

Rising piracy risk off the coast of Somalia

Piracy off Somalia is showing signs of re-emerging after several years of very low activity. In spring 2026, four hijackings were recorded within six weeks, including incidents on 23 March, 21 April, 26 April and 2 May. This is taking place in an area where piracy had been limited for an extended period.

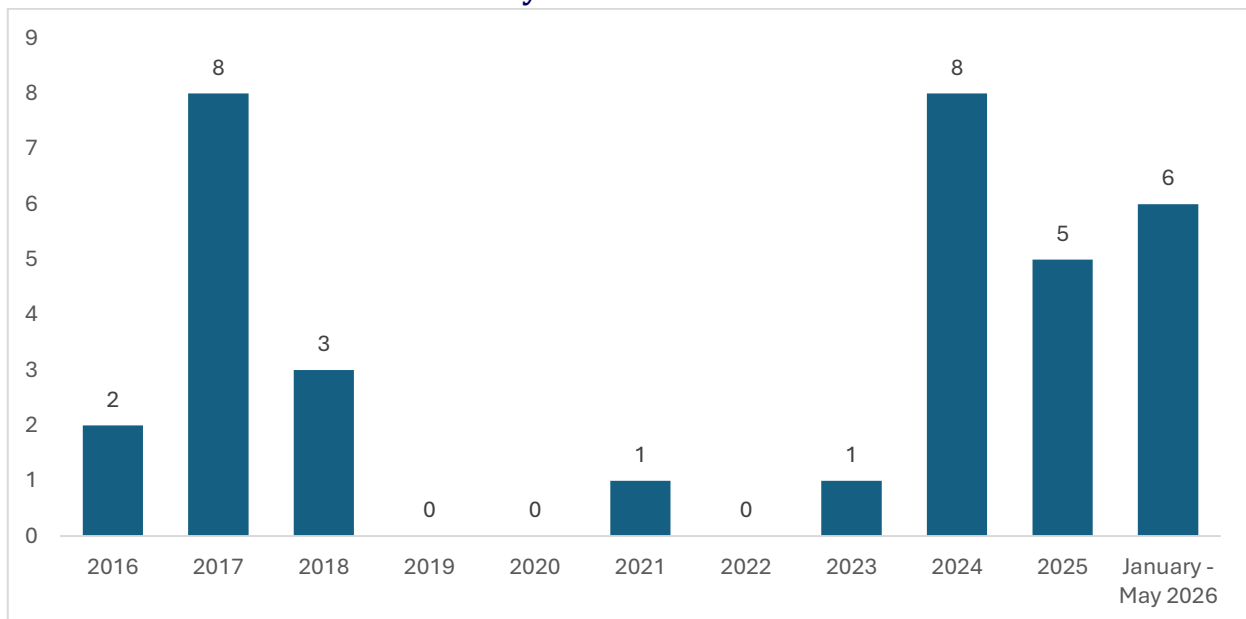
After a period with virtually no recorded incidents from 2019 to 2023, activity increased to eight incidents in 2024. In 2025, five incidents were recorded, and from January to April 2026, six incidents were recorded - four of which were hijackings. Activity remains low in absolute terms, but incidents are once again occurring over several sequential years. By comparison, piracy off Somalia peaked in the period 2009–2011, with more than 200 recorded incidents annually.

This development may be linked, among other things, to changes in the maritime security situation in the region. In recent years, focus and resources have increasingly shifted away from counter-piracy efforts in the western Indian Ocean, which may have created an opportunity for piracy groups.¹

Globally, piracy remains concentrated in Southeast Asia, particularly in the waters around Indonesia and in the Singapore Strait, where the ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reports the highest number of incidents. Attacks off Somalia, by contrast, are fewer in number, but have a higher share of hijackings, which occur to a more limited extent in Southeast Asia.

The development underlines the need for continued attention to piracy risk, both in the western Indian Ocean and in other high-risk areas.

Piracy attacks of Somalia



Source: ICC-IMB Piracy Map 2016–2025 and Piracy Map Live, accessed on 13 May 2026. The figures include incidents in the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea and off Somalia. Only incidents attributed by ICC-IMB to Somali pirates are included.

¹ The assessment is based, among other things, on statements by DIIS researcher Jethro Normans, as reported in international media, pointing to the possibility that the diversion of naval forces to the Red Sea may have reduced the international naval presence in the western Indian Ocean. At the same time, pressure on local security forces in Puntland and increased capacity among piracy networks operating further from the coast are highlighted as possible reasons for the renewed activity.