HAS KENYA MADE PROGRESS IN COUNTERING TERRORISM?
COMPARING THE ASSAULT ON WESTGATE MALL TO THE COMPLEX ATTACK ON 14 RIVERSIDE DRIVE
Executive Summary

Summary

This issue of Constellis’ Kidnap for Ransom Insight Report covers global kidnapping incidents and trends for the months of March, April and May 2019. The information is derived from multi-source analysis of kidnap for ransom activity and where known, the outcome or resolution of the events. The report covers current kidnap for ransom hotspots at regional, national and provincial levels, with a particular focus on areas where kidnap for ransom activity is increasing.

Statistical analysis of data for March and April 2019 is included on page 13, which displays kidnap for ransom trends by region, victims by nationality and employment sector, as well as identifying the Top 10 countries 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 March and April 2019. It also offers sample cases that took place during those months to illustrate identified trends.

The Cybersecurity section examines current issues affecting companies and individuals in the realm of IT security. This edition will provide an analysis on the increasing use of cryptocurrencies for different forms of crime. Although initially most popular amongst cybercriminals, due to its anonymous nature, cryptocurrency has increasingly impacted other areas of criminality, being used in black market transactions, as well as in actual kidnap for ransom incidents. While Bitcoin is currently the most common type of cryptocurrency demanded, a growth in the use of ‘privacy coins’ such as Moreno and Dash is being registered as they offer near total anonymity.

The Focus Article offers a comparative assessment of Kenya’s most significant terrorist attacks in recent times; the 2014 Westgate Mall and the 2019 Riverside Drive attacks. While both were perpetrated by Islamic extremist group Al Shabaab, they presented very different attack methodologies. However, most importantly, these incidents showed two very different responses from the Kenyan security forces, having a critical impact on the final outcomes. These differences in response clearly show an important learning curve by the government and relevant agencies. They also offer valuable lessons to both the public and private sectors regarding the importance of establishing crisis response strategies and their continued evaluation in order to adapt them to ever-evolving threats such as terrorism.
GLOBAL OVERVIEW

AMERICAS

Over March and April 2019, the Americas recorded the highest number of foreign kidnap victims, with over 66% of the total recorded by Constellis globally. This notable increase was principally linked to a series of mass kidnappings of Central American migrants in Mexico. While not a new trend in the country, this activity seems to have spiked since the arrival of the first ‘Migrant Caravan’ in November 2018. Since then, migrant flows from Central America have continued steadily, providing criminal groups with a vast array of vulnerable targets. Ransom demands in these cases are not large, with the profit resting in the numbers, thus promoting kidnappings en masse. This has been paired with a continued worsening of the security situation in the country, in spite of the pledges made by the new president upon his arrival in office in December 2018. Since then, kidnapping numbers have increased exponentially, with the first four months of 2019 reflecting an almost 43% increase with respect to the same period in 2018. With 669 cases, these four months recorded the highest kidnapping figure in the last five years. Veracruz, Estado de Mexico, Mexico City, Puebla and Tamaulipas are the states with the highest incidence in the country.

CASES:

- On 10 April, Mexican security forces rescued a group of 143 Hondurans, including 71 minors, who had been kidnapped in the southern state of Veracruz. The migrants were rescued from a hotel in the locality of Naranco, approximately 350km from Mexico City, where they were held by a criminal group that had demanded up to USD 10,000 per hostage. Three suspected kidnappers were arrested during the raid.

- Two days earlier, also in Veracruz State, two raids resulted in the release of 11 other Central American nationals. The second of these two groups, comprised of four Hondurans and one Guatemalan, had reportedly been kidnapped by members of Los Zetas cartel in the city of Cosoleacaque.

- An American couple of Mexican origin returned to the US on 27 April after Mexican authorities rescued them from kidnappers that had held them for ransom in the border city of Nogales, Sonora State. The couple had been kidnapped by a group of armed men on 24 April. The next day, the US Embassy in Mexico City alerted the Sonora authorities after relatives of the victims in the US filed a report, saying the kidnappers were demanding USD 15,000. According to the Sonora authorities, the victims were located within half an hour, inside a house in southern Nogales. Two men guarding the victims were arrested during the raid, Police are currently looking for other accomplices. The US government revealed that in 2018, the FBI investigated 113 kidnapping cases in Mexico involving US citizens. Of those cases, 64 involved US residents and 10 US expatriates, while in 39 cases, an extortion call or ransom demand was placed to a number in the US.

As the Venezuelan political crisis continues to show no signs of resolution, the economy and insecurity continue to spiral out of control. Journalists, dissidents and activists continue to be targeted for intimidation, kidnapping, illegal detention and forced disappearance by regime forces, while criminals continue to operate freely. While remaining businessmen and expatriates are preferred targets for kidnapping gangs, even the lower strata of the population are at constant risk. Moreover, the migration of criminals from Venezuela has been conspicuous throughout Latin America. While neighboring countries are most affected by this phenomenon, the activities of Venezuelan criminal elements and groups, especially kidnapping, have been reported as far away as Mexico. Trinidad and Tobago have been particularly affected by this, both at sea and on land. For example, in mid-May, as a result of security operations launched following the increase in criminal activity in the dual-island nation, the Trinidadian authorities arrested nine members of Venezuelan ‘mega gang’ (comprised of more than 100 members) ‘Evander’. The arrested included a Trinidadian national and the leader of the gang. Investigations into the case suggest that the gang, presented with less favourable conditions at home, saw an opportunity to expand its business by running it from the island. In addition to a weak security apparatus, Trinidad and Tobago represent prime locations for the transit of drugs, weapons and other illegal goods, and for the recruitment of desperate Venezuelans escaping the crisis.

