The Cyber Security section examines current issues affecting companies and individuals in the realm of IT security. This edition will look into the “NotPetya” attack, the second major malware release to have infected the IT systems of thousands of organisations and individuals around the world in two months, following the WannaCry incident in May. Unlike conventional ransomware and viruses intended to extract a financial return, the NotPetya virus is distinctive in that the hackers appear to have deliberately sought to destroy the data of user systems, using ransomware features of the software as a cover.

The Focus Article offers an overview of the kidnapping threat to employees of the extractive industries. This sector continues to face a distinct series of security challenges compared to other industries, often operating in remote areas of frontier markets and developing countries, which may possess volatile and precarious security conditions. In this context, employees of the extractive industries continue to be targeted in kidnap for ransom bids for a series of motivations, ranging from financial to ideological and social.
GLOBAL OVERVIEW

AMERICAS

During the period May-June 2017, the Americas region retained its share of foreign kidnapping victims as a percentage of the global total, despite a general reduction in the number of recorded incidents in Latin American countries. In Mexico, where kidnap for ransom bids are typically of shorter duration and involving smaller ransom demands than European or African averages, a number of high-profile cases organized by experienced criminal and paramilitary groups continued to make headlines over Q2. In such cases, affluent local nationals, the political elite as well as foreign nationals, remained the primary targets.

CASES:

A kidnapped American-French expatriate was rescued in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato state, by units of the anti-kidnapping police, 80 days after her abduction in the same city on 13 March. According to local media, the criminals had demanded USD 1 million for the release of the victim and had cut off one of her fingers to pressure her family to pay. The authorities stated the kidnapping was carried out by an organised criminal gang comprised by individuals of different nationalities led by a former Chilean militant. The gang was said to have been operating in central Mexico for 10 years and was linked to at least eight other high-profile kidnappings, including the kidnapping of Senator Diego Fernandez de Cevallos and the daughter-in-law of former president Vicente Fox. The gang was known for holding its victims for periods between eight and 16 months and demanding large ransom amounts in dollars.

According to official statistics, total numbers of kidnapping incidents have decreased over 90% in Colombia since the last decade and continue to follow a downward trend at the time of writing. Despite such improvements, however, kidnap for ransom activity remains one of the main security challenges in the country. Although the National Liberation Army (ELN) has engaged in peace talks with state authorities, the group has refused to abandon its kidnapping activities, which remain an important source of both funds and political leverage. Even in cases where paramilitaries have agreed to end the practice, enforcing such agreements upon their own supporters has repeatedly stalled, with dissident groups or former militants turned criminals continuing to conduct attacks across this country. Such activity is notable in the case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), whose splinter factions have repeatedly engaged in the abduction of both foreign and local nationals in spite of the peace agreement signed by its central command in November 2016.

CASES:

On 17 June, militants of the “Front Hector” of the ELN kidnapped two Dutch journalists in the Catacumbo area of Norte de Santander department, while carrying out an investigation for a TV programme without a security escort. The victims were freed after seven days in captivity, following negotiations between the Colombian government and the central command of the ELN. The specific conditions of their release are unknown. According to the victims’ testimonials, they were detained on the grounds of being CIA agents. They described being held in harsh conditions, and were moved on multiple occasions, but were never harmed or threatened to be killed.

On 5 July, dissident Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels released an employee of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) who was held captive for two months. Herley López was seized by militants of the First Front (a FARC unit rejecting the peace process) on 3 May in Miraflores, Guaviare department, while he was working on an agricultural project. The victim had been singled out after the FARC unit carried out an ID check, where it was discovered he worked for the UN. López said he was never informed of the motive behind his abduction. He recounted being under close watch by 15 armed masked men who constantly transferred him to different locations by foot, trying to evade the Colombian military.
EUROPE

Kidnapping poses a limited risk to both foreigners and locals working for international companies and organisations across Western Europe, where the practice is largely deterred by effective security apparatus and law enforcement. Nonetheless, sporadic incidents continue to be reported, although in most instances, resolved by the action of local authorities. Spain has reported some of the lowest rates of kidnapping in Europe with most recent official figures indicating that a total of 87 people were kidnapped in 2015. Although violent crime decreased in 2016, Spain remains a moderate-threat destination for criminality such as petty theft and narcotics smuggling, representing a popular entry point into the European market for foreign organised criminal groups which engage in an array of illicit activities.

