EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

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

Statistical analysis of data for January and February 2018 is included on page 15, which graphically displays K&R trends by region, victims by nationality and employment sector, as well as identifying the Top 10 counties for kidnapping of foreign nationals over the reporting period.

The Global Piracy Update provides an overview of the piracy threat by region with trend analysis for the first two months of 2018. It also offers sample cases occurring through those months, which illustrate given trends.

The Cyber Security section examines current issues affecting companies and individuals in the realm of IT security. This edition will look into the cybercrime trends over 2017. The past year witnessed the highest rates of cyber-attacks on record, with almost double the number of incidents recorded in 2016. By far the most recurrent form of attack was ransomware, targeting thousands of individuals and businesses, with a cost of billions of dollars to the global economy. 2017 also saw the rise of other forms of attack, such as DDoS and infiltrations of devices connected to the internet. A lack of rigour and training around cyber security within major organisations and governments have been identified as the key enablers and drivers of such activity.

The Focus Article offers an overview of kidnapping and extortion in Colombia. Once known as the leading kidnap for ransom hotspot globally, Colombia has experienced significant reductions in kidnapping levels over the last three years. This trend has developed in parallel with the peace process between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), an important condition of which was the suspension of kidnap for ransom attacks by the group. At the same time, extortion has emerged as one of the fastest growing crimes in the country over the last 10 years, at present representing one of the main security challenges to organizations in the country. A criminal migration towards this very cost-effective activity, in addition to innovative tactics, can be identified as the main drivers of this growth. Incidence in both cases, kidnapping and extortion, is mainly driven by organised and common criminality, suggesting some clear gaps in the security strategy of the Colombian government, typically focused on armed groups’ activity.
GLOBAL OVERVIEW

AMERICAS

During the first two months of 2018, the Americas saw a noticeable increase in the reporting of kidnapping incidents targeting foreign nationals. The number of victims recorded in this period was the highest recorded by Constellis for any first bimester over the last four years, with over 75% of these incidents occurring in Mexico, where a continuous deterioration of security is being observed. Violence in Mexico, increasing since the beginning of 2015, reached a historical peak in 2017, both in terms of total number of incidents and territorial reach. While in the past, armed activity was typically concentrated in regions well-known for their cartel activity, recent attacks have extended to include areas previously assessed as secure, including the Mexican capital and some of the nation's leading tourist resorts. This situation was most recently acknowledged in the travel warnings issued by the Canadian and US governments, warning their citizens on the security threat at the beach resort of Playa del Carmen in Quintana Roo. Cartels in Mexico employ kidnapping as one of their main tactics of violence, which is often overlooked or directly aided by local authorities. While cartels do not typically target foreign nationals, a number of incidents have been recorded in the past, with victims often targeted due to their existing links to illicit activities.

CASES:

▶ On 31 January, three Italian nationals disappeared in Tecalitlán, Jalisco state. Details on the case have been limited, with all three remaining missing at the time of writing. After investigations, it was determined that the Italians were initially arrested by local police, who in turn handed them over to members of a cartel. The police officers reportedly received a payment amounting to 43 euros to kidnap the foreigners. Although not confirmed by the authorities, it is believed the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) was behind the plot. Press articles have suggested this activity was behind the plot. Press articles have suggested the incident was behind the plot.

▶ Over recent months, an increase in virtual kidnappings (plots involving false claims of abduction to extort money from friends or relatives of the alleged victims) has occurred in Mexico. Such incidents commonly take place at hotels, affecting both local and foreign visitors, primarily Spanish speakers. At least four such incidents have been recorded in the media in the last three months. On 24 February, Mexican Police located an exchange student who was the victim of a virtual kidnapping in the city of Queretaro. For three days, criminals made the student and his relatives in Spain believe he had been kidnapped, and demanded £30,000 for his "release." After receiving notification on the incident, the Mexican authorities located the student in a hostel in Queretaro, and determined that the criminals’ calls originated from a town almost 700 kilometres away. Moreover, it was identified that the telephone number used by the criminals had already been used in similar reported cases the previous week. No arrests were reported and it is unclear if any payment took place.

Meanwhile in South America, Colombia has experienced a surge in violence following the expiration on 9 January of the temporary ceasefire between the state and the National Liberation Army (ELN), leading the Santos administration to suspend all talks with the ELN on 29 January. The political crisis has been followed in turn by an escalation in military action by the security forces, including an airstrike on 7 March against ELN positions, killing a number of militants and commanders of the group in Antioquia department. Amid an ongoing deterioration in the situation, there is a new risk of a long-term collapse in the talks with the ELN militias, and with it, the potential for a revival of the group’s former levels of violence, including kidnapping. While the surge in ELN violence has been assessed as both a tactic to pressure the government and an expression of internal divisions within the organization, the government’s position is considered to have become particularly stern in the context of the country’s upcoming presidential elections, in which military and national security will be at the forefront of the campaigns.