CASES:

- Portuguese businessman Alfredo Fernandes Abreu was killed in an express kidnapping on 4 May. After being intercepted by armed men on a road in the district of Carrizal, Miranda State, the expatriate was forced to take the assailants to his home. After they stole jewels and money, the criminals shot the victim as they escaped. Fernandez Abreu was taken to a hospital but did not survive his injuries. According to the Venezuelan authorities, the crime was carried out by a local gang, which in recent months had kidnapped at least 14 other traders in the area.

- Peruvian police detained three members of a Venezuelan criminal gang, which planned to kidnap the owner of a hospital. The three Venezuelan nationals were arrested in the San Martín de Porres district of Lima, at a restaurant close to a hospital owned by the targeted businesswoman. The arrest took place after the police were informed of a group of suspicious people roaming the vicinity. This incident followed the kidnapping on 21 April of another businessman in the same district, also by a gang consisting of five Venezuelan nationals. The businessman in this incident was released the following day during a rescue operation. A ransom of USD 250,000 had been demanded from his relatives, who were sent multiple videos showing the victim being tortured to pressure them into paying swiftly. The kidnapping had been planned by a former employee of the victim, who was among those arrested. According to investigations, the gang had studied the businessman’s movements for nearly three months. Only one of the suspects could prove he was legally in Peru.

- Trinidadian fisherman Adrian Anthony Hospedales, who was kidnapped by Venezuelan pirates while fishing off the coast of Moruga, Trinidad, was fatally wounded during a security operation in the outskirts of the city of Tucupita, Venezuela, on 4 April. The Trinidadian was injured after an explosive detonated in his vicinity, and died in hospital on 6 April. Hospedales had been kidnapped on 23 January 2019 along with two colleagues, who were reportedly released after their relatives paid a ransom. According to Hospedales’ relatives, the kidnappers had initially demanded a USD 30,000 ransom, which was subsequently amended to include a boat filled with grocery items, medical supplies and cash.
Europe accounted for 5.1% of Constellis’ victim records for March-April. After a relative lull observed over the first two months of the year, reports of mass kidnappings of migrants have increased again. This has particularly been observed in Greece, where the rescue of over 100 kidnapped migrants has been recorded in recent weeks. As is also the case in Mexico, the continuous inflow of vulnerable refugees and migrants to Western Europe has promoted the growth of related criminal activities. These are mostly carried out by non-European criminal groups, which typically target their victims from points of origin, offering safe passage and/or work in the region. However, the participation of European elements has also increasingly been reported. According to a recent report by the United Nations’ International Organization for Migration (IOM), some 12,546 illegal migrants and refugees have reached Europe by sea since the beginning of 2019, 11,760 of them having arrived in Spain and Greece.

**CASES:**

▶ On 4 April, Greek police arrested three men in Thessaloniki for holding 16 migrants for ransom. A Moldavian, a Pakistani and an Indian national were arrested in the raid that took place at a warehouse in the district of Ionia. The men were arrested after one of the suspects brought 12 new migrants to the warehouse where four more people were already being held.

▶ Spanish authorities announced on 11 April the dismantling of a kidnapping gang operating between Spain and Morocco. The gang was reportedly involved in the kidnapping for ransom of Moroccan minors. The unaccompanied minors were originally smuggled to Spain by the criminals, who were paid varying amounts by the children’s parents to gain them entry to Europe. Once in Spain, the criminal network would contact the parents and demand USD 520 for the release of their child, threatening to kill them or sell their organs on the black market. The arrests were the result of ongoing investigations launched since the summer of 2018, when three kidnapped Moroccan minors were discovered in Granada being held in deplorable conditions. Since then, Spanish police have dismantled several such criminal networks, including three in Almeria, one in Cadiz, one in La Linea and another in Jerez de la Frontera.

▶ On 8 May, four soldiers attached to the National Republican Guard (GNR) were detained in the outskirts of Lisbon, Portugal, suspected of kidnapping two Nepalese agricultural workers. The incident took place in October 2018, in the municipality of Odemira, Alentejano province. After an argument with their employer, the soldiers showed up at the workers’ accommodation from where they were assaulted and abducted. The fate of the victims was not ascertained.

▶ On 26 April, the Spanish Civil Guard arrested four men for kidnapping a man in the Toledo province town of Mora. Although the kidnap was reported to the Civil Guard on 25 April, it had been carried out in November 2018. According to the report, the victim was abducted after he arrived for a business meeting arranged by a man who allegedly had land for sale. The victim was met by three men who assaulted him and took him away at gunpoint. The criminals later phoned the victim’s father to demand a ransom of 20 million roubles (over USD 306,000) from his relatives. The police managed to locate the safe house on 8 May, arresting the kidnappers and releasing the victim. The car and mobile phone used by the kidnappers were found at the property.

▶ On 6 May, the 32-year-old son of a Russian businessman was abducted after being lured by kidnappers to an unfinished building in the Moscow district of Leninsky. The victim was then taken to an apartment in Lyubertsinsky district, from where the kidnappers demanded a ransom of 20 million roubles (over USD 306,000) from his relatives. The police managed to locate the safe house on 8 May, arresting the kidnappers and releasing the victim. The car and mobile phone used by the kidnappers were found at the property.

