EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

This issue of Constellis’ Kidnap for Ransom Insight Report covers global kidnapping incidents and trends over the months of May and June 2018, as well as the start of July. The information is derived from multi-source analysis of kidnap for ransom activity and where known, the outcome or resolution of the event. The report covers current kidnap for ransom hotspots at the regional, national and provincial level, with particular focus on areas where K&R activity is increasing.

Statistical analysis of data for May and June 2018 is included on page 13, which graphically displays K&R trends by region, victims by nationality and employment sector, as well as identifying the Top 10 counties for kidnapping of foreign nationals over the reporting period.

The Global Piracy Update provides an overview of the piracy threat by region, providing trend analysis for May and June 2018. It also offers sample cases occurring through those months, providing an illustration of the identified trends.

The Cyber Security section examines current issues affecting companies and individuals in the realm of IT security. This edition will look at employee behaviour as a catalyst for security breaches. Although cyber-criminals continue to increase their hacking activities, employee negligence has been cited as the major root cause of data breaches amongst businesses. Despite widespread cyber-security training initiatives, employees have been found to favour convenience over security when it comes to creating passwords, as well as not verifying the source of emails before clicking on links, for example. Such malpractice has led to theft of credentials and data, costing businesses millions of dollars.

The Focus Article offers an insight onto the role of a Crisis Response Consultant. When critical incidents take place, they affect not only the workers directly involved but can have serious repercussions for organisations. Support provided by the Consultant can be vital in the resolution of a crisis, ensuring that an organisation can lead a coordinated response, information is effectively managed and that the organisation is compliant with its various legal and HR obligations. As organisations increasingly recognise their duty of care responsibilities towards staff, the role of the crisis response consultant is not only limited to a time of crisis. It also encompasses pre-incident support helping organisations to reduce the likelihood of a crisis event, mitigate the consequences of an event and increase resilience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GLOBAL OVERVIEW ..................................................................................................... 03
Americas ...................................................................................................................... 03
Europe .......................................................................................................................... 05
Middle East .................................................................................................................. 07
Africa ............................................................................................................................ 09
Asia ................................................................................................................................ 11
STATISTICS................................................................................................................... 13
GLOBAL PIRACY UPDATE ............................................................................................ 17
CYBER SECURITY ......................................................................................................... 19
FOCUS ARTICLE ........................................................................................................... 21
ABOUT CONSTELLIS .................................................................................................... 23
GLOBAL OVERVIEW

AMERICAS

During May-June 2018, the Americas accounted for 27% of the total pool of foreign kidnap victims recorded by Constellis globally, consistent with reporting observed since the beginning of 2018. While regional statistics continue to be led by Mexico, Canada notably ranked second in the region. Although Canada has an overall low crime rate, especially of violent crime (including kidnapping), the country has seen a spike of virtual kidnappings targeting its Chinese community since the second quarter of 2018. These schemes typically target young Chinese residents, who are called by people alleging to be Chinese officials. This claim is supported by the use of devices that alter the caller’s ID, making it look like an official Chinese number. Victims are told they or a family member are implicated in crimes in China and as part of the investigation, they need to answer questions and comply with their demands. Such demands range from changing locations and going incommunicado, to taking photos or videos pretending to be victims of kidnapping. Victims are coerced with threats of criminal prosecution or violence against their family. Meanwhile, using information provided by the victims, the criminals establish contact with their families. Relatives are told the person has been kidnapped and a ransom is demanded. The demands have seldom been published, but reported payments have reached USD 200,000. Constellis recorded at least seven such incidents in Canada during the reporting period. This type of extortion scheme, which is common in China, has rapidly spread internationally, with a number of similar cases also recorded in other countries such Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, the UK and Germany. Authorities in these countries have concluded that perpetrators of these crimes are largely operating from China.

CASES:

► On 11 July, a young Chinese woman in Victoria was called by people claiming to be Chinese authorities from the embassy in Ottawa. After initially being told the call referred to a shipment, the caller later altered his argument, claiming he was a police detective and that the woman was implicated in a serious crime. Over several hours, the woman was asked for additional personal and financial information as part of the alleged ‘ongoing investigation’. In an attempt to show legitimacy, the fraudsters told the woman to Google the number they were calling from to confirm it was connected to the police in China. The woman nonetheless was suspicious and reported the incident to the Canadian authorities. The Victoria police warned that although in this case no payments were reported, much of the victim’s personal and financial information was compromised.

► On 25 May, Mexican authorities rescued a kidnapped businessman in the city of Tuxpan, Veracruz State. The 83-year-old motel owner was kidnapped on 23 May, with his kidnappers subsequently demanding a ransom of 10 million pesos (over half million dollars). Four suspected kidnappers were arrested during the rescue operation. The authorities identified the detainees as members of a well-known local criminal group characterized by its high level of violence, and which has been linked to at least five other kidnapping cases in the northern area of Veracruz state.