CASES:

- On 2 July, a Dutch businessman of Serbo-Croatian origin was released in Toledo by the Spanish authorities after 11 days in captivity. The Dutch national was kidnapped on 21 June by several individuals dressed in police vests in Lloret de Mar, Girona, as he returned home from work. The victim was reportedly beaten and drugged as well as being blindfolded throughout his ordeal. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of €1.5 million in exchange for his release. Five suspects, including the mastermind, were arrested in Toledo and Madrid. The responsible gang was said to be an experienced Eastern European criminal group led by a Romanian doctor who worked for a Madrid hospital. According to initial investigations, during his captivity, the victim was moved several times between Toledo and Madrid. It is unknown if other motivations apart from the general financial incentive were behind the targeting of the businessman, including whether he was in any way linked to the gang.

- Meanwhile in Portugal, an American tourist was abducted from the streets in the Chiado area of Lisbon on 26 May. The victim was bundled into a car, driven around Lisbon and forced to withdraw over €1,000 from various ATM machines. Reportedly, the American national was violently attacked during the 40 minute-long incident.

- On 15 May, 15 Pakistanis who were en route to Germany were reported to have been kidnapped in Romania, where they were allegedly being tortured and starved by their captors. Relatives of the victims have said they received videos showing the victims being tortured and that €10,000 euros have been demanded as ransom.

- On 17 May, Turkish media reported the murder of six Pakistanis who were kidnapped for ransom in Istanbul by a criminal group comprised of Kurdish and Afghan nationals. The victims reportedly intended to enter Europe via Turkey and were waiting for their agents to help them cross the border when they were abducted.

The targeting of illegal migrants in kidnap for ransom bids in Europe, a trend that started to be identified in late 2016 at entry points of the continent such as Turkey and Malta, has continued into Q2 2017, with the potential for a further increase as cases emerge in other countries along the migrant route. Most of these incidents are perpetrated by human traffickers, who often send videos to the victims’ relatives showing the hostages being tortured in order to force the payment of a ransom for the victims’ release.
Kidnappings involving foreign nationals remain infrequent in the Middle East, given the reduced presence of expatriate personnel in hostile environments over the past 12 months, coupled with effective security precautions in the more stable regions of the Persian Gulf. Amid current speculation regarding a potential defeat of IS and its implications in the Middle East and elsewhere, the security situation in the region will remain highly unstable and precarious. In a post-IS scenario, widespread militia activity, and economic challenges in countries such as Iraq and Syria have translated into a notable growth in armed criminality. In Iraq for example, according to local media, in 2016 over 700 people were kidnapped in Baghdad alone. This high incidence has been linked to the recent rise of militia groups in the context of anti-IS operations in the country. The Shiite Hashd al Shaabi militia groups have been identified as some of the main actors behind these abductions. A noticeable increase in kidnapping incidents has also been reported in Tuz Khurmatu and Salahdin Province, also linked to the Hashd al Shaabi. According to local reports, at least 33 kidnapping cases took place in the city in the past three months, 27 of which were resolved after the payment of a ransom.

**CASES:**
- In Lebanon, the Syrian conflict continues to trigger kidnapping incidents, particularly in the Bekaa Valley, where a number of retaliatory and sectarian kidnappings are commonplace. In a recent example on 9 June, a Syrian agricultural worker was kidnapped by unidentified gunmen in Arsal, Bekaa Valley. It is believed the kidnapping was connected to the victim’s alleged links to the Syrian Army.

A number of incidents involving expatriates in Gulf countries continue to be reported, most commonly targeting Asian nationals. However, these incidents remain low-level, orchestrated by opportunistic criminals or originated by personal disputes. Perpetrators in the majority of publicly reported incidents are finally prosecuted by local authorities.