Although Europe has one the lowest crime rates in the world, the continent is of course not immune to violent and organised crime. While limited in comparison to other regions in the world, traditional kidnapping for ransom, including that of high-profile individuals, does take place. Given the effectiveness of the police, most reported cases are resolved with the arrest of the perpetrators, commonly during rescue operations mounted by local security forces, which discourages the proliferation of such acts. In most instances, victims are rescued or released after short captivity periods. In Europe, long periods of captivity commonly mean that the victim is dead.
**MIDDLE EAST**

The Middle East maintained similar levels of kidnapping of foreign nationals over March and April 2019, with eight recorded victims, in comparison to nine in the previous two months. Over the reporting period, 50% of the incidents were recorded in Lebanon, where crime continues to be one of the main concerns for travellers and expatriates. The incidence of violent crime in Lebanon, including kidnapping for ransom, is primarily attributed to the widespread proliferation of firearms, which has been exacerbated by the conflict in neighbouring Syria. Likewise, while Lebanon has a long history as a regional hotspot for kidnapping, the ongoing Syrian crisis has led to a spike in the number of both criminal and politically-motivated abductions. In this context, Syrian nationals in Lebanon have become prime targets for kidnapping, though any foreign national with perceived wealth may be liable to kidnapping. Foreign nationals should particularly avoid the Bekaa Valley, where the threat is highest.

**CASES:**

- On 19 April, a young Syrian man was kidnapped by a Lebanese criminal gang while on his way to Syria from Beirut. The victim was driving near the Bekaa Valley town of Aanjar when he was intercepted and forced into a jeep that drove him towards northern Bekaa. His fiancée, who was also in the car during the incident, was released unharmed. Family members were later contacted and a ransom of USD 1 million was demanded to secure the man’s release. A few days prior to this incident, the Lebanese army had announced the rescue of two Syrian minors who had been kidnapped in the same area.

Meanwhile in Syria, as a result of the advances of regime forces to the south and Kurdish troops to the east, militant opposition groups have been clustered in the northwest of the country. As is the case of the remnants of the Islamic State, it is argued that some of these groups – stretched for funds and cornered by enemy forces – have renewed efforts to negotiate the release of their remaining foreign hostages. In this context, a series of releases of foreign hostages has taken place in recent months, as well as provision of proof of life for others.

**CASES:**

- On 5 April, the Italian government announced the release of Italian hostage Sergio Zanotti, after three years in captivity. Zanotti was kidnapped by unidentified militants in April 2016 in Turkey, near the Syrian border, from where he was transferred to Syria. His abductors posted at least two videos of Zanotti during his captivity. It is unknown if any ransom payments were made to secure Zanotti’s release. On 22 May, another announcement was made regarding the release of a second Italian hostage. Alessandro Sandrini disappeared in October 2016 in Adana, Turkey, while allegedly on holidays. The so-called Salvation Government, which is the civilian branch of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (formerly Al Nusra Front), said they had negotiated through informants with Sandrini’s kidnappers to secure his release.

At present, tensions in the Persian Gulf are at their highest as a result of the deterioration of the geopolitical situation in the region, with the US, Iran, and their respective allies at the epicentre. Although the Trump administration’s astringent posture towards Iran dates from as early as May 2018, a crisis point was reached in recent weeks following a series of measures that have put the Iranian regime under considerable pressure. These included renewed sanctions on oil exports and other key sectors of the Iranian economy, as well as the listing of Iran’s elite force, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), as a foreign terrorist entity. Moreover, citing intelligence indicating an increased threat from Iran, the Trump administration decided to bolster US military presence in the region. While Iran continued to deny US allegations of Iranian aggression, a series of attacks took place soon after, further exacerbating the already volatile situation. These included the 12 May ‘sabotage’ of four commercial vessels, including two Saudi oil tankers, off the coast of the UAE; the 14 May attack on oil facilities near Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and a rocket attack near the US embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, on 19 May. These incidents have been attributed to alleged Iranian-proxies in Yemen and Iraq. Although Iran has denied any participation, this is said to be a tactic commonly used by the Iranian regime to exert power in the region. While attacks linked to the situation have so far been limited to rocket and drone attacks, other forms of attack, including kidnappings, cannot be discounted. This is particularly the case for Iraq, Syria and Yemen, where threat reporting indicates the possibility of kidnappings by Iran-linked groups. While US forces are cited as the main likely targets for these groups, individuals linked to US interests or those of its allies could also be targeted. A high risk of collateral damage will also remain for the duration of the current crisis.

**CASES:**

- According to Syrian media sources, Hama has recently witnessed an uptick of kidnapping for ransom, reportedly carried out by militias associated with Iran. For example, on 28 March, a young man was kidnapped from a Hama suburb. His kidnappers reportedly demanded a ransom of 5 million liras (USD 23,300) in exchange for his release. Local activists have said that the increase in the number of kidnappings in the area is the result of a reduction in financial support from Iran, linked to the financial crisis experienced in the country as a result of Washington’s sanctions.