In the context of a deep social, political and economic crisis, Venezuela has become a hub of crime in South America. A mafia state, ungoverned spaces and arms proliferation are some of the characteristics which have made the country the perfect safe haven for criminal groups, both local and foreign. The Colombia-Venezuela border is today one of the main hotbeds of criminality in Latin America, generating hundreds of millions of dollars in illicit revenues for illegal groups, including militant and paramilitary organisations, which operate freely across borders. While Venezuelan organised criminal structures are strengthening, Colombian groups have taken the lead in the criminal economy of the sub-region. This is also the case to the southwest, on the border with Ecuador, where a proliferation of militant dissident groups has been observed in recent times. These groups, whose members have rejected the peace accords and their re-integration policies, pose the greatest security challenge in the region along with cartels formed by former militants, engaging in activities ranging from drug trafficking to illegal mining, oil syphoning, extortion rackets, and kidnapping for ransom.

CASES:

► In early July, two bodies were found in a rural area of Tumaco, in the Colombian department of Nariño. Forensic investigations determined the remains belonged to the Ecuadorian couple kidnapped from an area near the Colombia-Ecuador border on 11 April. Their kidnapping was claimed by the dissident Oliver Sinisterra Front of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) through a video on 16 April. In the footage, both hostages appeared chained and pleading with the Ecuadorian government to comply with the kidnappers’ requests. Demands included the release of a number of prisoners from Ecuadorian prisons. The Colombian authorities determined that Oscar Villacís and Kathy Velaasco were murdered on the first days of their detention and that they suffered a “violent” death. The Oliver Sinisterra Front was also responsible for the kidnap-murder of other three Ecuadorians, including two journalists, in the same month.

► An Italian businessman was rescued just hours after he was abducted on 4 June, in the Simón Bolivar municipality of Zulia State, Venezuela. Aquiles Marinelli was driving with his wife and a son when criminals intercepted them. The woman and child were soon released so they could gather the (undisclosed) demanded ransom. The plan was foiled after a few hours, when the authorities located the criminals, who released the victim before escaping.

► María del Carmen Moreno, community leader of the Colombian locality of Caño Rico, Arauca department, was found dead on 2 May, five days after her kidnapping on 27 April. Prior to her death, her family received a video showing the victim handcuffed, stating she had been captured by “paramilitaries”. A demand of a COP 1 billion (over USD 353,000) ransom was also communicated, with a 24-hour deadline for the payment. Police investigations determined the incident was a kidnap for ransom carried out by a Venezuelan criminal group, in complicity with a number of Colombian nationals. Later on, local authorities found the bodies of two Venezuelan men in the same area. The murders were claimed by alleged FARC dissidents. According to local media, hours prior to the findings, a video was circulated on social media, showing the two men in chains, claiming Moreno’s kidnapping. It is unknown why the kidnappers were murdered.
Europe

In an unexpected development, Europe showcased as the leading region for kidnaping of foreign nationals in Constellis’ statistics for the period of May-June 2018. Although there was an increase in reporting with respect to previous periods, this was mainly the result of a series of mass kidnappings of migrants recorded in Greece. While a lull in reporting of this kind of incidents was observed in recent months, this trend was often reported throughout entry points into Europe in 2017. As a number of reports have been published drawing attention to the plight of immigrants on their way to Europe, large-scale immigration into the continent in recent years has also triggered fierce debate over its direct links to an increase in crime reported within destination and transit countries. While the direct participation of immigrants/refugees in crime rates in Europe is debatable, it is certain that they constitute easy targets for criminal groups along their journey. Similar to the trend observed in Latin America, scores of migrants are being kidnapped for ransom by organised criminal groups, often comprising the human smugglers they paid to get them to their destination.

Cases:

- On 9 May, Greek police rescued 50 migrants who had been held hostage in northern Greece by a Pakistani group. Many of those rescued, who included five teenagers, were found in bad physical condition, having been given minimal food and water. The victims -38 Pakistanis, 10 Bangladeshis and two Sri Lankans- had been held in a complex of abandoned buildings east of the city of Thessaloniki. Most of them had been held for six days, although some of them were said to be more recent arrivals. Authorities were alerted to the situation by relatives who received ransom demands for the victims’ release. The rescued men told police they had each paid between 1,500 and 3,000 euros (USD 1,780-3,600) to be smuggled into Greece. Once they entered the country, the smugglers took them to the abandoned buildings, demanding another 2,000 euros (USD 2,400) or more for each for them to be released. The money was to be sent to the ring-leaders in Pakistan.

- In a high-profile case, at midday on 25 June, the Kiev police receive reports of a man who was forced into a car while walking down Turhenivska Street. Police identified the victim as a Libyan national named Abdusalam, after finding his passport at the crime scene. Subsequent investigations determined the man was the son of the financial attaché of the Libyan embassy in Ukraine. It was also determined it was a case of kidnap for ransom, in connection with the “financial capabilities” of the family. The hostage was found by police on the same day in Kiev’s Shevchenkivsky district, having sustained minor injuries. On 28 June, Ukrainian authorities arrested two Egyptian nationals, suspected in the kidnapping. No information was provided on the ransom demanded.

Ukraine continues to constitute a top regional kidnapping hotspot. While kidnaping has always been a common practice there, until recent times it was mostly limited to score settling and as an intimidatory tactic among organised criminal groups. In recent years however, an increase in kidnaping for ransom has been observed, carried out also by less experienced groups. According to official statistics, kidnaping cases in Ukraine increased markedly after 2014, believed to be a result of the proliferation of criminal groups originating from neighbouring countries. In this context, while in 2013 Ukraine registered 27 kidnappings for ransom, in 2014 this increased to 72 cases, and in 2016 to 74 cases. It is reported that so far in 2018, over 20 such cases have already been registered by the authorities.

