CHAPTER 5

Overview of Maritime Security Challenges in the Gulf of Guinea

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines maritime security threats and challenges in the Gulf of Guinea. It provides a practical discussion of the implications of the threats and thematic areas identified in the previous chapter and depicted in Figure 4.2. The discussion will cover the root causes and drivers of the maritime security threats in the region as well that the impact on national, regional and global security. Although the analysis goes into considerable detail, it is nonetheless an overview of the case study presented in the next chapter.

5.2 Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea

In the last decade, piracy and armed robbery at sea have become the chief maritime security threats, mainly due to their impact on international trade and SLOC security.1 Indeed, global attention has centred on Southeast Asia, especially the Malacca and Singapore Straits, where piratical attacks have become commonplace.2 Piratical attacks in the Indian Ocean have also become a global concern, especially from 2005 and peaking in 2008.3 This prompted a series of UN resolutions targeting Somalia, the source of many piratical activities.4 However, as the global response to the problems in the Indian Ocean was unfolding, piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea was gaining

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1 The importance of global trade is discussed in chapter 3.
momentum. Thus the UN Security Council adopted Resolutions expressing concerns about piratical attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, and calling for regional States to take remedial action.\textsuperscript{5}

Chapter six will examine the threat of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. This detailed case study is justified by the historical significance of piracy and armed robbery as a maritime security threat, as well as the complex dynamics and implications of the crime on critical dimensions of maritime security (as illustrated in Figure 4.2).

5.3 Illicit Drug Trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea

The 2008 UN Secretary General’s Report on Oceans and the Law of the Sea identified the illicit trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances as a maritime security threat.\textsuperscript{6} Indeed, a year earlier the International Drug Control Board assessed illicit drug trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea, concluding that it had become a region-wide phenomenon.\textsuperscript{7} Thus the nature, trends and dynamics of drug trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as its implications, deserve a closer look.

5.3.1 Drug Vessels and Transhipment at Sea

For over two decades the Gulf of Guinea has been a major hub of drug trafficking.\textsuperscript{8} The multiple sea approaches to the region, coupled with governance and structural weaknesses, has made the Gulf of Guinea an attraction for organised crime.\textsuperscript{9} The region is a key link in what has become known as the “cocaine

\textsuperscript{6} United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General, Oceans and the Law of the Sea, (A/63/63, 10 March 2008), para. 82.