- On 15 May, the US State Department ordered the departure of non-essential US government employees from Iraq; both at the US Embassy in Baghdad and the US Consulate in Erbil. It also warned its nationals about the risk of violence and kidnapping, and the threat posed to US citizens and Western companies by anti-US sectarian militias. According to US officials, the decision to bolster the US military presence in the Persian Gulf and evacuate personnel was made after an Iranian Hezbollah proxy group in Iraq was given authorisation to kill and kidnap US soldiers.
The security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate as Jihadists continue to gain ground in spite of the Western-led efforts to secure the region. While initially concentrated in Mali and Niger - were abducted on 27 April during an early-morning raid on a rig owned by Niger Delta Petroleum Resources in Ogbele, Rivers State. No more details were made public. The oil workers are still missing at the time of writing. This incident took place two days after two senior staff for Shell Nigeria were kidnapped in Rivers State, with their police escorts being killed in the attack. The two victims were allegedly rescued by Nigerian security forces after five days in captivity.

Three oil workers - a Canadian, a British national and a Nigerian - were abducted on 27 April during an early-morning raid on a rig owned by Niger Delta Petroleum Resources in Ogbele, Rivers State. No more details were made public. The oil workers are still missing at the time of writing. This incident took place two days after two senior staff for Shell Nigeria were kidnapped in Rivers State, with their police escorts being killed in the attack. The two victims were allegedly rescued by Nigerian security forces after five days in captivity.

Palau-flagged product tanker APECUS was attacked by six pirates at Bonny Outer Anchorage, on 19 April. Six members of the vessel's crew, including five Indian nationals, were kidnapped in the attack. According to relatives of the victims, the kidnappers have contacted them to demand a ransom of USD 1 million, which was later lowered to USD 500,000. The sailors remain in captivity at the time of writing.

Meanwhile in East Africa, Al Shabaab has intensified the tempo of its attacks over the past two months in response to increased US air activity targeting the group in Somalia. While kidnapping is not the most common of its attack methods, the group certainly retains the capability to do so, should the opportunity present itself. A number of foreign nationals have been kidnapped by the group in the past, both in Somalia and eastern Kenya.

On 12 April, suspected Al Shabaab militants kidnapped two Cuban doctors and killed their security detail in Mandera, northern Kenya. A second bodyguard, who managed to ‘escape’, was arrested, suspected of facilitating the kidnapping. The attack took place in the early morning, when armed assailants in two cars ambushed the doctors on their way to work. Kenyan police sources said the doctors had been transferred to Somalia, with elders from Mandaera having travelled there to negotiate the victims’ release. In mid-May, elders involved in the negotiation said the kidnappers had demanded KES 150 million (approximately USD 1.5 million) for the release of the doctors, who were then being held in the Jubaland region of Somalia. Initial investigations determined that the attack was well-planned, with the abductors having comprehensive knowledge of the victims’ travel routines and security available along the routes and facilities they frequented. According to local reporting, the two doctors had already expressed concerns over their safety, specifically regarding the five-kilometre distance they had to cover daily from their house to the hospital where they worked at. The doctors had already asked to be moved to the precincts of the hospital, but their request was not acted upon by the hospital authorities. Both the Mandaera local government and hospital officials denied the allegations, saying that although they were not relocated, due security measures had been taken, such as regular changes of routes and rotation of security staff. The day after the kidnapping, the Kenyan government evacuated the remaining Cuban doctors attached to Wajir and Garissa counties.

During the rescue operation, the Barkhane forces also rescued two other hostages, a US and a South Korean citizen, who had reportedly been held captive for 28 days. Later reports said the two women had been traveling together through West Africa and had just crossed the border between Burkina Faso and Benin when they were kidnapped.

Coast. This apparent expansion comes at a time when the GS Joint Force - set up by Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Niger - is struggling to remain operational as it is lacking in funding and equipment to effectively combat Islamic groups in the region.

**CASES:**

- Two French tourists were kidnapped while on a safari trip in the Pendjari National Park in north-western Benin, on 1 May. Soon after the incident was reported, the body of their guide and their burnt-out vehicle was found less than 100 kilometres from the border in Burkina Faso. The hostages were released in a French-led operation on the night of 9-10 May in Burkina Faso, as they were allegedly being moved towards Mali. During the operation, two French soldiers and four militants were killed. Two other kidnappers managed to escape. Although the identity of the kidnappers remains uncertain, it is thought they were members of Ansarul Islam who intended to hand over the hostages to the Macina Liberation Front, which is itself part of the Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Musulmin (JNIM) umbrella organisation.

**CASES:**

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- Nigerian police parade 93 suspected kidnappers operating in the Kaduna-Abuja Express Road, 16 May 2019. (The Guardian Nigeria)

- Three rescued hostages - two French citizens and one South Korean - at a news conference in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, after their release. (Otago Daily Times)

Over March-April 2019, Africa saw an increase of 32% with respect to the number of kidnap victims recorded over the previous reporting period. The increase was directly linked to a rise in kidnapping in Nigeria, both offshore and inland. Although Nigeria has always suffered from high levels of criminality, recent months have made evident that the country is experiencing a profound security crisis. Terrorism, militancy, ethnic tensions and spiralling criminality are all part of this multi-faceted crisis. Kidnapping is currently one of the main challenges for the Nigerian government. Pirates and kidnappers in Nigeria are well-armed and often violent, and attackers have been known to persist even when there are armed security teams present, which often leads to casualties in kidnapping attacks. A recent report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that about USD 771 million is lost to predominantly Nigerian piracy and other maritime crimes in the Gulf of Guinea every year. Regarding inland activity, kidnappers have received at least N1 billion (approximately USD 2.7 million) in the last few months alone, according to estimates by local civic organisations. These local bodies have linked the current kidnapping crisis, among other factors, to an increasing participation of elements within the government and security forces in this activity.
On 10 May, 10 local nationals were arrested in Vietnam’s Lang Son province, accused of abducting a number of Chinese men for ransom the previous week. The suspects had reportedly lured the victims via WeChat, convincing them into crossing the border into Loc Binh, where they would be given work. Once there, the kidnappers dressed as police ‘arrested’ them to later demand large ransom payments from their relatives in China. According to the Vietnamese authorities, the group had kidnapped at least another seven Chinese nationals in previous weeks, collecting about 215 million dong (USD 9,209) in ransoms. Reportedly, all the victims had entered Vietnam illegally, which compelled them and their relatives to comply with the kidnappers in a bid to get them home safely.