On 13 January, suspected ELN militants kidnapped a subcontractor of the state-run oil company Ecopetrol. The man was abducted by two armed men from his office in Saravena, close to the border with Venezuela. The Colombian authorities have attributed the kidnapping to the Domingo Lain front of the ELN, responsible for a series of bombings and kidnappings in Colombia’s eastern territories. The kidnapping took place just hours before the arrival of the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, who travelled to Colombia to support the peace negotiations with the rebel group. This incident is the first kidnapping attributed to the ELN since the end of the bilateral ceasefire on 9 January.

On 13 January, suspected ELN militants kidnapped a subcontractor of the state-run oil company Ecopetrol. The man was abducted by two armed men from his office in Saravena, close to the border with Venezuela. The Colombian authorities have attributed the kidnapping to the Domingo Lain front of the ELN, responsible for a series of bombings and kidnappings in Colombia’s eastern territories. The kidnapping took place just hours before the arrival of the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, who travelled to Colombia to support the peace negotiations with the rebel group. This incident is the first kidnapping attributed to the ELN since the end of the bilateral ceasefire on 9 January.

On 13 January, suspected ELN militants kidnapped a subcontractor of the state-run oil company Ecopetrol. The man was abducted by two armed men from his office in Saravena, close to the border with Venezuela. The Colombian authorities have attributed the kidnapping to the Domingo Lain front of the ELN, responsible for a series of bombings and kidnappings in Colombia’s eastern territories. The kidnapping took place just hours before the arrival of the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, who travelled to Colombia to support the peace negotiations with the rebel group. This incident is the first kidnapping attributed to the ELN since the end of the bilateral ceasefire on 9 January.

On 13 January, suspected ELN militants kidnapped a subcontractor of the state-run oil company Ecopetrol. The man was abducted by two armed men from his office in Saravena, close to the border with Venezuela. The Colombian authorities have attributed the kidnapping to the Domingo Lain front of the ELN, responsible for a series of bombings and kidnappings in Colombia’s eastern territories. The kidnapping took place just hours before the arrival of the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, who travelled to Colombia to support the peace negotiations with the rebel group. This incident is the first kidnapping attributed to the ELN since the end of the bilateral ceasefire on 9 January.

Meanwhile, in Paraguay, two Mexican Mennonite farmers were released by the Paraguayan People’s Army (EPP) on 5 February. Franz Hiebert and Bernhard Blatz were reportedly released after ransom payments to the group, amounting to USD 500,000 and USD 750,000 respectively. According to the hostages’ accounts, they were held separately and did not meet until a few days prior to their release. Hiebert was kidnapped by the EPP on 21 August 2017 from a ranch in the district of Tacuati, while Bernhard Blatz was taken by the group on 1 September 2017 near San Pedro city, both in San Pedro department. The release took place almost a month after a third Mexican hostage, Abraham Fehr, was found dead on 11 January. According to local media, the group initially demanded USD 20,000 and later increased the ransom to USD 500,000. A Paraguayan official said Fehr was killed three days after the second demand was communicated and failed to be paid. The victim was kidnapped by the EPP in August 2015. It is believed the EPP has received about USD 3.7 million in ransoms for these and 10 other cases.
EUROPE

Europe continues to represent only a small proportion of expatriate kidnapping incidents recorded worldwide, typically accounting for 5% of the global total. Such activity is often confined to the region’s border states and along migrant smuggling routes. In Ukraine, where politically-related incidents and criminal abductions are common, the contested districts of Donetsk and Luhansk are particular hotspots. By contrast, criminal kidnappings are more common in Kiev. Many of the attacks recorded in the capital are believed to be linked to local organised crime, and often target foreign businessmen of Central Asian countries. Another current trend identified in the country, and common to Russia as well, is the targeting of individuals linked to the cryptocurrency industry. These type of incidents have been reported with increasing frequency in both countries since mid-2017.

CASES:

- On 6 February, Armenian businessman Suren Mamyan was kidnapped in Kiev by a group of criminals who demanded a USD 500,000 ransom from his relatives. Ukrainian police rescued the businessman after 11 days in captivity. During the operation, several suspects were detained. An investigation is in progress to determine the circumstances and motives behind the kidnapping.

- Yury Mayorov, the creator of cryptocurrency PRIZM, was kidnapped by four unknown men on 23 February from the streets of Moscow. According to Mayorov, he was robbed of USD 20,000, three iPhones and his computer. With his computer, the kidnappers were allegedly able to access his crypto wallet and rob him of 300 bitcoins, worth about USD 2.6 million at the time of writing. It was reported that before the criminals let Mayorov go, they ‘drugged’ him, causing him to be hospitalised before being able to report the incident to the police. On the same day, a crypto investor in Moscow was held at knifepoint and forced to transfer 100 bitcoins (about USD 871,000) to his assailants. Another attack on a crypto investor took place in St. Petersburg in mid-January. In December 2017, Pavel Lerner, the director of UK-based crypto exchange EXMO, was kidnapped in Kiev, Ukraine, and held for three days. His kidnappers reportedly received a ransom of USD 1 million in bitcoin.