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Demonstration against the increase in the number of asylum seekers in Lesbos Island, Greece. (npr.org)
MIDDLE EAST

Over the reporting period, the Middle East showed a slight increase in the number of kidnappings of foreign nationals recorded. Nonetheless, the region remains at the bottom of the global ranking, with only 3.9% of the total pool of incidents identified over May-June 2018. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries continue to record sporadic instances of kidnapping. Many of these involve expatriates, unlike other countries in the region, where the risk is greater amongst local nationals. For example, in Saudi Arabia, along with kidnapping, other instances of crime traditionally do not pose a serious risk, enjoying one of the lowest crime rates in the world. Infrequent occurrences of violent crime in the country mostly target members of the unskilled immigrant workforce, with Westerners and skilled expatriates very rarely victimised. Personal and economic disputes are the most common drivers in occurrences of kidnap for ransom in the Kingdom.

CASES

- On 24 May, Jeddah police rescued a Lebanese resident who was kidnapped by a number of Egyptian nationals, who demanded the payment of a debt of one million riyals (USD 266,000). According to reports, the perpetrators abducted the victim from his home in Jeddah and kept him hostage in another apartment in the city. Reportedly, two of the suspects took turns to guard the victim, while a third travelled to Egypt to carry out the ransom negotiations with the victim’s relatives in Lebanon. The victim was located and rescued by police within 48 hours from the time the incident was reported to the Saudi authorities.

- In continuation of a trend identified since late 2016, Istanbul police on 18 May dismantled a kidnapping gang responsible for the abduction of a Pakistani migrant. The gang, consisting of six Afghan nationals, kidnapped the victim shortly after entering Turkey illegally. A ransom of USD 20,000 was reportedly demanded from the hostage’s family in Pakistan. The Consulate General of Pakistan in Istanbul notified the incident to the city’s Public Prosecutor’s Office on 10 May. The victim was rescued after a Pakistani national reported having seen a person who fitted his description in the city’s Sultangazi district. The victim was held for nine days.

Meanwhile in Iraq, the north-eastern territories witnessed an upsurge in Islamic State (IS) attacks over June, in what has been criticized as a lack of an appropriate security strategy in the aftermath of the liberation of Mosul. In this context, according to local sources, over 80 people including civilians, security officers, and tribal fighters, were kidnapped in a time span of 72 hours in mid-June. A number of these abduction events took place along the Baghdad-Kirkuk highway. It was reported that at least 20 of the hostages were murdered by IS. While the group’s capabilities have notably been degraded in the last 12 months following the loss of most of its territory, a number of sleeper cells remain throughout Iraq and Syria. These cells are said to have undertaken a strategy of guerrilla warfare and other asymmetric tactics, by which they will look to exploit any weakness in the Iraqi security apparatus. As such, IS remains a credible threat source in the country, known to resort to kidnapping with political and ideological goals, as well as for funding.

CASES

- The Islamic State group released a hostage video on 23 June, demanding the release of all Sunni women prisoners from Iraqi jails. The group gave the government a deadline of three days before it would execute the six hostages shown in the video, who identified themselves as Iraqi policemen and militiamen. The video was published on jihadist social media groups, one week after IS claimed the kidnapping of 17 people, including policemen and members of the Shia Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), on the Baghdad-Kirkuk highway. Later, on 27 June, Iraqi security forces found the bodies of eight men, including the hostages in the video, two days after the deadline expired. The bodies were found mutilated and rigged with explosives in the Tuz Khurmatu district of Salahuddin Province.

- Later, on 6 July, two Filipino women were kidnapped on the road connecting Baghdad to Kirkuk. The women were traveling with three other Filipinos on their way to Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan region, when their car broke down. The two women were waiting outside the car when unknown men drove by and abducted them. The identities, affiliation, and motivation of the kidnappers was not made clear. The victims were rescued by Iraqi authorities on 7 July in Diyala Province, a day after their kidnapping. Several kidnappers were reportedly arrested during the rescue operation. The victim’s driver, who reportedly escaped just before the abduction, has been taken for questioning by the police.

Still from video released by the Islamic State displaying six hostages identified as Iraqi security forces and militiamen (Kurdistan 24)

Afghan nationals arrested by Istanbul police for kidnapping a Pakistani migrant (tns.world)
AFRICA

In an unanticipated turn of events, Africa passed from being the number one hotspot for the kidnapping of foreign nationals with above 50% of all incidents recorded in the last 18 months, to third, accounting for just over 13% of the total pool in May-June. This is mainly explained by the absence of reporting on occurrences of mass kidnapping of foreign nationals, typically linked to Nigerian piracy in West Africa. Nevertheless, while no hijackings were recorded, the Gulf of Guinea remained the worst-affected area for piracy, with Nigeria as the lead in this activity. During May-June, Madagascar experienced a noticeable increase in the kidnapping of members of its foreign community. Dubbed “Karana”, the wealthy members of the Malagasy Indian community, many of whom possess French citizenship, have been the preferred target for kidnappers in the country. According to unofficial statistics, at least 110 Karanas have been kidnapped so far in the country. This problem, which intensified since 2017, has observed an upsurge in recent months, with at least one kidnapping reported every week since the end of May. This issue has merited the concern of the French authorities, who have once more demanded more rigour from the Malagasy authorities to curb the problem. It is believed that the lack of cooperation by the affected families, which originates from their distrust of the authorities, has had an important role in preserving this criminal activity. A number of Karana businessmen have reportedly moved to Mauritius in view of the current precarious security situation in Madagascar.

