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KIDNAP+ RANSOM INSIGHT

GLOBAL SUMMARY

FOCUS ARTICLE

COVID-19 RECOVERY: ADVICE FOR NAVIGATING THE POST-CRISIS LANDSCAPE

May

2020 REPORT

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KIDNAP+
RANSOM
INSIGHT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

This issue of Constellis' Kidnap for Ransom Insight Report covers global kidnapping incidents and trends for the months of March, April and May 2020. The information is derived from multi-source analysis of kidnap for ransom activity and where known, the outcome or resolution of the events. The report covers current kidnap for ransom hotspots at regional, national and provincial levels, with a particular focus on areas where kidnap for ransom activity is increasing.

Statistical analysis of data for March and April 2020 is included on page 13, which displays kidnap for ransom trends by region, victims by nationality and employment sector, as well as identifying the Top 10 countries for the kidnapping of foreign nationals over the reporting period. Additionally, 12-month statistical information (May 2019 – April 2020) can be found on page 17.

The Global Piracy Update gives an overview of the piracy threat by region, providing trend analysis for March and April 2020. It also offers sample cases that took place during those months to illustrate identified trends.

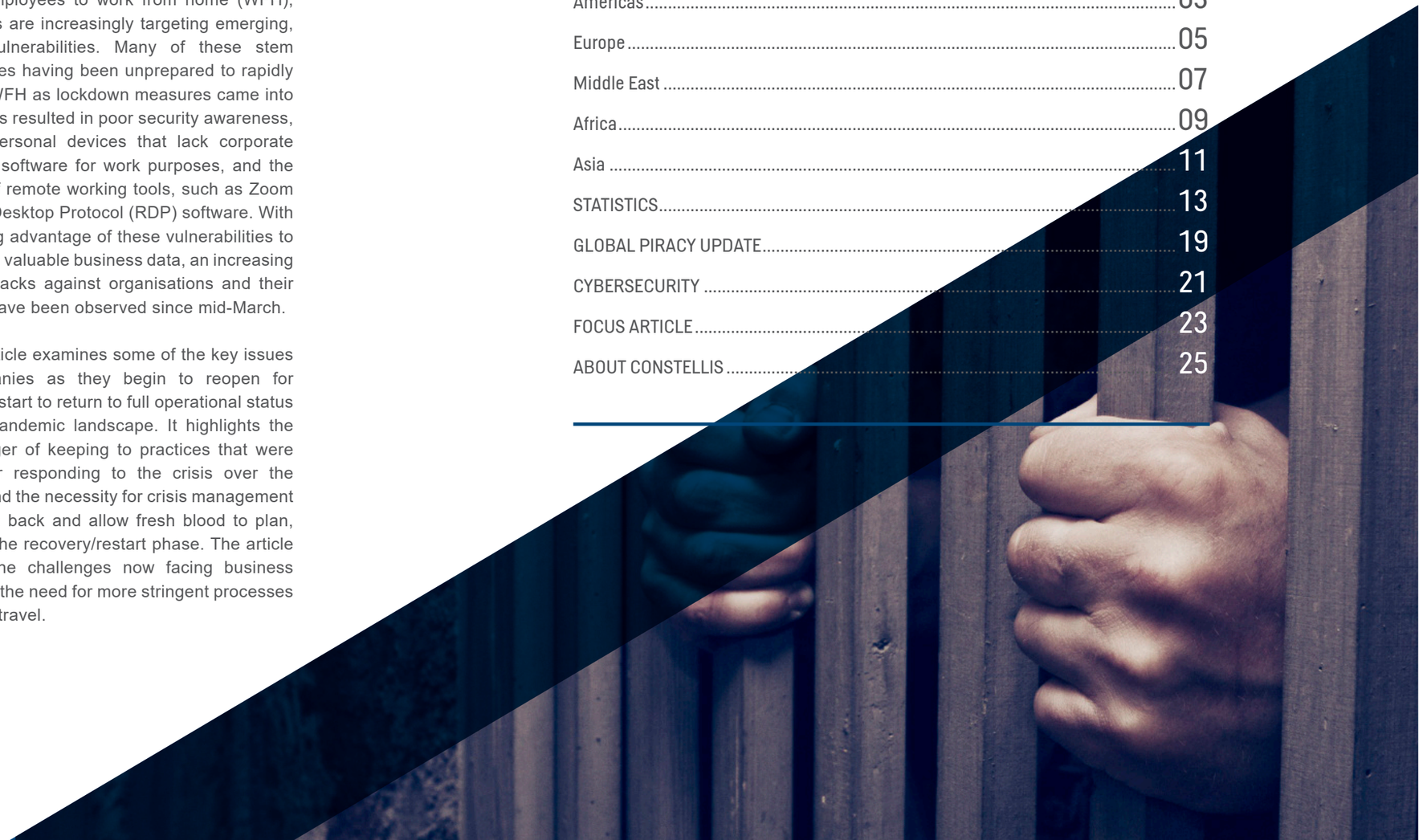
The Cybersecurity section examines current issues affecting companies and individuals in the realm of IT security. This edition will provide an insight into the targeting of remote workspace by cybercriminals. Coronavirus-themed cybercrime. With the coronavirus pandemic forcing a great number of employees to work from home (WFH), cybercriminals are increasingly targeting emerging, associated vulnerabilities. Many of these stem from companies having been unprepared to rapidly transition to WFH as lockdown measures came into place. This has resulted in poor security awareness, the use of personal devices that lack corporate cybersecurity software for work purposes, and the exploitation of remote working tools, such as Zoom and Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) software. With hackers taking advantage of these vulnerabilities to gain access to valuable business data, an increasing number of attacks against organisations and their remote staff have been observed since mid-March.

