of Guinea region. It really is in the interest of the international society to make this trade smoother, and to protect the seafarers on whom we so deeply depend to keep the trade flowing”.