CASES:

- On 8 June, Nizar Pirbay, a French entrepreneur of Indian origin, was kidnapped in Toamasina, Madagascar, whilst returning to his home in the Salazamay area of the city. It was reported that the victim was accompanied by two bodyguards at the moment of the kidnapping. Pirbay was released near his residence on 3 July, after being held for 25 days, the longest captivity recorded for just over 13% of the total pool in May-June. This is mainly explained by the absence of reporting on occurrences of mass kidnapping of foreign nationals, typically linked to Nigerian piracy in West Africa. Nevertheless, while no hijackings were recorded, the Gulf of Guinea remained the worst-affected area for piracy, with Nigeria as the lead in this activity. During May-June, Madagascar experienced a noticeable increase in the kidnapping of members of its foreign community. Dubbed “Karana”, the wealthy members of the Malagasy Indian community, many of whom possess French citizenship, have been the preferred target for kidnappers in the country. According to unofficial statistics, at least 110 Karanas have been kidnapped so far in the country. This problem, which intensified since 2017, has observed an upsurge in recent months, with at least one kidnapping reported every week since the end of May. This issue has merited the concern of the French authorities, who have once more demanded more rigour from the Malagasy authorities to curb the problem. It is believed that the lack of cooperation by the affected families, which originates from their distrust of the authorities, has had an important role in preserving this criminal activity. A number of Karana businessmen have reportedly moved to Mauritius in view of the current precarious security situation in Madagascar.

- On 6 July, an unidentified armed group kidnapped four foreign engineers, three Filipinos and one South Korean, working at a water plant project in south-eastern Libya. The kidnapping took place during a morning raid at the Al-Hassouna plant, near the locality of Ishwir. The attackers reportedly first stormed the worksite and later headed to the residential building to conduct the abduction. A number of Libyan workers were also initially taken, but were later released on the same day. The management of the Great Man-made River Project later confirmed the abduction in a statement, demanding the release of the workers. Although the attack has not been claimed, some sources affirm that the responsible group is a local militia. The said group is led by a man whose brother has been held for months by the authorities on charges of leading organizations affiliated with supporters of the former regime. Having said that, Islamic militant groups, including those linked to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, are also present in the area and could potentially be responsible.

In Libya, the security situation continues to be highly volatile, with a weak central government and various militias exercising de facto power through several territories of the country. This is paired with high levels of criminality and a high threat of Islamic terrorism. In this context, kidnapping has emerged as one of the main security concerns in the country, both for ransom and for ideological/political reasons. Foreign personnel, especially Westerners, are at particularly high risk for kidnapping in Libya. Many of the militant groups active in the country harbour anti-foreign ideologies, and along with criminal groups, regard foreigners as high-value targets. As such, most western governments advise against all travel to Libya.

- Meanwhile, Somalia continues to be a very high security threat destination, in spite of increasing political stability. In a context of widespread crime and active Islamic militancy, foreign nationals are frequently targeted for crimes, including kidnapping. In the most recent incident, on 2 May, unknown assailants entered the compound of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Mogadishu and kidnapped a female German nurse, later identified as Sonja Nientiet. The kidnappers left with the victim through a back door where a vehicle was waiting. The incident is said to have taken place without outward violence and despite several security guards working at the site. On 4 May, the Somali government confirmed that one of the security guards was involved in the kidnapping. Reports coming from the central Mudug region in mid-June, claimed the hostage was being held by at least 10 gunmen in an area consisting of hills and caves near the coastal town of Hobyo. No more updates have been published on the case since then, with the victim remaining captive. No group claimed responsibility for the kidnapping, although it is widely believed it was carried out by Al Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab.

Information appeal by the Collective of French of Indian origin of Madagascar (CFOM) in the kidnapping of businessman Nizar Pirbay (CFOM LinkedIn page)
Reporting of kidnapping activity in Asia remained low, in line with trends observed since 2017, accounting for just over 13% of all victims of foreign origin recorded by Constellis in May and June. In Afghanistan, the security situation remains highly challenging and unstable, with more civilians killed during the first six months of 2018 than in any same period over the last 10 years, according to the UN. This is owed to an increase in the lethality of militant assaults, particularly suicide and complex attacks. While most incidents nation-wide are attributed to the Taliban, the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) has also featured significantly, claiming over 52% of suicide attacks in Afghanistan. Although the successful ceasefire held in June and reports of possible future peace talks with the Taliban are positive developments, it is not expected that violence in the country will decrease. On the contrary, an increase is likely on the road to the 2018 parliamentary elections and the 2019 presidential elections.

In Pakistan, the Anti-Violent Crime Cell (AVCC) of the Crime Investigation Agency in Karachi claimed the rescue of a kidnapped businessman on 29 June. Abdul Latif Sorathia, owner of a construction company, was kidnapped on 8 May by three unidentified suspects from his office in the Murtaza Commercial Area of Karachi. The incident was reported to the police after his family received a call demanding Rs60 million (USD 492,000) in ransom for Sorathia’s release. After carrying out various raids, the authorities eventually found the victim in Gadap Town, near the border with Balochistan province. After a brief skirmish with the kidnappers, the victim was rescued and one suspect was arrested. Further raids are underway for the arrest of the remaining suspects.