The Focus Article examines some of the key issues facing companies as they begin to reopen for business and start to return to full operational status in this new pandemic landscape. It highlights the possible danger of keeping to practices that were developed for responding to the crisis over the longer term and the necessity for crisis management teams to step back and allow fresh blood to plan, and oversee the recovery/restart phase. The article also raises the challenges now facing business travellers and the need for more stringent processes for managing travel.

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GLOBAL OVERVIEW

AMERICAS

Over March-April 2020, Constellis recorded a decrease of nearly 27% in the number of foreign kidnap victims in the Americas, compared to January-February figures. The progressive decrease in incidents here and in other regions of the world can be in part attributed to travel disruption and movement restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to a likely decrease in reporting as the media shifted its focus to cover the virus. Particular to the Americas, hand-in-hand with a decrease in overall levels of kidnapping and other violent crime since March, a notable upsurge in virtual kidnapping, extortion, and scams has been reported in many countries across the region. This has been the case for example in Argentina, where only four kidnappings for ransom were reported in March and April, down from nine recorded in December 2019. Likewise, the Argentinean authorities reported a decrease of 89% in armed robbery since a national lockdown was decreed on 20 March. Meanwhile, virtual kidnapping and scams have been on the rise, at a rate of about 40%, particularly targeting the elderly population. Meanwhile, in Canada a resurgence of elaborate virtual kidnapping scams targeting the Chinese minority has been seen in the west of the country since April, following a lull of several months. A similar trend has been observed in the US, where this type of event is on the increase, particularly in localities with a large Hispanic population.

CASES:

- An elderly woman was the victim of a virtual kidnapping in Mar del Plata, Argentina, on 27 April. She received a call from an unknown person who claimed to have her daughter hostage. The woman was manipulated into believing the caller's claims and agreed to pay. She was instructed to throw a bag from her balcony, containing an unknown amount of money and jewellery. Soon after the event, she was able to communicate with her daughter and realised she had been scammed. She subsequently reported the incident to the police.

- Canadian police warned the public about an increasing number of virtual kidnapping scams targeting the Chinese community in British Columbia. In a recent incident, on 18 April, Victoria police were called by a Chinese woman who said she had been contacted six days earlier by a Mandarin-speaking person who claimed to be a member of the Chinese police. The man had managed to convince her to give up her personal details and to send him money in order to protect her family in China. The scammer then used her personal details to convince the woman's relatives that she was being held for ransom. According to police officials, the scam was interrupted before any money was transferred to the scammer.

