

Increasing Piracy Activity off Somalia

The number of piracy-related incidents off Somalia has reached its highest level in ten years. Figures from the ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) show that 13 piracy-related incidents were recorded in the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea and off the coast of Somalia during the first seven months of the year. The development points to renewed activity in the area following several years with relatively few incidents.

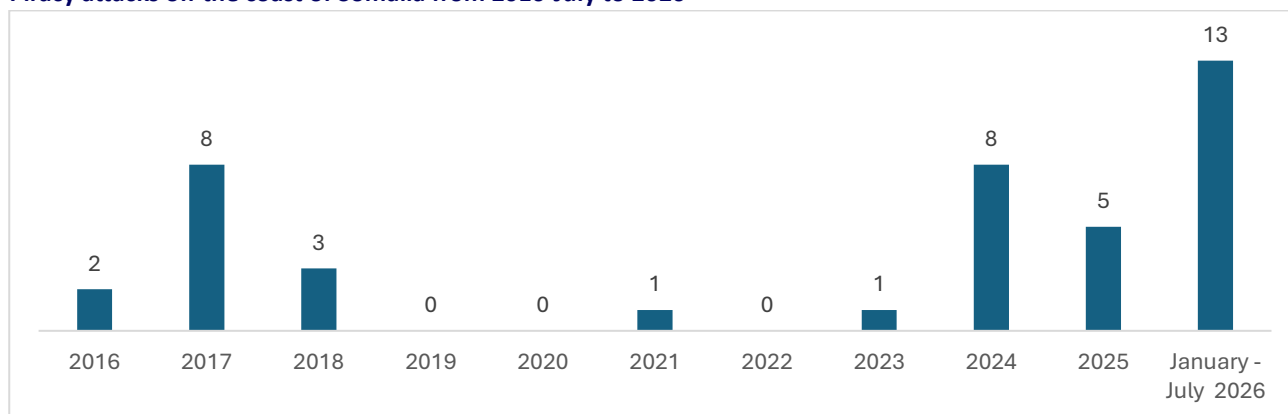
The IMB recorded 8 incidents off the coast of Somalia in 2024 and 5 incidents in 2025. In the first seven months of 2026 alone, 13 incidents have already been recorded. Activity remains low compared with the piracy wave of 2009–2011, where more than 200 attacks were recorded annually, but the figures indicate a renewed increase in the activity of the region.

The development may be linked to underlying challenges in Somalia, including drought, illegal fishing, economic hardship and weak government structures. At the same time, changes in the maritime security environment in the region, including increased pressure on international naval operations and on broader counter-piracy efforts around the Horn of Africa, may have created more favorable conditions for renewed pirate activity.

The operating pattern of Somali pirates continues to be characterized by the hijacking of vulnerable vessels, particularly fishing vessels, which can subsequently be used as ships for attacks further from the coast. The EU naval mission Operation Atalanta assesses that several pirate groups are active and operating in the area where they are increasingly demonstrating the ability to carry out coordinated operations. At the same time, their activities are continuously adapted to weather and monsoon conditions, allowing pirates to exploit opportunities in the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin respectively. The development points to an increased operational range and a threat picture that increasingly resembles the situation before 2012.

The IMB's global incident register also shows that the majority of the world's piracy and armed robbery incidents continue to occur in Southeast Asia, particularly around Indonesia, the Philippines and the Singapore Strait. While attacks in Southeast Asia often involve theft and robbery against ships at anchor, incidents off Somalia are more likely to involve hijackings and organized attacks against vessels underway. Somalia-related incidents accounted for around 30 per cent of the incidents recorded in the IMB's global incident register during the period but represented a significantly larger share of the most serious attacks.

Piracy attacks off the coast of Somalia from 2016-July to 2026



Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Piracy Reporting Centre (accessed 5 August 2026). The figures include recorded incidents in the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea and off the coast of Somalia that the IMB attributes to Somali pirates. Historical figures for 2016–2025 are based on the IMB's annual records, while the figure for 2026 is based on the IMB's ongoing incident register through July 2026.