**CASES:**
- On 24 May, the Australian government announced the safe release of Australian national Craig McAllister, kidnapped in Sana'a in October 2016. The release was said to be the result of mediation by the Omani government and tribal leaders. McAllister had two times appeared in hostage videos published by his kidnappers online, on January 2017 and on October 2016, where he urged his government to meet the demands of his kidnappers. While the identity of his kidnappers remains unknown, it is believed McAllister was in the hands of Houthi rebels. No mention was made regarding the possible payment of a ransom. It is unlikely that the Australian government made a payment to McAllister’s captors, having a no-ransom policy; however, this does not preclude a payment from the family or third parties.

**CASES:**
- On 14 June, Dubai police rescued an Asian woman and arrested two alleged kidnappers during a raid on 14 June. According to the police, the woman was kidnapped by two suspects over a Dh3,000 (USD 816) financial dispute. The two Asian men kidnapped the woman on her way to work and locked her up in a flat on the border between Dubai and a neighbouring emirate, from where they made the victim call a friend to bring Dh50,000 (over USD 13,600) to let her go. The friend reported the incident to the Dubai police, who located the victim by tracing the phone used by the kidnappers.
AFRICA

Over May-June 2017, the African continent witnessed a 50% reduction in the number of kidnapped foreign nationals, primarily linked to a decrease in the number of mass kidnapping incidents reported over the period, especially in Nigeria and Libya. Nonetheless, the region continues to show the highest incidence of kidnapping of foreign nationals, with almost 70% of all incidents recorded by Constellis at the global level in the same period. During the reporting period, a number of significant incidents highlighted the threat in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where the security situation remains highly volatile, particularly in the east of the country, including North and South Kivu, where militant groups commonly turn to kidnapping in order to fund their activities.

CASES:

- On 8 July, the Kinshasa police announced the rescue of an Indian expatriate businessman, 19 days after his abduction by a network of kidnappers of several African nationalities. Mr. Ritesh was abducted on 20 June from a golf course in Kinshasa, with his kidnappers demanding a ransom of two million dollars for his release. It is not clear if any payment took place before his rescue. According to the Congolese police, this is the first time a kidnapping for ransom has taken place in the capital in recent years.

- Meanwhile in Madagascar, the kidnapping for ransom of residents of South Asian descent continues to be prevalent. On 7 June, four men armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles kidnapped a wealthy hotelier of Indian origin outside his home in Antanarivo as he was leaving for work. The victim was released after eight days in captivity. The ransom demanded by the kidnappers and the sum likely paid for his release remain unknown. This kidnapping occurred just two days after the release of a French national of Indian decent. His 23-day ordeal reportedly ended with the payment of an undisclosed ransom. His kidnappers had originally demanded €1 million.

- In Nigeria, foreign nationals continue to be targeted in kidnap for ransom bids, most commonly in southern territories, where the criminal threat is more acute. On 5 June, armed men in Okpella village, Edo State, kidnapped a Chinese expatriate during a routine patrol at a cement quarry site. The expatriate’s security attachment was killed during the attack. The status of the hostage is unknown. A few days after the incident, members of the House of Representatives called on the federal government to declare a state of emergency in Edo State due to the prevailing insecurity, including high rates of kidnapping.
AFRICA

The political and security environment in Libya remains precarious, exacerbated by a challenging economic situation facing the country with ongoing disruptions to oil and gas exports. Political division, widespread militia activity, the presence of Islamic terrorist groups and pervasive criminality, are all significant challenges to Libya’s prospects for stability. In this context, kidnapping for ransom and for ideological reasons has become one of the main security concerns. Militants and criminals have regularly targeted foreign nationals since 2014, including diplomatic personnel and oil workers. Recent reports stating that Islamic State and other Jihadi militants, including foreign fighters, are regrouping in the southern Libyan Desert, exploiting pre-existing smuggling networks along the borders with Sudan, Chad, Algeria, Niger and Tunisia are also of significant concern.