- Police in New Mexico announced an increase in virtual kidnapping reports since March. In the last week of April for example, the Roswell Police Department (RPD) received five such reports, in which criminals demonstrated a strong local knowledge and were possibly in possession of some information regarding their targets and their targets' families. According to the authorities, the calls often come from Mexico and those responsible select their victims from phone directories, followed by social media monitoring. While these scams take place in different localities of the US, given New Mexico's large population of people with ties to Mexico, residents of the state are often chosen as targets.

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In Colombia, Coronavirus containment regulations have also brought about a significant decrease in violent street crime. However, this has mainly been true of urban environments, while violence continues unhampered in rural areas, where armed groups have continued their criminal activities. These groups have seen the disruption of one of their main revenue streams, drugs trafficking, as the closure of borders, restrictions on movement and closure of points of sale have affected sourcing, distribution, and retail sales. These losses are expected to be compensated by other sources of income, such as kidnapping and extortion. Likewise, in Mexico, cartels have resorted to relying even further on their kidnap activities. In the north of the country, these groups have found in migrants and asylum seekers a preferred target, given their vulnerability. Not only do these individuals fall directly into the cartels' reach by contracting cartel-affiliated parties to cross into American territory, but they are also unlikely to report incidents to the authorities for fear of deportation. In a recent interview, a member of the Juarez Cartel acknowledged that the organisation specifically targets Cuban migrants, as most of them have comparatively well-off relatives living in Miami who are able to pay higher ransoms – typically up to USD 20,000 – than the relatives of Central American migrants. Overall, this trade-off is expected to persist for the foreseeable future. Moreover, crime levels, including kidnapping, are predicted to climb as restrictions begin to ease and many turn to crime, with their livelihoods badly affected in the post-virus economic crisis.

CASES:

- A well-known Colombian rancher was released by his captors on 2 May, allegedly owing to his delicate health. Iván Cetina was abducted on 24 February from his ranch located in a rural area of Cúcuta, Norte de Santander department, near the Venezuelan border. He was taken by four armed men claiming to be members of the National Liberation Army (ELN), who subsequently took him to Venezuela, ostensibly Zulia state. Cetina remained there until his release, constantly guarded by heavily-armed militants who told him he had been abducted as he had been identified as an "economic target", and as such would help finance their campaign through payment of a ransom. While the rancher acknowledged that a large ransom had been demanded for his freedom, he said that no agreement had been reached with his family previous to his release. Cetina said that in addition to his poor health, fear of an imminent rescue operation by the Colombian army may have triggered his release.

- In Mexico, on 17 April, the anti-kidnapping unit of the Chihuahua state police raided a property in Ciudad Juarez, where it was reported a foreigner was being held against her will. Two suspects, including a US citizen, were arrested during the operation. The rescued victim, whose nationality was not revealed, had reportedly been held since 11 April. According to initial investigations, the criminals are members of a kidnapping gang who lured their victims by offering smuggling services to the US.

- A wealthy Mexican businessman from Querétaro state and former president of the state's industrial chamber, was released after a week in captivity. Jesús Calderón was kidnapped on 19 April from inside his home in the municipality of Corregidora by a heavily-armed group. The kidnappers allegedly demanded MXP 10 million (over USD 402,000) for the businessman's release. Initial investigations have led the authorities to believe the abduction was carried out by the Santa Rosa de Lima cartel, which is based in the area of Celaya and is responsible for much of the violence in the state.



Disinfection of Rio de Janeiro's Santa Marta favela, carried out by volunteers in April 2020. (Photo: Malay Mail)