In an unusual incident, Maldives police on 2 May rescued a Bangladeshi expatriate who had been abducted the previous day. One suspect, also a Bangladeshi national, was arrested as he showed up to collect the MVR 40,000 (approximately USD 2,500) ransom he had demanded for the release of the hostage. After questioning, the man revealed he had been aided by seven Maldivians, who physically assaulted the expatriate and stole his valuables. The local suspects were able to escape when the police arrived at the safe house to rescue the victim.

On 15 April, the Philippine authorities rescued 10 Chinese men who had been kidnapped by members of a loan shark gang. Six suspects, including six Chinese and a Filipino, were arrested during the raid that took place in Noveleta, Cavite region. The victims had been abducted from different casinos in Pasay City, Metro Manila, after they failed to pay back money they owed to the suspects. It was reported that some of the victims had been held captive for as long as seven days.

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Although some figures show that thousands of kidnappings take place in India every year, only a small fraction of them are actually for ransom. Kidnap for ransom in India typically targets businessmen and their dependants, although recent reporting suggests that members of the middle classes are increasingly being affected, as they are perceived to be more accessible targets. While organised criminal syndicates have a presence in the country, kidnap for ransom is typically carried out by unprofessional groups, often led by a person with some degree of familiarity with the target. Like other types of violent crime in India, this does not usually affect foreigners.

CASERS:

On 6 April, Indian police arrested four individuals involved in the kidnapping of the 16-year-old son of a local businessman. The teenager had been kidnapped the previous day during a festival in the city of Bhavnagar, Gujarat State. The suspects had reportedly demanded a Rs 1 crore (approximately USD 144,000) ransom from the victim’s family. The victim was released by the kidnappers after they found out the police had located them, which they had done by tracking the victim’s mobile phone. Although the criminals initially managed to escape, they were soon arrested as the victim was able to identify them.

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Violent protests after kidnapped twins found dead in Madhya Pradesh. (Hindustan Times)
Statistics for March-April 2019 are drawn from Constellis’ record of 332 kidnapped foreign nationals. Over January-February 2019, Constellis recorded a total of 125 foreign nationals kidnapped across the world.

### Global and Regional Geographical Distribution of Victims

#### KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS*

- **Americas**: 66.6% (221)
- **Africa**: 19% (64)
- **Asia & Pacific**: 6.9% (23)
- **Middle East**: 5.1% (17)
- **Europe**: 2.4% (8)

### Top 10 Countries for the Kidnapping of Foreign Citizens in Mar-Apr 2019

1. **Mexico (217)** 65.4%
2. **Nigeria (24)** 38%
3. **Philippines (14)** 30.5%
4. **Lebanon (4)** 50%
5. **Greece (16)** 44%
6. **Libya (3)** 38%
7. **Somalia (10)** 30.5%
8. **South Africa (10)** 20%
9. **Cameroon (4)** 12.5%
10. **Uganda (3)** 4.3%

* (Number of Victims)
MAR-APR 2019

KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS

REGIONAL ORIGINS OF VICTIMS

- Latin American: 65.7%
- South East Asian: 9.9%
- Middle Eastern: 6.6%
- European: 2.7%
- South Asian: 5.4%
- African: 0.3%
- North African: 0.3%
- Central Asian: 0.3%
- Unknown: 5.4%

MOST VICTIMIZED SINGLE NATIONALITY

- Honduran
- Chinese
- Cuban
- Guatemalan
- Bangladeshi
- Yemeni
- Indian
- American (US)
- Lebanese
- Syrian

MOST VICTIMIZED ORIGIN BY REGION

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VICTIMS BY OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR

- Unskilled: 75.6%
- Maritime: 6.9%
- Tourist: 5.2%
- Construction: 2.1%
- Unknown: 3.6%
- Business: 1.5%
- Other: 1.5%
- Dependent: 0.9%
- Health: 0.9%
- Oil: 0.6%
- Diplomat: 0.3%
- Journalist: 0.3%
- NGO: 0.3%
- Religious: 0.3%

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.
Levels of hostile maritime activity over March and April 2019 remained largely consistent with the previous two months, with 41 incidents compared to 43 over January and February. Criminal boardings continued to account for the majority of recorded incidents. Seven hijackings were also reported, down from eight in the previous two months. The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) remained the area most affected by piracy worldwide, followed by Latin America, where hostile maritime activity nearly tripled over March and April compared to the January – February period. Incidents in Latin America over the March – April period were more geographically dispersed than in the previous months. In particular, incidents were recorded in areas including Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil. Venezuela continued to feature prominently in reporting, with attacks off its coast expected to continue due to enduring unrest on land. Moreover, Venezuelan pirate gangs are also becoming increasingly active off Trinidad and Tobago’s coast.