CASES:

On 28 June, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) confirmed the safe return of five of its employees following an attack on a UN convoy traveling from Surman to Tripoli. The convoy was attacked by armed militiamen near Zawijah, about 50km west of Tripoli. Seven UN members, five men (three Libyans, one Malaysian and a Romanian) and two women (an Egyptian and a Palestinian), were taken hostage for a few hours before being released unharmed. The kidnappers allegedly demanded the release of relatives detained in Tripoli. It is unknown whether this or other demands were conceded for the release of the victims.

Elsewhere in the Sahel, umbrella jihadi group Jama’a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), al Qaeda’s main entity in West Africa, released a video on 2 July showing six foreign hostages in its captivity, only one week after Swedish hostage Johan Gustafsson was released by the group. In the video, each of the victims sent a message to their families and respective governments asking them for help, additionally, the narrator calls the hostages’ relatives to negotiate directly with the group. The hostages in the video include Stephen Malcolm McGowan, a South African kidnapped in Mali in 2011; Ken Elliott, an Australian doctor kidnapped in January 2016 in northern Burkina Faso; Romanian national Iulian Ghergut, kidnapped in Burkina Faso in 2015; Swiss missionary Beatrice Stockly, kidnapped in January 2016 in Mali; and two previously unclaimed hostages: Colombian nun Gloria Narvaez, kidnapped in southern Mali in February 2017, and French humanitarian worker Sophie Petronin, abducted from Gao, Mali, in December 2016. However, the video does not mention American aid worker Jeffery Woodke, who was kidnapped by presumed jihadists in Niger last year.
Constellis’ statistics for Asia observed an increase of almost 30% in the number of victims registered over May-April 2017 with respect to the previous two months. This was mainly the result of an increased incidence in Afghanistan, where at least five foreign nationals were kidnapped, including three western expatriates and two diplomats. This was most prominent in Kabul, where there has been a notable increase in high-profile militant attacks in the last three months. Moreover, in a context of overstretched security forces, kidnapping and extortion rings appear to be feeding off the growing insecurity. Although accounting for a small proportion of all victims of kidnapping in the city, foreigners find themselves targeted by both militants and criminals. The latter additionally tend to often sell (or threaten to do so) foreign and other high-profile victims, to insurgent groups for a higher price, who may transfer them to territories across the border in Pakistan.

**CASES:**

- On 20 May, unknown gunmen attacked a guesthouse run by Swedish NGO Operation Mercy, located in the Darulaman area of Kabul. During the attack, the compound’s security guard was beheaded by the attackers while a Finnish aid worker was taken hostage and a German colleague died in the attack, presumably resisting the kidnapping. No more information has been available since the incident was reported, including the perpetrators’ identity. This incident was followed by the kidnapping of an American national outside his home in the Karte Char area, on 18 June, when armed men intercepted his car on his way to work. The victim worked as a consultant for the Afghan government, on a World Bank project. No one claimed responsibility for the kidnapping.

- Similarly, in Pakistan, a young Chinese couple, who were reportedly working as Chinese language teachers in the country, were kidnapped from the streets of Jinnah Town, Baluchistan province, on 24 May. Another Chinese woman managed to escape the attack and report the incident. Later, on 6 June, IS published a video showing the alleged dead bodies of the victims. The announcement followed a failed rescue operation carried out by the Pakistani military on 4 June. The Pakistani government later claimed that the motivation behind the kidnap/murder was that the Chinese victims, along other foreign nationals, were actually preaching Christianity in the area at an establishment disguised as a language school.

- Two Japanese tourists, who had been reported missing since 30 May after taking a boat tour to islands off Palawan Province, were found dead on 3 June. According to witnesses of the incident, three men who joined the group at a stop in the tour were responsible for the kidnapping and subsequent murder of the group. Three suspects were arrested, including a Japanese national. While it was initially suspected that Abu Sayyaf militants were involved in the crime, the current line of investigation points towards the involvement of a Japanese criminal syndicate (Yakuza) in relation to a financial dispute.