- Foreign migrants continue to be a preferred target of kidnappers in Turkey. Three Nepalese were kidnapped by a gang of Pakistani nationals in two separate incidents on 4 and 5 February. The three hostages were set free on 10 February after their families paid a total ransom of Rs 2.1 million (USD 20,300) to Pakistani accounts. According to the victims, who had been working in Turkey since August 2017, the kidnappers had promised them better jobs at another company. They were abducted after they were taken to an unknown location to allegedly complete procedures for the new job.
Likewise in Lebanon, kidnapping for ransom remains a prosperous criminal activity, especially in the Beqaa Valley. This area neighbouring Syria presents an unpredictable security situation and kidnapping is rife for a series of motivations, including financial, sectarian and tribal reasons. Criminal groups have found in this area a fertile ground for their activities, commonly targeting businessmen and their dependents. Syrian nationals, settled in Lebanon after flying their country’s conflict, have often been a target of these gangs.

**CASES:**

- On 22 February, a 7-year-old Syrian girl was kidnapped outside her house in Zahle, Beqaa Governorate, as she was getting on the school bus. The child’s father received a call from the kidnappers demanding a ransom of USD 250,000. The girl was rescued by the Lebanese security forces on the same day, nine hours after her kidnapping. The suspected abductors were arrested during the operation.

- Earlier, on 12 February, three abducted civilians were rescued by Iraqi security forces near the northern city of Mosul. It remains unclear whether the three had been abducted for ransom. A suspected kidnapper was arrested during the operation. According to the authorities, the man was a member of the Islamic State when the terror group was still in control of the city.

- Meanwhile in Yemen, Houthi rebels reportedly kidnapped two United Nations employees in Sana’a and placed them under arrest on 8 March. A source said the two UN staff members were not allowed to drink or use the toilet for six days. The UN has stated that their employees and others working at humanitarian agencies have recently had serious concerns over harassment by Houthi insurgents, which have so far affected at least 600 UN workers.

Fewer kidnappings for ransom involving foreign nationals in the Middle East were observed over the months of January and February 2018. However, a number of countries in the region remain hotspots for kidnapping at the global level, both in terms of threat and overall numbers. This is the case in Iraq, where a deterioration of the economy, related to both the conflict and the decrease in international oil prices, has resulted in a commensurate increase in crime. In Iraq, this is coupled with poor law-enforcement capabilities, corruption, and the influence of local militias in local security. A number of these militias have in the past been linked to kidnapping incidents and kidnapping threats to Westerners. According to official sources, about 90% of kidnapping incidents recorded in Iraq are financially-motivated. This threat is particularly acute in Baghdad, with the areas of Rusafa and Karrada accounting for the highest levels of kidnapping in the city, and where ransom payments have reportedly reached up to USD 400,000.
AFRICA

Africa’s relative share of the number of foreign nationals kidnapped worldwide has increased, reaching almost the 70 percent mark of all incidents recorded by Constellis during January and February 2018. The increase was mainly attributed to a newcomer in the region, Benin, where two maritime hijacking incidents were recorded, including the kidnapping for ransom of 44 sailors, most of them Indian nationals. This was followed by Nigeria and Libya, where the kidnapping problem continues unabated in the context of very complex and challenging security environments. In Cameroon, few kidnappings of foreign nationals have been recorded since the Boko Haram-linked abductions of 2013 and 2014. However, the security profile of the country has notably deteriorated in the last 15 months with the Anglophone crisis in the west. What started with a few peaceful demonstrations, has now spiralled in what is assessed as Cameroon’s most alarming conflict since its independence, with scores of civilians killed and arrested, and thousands of displaced people fleeing into neighbouring regions and into Nigeria. A number of kidnappings for political motivations have been recorded in the last couple of months in the context of this conflict. While previous violence in the area had not targeted foreign nationals or interests, the first such incident took place in mid-March. Given the rapid intensification of the conflict, there is a possibility of further occurrences. As such, foreign governments have advised against all but essential travel to the Northwest and Southwest regions, in addition to existing travel restrictions to the country’s border areas with Nigeria, Chad and Central African Republic.

CASES:

▶ Animnom Aron Yong, a regional delegate for Social Affairs, was abducted by unidentified armed men in Batibo, in the Anglophone Northwest region of Cameroon, on 24 February. The abduction was later claimed on social media by the so-called Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF), an armed group of English-speaking separatists. Yong appeared on a video released by his captors on social networks on 10 March. The one-minute recording shows the hostage appealing to the Minister of Social Affairs, Pauline Irène Nguene, to intercede with the Cameroonian government to respond to the grievances of his captors. Yong additionally states that the kidnappers have given a 48-hour deadline for the government to comply, after which he will be “sacrificed”.

▶ Two American and two Canadian citizens were kidnapped in Nigeria’s northern Kaduna State on 16 January. The four were reportedly in the country conducting investment research for a Canadian solar energy company. The foreigners were travelling in two separate vehicles from Kaduna to Abuja, when they were attacked by armed men on the Kwoi-Jere Road near the locality of Kagarko. Two police officers, who were escorting the convoy at the time of the incident, were killed in the ambush. The Nigerian authorities said the kidnapping was carried out by a kidnap for ransom gang, which demanded an undisclosed ransom for the victims’ release. The victims were released on 19 January, allegedly during a joint security operation by the Nigerian military and the police. Two kidnappers were arrested during the operation. The Abuja-Kaduna highway is notorious for its very high rate of kidnapping for ransom and other violent crime. This, in spite of police and military presence, suggesting probable collusion of the security forces.