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In the Philippines, the anti-organised crime watchdog Movement for Restoration of Peace and Order (MROM) has recently expressed alarm over the number of cases of kidnapping, especially Chinese, detained illegally by Chinese syndicates after being convinced to run-up large gambling debts. In a trend observed since mid-2017, the country has seen a noticeable increase in rates of casino abductions, having now become a lucrative business for these groups. Reportedly, in cases where relatives of the victims cannot gather the funds to pay the gambling debts, the victims are forced by the aforementioned syndicates to work in illegal drugs laboratories, online gambling facilities, or as drug couriers. Philippine officials announced that they are coordinating efforts with the Chinese embassy in order to address the problem. Meanwhile, the Chinese embassy has recently sent its citizens a warning on the risks of illegal gambling. An issue raised by the Philippine authorities is that in many such cases, victims leave the country after being rescued without pursuing their case, leading to the dismissal of the charges against the kidnappers.

Cases:

A Taiwanese businessman, who was kidnapped by Chinese loan sharks over unpaid gambling debts, was rescued by the Parañaque City police from a hotel room at the Solaire Resort and Casino early on 14 June. Philippine officials said Chou Yin-Chin, who entered the country as a tourist on 20 May, had been held hostage since 11 June after he was unable to pay P300,000 (USD 5,600) to his captors. The police were alerted about the kidnapping by the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO), which was contacted by Chou’s relatives in Taiwan. The suspects allegedly demanded that the relatives pay the P300,000 (USD 5,600) debt, plus P100,000 (USD 1,600) in interest. Two of Chou’s four alleged kidnappers were arrested during the rescue operation and were charged with serious illegal detention. Two other suspects remain at large.

Meanwhile in Thailand, a Chinese woman who was kidnapped from Bangkok’s Suvarnabhumi airport was found safe on a roadside in Bang Na, Bangkok, 13 days after her abduction. Jincai Chen was abducted from inside the airport by five people, four Chinese and a Thai, after arriving on a flight from Hong Kong on 6 May. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of 3 million yuan (USD 443,000) from her Korean husband. On 18 May, the husband sought help from police after he paid 1.9 million yuan (over USD 280,000) to the kidnappers and the victim was not released.Reportedly, the gang expected to be paid 1 million yuan more (USD 156,500) before releasing Chen. During her confinement, the victim was held in several locations in Bangkok, Pattaya, and Rayong province. Chen was finally released on 19 May, when the kidnappers began to feel pressure from police involvement. Investigations achieved the identification of all people involved in the kidnapping. Suspects included a Hong Kong resident, three Chinese mainlanders, and 10 Thai nationals, including a top immigration official working at the airport. According to Hong Kong media citing a Thai police source, the kidnapping took place as a result of a business dispute between Chen and a Chinese businessman, who hired a Thai female criminal to organise and execute the kidnapping. Some of the Thai subordinates confessed they were paid 1,000 baht to assist.
STATISTICS MAY-JUN 2018

KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS*

Global and Regional Geographical Distribution of Victims

- **Europe**: 42.5%
- **Americas**: 26.8%
- **Africa**: 13.4%
- **Asia & Pacific**: 13.4%
- **Middle East**: 3.9%

**Statistics for May-June 2018 are drawn from Constellis’ record of 127 kidnapped foreign nationals. Over March-April 2018, Constellis recorded a total of 105 foreign nationals kidnapped across the world.**

**Region** | **Number of Victims**
--- | ---
Europe | 54
Americas | 34
Africa | 17
Asia | 17
Middle East | 5

**Rest of the World**: 22.9%

**Top 10 Countries for the Kidnapping of Foreign Citizens in May-June 2018**

- **Greece**: 39.4%
- **Mexico**: 11.8%
- **Canada**: 5.5%
- **South Sudan**: 3.9%
- **UAE**: 2.0%
- **Turkey**: 2.0%
- **Syria**: 2.0%
- **Afghanistan**: 2.0%
- **Philippines**: 2.0%
- **South Africa**: 1.6%

* (Number of Victims)
MAY-JUNE 2018

KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS

REGIONAL ORIGINS OF VICTIMS

01 SOUTH ASIAN (61) - 48%
02 LATIN AMERICAN (21) - 16.5%
03 SOUTHEAST ASIAN (19) - 15%
04 LATIN AMERICAN (19) - 15%
05 MIDDLE EASTERN (7) - 5.5%
06 AFRICAN (4) - 3.1%
07 NORTH AFRICAN (3) - 2.4%
08 CENTRAL ASIAN (1) - 0.8%
09 NORTH AMERICAN (1) - 0.8%
10 UNKNOWN (1) - 0.8%

* (Number of Victims)

MOST VICTIMISED SINGLE NATIONALITY

01 Pakistani
02 Chinese
03 Bangladeshi
04 Indian
05 Honduran
06 Colombian
07 Guatemalan
08 British
09 Lebanese
10 Israeli

MOST VICTIMISED ORIGIN BY REGION

REGION ORIGIN
Africa Europeans & Africans
Americas Latin Americans
Asia Southeast Asians
Europe South Asians
Middle East South Asians

DISCLAIMER: These statistics herein presented are the result of a compilation of kidnapping incidents involving foreign nationals only, which have been reported in the media and other open sources. The information contained and its results are therefore partial as result of the incomplete nature of open-source material. Thus, this report should be taken only as a reference of general trends, taking its limitations into consideration.