- Similarly, in Thailand, police rescued a kidnapped Japanese businessman from an apartment in Bangkok on 9 June, after four days in captivity. The victim was found with signs of torture and with a broken leg. Three suspects were arrested during the raid, all of them Japanese nationals, one of whom is believed to be linked to the Yakuza. The police said they suspected the kidnappers would soon kill the victim as all available funds from his credit cards and bank accounts had been withdrawn. The kidnappers had initially demanded a ransom of 300 million yen (over USD 2.6 million). Investigations determined that the group had been monitoring the Japanese businessman for months before kidnapping him. The victim’s wife pointed to a Japanese contractor as the possible mastermind of the kidnapping, given a pre-existing business dispute with the victim.

The Abu Sayyaf Group’s kidnap for ransom activity has decreased in the past few months as a result of the continued military crackdown by the Philippine authorities on Islamic militancy in Mindanao, which has reportedly depleted group numbers and deprived Mindanao militants, including the IS-linked Maute faction, of a base from which to organise their activities. The threat nonetheless remains heightened as these groups may be motivated to seek safe havens elsewhere in the Philippines and to carry out high-profile attacks, including kidnappings. This threat is compounded by high rates of violent crime, particularly in southern regions and metro Manila, where gangs commonly target people of Chinese, Korean and Japanese descent (both local and foreign).
Statistics for May–June 2017 are drawn from Constellis’ record of 108 kidnapped foreign nationals. Over March and April 2017, Constellis recorded a total of 193 foreign nationals kidnapped across the world.

AFRICA 69.4%  ASIA 13.0%  AMERICAS 11.1%  MIDDLE EAST 4.6%  EUROPE 1.9%

**KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS***

**Global & Regional Geographical Distribution of Victims**

**May-June 2017**

**Top 10 Countries for the Kidnapping of Foreign Citizens in May-June 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf States</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillipines</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Results do not include the kidnapping of illegal migrants.
May - June 2017

KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS

REGIONAL ORIGINS OF VICTIMS

01 AFRICAN 34.2%
02 CENTRAL ASIAN 19.4%
03 EUROPEAN 11.1%
04 MIDDLE EASTERN 1.9%
05 NORTH AMERICAN 1.9%
06 SOUTH ASIAN 4.6%
07 NORTH AFRICAN 5.6%
08 SOUTH EAST ASIAN 6.5%
09 UNKNOWN 7.4%
10 LATIN AMERICAN 7.4%

MOST VICTIMISED SINGLE NATIONALITY

01 Tanzanian
02 Iranian
03 South Sudanese
04 Costa Rican
05 Dutch
06 Kenyan
07 Indian
08 Chinese
09 Japanese
10 American

MOST VICTIMISED ORIGIN BY REGION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>ORIGIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Africans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>South East Asians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>Latin Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>North Americans &amp; Europeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only one case, therefore not statistically significant

VICTIMS BY OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR

UNKNOWN 26.8%
MARITIME 19.4%
OTHER 13.9%
RELIGIOUS 1.9%
PROFESSIONALS 2.8%
JOURNALISTS 2.8%
DEPENDENTS 2.8%
TOURISTS 3.7%
UNSKILLED 5.6%
DIPLOMATS 5.6%
NGO 6.4%
BUSINESSPEOPLE 8.3%

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.

 MOST VICTIMISED OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR BY REGION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Maritime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>Businesspeople</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Businesspeople &amp; Tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Tourists &amp; Businesspeople</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>Unskilled Workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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GLOBAL PIRACY UPDATE

According to the latest report by the ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a total of 87 incidents of maritime piracy were reported between January and June 2017. This figure represents a substantial decrease compared to the same period in 2016 when 97 incidents were recorded. Notwithstanding, a minor increase was observed in Q2 2017, with 44 incidents from 43 reported in Q1 2017. Of the ships targeted during the first half of 2017, 19 were product tankers and 18 bulk carriers. Violence inflicted upon crewmembers persisted during this period with 63 seafarers taken hostage, 41 of them for ransom compared to 62 people taken throughout 2016. No crew was killed during the second quarter of 2017 unlike the first quarter of 2017, when two sailors were killed in waters off the Philippines.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Aden has remained unstable, with five incidents recorded in the region during the second quarter of 2017. Somalia remained the primary hotspot for piracy in this area, as incidents more than doubled from Q1 to Q2 2017, underscoring the growing ability of Somali pirates to carry out attacks. As an example of this trend, in early April, two separate attacks were carried out off the coast of Somalia within 48 hours. These attacks, involving Indian cargo ship, MV Al Kausar, and Pakistan-owned cargo vessel, MV Salama 1, had at least 11 seafarers taken hostage by the pirates. It is assessed that this trend is the result of a lack of adherence to Best Management Practices (BMP) by a number of vessels, leaving them at a greater risk of an attack. Meanwhile, in the strait of Mandeb, one oil tanker was attacked as insecurity grows in the region due to the military conflict in Yemen.