In Angola, since 2015 there have been indications of an increase in kidnapping for ransom, particularly targeting Chinese citizens. Nationals of other countries, including Westerners, were also victimised in incidents in 2016 and 2017, with Luanda as the epicentre of this activity. This trend has continued into 2018, with the kidnapping of at least one Chinese national. This has led the Chinese authorities to issue a formal appeal to their Angolan counterparts to curb this situation, in which Chinese nationals have been kidnapped for ransoms ranging between 10 million and 100 million kwanzas (USD 46,600 - 466,000). Past incidents involving Western nationals have seen ransom demands up to USD 3 million. This trend has been associated with the declining economic situation in the country following the global decrease in oil prices, in addition to an increase in activity of foreign criminal groups, including Chinese mafia and South African gangs.

CASES:

▶ On 12 January, a Chinese and an Angolan were kidnapped in the Comandante Fidel Castro area of Luanda. The kidnappers reportedly demanded 100 million kwanzas (USD 466,000) for the release of the hostages. The two victims were reportedly released following a ransom payment of 7 million kwanzas (about USD 32,600).

▶ In South Africa, the trend targeting businessmen of South Asian origin continues to unfold as news emerged regarding the kidnapping of foreign nationals with possible jihadist motivations. On 12 February, two British-South African dual nationals were kidnapped near the Bivane Dam in Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal province. Three people have so far been arrested in connection with the incident, and a quantity of IS propaganda and recruiting material has been found during the raids. All the suspects had a criminal record and one was already known to the South African counter-terrorism authorities. Having said that, it has not been officially confirmed if the kidnapping had indeed a terrorist motivation. This question arose from the fact that 700,000 rand (about USD 58,500) were withdrawn from the couple’s bank accounts on the day of their kidnapping, a typical mark of express kidnapping, uncommon in terrorism-related incidents. The couple remain missing at the time of writing. The kidnapping prompted the British and other foreign governments to issue a travel advisory, warning of the kidnapping and terrorism threat in South Africa.
Reporting of kidnapping incidents in Asia involving foreign nationals observed an important decrease during the first two months of 2018. This is particularly the result of decreased activity recorded in the Philippines and Malaysia, two of the region’s hotspots for kidnap for ransom. A focus on security in these two countries is to be attributed for this positive development. Having said that, a number of incidents recorded in the Philippines’ southern territories in recent weeks, and the recent revelation by the Malaysian authorities identifying three new kidnap for ransom groups active in Sabah, may be indicative that the threat in this area is far from being eradicated. While it is not clear if any of these developments have a link to the Abu Sayyaf or its many splinters, it is also true that kidnapping linked to terrorism in this region remains latent, particularly as the group has consistently shown great levels of resilience throughout time.

**CASES:**

- On 18 January, two Indonesian hostages were released after being held by the Abu Sayyaf for more than a year in the southern Philippines. The two fishermen were kidnapped on 5 November 2016 from different fishing boats in waters off Sabah, Malaysia. According to local media, the victims were handed over to former Sulu governor Sakur Tan, by a “concerned citizen”. There were no official comments yet to determine the financier’s identity. Indonesian sailors La Utu Raali and Mr La Hadi La Adi (center) in meeting with Indonesian and Philippine authorities following their release on 19 January. (The Straits Times)

- Elsewhere in the Philippines, cases of foreign nationals targeted by loan sharks at casinos continue to be reported. A Taiwanese national was rescued by Philippine police from a hotel room in Parañaque City on 9 January. Three Chinese nationals were arrested in the operation. Lat Yun Chun was held hostage on 7 January as he left a casino in Pasay City, lured by the suspects who invited him to their hotel to talk about the P100,000 (USD 1,900) he owed to their boss. The kidnappers then called his family in Taiwan to demand payment in exchange for Chun’s release. After receiving the ransom call, Chun’s family reported the incident to local media citing Philippine military records, nine people, including five foreigners, still remain in Abu Sayyaf captivity to date.

Indonesian sailors La Utu Raali and Mr La Hadi La Adi (center) in meeting with Indonesian and Philippine authorities following their release on 19 January. (The Straits Times)

- On 1 January, a Taiwanese man was kidnapped in a hotel room in Mandala Park, bitch processing, India. His kidnappers initially demanded a Rs 5-crore ransom (USD 769,000). After a five-day search operation, the Delhi police rescued the victim and arrested three kidnappers. The arrested included the mastermind of the kidnapping, an ex-employee of the businessman, who was allegedly illegitimately fired and owed some salary payments. Reportedly, a ransom of Rs 4 crore (USD 615,000) paid by the hostage’s family, with police recovering Rs 3.96 crore (USD 609,000) during the rescue operation.

Another UN employee, who was also in the vehicle, was killed in the attack. The authorities initially said they were carrying out investigations to determine if the driver was involved in the scheme. However, the body of the driver was found on 16 March in the same area where the kidnapping took place. The female employee and her son remain missing and no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. It is unknown if the abductors have issued any demands.