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EUROPE

In line with global trends over the reporting period, Europe experienced a reduction of 50% in reported kidnap incidents involving foreign nationals. Kidnapping has typically been a negligible criminal activity in Europe owing to the effectiveness of police forces across the region. This activity has been further reduced with the introduction of quarantine measures in most European countries. As observed in the Americas, non-presence-based crimes such as cybercrime, fraud and counterfeiting saw a noticeable increase, particularly those with a COVID-19 theme. The expansion of cybercrime on the continent is of particular concern for the authorities, as it will likely remain a predominant trend for the post-pandemic future. Just as organisations and individuals are likely to keep relying on internet-based solutions as restrictions are lifted, crime seeking to exploit this reliance will persist. Moreover, authorities have ascertained that cybercriminals have gained in experience, devising more complex and efficient schemes to maximise profits in shorter periods of time. Another criminal trend observed throughout the confinement period was the persistence of human smuggling operations, however, in a reversed manner. It has been reported that as a result of the economic crisis ensuing from containment measures, as well as for fear of contagion, a number of North African migrants resorted to paying human smugglers to be smuggled back into their home countries. According to media reports, migrants would pay fees around €5,000 for this service, as borders and air travel closed. While this has not yet been translated into kidnapping reports, such a development is highly likely, as observed in the past.

CASES:

- On 24 April, Moscow law enforcement arrested three individuals suspected of having abducted a Kyrgyz man. The security operation took place after witnesses of the kidnapping reported the incident to the police. The report stated that the victim was beaten by five men who later forced him into a car, leaving the scene immediately. The car used in the abduction was tracked by the police on the same day; inside they found three of the suspects and the victim. Those arrested were nationals from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Armenia. While investigations are ongoing, the authorities believe the abduction may be linked to a case of racketeering.

- On 23 April, a Pakistani journalist who went missing in March was found dead in a river outside Uppsala, Sweden. Sajid Hussain had gone missing on 2 March whilst travelling by train from Stockholm to Uppsala. While other lines of investigation are being considered, the police said they didn't dismiss the possibility that the man could have been kidnapped and murdered in relation to his work. Hussain fled Pakistan in 2012 after receiving threats related to his reporting. He lived in exile in several countries before seeking asylum in Sweden in 2017. In addition to writing about human rights violations and forced disappearances in Pakistan, he also reported on organised crime, exposing several drug kingpins. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has said that given Hussain's controversial profile, it cannot be ruled out that he was abducted and killed at the behest of a Pakistani intelligence agency.



A number of countries in the European Union closed their land borders as part of their COVID-19 containment measures. (Photo: The Conversation)

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While organisations are looking after their staff and responding to the current COVID-19 crisis, leaders need to look to the future and start planning for their recovery now. Constellis can provide the tools you need to restart your business, such as disinfection and testing, as well as expert guidance and advice needed to support your organisation through the difficult months ahead. Our advisors can help you recover and learn from this major disruption event, providing a flexible, integrated approach to recovery and a practiced, objective lens that does not share organisational assumptions and can help you learn from this experience so that you are better prepared to deal with future crises.



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MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East saw a decrease of 30% with respect to the number of kidnapped foreigners over the previous reporting period. This is largely assessed to be the result of a reduction in the number of successful hijackings of vessels off the coast of Iran. That being said, the threat remains latent, as evidenced by a series of hostile activities registered in the area, including the seizure of a chemical tanker and the harassment of US navy ships. Following the latter event that took place on 15 April, President Trump ordered the destruction of any Iranian vessel demonstrating aggressive behaviour, signalling the potential for another wave of tit-for-tat incidents in the region. Iran has not only shown a hostile attitude at sea, but also inland, continuing to assert its role as a regional military power despite the severe impact of COVID-19 in the country, both in social and economic terms. Indeed, it is believed that the recent Iranian military build-up is in fact intended to deflect internal social pressure, which had been intensifying prior to the pandemic and is said to be once again mounting, set against what is thought to be the regime's poor response to the health crisis. For example, also in April, halfway through the peak of the outbreak, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched its first satellite into space and revealed a new rocket launch site, exposing the Islamic Republic's military space programme, believed to be aimed at advancing its development of ballistic missiles. This approach has also been reflected in Iran's interference in other countries in the region, both directly and through its proxies. The scaling down of the US presence in the area reported in May could represent a further opportunity for Iran's expansive plans.

CASES:

- On 14 April, a Hong Kong flagged vessel came under attack approximately 47 nautical miles northwest of the Iranian Port of Bandar e-Jask on its way to Jubail, Saudi Arabia. The craft, identified by some sources as product tanker SC TAIPEI, was reportedly boarded whilst at anchor by armed men believed to be members of the IRGC, who took it to Iranian waters. However, shortly after, the vessel began sailing again. It is thought that the IRGC released the vessel once its origin was ascertained, trying to avoid confrontation with China. The vessel is understood to have had a crew of 22 at the moment of the attack, all of them Chinese nationals.