Attacks in and around the Philippines have declined considerably from the first to the second quarter of 2017. From January to March 2017, nine attacks were reported in the region, while just four cases were recorded from April to June 2017. This downward trend is assessed to be a result of a greater cooperation between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, aiming at preventing further kidnappings of seamen plying in the Sulu-Celebes Sea, and the ongoing military operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) by the Philippine authorities. The risk of attacks in the region however remains. Illustrating the extant threat in the region, on 23 June, six heavily armed men hijacked a small Thai product tanker, CP41, en route from Singapore to Songkhla, Thailand; a similar incident to the series of recurrent attacks carried out in the region between April 2014 and August 2015.

Pirates held at gunpoint by the Indian navy after thwarting an attack on a Liberian vessel on 16 May 2017. (Indian Navy.)

CASES:

- On 23 May, Somali pirates hijacked an Iranian fishing vessel in waters off Gondala, Puntland. It was believed that the pirates captured the ship to use it as a mothership to later attack larger and more valuable vessels. Local authorities noted that the fishing trawler did not have a license to fish in Puntland. The hijacked ship had a crew of at least 20 Iranian men on board when it was attacked. No further details have since been provided.

- On 17 May, at least six crewmembers were kidnapped, from a general cargo in Nigeria, some 40 nm southeast of Brasso, Bight of Bonny. Although not confirmed, it is believed the attacked vessel was the German MV Glory. An unspecified number of sailors were taken hostage by the pirates. The nationalities of the kidnapped crew are still unknown, as well as their ranks, although it is believed the victims are senior officers, including the Master of the ship. The remaining crew sailed the ship to Bonny anchorage. Later on 9 June, Russian authorities announced the release of a Russian national who was kidnapped by pirates in the Gulf of Guinea in mid-May, possibly referring to the 17 May attack. The conditions of his release were not mentioned.

- During June and the beginning of July, three sailors were murdered and four rescued in the Philippines. In incidents linked to the Abu Sayyaf Group. On 4 July, the Philippines military found the beheaded bodies of two Vietnamese sailors, part of the six-men crew of the Vietnamese bulk carrier MV Royal 16 hijacked in November 2016. A third Vietnamese sailor was found dead on 13 June, following clashes between Philippines security forces and ASG militants. It is unclear if he belongs to the crew of the MV Royal 16 or to that of the MV Giant Hai, whose crew were kidnapped in February 2017. Additionally, three Filipino sailors and one Vietnamese, members of the crews of the FB Ramona 2 (abducted in December 2016) and MV Royal 16 respectively, were rescued by the authorities in the same period.
Petya is the second major global malware attack to have emerged in the past two months, reportedly affecting at least 2,000 individuals and organisations worldwide on 27 June by encrypting files on infected machines and demanding a ransom for data to be restored. Initial observations concluded that the virus was ransomware, similar to May’s WannaCry outbreak, which infected hundreds of thousands of systems worldwide.

The original Petya has been in existence since 2016 but unlike WannaCry, leaves an infected computer completely paralyzed. The latest version of the virus used in the 27 June attack has been dubbed ‘NotPetya’ because it uses a completely different encryption routine. The creators of the original virus, Janus Cybercrime Solutions, recently released the master decryption key of all past Petya versions, possibly to distance themselves from the NotPetya outbreak. This key unfortunately did not help NotPetya victims because of the difference in the encryption process.