INDUSTRY NUMBER OF VICTIMS
Unskilled 68
Businesspeople 15
Tourists 10
Unknown 9
Construction 8
Education 8
Dependents 3
NGO 3
Professionals 1
Journalists 1
Diplomats 1

MOST VICTIMISED OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR BY REGION

REGION OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR
Africa Businesspeople
Americas Unskilled
Asia Construction
Europe Unskilled
Middle East Unskilled

* (Number of Victims)
Piracy in the Gulf of Aden remained subdued throughout May and June. This was partly due to the effectiveness of the Maritime Security Transit Corridor linking the Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor (IRTC) and the Bab El Mandab Traffic Separation Scheme. Contributing to low piracy levels was the southwest monsoon season that commenced in June. Lasting through to September, and dominating weather patterns in the area, this traditionally results in the confinement of small boat activity. Nonetheless, ships should not become complacent to the piracy threat in the region. Meanwhile, attacks related to the conflict in Yemen increased. Incidents over May and June included missile attacks on a Turkish bulk carrier and a UAE landing craft. The increase in activity was likely due to the implementation of around-the-clock port operations and the termination of security personnel, who potentially utilized inside knowledge to facilitate or perpetrate attacks.

A downward trend continued to be observed in Southeast Asia throughout May and June. Criminal boardings and attempted robberies decreased 25% from the March-April period. The majority of incidents occurred while vessels were at anchor. Notably, two attempted robberies were reported at Muara Berau Anchorage, in Indonesia's Samarinda city, bringing the total number of incidents thus far this year to 12. Incidents over May and June were also prevalent in and on approach to the Singapore Strait. Additionally, an attempted boarding of a bulk carrier was recorded at Chattogram, Bangladesh. Chattogram, anchorages and approaches remain a regional piracy hotspot, with six incidents having been reported since the start of the year. Generally, the primary aim of pirates in Southeast Asia appears to be theft, although there is also a credible threat of hijacking, particularly for cargo theft. Assailants frequently use fishing boats in a bid to disguise their approach. The risk of attacks is much higher at ports and anchorages at night. Whilst crew kidnappings are relatively uncommon in this region, there is a high risk of abduction by groups linked to the Philippines terror organization Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). While no such incidents have been recorded since March 2017, this remains a credible threat, particularly in the Sulu and Celebes Seas.

CITIES:

On 7 June, in a rare public account of Iranian intelligence and security operations, Iranian authorities announced the rescue of four Iranian fishermen after over three years in captivity in Somalia. The rescued hostages were part of the 21-man crew of the Iranian-flagged vessel Siraj, which was hijacked off Ceel Huur on 23 March 2015, while allegedly fishing illegally in Somali territorial waters. Another Iranian vessel, the Jaber, was also hijacked on the same day; however, its 19-man crew managed to escape with the vessel in August 2015. Meanwhile, the pirates demanded a very large ransom for the remaining hostages from the Siraj. Iranian officials said rescue efforts had been underway since March 2015 but had not been successful. However, after some months, pirates released four of the hostages. Another fisherman was then released, which was hijacked and released in August, followed by another two in December. As a result, eight crew members died in captivity. A further four crew were rescued by Somalian forces in November 2015. Following the failure of diplomatic efforts to release the remaining hostages, Iranian intelligence arranged a prisoner swap with one of the pirates leaders in 2017. However, the pirates did not attend the meeting and an Iranian Special Forces team subsequently attempted to rescue the fishermen by sea. The operation was aborted amid fears US drones conducting reconnaissance in the area would spot Iran's activity. The remaining four fishermen were finally rescued in a “complex” ground operation in June 2018. Four members of the crew, including the ship's captain, remain in captivity as the pirates had separated them earlier from the group. Iranian authorities said efforts are underway for their release.

On 1 June, 14 armed men attacked MT Lee Bo approximately 25 nm east of Mersing, Malaysia. After the assailants realised there was no product onboard, they stole the crew's cash and valuables. Two crew members were injured. The pirates then moved to neighbouring vessel MT Bright. At that point, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) boarded the MT Bright via helicopter, arresting all perpetrators. Prior to the incident, the MMEA acquired information a vessel was to be hijacked for product. The assailants were planning to siphon product from the hijacked vessel. According to the MMEA, MT Lee Bo was not the intended target, but was chosen last minute. Two men, believed to be the leaders of the gang, were arrested in Batami, Indonesia. Investigations revealed the Mongolian-flagged MT Bright was owned by a Singaporean businessman who was the gang's financier. Two tankers were hijacked for product in the area in 2017.
With a plethora of cyber-attacks targeting businesses in a variety of ways, research is increasingly depicting the threat of employee behaviour as a catalyst for security breaches. Despite advancements in cyber-security and widespread employee training, a number of studies conducted on the root causes of security breaches have uncovered the employee as a major instigator. Recent reports, for instance, have found that 54% of all company data breaches were caused by negligent employees or contractors. By comparison, external attacks conducted by hackers accounted for only 33% of breaches. Given these figures and the number of recent high-profile data breaches, employee cyber education appears to be no better than standard, an issue requiring urgent attention considering the vast costs associated with security breaches.

