



STOWAWAYS – A PERENNIAL PROBLEM

INTELLIGENCE REPORT – DECEMBER 2021

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15 December 2021

Introduction

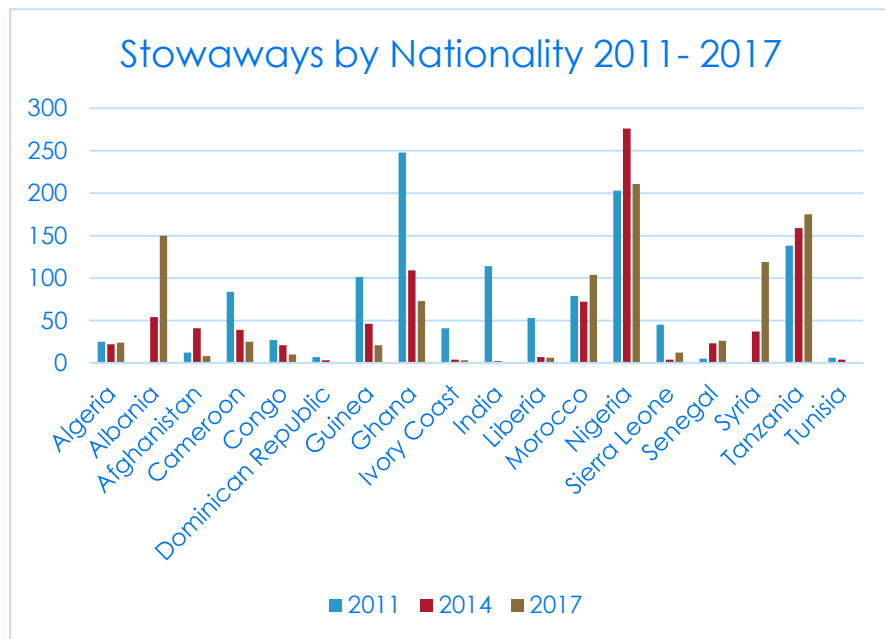
Stowaways pose a persistent challenge to ship operators and other organisations operating with the maritime domain, they can cause delays to a ship's timetable which can result in financial penalties and lengthy legal issues. The safety of a ship's crew can also be put in danger, incidence of violence against crew members when stowaways are discovered, are now common. An incident in the English Channel in 2020 resulted in military intervention when seven stowaways attempted to take control of a ship while on route to Southampton. Stowaways routinely put their own lives at risk, which can quickly escalate into a Safety of Lives at Sea (SOLAS) issue for the ship which can constitute a threat to maritime security. The ISPS Code which seeks to prevent unauthorized access to ships, port facilities and their restricted areas, can also be compromised incurring fines and possible reputational damage to a port facility operator or ship owner. The problem is of significant concern to ship owners as they are often heavily burdened with the humanitarian costs involved in the preservation of life and repatriation of those detained.

Why do people Stowaway?

There are many reasons people risk their lives to board vessels bound for foreign destinations but generally those who do so are seeking a better life and therefore are usually from third world countries where the standard of living is low, these can be defined as economic migrants. Some may be asylum seekers and refugees escaping persecution or conflict in war torn countries.

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) defines a stowaway as “a person who is secreted on a ship, or in cargo which is subsequently loaded on the ship, without the consent of the ship owner or the master or any other responsible person”.

The IMO which carries out global research on stowaway incidents reported in their 2017 figures (the latest available), that there were 432 incidents that year, involving 1,420 stowaways. In the majority of these incidents the embarkation took place in Africa followed by Europe, Central and South America. The following chart shows the nationalities of those Stowaways discovered between 2011 and 2017:-



In 2017 the majority were Nigerian nationals (over 250). Other nationalities included 175 Tanzanians, 150 Albanians, over 100 Syrians, 100 plus Moroccans and over 70 Ghanaians.