Indonesian sailors La Utu Raali and Mr La Hadi La Adi (center) in meeting with Indonesian and Philippine authorities following their release on 19 January. (The Straits Times)

- In Afghanistan, kidnapping incidents continue to be reported on a daily basis countrywide, carried out by militants and criminals alike. NGO workers are commonly targeted in these crimes. A UN local staff member, her child and their driver (also a UN employee) were kidnapped on 22 January in the Khair Khana area of Kabul city, as the woman was on her way to drop her child off at school before heading to work. Another UN employee, who was also in the vehicle, was killed in the attack. The authorities initially said they were carrying out investigations to determine if the driver was involved in the scheme. However, the body of the driver was found on 16 March in the same area where the kidnapping took place. The female employee and her son remain missing and no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. It is unknown if the abductors have issued any demands.

- The son of a well-known south Delhi businessman was kidnapped on 1 January. His kidnappers initially demanded a Rs 5-crore ransom (USD 769,000). After a five-day search operation, the Delhi police rescued the victim and arrested three kidnappers. The arrested included the mastermind of the kidnapping, an ex-employee of the businessman, who was allegedly illegitimately fired and owed some salary payments. Reportedly, a ransom of Rs 4 crore (USD 615,000) paid by the hostage’s family, with police recovering Rs 3.96 crore (USD 609,000) during the rescue operation.

In Afghanistan, kidnapping incidents continue to be reported on a daily basis countrywide, carried out by militants and criminals alike. NGO workers are commonly targeted in these crimes. A UN local staff member, her child and their driver (also a UN employee) were kidnapped on 22 January in the Khair Khana area of Kabul city, as the woman was on her way to drop her child off at school before heading to work. Another UN employee, who was also in the vehicle, was killed in the attack. The authorities initially said they were carrying out investigations to determine if the driver was involved in the scheme. However, the body of the driver was found on 16 March in the same area where the kidnapping took place. The female employee and her son remain missing and no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. It is unknown if the abductors have issued any demands.

Afghan Security Forces deployed in Kabul. (Sputnik News)
FOR THE KIDNAPPING OF FOREIGN CITIZENS IN JAN-FEB 2018

**Statistics for January-February 2018** are drawn from Constellis’ record of 136 kidnapped foreign nationals. Over November-December 2017, Constellis recorded a total of 90 foreign nationals kidnapped across the world.

**Kidnapped Foreign Citizens**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>Benin (32.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>Mexico (16.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia &amp; Pacific</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>Malaysia (22.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>Lebanon (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>Turkey (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the World</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>Others (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Top 10 Countries**

1. **Benin** 32.4%
2. **Mexico** 16.9%
3. **Libya** 8.1%
4. **Turkey** 2.2%
5. **South Sudan** 2.2%
6. **Mozambique** 2.2%
7. **Madagascar** 2.2%
8. **South Africa** 2.2%
9. **Uganda** 5.1%
10. **Nigeria** 8.1%
2018

KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS

REGIONAL ORIGINS OF VICTIMS

Most Victimised Single Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduran</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudanese</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Victimised Origin by Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Occupation</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>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>Dependents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VICTIMS BY OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR

Most Victimised Occupational Sector

- Maritime: 33.8%
- Business People: 10.3%
- Migrants: 9.6%
- Other: 12.5%
- Unknown: 9.6%
- Construction: 6.6%
- Health: 5.9%
- NGOs: 2.9%
- Mining: 2.7%
- Unskilled: 2.9%
- Dependents: 3.7%
- Tourists: 5.9%
- Professionals: 6.6%

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 trend, taking its limitations into consideration.
GLOBAL PIRACY UPDATE

Piracy incident figures declined in early 2018 in the Gulf of Aden/Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Guinea and Southeast Asia, compared to Q4 2017. Piracy-related incidents reported in this period (including hijackings, armed robberies, attempted attacks, pirate sightings and suspicious activity) concentrated mainly in the Gulf of Guinea, particularly in Nigeria’s territorial waters, followed by Southeast Asia. Kidnap for ransom attacks remained limited, with only two incidents reported to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), in addition to a thwarted attack. Both successful hijackings recorded in the January-February 2018 period occurred off Cotonou, Benin, indicating persisting piracy threats in areas previously assessed as relatively safe. Criminal boardings continue to account for the majority of incidents reported globally, with 22 cases recorded in the first two months of 2018, a significant decrease from 40 in Q4 2017. Although the incidence of terrorism-related assaults remains low, with one foiled attack in early 2018 off Yemen’s coast, the threat of further attacks remains credible. This threat is most pronounced in the Gulf of Aden due to the ongoing conflict in Yemen, where Houthi rebels have previously targeted coalition ships with ballistic missiles, artillery strikes and boats laden with explosives.

Levels of hostile maritime activity in the Gulf of Aden were relatively low throughout the first two months of 2018. Two attempted attacks were reported in February off the coast of Somalia, both aborted after the vessels’ onboard security teams fired warning shots. Piracy groups in Somalia continue to have sufficient capability and intent to carry out attacks against merchant vessels. While the increased presence of naval patrols and onboard armed security personnel deter much of the hostile activity, a risk of attacks remains, particularly to vessels without onboard armed security. Vessels also continue to sporadically report suspicious or aggressive approaches off Yemen’s coast, where the threat of attacks remains high in the vicinity of Houthi rebel-held territory. Notably, on 6 January, coalition forces destroyed a waterborne improvised explosive device (WIED) as it headed towards a Saudi-flagged oil tanker. Three days later, the Houthi media reported the group’s leadership had threatened to block the Red Sea shipping lane if coalition forces do not cease advances on the port city of Al-Hudaydah. Rebel forces in the area have previously demonstrated the ability to launch complex attacks including several armed skiffs and WIEDs. In this context, the possibility of further similar assaults on transiting vessels remains credible.