- The Emirati Red Crescent (ERC) announced the loss of two of its local employees in Yemen. The two aid workers were abducted in Aden by gunmen who took them away in a car the night before they were murdered, execution style. The ERC condemned the crime, while confirming the continuation of its humanitarian work in the country. The nationality of the victims, identified as the co-ordinator of the ERC's relief operations and a colleague, was not specified, but it is believed they were local nationals. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. Aden has become one of the hotspots of violence in the country. There, the complexity of the war has been shown by the conflict emerging among the parties of the anti-Houthi coalition, and by the presence of both Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State (IS). Specifically, in early May, there were reports of the arrival of dozens of AQAP and IS militants at the port city. It is believed that the jihadis may have been among the hundreds of individuals released from Houthi prisons due to COVID-19 concerns. This could certainly have a negative impact on the already unstable security situation in southern Yemen in the near future. Resulting activity may well include abductions, a common tactic of both groups, with aid workers remaining a potential target.

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Iraq remains another bastion of insecurity in the region. While COVID-19 containment measures resulted in a decrease of violent activity, particularly in urban settings, these same measures have resulted in the reinforcement of IS in the country. This has been particularly evident in north-central Iraq, where IS militants have taken advantage of the security vacuum created by the redeployment of the Iraqi Security Forces to enforce COVID-19 containment policies and the drawdown in coalition activity since January. Along with the possible infiltration into Iraq of escaped IS convicts from Syrian prisons, these factors have seemingly enabled the group to restructure and expand. While most activity has so far been low-level, an increase in tempo has been recorded and may soon translate into more complex attacks. Meanwhile, Iranian-backed militias continue to pose a significant threat, particularly to US interests and those of its partners, as they continue to press for a full withdrawal of foreign forces and assert Iran's influence in the country. It is assessed that as a result of the advance of IS, these groups, also known as Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs), will soon gain further influence as they once again deploy to combat the insurgents. The PMUs - who have increased attacks against international commercial assets in Iraq over the past two months - and IS are known to engage in kidnap operations, both as a coercion tactic against civilians and for funding. An increase in kidnapping levels is thus likely in the near future, particularly as containment measures start to relax across the country. A similar situation is being witnessed in Syria, where Turkey's military campaign in the country has forced Kurdish forces tasked to battle IS to redeploy to defend Kurdish regions in north-eastern Syria. This, along with the withdrawal of US forces, has facilitated the resurgence of IS in the country. While the Pentagon continues to deny the group's resurgence in Syria, a series of recent attacks seem to prove otherwise.

CASES:

- Four aid workers -three French nationals and an Iraqi- employed by a French NGO were released on 26 March, two months after their kidnapping in Baghdad. The French government expressed its gratitude to the Iraqi authorities for their cooperation, without giving further details. Neither the French authorities nor the Iraqi government spoke previously of the event and though no claims of responsibility were made, it was attributed to Iran-linked Shia militias. While it was claimed that no ransom had been paid for the freedom of the aid workers, their release took place 24 hours after France announced the partial withdrawal of its forces in Iraq.

- On 9 May, Sheik Ahmed Ajmi Obedi, the leader of the Obedi tribe, was abducted by unidentified armed men in Daquq, in the Iraqi Kurdish province of Kirkuk. While no group has claimed the attack, the areas between Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk governorates are witnessing an increase in IS activity, with a number of kidnappings and killings of civilians and military personnel reported in recent weeks. Further reinforcing the possibility of IS's responsibility in the attack, Sheik Obedi's son was abducted by suspected IS militants, on 11 May. The motive behind both kidnaps remains unclear.