The past two months also saw a rise in instability in Libya, where the Libyan National Army (LNA) began its offensive to capture the Tripolitania region. Whilst commercial vessels are unlikely to be directly targeted, hostilities inadvertently increase the risk of collateral damage from air and artillery fire. Furthermore, in a dangerous precedent, African migrants hijacked an oil tanker off the Libyan coast and forced the crew to divert course to Malta. The incident occurred on 27 March, after the vessel had rescued 108 migrants on its way to Libya. Three migrant teenagers were subsequently charged with terrorism over the hijacking. The incident highlighted the desperation of migrants attempting to reach Europe, which may lead to the recurrence of such incidents.

Hostile activity in the Gulf of Aden and the wider East Africa region rose more than 30% over March and April. Notably, Somalia witnessed a spate of attacks, including a hijacking, in which Somali pirates used a captured dhaw as a mothership, underlining the continued kidnapping for ransom risk in the region. Additionally, a land-based terrorist attack was recorded in which suspected Al Shabaab militants opened fire on a fishing vessel from the shoreline in Ceel Dhahanaan. This incident is evidence of the marked rise in Al Shabaab activities in Somalia following the US decision to escalate airstrikes against the group in January – February period. Incidents in Latin America over the March – April period were more geographically dispersed than in the previous months. In particular, incidents were recorded in areas including Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil. Venezuela continued to feature prominently in reporting, with attacks off its coast expected to continue due to enduring unrest on land. Moreover, Venezuelan pirate gangs are also becoming increasingly active off Trinidad and Tobago’s coast.

In recent months, there have been several notable hijackings off the Somali coast, including the hijacking of the dhow ADRIA (South Korea-flagged) and TXORI ARGI (Spain-flagged) by two separate pirate groups. These incidents, along with others in the Gulf of Oman High Risk Area (HRZ), have led to an increase in the number of reported incidents in the GoG. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) recorded a 42% decrease in the total number of incidents reported in the GoG in Q1 2019 (38), compared to Q1 2018 (66). Yet, the IMB data is certainly reflective of the fact that many vessels fail to report incidents. For example, IMB recorded 14 incidents within Nigeria’s EEZ in Q1 2019. In contrast, Constellis recorded 33, while MarTrackTM reported 27. In this respect, given that there is no evidence to suggest an improvement in maritime security off western Africa’s coast, the GoG is expected to remain the world’s piracy hotspot.

CASES:

- Two piracy incidents were recorded off the Somali coast, in the span of 12 hours on 21 April, the first attacks in the area since October 2018. First, pirates aboard two skiffs approached a Taiwan-flagged fishing vessel (SHIN SHUEN FAR 889) roughly 253 nautical miles off Mogadishu. The hostile vessels departed the area after members of the armed embarked security team (AEST) showed their weapons. Later, fishing vessels AESTs (Austria) and TXORI ARGI (Spain-flagged) were approached by two skiffs approximately 240 nautical miles off Mogadishu. Pirates approached one of the vessels and fired a rocket-propelled grenade at the second vessel. The attack was repulsed by the vessels’ AESTs. Due to time and space proximity, it is likely that both attacks were carried out by the same pirate group. Following these incidents, the EU Naval Force (NavFor) searched the area and identified a suspected mothership. The Yemeni dhaw, which had been hijacked with all its crew by five Somali pirates off the central Somali coast on 19 April, was rescued on 23 April.

- At approximately 1115hrs on 9 March, at least a dozen pirates armed with machine guns in two speed boats approached the Panama-flagged diving support vessel E. FRANCIS around 32 nautical miles southeast of Brass, Nigeria. The captain immediately notified Toft the ship’s naval escort security boat, which manoeuvred to engage the attackers. One speed boat closed in on the vessel, while the other exchanged fire with the security boat. The target’s alarm was raised and the crew proceeded to the engine room, while all power was shut down. After boarding the vessel with the aid of an elongated ladder, the pirates vandalised cabins and stole crew belongings as well as vessel property. The assailants kidnapped four crew members and a passenger before escaping. The ship was then sailed to safety at Bonny Anchorage by the remaining crew. A Nigerian Navy armed guard and seven pirates were reportedly killed during the exchange of fire. The identity of the hostages and their fate remains unknown. Of note, AESTs are forbidden in Nigeria. Instead, Nigeria permits private contractors to provide for-hire Security Escort Vessels services using civilian boats and armed Nigerian Navy active-duty service members. This practice is considered much less reliable than AESTs.

- Philippine marines conducted a two-day rescue operation on Simusa Island in Sulu province over 4 and 5 April, in a bid to free three fishermen held hostage by the ASG. The hostages - two Indonesians and a Malaysian - attempted to escape whilst the operation was underway. One of the Indonesian hostages drowned, while the other was rescued. The Malaysian was shot as he ran away during a gunfight between the militants and the Philippine marines. The man subsequently succumbed to his injuries. The three hostages were abducted on 5 December 2018. When around 20 ASG militants boarded their fishing boat off Tambunan, Malaysia. A RM 3 million (about USD 736,000) ransom had been demanded, although it is unclear if the sum was for all or each of the hostages.
Almost from the inception of cryptocurrency, cybercriminals have utilised it for illicit purposes, with the rise in cybercrime mirroring the rise of cryptocurrency. Digital currencies afford criminals anonymity, as well as the ability to move vast sums of money undetected. This is due to cryptocurrencies being largely unregulated and falling outside of the scope of international financial regulations. As such, various forms of cyberattack, including ransomware, scams and hacks, have favoured cryptocurrencies; through which criminals launder ill-gotten gains and avoid detection. It has been estimated that during 2018 alone, over USD 5 billion worth of cryptocurrency was laundered in Europe.