The Gulf of Guinea remained the top hotspot for piracy events at the start of 2018. Out of 17 incidents recorded in the region throughout January and February, 11 occurred in Nigeria’s territorial waters, most of them off Bonny Island. Hostile activity in the area remained within established parameters, with typical attacks consisting of one or two small speedboats carrying up to eight heavily armed pirates approaching a vessel offshore and attempting to board it using hooks, ropes and ladders. If successful, pirates frequently take hostages to hideouts in the Niger Delta, demanding large ransoms. Elsewhere in the Gulf of Guinea, hostile activity remained low. Of concern were the two hijackings that were recorded off Cotonou, Benin. The attack was the first reported on large merchant vessels since December 2016. A downward trend was observed in Southeast Asia throughout the reporting period, with nine actual incidents and four attempted boardings reported throughout the period. Incident levels in the region have remained consistently low, with the January-February 2018 period registering the lowest number of incidents since 2009. This downward trend is largely attributed to increased security measures in the region, in addition to greater cooperation between ASEAN countries with the assistance of international powers such as the US. Despite ongoing regional capacity building efforts, the threat of piracy remains credible. In line with established trends, a deck of attacks continues to be prevalent at ports and anchorages in Bangladesh, the Philippines and on ships while underway in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

CASES:

- On 22 February, armed Somali pirates attacked the 50,000 metric tonne Singaporean-flagged chemical tanker MT Leopard Sun around 315 nm northeast of Mogadishu, Somalia. The vessel was sailing from Sohar, Oman, to Cape Town, South Africa, when it was attacked and chased by two skiffs approximately 160 nm from the coast of Hobyo, Galmudug state. The pirates opened fire on the vessel, with the onboard armed security team firing warning shots, resulting in the abortion of the attack. The incident lasted approximately 20 minutes. The attack was the first of its kind in the area since November 2017.

- On 16 February, the crew of a cargo ship prevented pirates from boarding their vessel approximately 4.4 nm southeast of Sibago Island, Philippines, in what is believed was a kidnapping attempt. Three motorized bancas, each carrying three armed attackers, attempted to board the Philippine-flagged cargo ship MV Kudos T using ropes and hooks. The crew splashed hot water onto the assailants, who then opened fire at the ship. Two flares were also activated to alert the authorities. As the authorities approached, the attackers escaped towards Basilian. Three crew members suffered minor injuries. The Philippine Coast Guard and Navy were deployed to the area and escorted the ship towards Zamboanga city.

- On 1 February, Hong Kong-based maritime company Anglo-Eastern lost contact with its oil tanker MT Marine Express off Cotonou Anchorage, Benin. The vessel carried 22 Indian crew and 13,500 tons of gasoline at the time of the incident. A search operation was conducted by Nigerian and Beninese authorities. On 6 February, a day after the incident was made public, the shipping company announced the release of the vessel and its crew, and that the cargo was intact. The conditions and place of the release were not mentioned. The incident occurred three weeks after UK maritime operator Union Maritime lost communications with its petrochemical tanker MT Barret in the same area on 10 January. After six days, all 22 crew were reported safe in Lagos, Nigeria. While it was not specified, it was suggested that a ransom was paid for the release of the vessel and its crew.

- On 10 January, Hong Kong-based maritime company Anglo-Eastern lost contact with its oil tanker MT Marine Express off Cotonou Anchorage, Benin. The vessel was carrying 22 crew and 13,500 tons of gasoline at the time of the incident. A search operation was conducted by Nigerian and Beninese authorities. On 6 February, a day after the incident was made public, the shipping company announced the release of the vessel and its crew, and that the cargo was intact. The conditions and place of the release were not mentioned. The incident occurred three weeks after UK maritime operator Union Maritime lost communications with its petrochemical tanker MT Barret in the same area on 10 January. After six days, all 22 crew were reported safe in Lagos, Nigeria. While it was not specified, it was suggested that a ransom was paid for the release of the vessel and its crew.
The year 2017 witnessed the highest levels of data breaches and cyber-incidents ever recorded, with malware-based cyber-crime leading the way, including ransomware, banking Trojans, spyware, adware and cryptocurrency miners, amongst others. Businesses of all sizes were targeted in such attacks, as well as others involving data theft and the infiltration of Internet-connected devices. High-profile data exposures struck organisations such as Equifax, Uber and Verizon, while malware attacks impacted the operations of Maersk, Merck & Roosnoff, demonstrating that even large-scale businesses with enormous resources are still susceptible to cyber-crime.

