



Mr. Efthimios Mitropoulos  
Secretary-General  
International Maritime Organization  
4 Albert Embankment  
London SE1 7SR

18 February 2009  
Our Ref.: PS-13750/1000112

Dear Secretary General,

The international tanker shipping industry is very seriously concerned by the ongoing violent attacks in the Gulf of Guinea against innocent merchant ships by armed pirates operating out a network of more than 3,000 creeks in Nigeria alone, and also by the apparent inability of the national and regional governments to protect shipping against these attacks.

The recent, understandable, focus on the huge piracy problem the Gulf of Aden and Somalia has meant that the not dissimilar problems that many tanker owners face in the Gulf of Guinea have been given less attention over the past months.

According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), there were 42 serious 'piracy' incidents in Nigerian waters and ports in 2007 and a similar number in 2008, with 5 incidents so far in 2009. We understand that the number of officially reported incidents may be doubled to give a more realistic picture of what is happening in this area.

Attacks in Nigeria have frequently been directed towards oil industry vessels, such as offshore supply vessels, but there have also been attacks on tankers, as well as on bulkers, reefers and general cargo ships. The pirates are usually heavily armed, and the attacks well planned and coordinated and frequently violent. A number of our own members have been involved, and have suffered armed robberies, kidnappings and other lawless acts. One recent attack off Nigeria's Brass River, with which I believe you are familiar, was particularly violent and persistent, with repeated attacks from heavily armed pirates in a fast skiff firing not only automatic machine guns but also a heavy gun firing 10 mm bullets which pierced the 6mm steel walls of the accommodation 50 times as well as putting 6 holes in one lifeboat. Thanks to the courageous and appropriate actions of the officers and crew the attack was thwarted and the vessel escaped. But there was no assistance or back- up from the shore.

We have been highlighting piracy action in the Gulf of Guinea regularly to our members, in our Security Bulletins and with articles in our WeeklyNEWS, as well as raising this at appropriate times in the media and elsewhere. The response of our members has been not only an expression of their extreme concern but that they feel very much 'on their own' when confronted by armed pirates in this area.

We would ask you, Secretary General, to help bring focus and attention to the piracy issue in the Gulf of Guinea, and to encourage those with influence in the region to assist in finding a solution (or solutions) to this pressing problem, eliminating this threat of piracy, re-establishing stability in this area and securing the safe passage and operation of merchant ships.

Yours sincerely,  
INTERTANKO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter M. Swift', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Peter M. Swift,  
Managing Director

☎ (direct): (0)20 7977 7020  
E-mail: [peter.swift@intertanko.com](mailto:peter.swift@intertanko.com)

.cc: Mr Nicholas Fistes  
Chairman, INTERTANKO