The most profitable form of cyberattack is ransomware. Ransomware involves the installation of malicious software in a computer system, holding data stored on the machine or network to ransom. Unless a fee is paid, the files won't be released and in many cases erasure is threatened. When a ransomware attack occurs, the virus will generate a ransom note, instructing the user how to pay a fee in cryptocurrency. These are typically issued with instructions on how to purchase cryptocurrency and send it to the attackers. In some cases, cybercriminals have even been known to launch online support centres to talk their victims through the process.

The overwhelming majority of cryptocurrency ransomware payments are in Bitcoin (BTC), with 98% of ransom payments being made via BTC. Even though the BTC blockchain is completely transparent, meaning that transactions can be traced, as well as obscuring its value. While the owners of digital wallets involved in Bitcoin transactions are anonymous, transactions are recorded on the blockchain, which is open to all. These can then be analysed to determine the identities of individuals involved.

The only major ransomware to actually offer the choice of paying in Bitcoin or Dash is GandCrab, though GandCrab victims that pay in BTC are charged an additional 10% fee for the efforts subsequently required by the cybercriminal to anonymise the ransom. Over Q1 2019, the three most common types of ransomware were Dharma, GandCrab and Ryuk.

The use of cryptocurrency in unlawful ventures is not limited to cybercriminals. From as early as 2015, for instance, for ransom payments that are be untraceable, making cryptocurrency payments a natural fit. Indeed, the pattern of ‘kidnapping for cryptocurrency’ is trending upwards, with many real-world, high-profile kidnap incidents now involving ransom demands in cryptocurrency. Another major way criminals have taken advantage of cryptocurrencies is through black-market transactions. Due to the anonymous nature of cryptocurrency, black-market shopping sites trading in them have thrived on the ‘dark web’, such as the notorious Silk Road. This Amazon-like platform was an online marketplace that enabled the buying and selling of illegal items such as narcotics, firearms and hacking tools – with all transactions on the Silk Road and other black-market sites made via cryptocurrencies. While cryptocurrency wallets have identifying code numbers, these cannot be traced back to individuals and so the exchange of cryptocurrency for black-market items or services on the ‘dark web’ (which masks the user’s IP address) is near untraceable. Demonstrative of the scale of such illicit activity, a recent study by the University of Sydney Business School claimed that 46% of all BTC transactions per year were connected to illegal activities, and equivalent to USD 76 billion.

**CASES:**

- **In December 2018, the Doctors’ Management Service (DMS), a medical billing service headquartered in Massachusetts, realised it had been breached by GandCrab and that information belonging to 38 US healthcare centres had been compromised. DMS however refused to pay the undisclosed ransom demanded by the GandCrab hackers, and instead recovered the data from a backup. GandCrab was the second-most prevalent ransomware in Q1 2019, holding approximately 40% of the market. What sets GandCrab apart from other ransomware is that it accepts both payments in Bitcoin and the ‘shadow cryptocurrency’ Dash. Moreover, GandCrab has been put on the black market as ransomware-as-a-service, thereby increasing its distribution channels exponentially. A full version of GandCrab on the ‘dark web’ reportedly costs around USD 1,000. Although attacks target a variety of organisations, healthcare institutions have been particularly affected by the malware.**

- **The kidnappers of the wife of Norwegian multimillionaire Tom Hagen demanded a ransom of approximately USD 10.3 million in the ‘shadow cryptocurrency’ Moreno for her release, local media reported on 9 January 2019. The police reportedly advised her husband not to pay the ransom. 68-year-old Anne-Elisabeth Falkevik, was kidnapped on 31 October 2018 from her home in Lorenskog, around 20km from Oslo, Norway. After over six months without any proof of life, it is believed Falkevik was killed.**

- **In February 2019, 20-year-old Joel Ortiz was sentenced by a Boston court to ten years in prison for stealing over USD 5 million in cryptocurrency from approximately 40 victims in the US via ‘SIM swapping’. This type of scam is on the rise and has been used by hackers to steal millions of dollars’ worth of cryptocurrencies. ‘SIM swapping’ involves social engineering against a target’s phone provider. In this scheme, criminals masquerading as the target, convince the provider to transfer the target’s phone number to a SIM card in their possession. Once this has occurred, the hacker has essentially hijacked the target’s phone number. The criminal is thereby able to receive passwords and verification codes, as well as being able to authorise two-factor authentications, all typically needed to access a cryptocurrency account.**

While BTC currently remains the cryptocurrency of choice for cybercriminals, the use of other ‘privacy coins’ is expected to grow in the near future as these currencies become more mainstream. Moreno, for instance, is now accepted on three of the five largest ‘dark web’ black-market places. The multitude of cyber-attacks and scams utilising cryptocurrencies will also continue to evolve, as will highly lucrative attacks against cryptocurrency exchanges.
HAS KENYA MADE PROGRESS IN COUNTERING TERRORISM? COMPARING THE ASSAULT ON WESTGATE MALL TO THE COMPLEX ATTACK ON 14 RIVERSIDE DRIVE

BY ROB ANDREW

The current Al Shabaab terror campaign in Kenya is a reaction to the country’s military intervention in Somalia to counter a series of cross-border kidnaps in 2011. Kenyan forces are still in the country, having been embedded into the African Union Mission since 2012. Over this period there have been multiple attacks on Kenyan soil, utilising sophisticated IEDs and shooters, and staging kidnaps, all of them aimed at undermining Kenyan resolve to retain its military in Somalia. These attacks have mostly targeted Kenyan security agencies and local nationals close to the Kenya/Somalia border, at remote locations that are difficult for the security forces to reach quickly. However, two attacks strayed from this modus operandi; the 2013 assault on Westgate Mall and this year’s complex attack on 14 Riverside Drive.