According to the Online Trust Alliance’s (OTA) end-of-year ‘Cyber Incident & Breach Trends Report’, there were a total of 159,700 cyber-attacks reported in 2017, an increase of almost 95% on the 82,000 recorded in 2016. The number of actual incidents is however likely to be far higher due to underreporting, with executives, law enforcement and the public often uninformed of attacks. This growth has largely been attributed to the significant rise in ransomware attacks. Over 2016-2017, ransomware breaches increased four-fold, with the FBI’s most recent estimate at 4,000 ransomware attacks per day globally. Ransomware attacks targeting businesses doubled over this time period, with one of the most widespread and devastating attacks, WannaCry, targeting an estimated 300,000 computers across 150 countries in May 2017. Notably, the virus temporarily crippled the UK’s National Health Service, delaying vital medical procedures and causing chaos amongst its patients. 2017 also witnessed the spread of other ransom-based attacks, such as Ransom Denial-of-Service (RDoS), in which cyber-criminals email domain owners and threaten a Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attack unless a ransom is paid. Beyond phishing attacks and Business Email Compromise (BEC), Internet of Things (IoT) infiltrations also saw significant growth in 2017. An example of such attacks was the breach of toy teddy bears in the UK that led to the compromise of 800,000 customers’ details.

According to a report by risk consultancy Risk Based Security, there were a total of 5,207 data breaches reported last year, which exposed approximately 7.8 billion records. Compared to 2016, this represents a 24.1% increase in breaches and a 24.3% increase in the number of records exposed. The vast majority of data breaches targeted the business sector, accounting for 39.4% of the total, followed by the medical (8.1%), government (7.2%) and education (5.3%) sectors. Of all data breaches, 55.8% were caused by hacking (unauthorised intrusion). Interestingly however, hacking only accounted for 29.8% of exposed records, with 68.8% of cases attributed to the unintentional exposure of sensitive data via the Internet.

OTA reported that 93% of data breaches in 2017 could have been prevented. Indeed, the high-profile cases described previously underscore a lack of rigour around cyber security amongst organisations we would expect to have been well-equipped, i.e. by regularly updating software, blocking malicious emails with email authentication and training employees to recognise phishing attacks. Significantly, as we have seen, upskilling and educating employees is critical, considering the direct link between how the majority of breaches occur and how the majority of sensitive data is exposed. Most data breaches originate outside of an organisation, but insider actions expose data at almost double the rate of hackers, thereby underlining widespread requirements for training and monitoring of employee’s activity online. Furthermore, attacks this year highlighted substantial gaps in organisations’ procedures in dealing with a breach once it had been identified, for example with slow disclosure, poor communications to the public and by lacking appropriate response measures. Additionally, with innovations in technology, such as the spread of IoT devices, privacy and security breaches will continue to place users and organisations at risk through 2018.

In this context, and with annual losses from cyber-crime now above $400 billion, businesses increasingly turned to cyber insurance in 2017. The insurance sector has predicted that global cyber insurance premiums will increase to $20 billion by 2025 from approximately $3-4 billion now. Given the ever-evolving nature of cyber-crime, there are a number of challenges associated with the growing phenomenon of cyber insurance. However, insurance firms are becoming increasingly experienced in making sure their clients are an acceptable risk.

CASES:

> South Korea, February 2018: Olympic Games officials confirmed that a cyber attack was conducted during the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. The attack caused the event’s official website to go down, leaving users unable to print tickets or view information about the games. Telecasts and grounding broadcasters’ drones were also affected. Additionally, McAfee announced it detected attacks in the months leading up to the games, in the form of malicious emails sent to Olympic officials. US intelligence affirmed the attack was orchestrated by Russian military spies, who attempted to make it appear as if North Korea was responsible for the intrusion. The Russian authorities vehemently denied any involvement.

> US, February 2018: The Colorado Department of Transportation was struck by the SamSam ransomware, forcing the agency to shut down 2,000 of its computers to prevent the virus from spreading across the entire infrastructure. The attack encrypted a number of files, with hackers requesting bitcoin in exchange for the decryption key. Colorado DoT is one of a number of organisations to have recently fallen victim to SamSam, which in January infected vulnerable networks in hospitals, city councils, schools and other transportation systems throughout the US. While ransom information was not provided on the Colorado DoT’s case, a hospital victim of the SamSam attack reported having paid USD 55,000 for the decryption key.

> Netherlands, January 2018: The Dutch national tax office’s website was brought offline briefly following a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) cyber-attack, just after the country’s largest banks were targeted. Rabobank, ABN Amro and ING all announced they were hacked, temporarily disrupting online and mobile banking services. In these DDoS attacks, the organisations’ internet sites were bombarded with data traffic, causing their servers to overload and go offline. All the affected banks stressed that client details were not compromised or leaked.
KIDNAPPING AND EXTORTION IN COLOMBIA

Kidnapping

Colombia was for many years known as the global top hotspot for kidnapping. This activity, however, became increasingly less common as the country’s armed conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was coming to an end. More specifically, Colombia has seen a steady decline in overall kidnapping numbers since 2015. This reduction can be attributed in great part to a decline in the number of FARC kidnappings as the group pledged to end this practice. Despite this trend, kidnappings carried out by organised crime and common criminals (Grupos Delictivos Organizados- GDO) have increased. Bacrim, the former paramilitaries now known as Grupos Armados Organizados (GAO), have also seen their kidnappings fall substantially, given the war they are currently waging against the government and other competing actors across the Uraba Gulf and Choco regions.