One of the main avenues hackers seek to exploit in compromising a company’s data is via weak employee passwords. In a recent survey conducted by OpenVPN, in which 500 US employees were questioned on their cybersecurity habits, it was found that 25% of respondents used the same password for everything. i.e. across multiple ‘accounts’ both personal and professional. Thus, should one account be compromised, all are open to hacking, potentially leading to valuable company data breaches. Moreover, despite improvements in company communication on the importance of creating strong passwords, the majority of employees’ trend towards convenience over security, crafting passwords that are easier to remember and therefore easier to bypass by hackers. Although biometric passwords would go some way to help combat the risk of password hacking, both user and company adoption are currently low, though steadily increasing.

Studies have shown that another key area of concern with regard to security breaches are phishing attacks, which continue to see growth in 2018. According to a study by Keeper Security and the Ponemon Institute, 75% of all ransomware attacks on small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in 2017 penetrated organisations via phishing emails. Phishing emails are aimed at deceiving employees into clicking on malicious links or downloads, thereby making their device or network vulnerable to cyber-attacks. Although most companies utilise robust email screening mechanisms, increasingly intricate malicious email campaigns have been used by hackers to bypass spam blockers. With email fraud growing in both scale and pervasiveness, companies of all sizes are under constant attack. In Q1 2018, for instance, approximately 80% of businesses were targeted by phishing. When combined with OpenVPN’s findings that 23% of employees frequently click on links before verifying their source, there remains a significant threat of security breaches via this form of attack.

With data protection at the forefront of peoples’ minds, particularly following the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Cambridge Analytica’s recent mishandling of Facebook users’ data, businesses are attempting to mitigate the threat of data breaches. Whilst cyber-security training for staff is mandatory across the vast majority of large companies, training practices and security policies are however struggling to evolve along with the workplace. For example, with the growing pace of remote working, employees can expose their businesses to both digital and physical breaches, i.e. by losing laptops or company phones, or by exposing their devices to vulnerable networks by using public hotspots. Physical safeguarding of data has also often remained an afterthought with the rise of open-plan offices. Such working environments, designed to promote collaboration, are often guilty of exposing data by having fewer ‘locks’ in place, both in a physical and digital sense, often leading to sensitive data being left on display.

It is believed that employee negligence leading to security breaches has cost companies vast sums of money in recent years. According to an IBM report, the average cost of a data breach globally is approximately USD4 million. Meanwhile, the cost to larger corporations suffering breaches involving 50 million records or more, can reach up to USD350 million in damages. Given the scale and consequences of security breaches, cyber education is therefore imperative. At present however, with employee negligence being responsible for over half of data breaches, there remains a significant gap in this area. Although the vast majority of businesses may invest heavily in their cyber defences, malpractice in the workplace can still expose companies to harmful attacks.

**CASES:**

- One of the most costly data-breaches over recent years was that targeting American health insurance company Anthem. In early-2015, hackers managed to steal an administrator’s credentials via social engineering techniques, granting them access to 79 million customer records. Members of the healthcare industry estimated the total cost of the breach would surpass USD31 billion. In 2017, Anthem agreed to pay USD115 million to settle lawsuits over the breach.

- A new type of attack called ‘Thermantor’ can physically record passwords entered on a keyboard or keypad by tracing the thermal residue left on the devices after a user has input their password. This is a physical attack, using a mid-range thermal camera to capture key strokes, which can remain visible for up to a minute after being entered by the victim. Although perpetrators still need to be able to place the thermal camera near the keyboard, such an attack could have severe implications. Whether perpetrated by an insider or as a result of negligence, it has been concluded that the only way to completely alleviate this threat is by avoiding passwords altogether as a means of securing data.

- Since May 2018, a new phishing email campaign dubbing ‘Special Ear’ has targeted a series of industries, including shipping and transport. ‘Special Ear’ is characterized by sending users malicious emails loaded with Trojan malware, capable of stealing credentials. The emails take the form of regular business documents, such as invoices and purchase orders, and are made to look more authentic by utilising domain names from the country the targeted company is located. The majority of attacks have so far been recorded by businesses in Saudi Arabia and Southeast Asia.
Response consultants have a fascinating, possibly unique, window on the organisations they support. All organisations are different, but one factor remains the same: stress exacerbates existing organisational or personal traits. For example, if a company is normally run in a traditional, hierarchical fashion, there is a risk that the Crisis Management Team (CMT) will exclude all but the most senior managers and thus be limiting its perspective. Crisis decision-making is acutely difficult, often based on poor or contradictory information, with lives and brands potentially at stake. We must therefore ensure that the CMT is well-balanced, able to cope with a myriad of complex issues and find good solutions to the problems presented. Effective CMTs tend to be those that are not dominated by one person and that listen to the experience at the table, no matter the seniority or day-to-day job of the individual. This is why we put such emphasis during crisis management training and the crisis itself, on enabling CMTs to work as a team, recognising and breaking down biases, as well as actively encouraging ‘thinking out of the box’ and presenting alternative views. This also helps to mitigate the risk of ‘groupthink’, which history and experience have shown to be one of the greatest enemies of logical decision-making in crises.