Unlike WannaCry, NotPetya threatened to delete encrypted files on an infected machine unless a ransom of USD 300 was paid in Bitcoins. However, it quickly became apparent that the virus was not ransomware, but rather used it as a cover. After the ransom note was generated, it would provide a 60-character “personal installation key” to be used to request a decryption key once payment was made. However, it was later discovered that the installation key bore no correlation to the encryption key, meaning that there was no way to decrypt the disk even if payment was made. As such, NotPetya was designated as a “wiper” virus rather than ransomware as it wipes data without a prospect for retrieval. Furthermore, it was discovered that NotPetya had a provision that enabled it to proliferate within organisations that had installed the protective patch against WannaCry.

There are two factors which bring the motivations behind the attack into question. The first was that the Bitcoin payment address which appeared in the ransom note was the same for every victim, meaning the money could be traced (the majority of ransomware uses a custom address in each instance). Second, the same email address was offered to all victims to obtain their decryption key once the ransom was paid. When the email provider acknowledged one of its addresses was being used in this cyber-attack, it suspended the account. This meant that for some victims it was impossible to request the decryption key, therefore, indicating that paying the ransom would be meaningless, which further suggested that the hackers did not expect to receive a ransom. This, and the intricate deployment and propagation of the virus, prompted the UK’s National Cyber Security Centre, as well as the Ukrainian authorities, to assess that the real motive behind the attack was disruption as opposed to collecting ransoms.

It currently remains unclear who was behind NotPetya. However, considering the attack was sophisticated and aimed at data destruction, it is believed it was potentially designed with a geopolitical goal, pointing at the possibility of state-sponsorship. The majority of infections – 60% according to the cyber security firm Kaspersky – took place in Ukraine, affecting government offices, banks, state power utilities and critical infrastructure, among others. As such, Ukraine has accused Russia of spreading the virus; however, this may not be the case as victims also included Russian interests such as Russia’s Rosneft oil company.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Avoid clicking on links or opening attachments / emails from unknown sources (people you don’t know or companies you don’t do business with).
- Ensure users select only trusted providers of software/apps to prevent involuntary malware downloads.
- Keep Windows up to date, at the very least by installing the March patch, which defends against the EternalBlue vulnerability, therefore, stopping one of the major avenues of infection.
- Have at least two backups of important files, one locally and one on the web.
Threat groups engaging in these activities may range from criminal and militant groups to disgruntled local communities, acting in accordance with financial, political or ideological objectives. The perception of wealth associated with global extractive industries has also contributed historically to the targeting of their employees in addition to a widespread practice of payment of ransoms to responsible groups.

Of corporate employees, expatriate workers typically possess the greatest threat profile, given the increased visibility and perception of wealth for such employees in local communities.

To mitigate this challenge, companies may seek to reduce the number expatriates and foreign visitors on the ground, although it has been observed that this strategy may also result in the transfer of the risk towards local staff, increasing the number of local workers becoming victims of abduction. Local personnel are also likely to be provided with less dedicated security support from corporate employers, with abductions of host country nationals also less likely to be reported in the media, and therefore less likely to generate potential challenges to would-be kidnappers. Moreover, in some instances, local employees, particularly those in managerial positions, have been found to have been targeted for their connection to the ruling elite. This is particularly an issue in regions with noticeable tribal/community divides.

According to Constellis’ statistics for the last 28 months, there were a total of 88 kidnapped foreign workers involved in the mining and oil and gas sector; 89% of these incidents took place in Africa, of which close to 75% were reported at sea. The Middle East and North Africa have also been identified as high-risk environments as a result of the elevated threat posed by Islamist militants. By contrast, Latin America remains one of the highest threat environments for local national workers, linked to the wider proliferation of kidnapping activities, including “express” and “virtual kidnappings” which are widespread in such societies. Incident reports from across the world have also highlighted that the kidnapping of workers of extractive industries can occur in any location where work is carried out, even at sites far from conflict areas with typically low levels of crime.