Kidnapping data provided by the Colombian Ministry of National Defence, clearly shows this trend in the kidnapping environment in Colombia, in which armed and dissident groups are no longer responsible for the bulk of the kidnappings. The largest component, organised crime, has on the other hand remained more or less unaltered in its activity for a number of years, pointing at the pitfalls of the security strategy of the Colombian government, having a strong focus on armed groups.

Number of reported kidnappings in Colombia 2015 -Jan 2018

On the other hand, while limited in extent, kidnapping activity by the National Liberation Army (ELN), the last remaining militant group in the country, remains unabated. The group continues to use kidnapping as a way to make money, and most recently, using it as leverage in the negotiation with the Colombian government. Moreover, there is also solid intelligence from the GAULA suggesting that the ELN and urban gangs have formed partnership to carry out their abduction and extortion business across the north coast of the country. Under this partnership, the ELN uses urban gangs and organised crime to carry out the abductions and then have the victims transferred to their custody in remote rural areas.

FARC dissidence has also been identified as a major threat, as they drift away from the now demobilised secretariat, and return to “business as usual”.

Another change observed in the last years has been regarding captivity periods and amounts demanded as ransom. Previously, kidnappers held their victims for shorter periods of time and collecting smaller ransoms. This has been attributed to an improvement in reaction times by the security forces. For this same reason, kidnappings in rural areas tend to present longer captivity periods and higher ransoms, as government action may be more impeded than in urban areas. As such, kidnapping activity in the country has typically concentrated in rural areas. In this context, in 2017, the highest kidnapping incidence is reported in the departments of Valle del Cauca and Norte de Santander, two of the regions with the highest rates of violent crime in the country. Particularly in Norte de Santander, a notable increase in criminality in recent years has been attributed to the migration of Venezuelan crime groups into the area.

Kidnappings in Colombia by actor 2015-2017

Source: Colombian Ministry of National Defence
Extortion

As kidnapping has dwindled in Colombia, extortion has increased dramatically over the past decade. In 2017, a total of 5,341 extortion cases were logged by the Colombian authorities, an almost four-fold increase from levels recorded in 2009. Organised crime dedicated to extortion has improved on its methods, effectively disrupting the local authorities’ efforts to combat it. Extortion methods currently in place in Colombia range from the long-standing trend of ‘vacunas’ (right to operate fees) and “war tax”, typically present in rural areas; to virtual kidnapping, commonly registered in urban milieus and typically originated from penitentiary facilities in the country.

Contrary to common notions, 99% of extortion incidents are carried out by common criminality. Misconceptions of the origin of extortion in the country arise from a common tactic by criminal groups, by which they claim to be members of the guerrilla or GAO in order to cause greater psychological stress in their victims and thus increase the chances of success.

As extortion requires little investment (material and logistical) and does not require major experience, a number of criminal groups have migrated their activities into extortion. Moreover, given the nature of the crime, law enforcement in this area is severely limited. Moreover, the current trend by which personal and company information is largely accessible via internet, has had a determinant role in the facilitation of extortion in the country. In this context, extortion has proven to be extremely hard to control for the authorities.

As such, extortion is assessed to be the main security threat in Colombia, significantly affecting organisations with local operations in the country. Poor management of personnel and broad accessibility to corporate information have been identified as the two main corporate shortcomings giving criminals an easy way to target them for extortion bids.

Number of reported extortions in Colombia 2009- Jan 2018

Source: Colombian Ministry of National Defence

Demonstrations against kidnapping, Bogota, December 2011. (rtve.es)

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

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

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

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

CONTACT

For more information on this report please contact:
BEATRIZ SANCHEZ-GARRIDO
Senior Analyst, Risk Management
beatriz.sanchez-garrido@constellis.com

For all enquiries on Constellis’ advisory & consulting services please contact:
MARK ALLISON
Vice President, Crisis & Risk Services
Mobile: +44 7791 495 057
mark.allison@constellis.com

Crisis Response Emergency Numbers:
NORTH/SOUTH AMERICA
+1 713 918 6401
EUROPE, AFRICA, ASIA, AUSTRALIA
+44 (0) 20 7 240 3237
GENERAL INQUIRIES
+971 800 100 100

THE INFORMATION IN THIS REPORT IS PROVIDED “AS IS” WITHOUT ANY WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, OR NON-INFRINGEMENT. CONSTELLIS MAKES NO REPRESENTATION OR WARRANTY THAT THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT WILL BE TIMELY OR ERROR-FREE. IN NO EVENT SHALL CONSTELLIS BE LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGES WHATSOEVER, INCLUDING ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, SPECIAL, CONSEQUENTIAL OR ANY OTHER DAMAGES, ARISING OUT OF OR IN CONNECTION WITH THE USE OF OR RELIANCE ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE WITHIN THIS REPORT. IN USING THIS INFORMATION, YOU ARE USING IT AT YOUR OWN RISK AND AGREE TO THE LIMITATIONS AND DISCLAIMERS PROVIDED HERE.

www.constellis.com