In the 1940s, psychologist Kurt Lewin developed the term ‘group dynamics’ to explain the distinct roles and behaviours that occur when people work in a group. Since then, much work has been done researching this area, including by Diehl et al in 1987, who investigated productivity loss in brainstorming groups. They found that when teams have a positive dynamic, they are nearly twice as creative as an average group. They also found that in groups with poor dynamics, indecisiveness, poor decisions and poor outcomes were more likely.

**COMMON PROBLEMS CAUSING POOR GROUP DYNAMICS INCLUDE:**

- Weak leadership. In group dynamics, a weak leader can mean that a more dominant member of the group takes over and generates more confusion than clarity.
- Blocking behaviour. Behaviour in team members that inhibits and disrupts information flow. Examples include:
  - The Aggressor: inappropriately outspoken and dominating
  - The Negator: always critical of others’ ideas and therefore stifles creativity
  - The Withdrawer: doesn’t participate in discussion or offer ideas
  - The Recognition Seeker: boastful and dominating
  - The Joker: introduces humour at inappropriate times
- Evaluation Apprehension. This occurs when team members feel they are being judged harshly by other team members and hold back opinions as a result.
- Groupthink. The decision made by the group has its basis more on a desire to maintain group cohesion than solving problems. This term was coined by Irving Janis in 1972 and he found that it was vital for groups to air different points of view.

It is challenging for response consultants to enter into and advise existing teams, considering the complexities of group dynamics. It takes some grey hair before a consultant can convince a seasoned CEO or CMT to listen, especially to the advice of an outsider. When a call comes, the chosen consultant will usually start providing initial advice and support by telephone and email before getting on an aeroplane, and this is the first challenge in establishing a good working relationship with the CMT. Consultants therefore need to be good communicators, not only in person but with all available means at their disposal.

Response consultants bring not only experience but also objectivity, as they are clearly not as closely connected to the crisis as the client’s CMT. Clients often project their worst fears onto the consultant, and once trust has been established, can place extraordinary confidence in his or her opinion or capabilities. But the consultant must guard against being drawn into the client’s fears, biases and assumptions and avoid letting it become too ‘personal’. This is why it is important to rotate consultants every three to four weeks. Clients are often fearful of replacing the consultant they have come to know and trust and we are conscious that we need to reassure clients of the value and capabilities of the new person before he or she arrives. Our response consultants always work in a minimum team of two and the consultant who is not deployed will always be following the case and communicating with the consultant on the ground to offer advice and support and keep abreast of developments. This means that they offer not only a fresh pair of eyes but they are also fully apprised of case details when they arrive to take over.

It is a mistaken assumption that response consultants are not affected by a crisis deployment. Occasionally this is true, but experience shows that most crises, particularly if it is something like a long-running kidnap case, do have an impact. Likewise, the cumulative effect of responding in high stress environments and chronic stress accrued over time cannot be ignored and this is one reason why we have a team of professional counsellors available, not only for our own team where necessary but also for clients. Any negative effects are however usually mitigated by proper rest and support at home. An effective response consultant is probably someone who not only has responded to a number of crises, but who has a good family support network and has accrued many years of relevant experience in dealing with high stress situations. Such a consultant has usually had a few brittle edges rubbed off by experience, and can therefore begin to understand their clients’ experience and needs.

The average age of Constellis’ current response team is 56 and this team has a combined experience of 500+ crisis response cases in over 80 countries. The team speak a wide range of languages fluently including English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Nepali, Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese and Swahili.
ABOUT CONSTELLIS

Constellis is a leading provider of risk management, humanitarian, social intelligence, training and operational support services to government and commercial clients throughout the world. Operating in over 45 countries, Constellis’ 20,000 employees bring unparalleled dedication and passion for creating a safer world by upholding the highest standards of compliance, quality, and integrity.

Constellis’ forward thinking services span a broad range of synergistic solutions, from the boardroom to the project site, encompassing risk governance, organisational resilience, business continuity management, crisis management, travel security, global tracking, training, protective security, life support, logistics and specialist support such as K9 services and UAV systems.

At Constellis, our number one mission is to secure success for our customers. Constellis combines the legacy capabilities and experience of ACADEMI, Triple Canopy, Centerra, Olive Group, OmniPlex, AMK9, Edinburgh International, Strategic Social and all of their affiliates. The consolidation of companies under the Constellis name allows our clients to rely on one single partner and project experience that spans the globe.

For more information about Constellis, please visit our website at: www.constellis.com

CONTACT

For more information on this report please contact:

BEATRIZ SANCHEZ-GARRIDO
Information Analysis Manager
beatriz.sanchez-garrido@constellis.com

For all enquiries on Constellis’ advisory & consulting services please contact:

MARK ALLISON
Vice President, Crisis & Risk Services
Mobile: +44 7791 495 057
mark.allison@constellis.com

Crisis Response Emergency Numbers:

NORTH/SOUTH AMERICA
+1 713 916 6401

EUROPE, AFRICA, ASIA, AUSTRALIA
+44 (0) 20 7 240 3237

GENERAL INQUIRIES
+971 800 100 100

www.constellis.com

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