Image from an IS media channel allegedly showing a group militant in Homs province, Syria, in April-May 2020 (Photo: Rudaw)

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AFRICA

Contrary to all other regions in the world, Africa observed an increase in the number of kidnapped foreign nationals recorded by Constellis over March and April 2020, with over 80% more victims than the previous two-month period. This increase was primarily linked to developments in the Gulf of Guinea, with Nigerian pirate groups expanding the scope and frequency of their activities, both in territorially and in scale, with the abduction of larger groups of seafarers becoming more common. Meanwhile, terrorism-related kidnappings continue to be a serious concern both in Nigeria and the Sahel region. Though no abductions of foreign nationals by extremist groups have been registered in the region in recent months, a series of releases, proof of life videos and arrests recorded over the reporting period continue to demonstrate this threat. While travel restrictions and the scaling down of operations in this area will result in a decrease of potential targets, the risk of abduction will in turn escalate for those remaining, including local staff. In Mali in particular, there is an ever-worsening security situation, with jihadi groups continuing to gain territory and closing in dangerously on the capital, Bamako. It is expected that the pandemic will come to benefit these groups in the region, in a context of deteriorating governance and increasing disgruntlement among the population.

CASES:

- On 1 May, Nigerian police announced they had dismantled a cell of terror group Jama'atu Ansaril Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan, also known as 'Ansaru'. The operation, which comprised a series of raids in different locations in Katsina and Kaduna states, was launched after the police received reports that the group was extorting companies in Katsina. Reportedly, the group sent emails threatening companies with the kidnap of their expatriate staff if they did not pay NGN 50 million per year (approximately USD 128,000). During interrogation, the nine arrested suspects confessed to the charges of extortion, as well as to a series of abductions in the past year, including the kidnapping of two foreign employees of construction company Triacta Nigeria Limited. Jordanian Zaid Alas and Syrian national Isah Jabour were abducted in Niger State in December 2019, with Ansaru reportedly receiving N120 million (over USD 300,000) in ransom for their release. Each member participating in the abduction was allegedly given between NGN 200,000 to 300,000 (USD 500-800). The suspects additionally confessed to the attack against Mothercat Construction Company in Kaduna state, in May 2019, which was also aimed at kidnapping expatriate workers.

- The United Nations' peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA) announced on 14 March that a Canadian woman and her Italian partner, who had been kidnapped in Burkina Faso 15 months previously, were free. A spokesman for MINUSMA said that the pair was found on 13 March by peacekeepers near the northern city of Kidal, Mali, after they allegedly escaped from their captors. The circumstances surrounding the event are unknown, as well as whether there had been a ransom demand. Edith Blais and Luca Tacchetto went missing while traveling through Burkina Faso on 15 December 2018. No group formally claimed the abduction. However, in an interview after his release, Tachetto said their captors were a group "close to al-Qaeda", who seemed to be very experienced. He additionally mentioned that they were moved constantly, having been transferred to Mali in January 2019. While all parties say there was no ransom payment, jihadi groups in the region are well-known for holding hostages for long periods of time until large ransoms are paid or important concessions are made. Likewise, both Italy and Canada have been said to have paid such ransoms in the past. Most recently, it was reported in May 2020 that the Italian government paid around €4 million to al-Shabaab for the release of Italian aid worker Silvia Romano, who was abducted in Kenya in November 2018.

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Meanwhile, in Mozambique, simultaneously with the implementation of COVID-19 restrictions, a new kidnapping wave is in progress. While a number of lower-profile incidents are undoubtedly taking place, though going unreported, all cases making it to the media relate to high-profile businessmen and their relatives, many of them belonging to the Muslim South Asian minority. These events are typically carried out by well-organised criminal gangs who are part of wider crime syndicates involved in other activities such as the drugs trade, smuggling, racketeering and loan sharking. It is believed that these groups are well-rooted within the Mozambican security services and the political circles, enabling them to act unimpededly and to hold victims for long periods of time until the hefty ransoms demanded are paid. A number of the most notorious criminal syndicates in the country are thought to be led by South Asian families who are also prominent in the business sector, meaning that these groups may have easy access to information on a large pool of potential targets. Targeting is also said to be facilitated by bank workers who are paid to pass on information on these individuals. The similarities between kidnaps in Mozambique and high-profile incidents in South Africa and Madagascar could be indicative of the reach of these groups. It has also been suggested that copycat kidnaps are taking place, with other groups trying to emulate this profitable criminal model throughout the region. This increase in kidnaps in recent weeks may be symptomatic of a criminal trade-off, by which criminal syndicates in Mozambique, like others around the world, are aiming to substitute losses in their other revenue streams, particularly in the drug trade, which have followed the closure of borders as part of the Coronavirus restrictions.