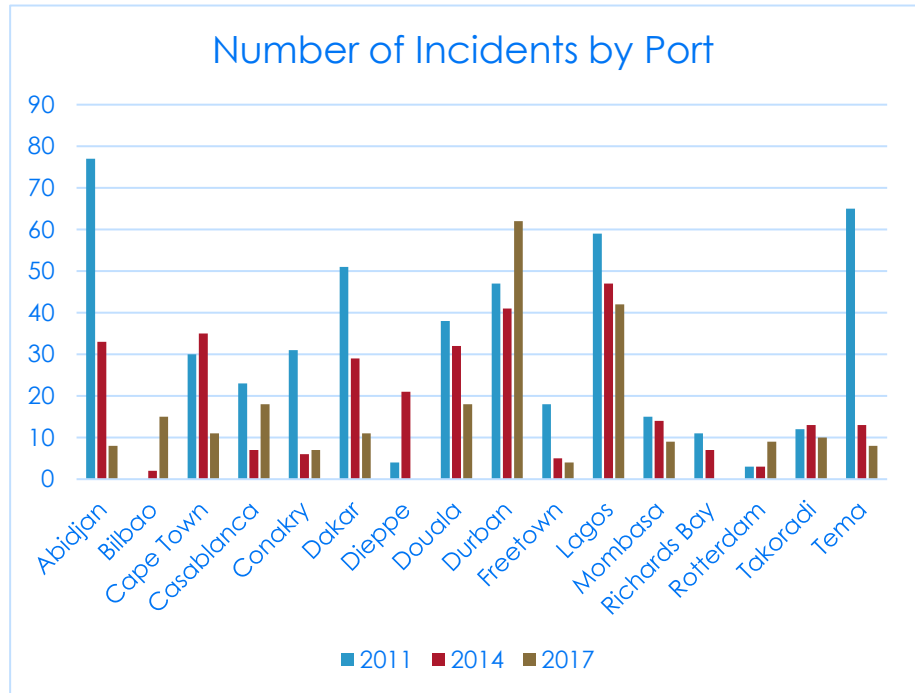
Where are Stowaways Boarding Vessels?

Ports in West Africa have been the primary embarkation point for stowaways in 2021, Lagos and Conakry in Guinea have recorded the most incidents this year.

2021 - Stowaway Statistics West Africa - Number of Incidents (based on IMO and local reports)

	Last 3 months	Last 6 months	Last 12 months
Lagos	5	7	16
San Pedro	1	1	1
Buchanan	1	1	1
Takoradi	0	1	1
Abidjan	0	1	2
Conakry	1	2	4
Douala	2	2	2
Bissau	1	1	1
Dakar	0	1	1

Stowaway statistics are generally hard to come by but the following chart identifies the ports where the most numerous boardings took place between 2011 and 2017 as recorded by the IMO:-



Recent Incidents

November 2021 - Five stowaways were arrested on the vessel MT Chemstrans Baltic after they were discovered at Lagos anchorage in Nigeria. The stowaways were aged between 23 and 27 and said they were attempting to reach Europe.

September 2021 - A stowaway boarded a ship at the port of Bissau using a mooring rope. The man was arrested at Tema Port, Ghana. The ship was heading for the United Kingdom.

May 2021 - Four stowaways were arrested on a cargo ship at the Port of La Coruña, Spain. The crew of general cargo ship Marley found 4 stowaways on board during pre-departure check. The stowaways from Kosovo and Albania

were taken into custody by the police. It is understood they made a mistake when boarding Marley and that they believed the ship was sailing to the UK.

October 2020 - Four stowaways rode on a ship's rudder for 2700nm from Nigeria to Spain before they were discovered. The Spanish authorities refused them entry and the stowaways were finally arrested when the ship, the Champion Pula, arrived in Norway.



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October 2020 - The crude oil tanker, Nave Andromeda, was illegally boarded by seven people believed to be Nigerian, in Lagos, Nigeria. They were discovered by the ships company off the Isle of Wight in the English Channel shortly before the ship was due to enter the port of Southampton. Members of the UK Special Boat Service (SBS) ended a 10-hour stand-off which started when the stowaways reportedly became violent. The stowaways were arrested by police when the ship reached Southampton. This incident which gained worldwide news coverage, raised the profile of the stowaway problem and elevated it into the public domain, emphasising the need for professional and official stowaway searches.

How do Stowaways board vessels?

There are a range of methods by which stowaways will attempt to gain access to vessel. Swimming out to a vessel at anchor and climbing on the rudder for example or climbing up a mooring rope involves potentially life threatening risks, hiding in a container or amongst a ship's cargo to gain access is safer and they are less likely to be detected.

Once on board the danger does not stop there, where a stowaway subsequently chooses to hide for the duration of their time on board incurs its own dangers, from hiding in stores, accommodation areas, holds, engine rooms, void spaces, cranes and chain locks, the voyage of a stowaway is far

from comfortable. Availability of clean potable water and food become significant issues for stowaways too.