In both of these attacks, Al Shabaab targeted locations within security compounds in Kenya’s capital, where large numbers of expatriates could be found amongst Nairobi’s affluent middle class. These attacks reversed the assumption that the group’s only targets were Kenyans and members of the Kenyan security agencies.

The assault on Westgate Mall, which saw the arrival of four terrorists firing their way through the Mall’s main access point, and then working in pairs shooting anyone in their way, resulted in the deaths of 67 people, with a further 171 injured. The security response to the event was slow, with the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF) having wrested control of the incident from the better trained and led General Service Unit (GSU) a few hours into the attack. This switch in control saw the military engaging and killing police officers in the chaos, and undoubtedly led to a protracted siege. Attempts to rescue survivors were mostly undertaken by members of the public. They alone were responsible for extracting 300 people trapped inside the Mall and were not constrained by the loose police security cordon.

Offers of support from Kenya’s international security partners were ignored. Observers noted that the siege should have ended or been contained to a much smaller part of the Mall during the first night, when the four armed attackers barricaded themselves with a number of hostages in one of the Mall’s stores. Experts believe that the GSU’s Recce Company had almost completed clearing the Mall when the KDF took control.

Shockingly, and protected by a wide security cordon, the KDF used this five-day period to loot the Mall, destroy the evidence of their actions (and on their way also evidence of the terrorist attack) and set fire to anything combustible, including the store where the four gunmen were holed up with the hostages.

After five days, the incident at Westgate Mall was declared over, the country went into a period of mourning, the excesses of the KDF were ignored, and international travel advisories damaged investor confidence and especially the country’s tourism industry. The excesses of the KDF prevented any viable forensic collection from the scene and bulldozers were hastily called in to bury the mess.

January’s attack on 14 Riverside Drive proved somewhat different. The Al-Shabaab attack team of four deployed with AK-47s and grenades. Separately, a suicide bomber detonated himself beside a popular restaurant to create a distraction that gave the shooters easy access through the single-entry point into the complex. This ultimately gave them access to the Dusit 2 hotel, where their intention was to take hostages on to the upper floors and delay the security follow up. Al-Shabaab wanted maximum publicity and needed a protracted siege to achieve this.

Kenya’s security agencies responded effectively and much faster than during the 2013 attack. Control remained with the Inspector General of Police. Key counter-terrorist agencies from both the police and KDF worked well together. Media footage captured evidence of a higher level of training, equipment improvements, as well as the presence of US and UK Special Forces working alongside their Kenyan counterparts. It was these differences that contributed to the swifter resolution and lower casualty numbers.

Additionally, second-tier police units conducted a methodical block-by-block evacuation and media controls were established. During the day of the event, the police evacuated over 700 people from the various buildings and offices in 14 Riverside Drive. The whole incident was declared over within 16 hours, with all four shooters killed in firesights with security agencies. Immediately afterwards, a major forensic operation was put in place so as to develop a detailed picture of the incident and furnish evidence for criminal prosecution.

In summary, the response to the complex attack on 14 Riverside Drive was swift, professional and effective. For many, this has erased the embarrassment Kenyans felt after the Westgate Mall debacle. So, what can we learn from these attacks?

In Kenya, the Al-Shabaab target set includes foreign nationals. Therefore, places frequented by foreigners must be considered as potential targets. Facility operators in Kenya, particularly those with a large influx of foreign visitors, need to consider site security, carry out security assessments and conduct regular reviews against the prevailing threat. There has to be dialogue with national security agencies and a shared understanding of how these agencies will respond in an incident. The quality and capabilities of private security solutions also need careful vetting.

Westgate Mall was carried out by four Somali shooters. However, in the 14 Riverside Drive attack, the suicide bomber and a number of the gunmen were Kenyan citizens. This surprised Kenya’s security agencies, highlighting the requirement for better intelligence penetration of Al-Shabaab and mechanisms to tackle the root causes of radicalisation. Kenya can learn a lot from its international security partners in this regard.

Finally, close cooperation and collaboration, both international and cross-agency, were evident during the incident at 14 Riverside Drive. The speed with which this incident was brought under control was impressive, minimising adverse media comment and reducing the impact on foreign travel advisories. In this regard, Kenya should be recognised for its much-improved counter-terrorism response.

WESTGATE MALL ATTACK
21 SEPTEMBER 2013
• 4 terrorists – all died in the attack (of asphyxiation)
• 67 dead
• 171 injured
• It took 5 days for the security agencies to clear complex and declare the incident over.

14 RIVERSIDE DRIVE ATTACK
15 JANUARY 2019
• 5 terrorists – 4 shooters, one suicide bomber. All shooters reportedly killed by Kenyan security forces.
• 21 dead
• 37 injured
• Less than 16 hours for the security agencies to clear the complex and declare the incident over.
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, organizational 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.

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