CASES:

- A businessman of Indian origin was abducted on 5 May in the city of Chimoio, in the central Mozambican province of Manica. Yassin Answar was abducted around 7:00 pm when he was driving to his residence. According to an eyewitness, a group of armed men in three cars blocked the victim's vehicle and fired at least ten shots. Although the victim tried to fight off his attackers, he was finally overpowered and forced to board one of the kidnappers' vehicles. It is unknown if the criminals have already contacted the hostage's family and whether a ransom has been demanded. This is the sixth kidnap recorded in the media in Mozambique since the beginning of 2020, and the second in a series that began in late April. At least two more businessmen have been abducted since Answar's disappearance, both of them also in central Mozambique.

- Another social consequence of the current pandemic has been the development of xenophobic sentiments among certain populations. For example, in Guinea, local media reported in mid-April the arrest of a number of Chinese expatriates, amidst a reported rise of xenophobia in China directed against the African community. The report claimed that the decision to arrest the Chinese nationals was taken to ensure the safe passage of Guinean nationals out of China, meaning that the arrestees would remain in detention until all Guinean nationals were safely repatriated. Seeming to support this information, a video circulated on social media purportedly showing the moment dozens of Chinese nationals were arrested and taken to a detention centre. The video was shared online with captions stating that the Chinese nationals would face dire consequences if Africans were harmed in China. However, the veracity of these claims has not been independently verified. Several videos have emerged from China showing violence against Africans since the first week of April, when an online post claimed that two Nigerians infected with coronavirus had escaped from a hospital and were responsible for causing the outbreak of the second wave of coronavirus in the country. Other reports have claimed that the Chinese government has also detained Africans, keeping them in isolation, despite their testing negative for COVID-19.

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ASIA

Asia was the region that observed the greatest downturn in kidnapping incidents, with a 90% decrease in the number of foreign kidnap victims recorded by Constellis over the March-April period. This has been directly linked to the strict lockdown measures implemented across the region in an effort to stem the spreading of the COVID-19 infection. This phenomenon was particularly evident in the Philippines, where the strict enforcement of lockdowns has resulted in a decrease of 60% in violent crime since February. This has been further reflected in the incidence of kidnapping in the country, with only four foreign victims recorded over March and none in April, contrasting significantly with the 21 victims documented over the preceding two months. As per previous trends, all the individuals abducted in the reporting period were Chinese citizens linked to Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations (POGO), which have for some time been the main driver of kidnaps in the country, along with casino and loan sharking activities by Chinese groups. In addition to the lockdown, another reason for the remarkable decrease in this type of kidnapping was the recently intensified government crackdown on illegal POGOs, in which thousands of Chinese citizens have been arrested and repatriated, with the support of the Chinese authorities. In 2019 alone, at least 70,000 Chinese nationals were identified as working illegally in POGOs and other fraudulent offshore operations. Having said that, the gambling sector remains a considerable source of income for the Philippine economy, and despite the growing evidence of its links to criminal activities, it is bound to remain. As an example of this, the Philippine government decided to allow the resumption of POGO activities as part of the first phase of loosening of Coronavirus restrictions. Effectively, this measure meant that the sector is considered an 'essential industry', thus triggering a considerable political backlash.

CASES:

- During a raid in Porac, Pampanga, on 16 March, Philippine anti-kidnapping police rescued a Chinese kidnap victim and arrested four suspected kidnappers -three Chinese nationals and a Taiwanese-. The Chinese man was kidnapped in Pampanga on 15 March and taken to a hotel in Porac where he was held. The suspects reportedly called the victim's family and demanded PHP 3 million (USD 58,600) in ransom.