“It’s not all doom and gloom, based on IMO figures there has been a reduction in Stowaway incidents in the last decade”

Reducing the Risk while in Port

The Convention on the Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (1965) - The FAL Convention, adopted resolution FAL 13(42) in 2018, which provides guidelines for the prevention of access by stowaways and the allocation of responsibilities to seek the successful resolution of stowaway cases.

The Resolution invites Governments to develop, in cooperation with the industry, comprehensive strategies to improve access control and prevent intending stowaways from gaining access to ships; it states that ship owners, masters, port authorities and public authorities should have adequate security arrangements in place which, as far as practicable, will prevent intending stowaways from getting aboard a ship or, if this fails, will detect them before the ship leaves port or, at the latest, before it arrives at the next port of call.

Implementation of robust security checks and search technology can dramatically reduce the problem, for example the port authorities in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, insist that any ship calling at Abidjan is to ensure an accredited security company is engaged to carry out a search and issue a report to the Harbour House before departure, this initiative has resulted in an 80% reduction in stowaway incidents in Abidjan since 2011.

Vigilant security rounds while in port and pre-departure searches carried out by trained security staff are most effective, combining this with the use of X-Ray machines, carbon dioxide sensors, close circuit TV and thermal imaging cameras to screen cargo and containers during loading can prevent people boarding a ship, this is imperative as once the ship has sailed the responsibility for stowaways is incumbent upon the ship operator/owners.

The Consequences of Stowaway Activity

The stowaway problem is not all one of doom and gloom, in fact based on IMO figures, there has been a general reduction in incidents involving stowaways over the last decade. This may however, indicate that people are simply using alternative methods to reach their desired destinations. The emergence of people smuggling routes in North Africa and Eastern Europe has offered a marginally safer option to those wishing to seek a better way of life abroad. As these routes become more dangerous and increasingly costly, it may be that we see an increase in incidence of stowaway events.

	2007	2011	2014	2017
Number of incidents	842	774	503	432
Number of stowaways	1,955	1,640	1,274	1,420

According to the IMO, despite the reduction in the number of incidents, stowaway cases still represent a very significant cost for ship owners and their P&I Clubs. Whilst the total net the cost of deductibles to the IG Clubs, including

	2007	2011	2014	2017
Total cost (US\$ million)	14.3	15.3	9.3	9.5
Cost/incident (US\$ thousand)	17.0	19.8	18.5	22.0
Cost/stowaway (US\$ thousand)	7.3	9.3	7.3	6.7
Stowaways/incident	2.3	2.1	2.5	3.3

finances imposed by States on ship owners, has decreased by some 30% from US\$14.3 million in the 2007 to US\$9.5 million in the 2017, the cost per incident has continued to rise, with incidents in 2019 costing US\$22,000 on average, compared with US\$17,000 per incident in 2007.

Legal liability

In its 'Guidance on Stowaways' paper, Gard state that in order to be covered under the P&I policy, the member must have a legal liability for the costs or expenses relating to the stowaways. The carrier will normally be liable for a person on board who is not in possession of valid identification papers. The carrier is also likely to be held liable for the cost of food/lodging, repatriation and the cost of any escorts hired for the repatriation.

The Member may also be liable for fines incurred where stowaways have escaped from the ship. In addition, the owner may be liable for fines levied by the authorities for each person arriving on their ship who is unable to produce the necessary visa or other entry documentation. Such fines will be covered under the P&I policy.

Neptune P2P Group comment:

Socio-economic pressures, climate change and conflict, often in less developed countries of the world, are all contributing factors driving those who seek to find a better existence. International shipping and the routes they ply, provide a convenient but perilous opportunity for stowaways wishing to travel abroad in search of a better life. To some extent this is a humanitarian problem that is all too often incumbent on ship owners to deal with and although the IMO encourages ship crews to treat stowaways humanely and to respect asylum seekers, there are reports that stowaways are sometimes treated badly when found. The IMO also advocates that governments should prosecute stowaways wherever possible, however, it falls upon the ship's owner working in conjunction with the P &I clubs to cover the significant costs incurred in the legal liability as well as care and repatriation of the stowaway. The issue of stowaways is one that is as old as shipping itself, it is unlikely to go away, how it is best managed is the question that needs to be answered.



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