In light of these factors, extractive companies need to adopt effective risk management policies, including a cohesive crisis management plan as well as consideration of the integration of community-engagement strategies and a locally-based security approach.
PAKISTAN. On 26 November 2016, six local workers for Polish oil and gas surveying company Geofizyka Krakow were kidnapped by a Taliban faction in South Waziristan province. In May 2017, a hostage video was released online, where the victims are seen pleading for their lives and the kidnappers inform that the hostages would not be released until the militants’ unspecified demands were met. The workers were released on 4 June 2017, reportedly on a “goodwill gesture”, after local elders mediated in the case. Previously, in 2008, a Polish engineer working for the firm was kidnapped by the Pakistani Taliban near the northwestern city of Attock and beheaded several months later.

MEXICO. On 3 September 2016, five mine workers were abducted by an armed group from the Temixco mine, in the locality of Arcelia, Guerrero State, following the theft of 1 million pesos (USD 55,000) from the company offices. According to local reports, the responsible cartel group demanded 3 million pesos (USD 165,000) for their release. The mine closed for three days after employees refused to work as a result of the lack of security. The victims were released after two weeks in captivity, following the payment of a ransom by their families. Another five workers for the same mine had been kidnapped in late August and released in early September, allegedly without any ransom payments.

CASES:

COLOMBIA. On 10 June 2017, former Popular Liberation Army (EPL) militants intercepted employees of a security subcontractor for Ecopetrol, in the municipality of Tibú, Norte de Santander, and informed them that the company had been designated as a “military target”. In previous weeks, the company reported the kidnapping of one of its workers and the destruction of two of their vehicles by members of the same group. As a result, Ecopetrol has increased security at its Tibú oil complex, including the deployment of army units. The suspected group, also known as “Los Pelusos”, commonly carries out kidnap for ransom and extortion of Ecopetrol employees and subcontractors at illegal checkpoints across localities of Catacumbo region.

NIGERIA. On 16 May 2017, suspected militants kidnapped four managers of a Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC) contracting firm, in a community along the Benin River, Delta State. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of 36 million naira (USD 114,000) in addition to the removal of army gunboats from the Benin River and their inclusion in the company’s payroll. The same militants were believed to be behind a series of recent attacks in the area, after complaining that oil companies had not been contracting them for their operations in the area. The victims were released after three days. It was not clear if the ransom demanded was paid but it was reported that the army removed its gunboats from the area the previous day.

SOUTH SUDAN. Between 8 and 18 March 2017, six oil workers, including two Indian nationals and a Pakistani citizen, were kidnapped by Sudan People’s Liberation Army - In Opposition (SPLA-IO) militants from the Adar and Palioch oilfields. All six victims worked for an oil consortium formed by China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), Sinopec and Petronas. While the militants stated the attacks were carried out to force oil companies to leave the country, they also demanded a ransom of USD 1 million. The victims were released on 31 March in undisclosed circumstances. The governments of Ethiopia and Sudan were part in the negotiation.

DRC. On 28 February 2017, five employees of Canadian Banro Corporation were kidnapped from the Namoya gold mine in Maniema province. The victims included a French national, a Tanzanian and three Congolese. The local militia suspected to be behind the attack had recently been threatening the company, criticising the lack of jobs for local young miners. The kidnappers demanded a USD 1 million ransom in addition to the construction of basic infrastructure in the area. The French and Congolese nationals were released after three months in captivity in unknown circumstances, while the Tanzanian national was reportedly released after one month, following the alleged payment of an undisclosed ransom.

The Tiguentourine gas plant in In Amenas, Algeria, following the January 2013 hostage crisis (IB Times)
**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, including background investigations, social intelligence tools, advanced training capabilities, life support services, UAV systems, global tracking technology, fire protection, and medical services, information security services and crisis response mitigation. 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, 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.

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**CONTACT**

For more information on this report please contact:

**BEATRIZ SANCHEZ-GARRIDO**  
Senior Analyst, Risk Management  
beatriz.sanchez-garrido@constellis.com

**JAMES BORRELLI**  
Programme Manager  
james.borrelli@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**  
+1 713 918 6401

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

**GENERAL INQUIRIES**  
+971 800 100 100

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