- Meanwhile in Malaysia, three Indian nationals were rescued by police in Kuala Lumpur after being held captive for a month. The victims had arranged with an Ahmedabad agent to travel to Australia on a work visa. The agent told them they had to make a 10-day stopover in Malaysia before being able to go to Australia. The trio were abducted coming out of their hotel on their first night in Kuala Lumpur. Soon after, their relatives were contacted by the kidnappers, who demanded RIN 10 lakh (USD 13,500) in ransom for each of the victims. On 6 March, one of the relatives reported the incident to the Ahmedabad police in India, who started investigations into the case in conjunction with the Malaysian authorities. The authorities managed to trace the ransom calls, leading to the victims' rescue on 7 March. The suspected kidnappers managed to flee and are currently at large. It is not clear if the agent was complicit in the crime.



63 Chinese and 13 Filipinos arrested on a raid targeting illegal POGOs in Makati City, on 5 May 2020. (Photo: Inquirer)

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In Afghanistan, the US peace agreement with the Taliban in February 2020 has had grave repercussions for the Afghan security environment. US troops have since begun to withdraw, leaving the Afghan forces increasingly on their own to combat the insurgency in the country and thus creating a clear security vacuum. The insurgent group has used the ceasefire to regroup and relaunch a full-on offensive against the Afghan government, despite the ongoing negotiations for a peace deal. An uptick in hostile activity has particularly been observed since early March, including a marked increase in high-profile attacks. While it would seem that the Taliban have held their part of the deal by halting attacks on US and other foreign forces, they have notably increased the tempo of attacks against the Afghan security forces, also resulting in a great number of casualties among the civilian population. This new offensive has greatly benefited the group, which is now believed to be operational in at least 70% of Afghanistan's districts. The power vacuum has been particularly evident in urban areas, including Kabul, where insurgents have increasingly been able to conduct military offensives. In this context, the local outfit of the Islamic State has also made considerable progress in the country. In view of the imminent collapse of talks for a peace deal with the Taliban and the worsening situation, President Ashraf Ghani declared the Afghan security forces would now revert to a full offensive posture, threatening an even greater increase in violence in the near future. In addition to the challenges on the military front, the Afghan government is being confronted by increasing civil unrest across the country as a result of the economic impact brought about by the COVID-19 containment measures.

CASES:

- On 2 May, the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI) said that in the past 70 days the Taliban had abducted at least 200 civilians, including 55 people who were taken in Maidan Wardak, Wardak province, on 1 and 2 March. Local authorities said that the victims were all youths, who the militants accused of cooperating with the government. Their abductors reportedly demanded the release of prisoners held by the government. Also of note, on 9 April, five employees of Afghanistan's Central Bank were kidnapped and killed in Herat province. The employees were reportedly on a work-related trip, which had not been coordinated with the security agencies. The MoI confirmed the incident, attributing it to the Taliban. The group did not comment on the incident.

- In Pakistan, a Chinese trader went missing on 20 April in Karachi. According to the complaint filed by a colleague, the man had gone out to meet his Chinese friends for dinner but never arrived and his vehicle was later found abandoned not far from his residence. The victim was safely recovered in the tribal province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on 28 April. The police did not give any details, only that the foreigner had been located with the help of "modern technology" and that it was not clear if it had been a kidnap for ransom. Local authorities said the man had been in Pakistan since 25 February for "business purposes", denying he was part of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. The clarification followed a number of past security incidents targeting the project as well as Chinese nationals working for it, including kidnappings and terror threats.



At least 24 killed in a suicide attack on a hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan, on 12 May 2020. Though the attack has not been claimed, it was attributed to IS. (Photo: Daily Sabah)

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STATISTICS

MAR-APR
2020

KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS

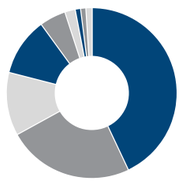
Global AND Regional GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMS

Statistics for are drawn from Constellis' record of 139 kidnapped foreign nationals. Over January-February 2020, Constellis recorded a total of 174 foreign nationals kidnapped across the world.



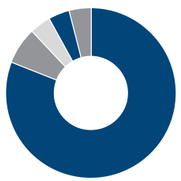
REGION	NUMBER OF VICTIMS
AFRICA	84
MIDDLE EAST	27
AMERICAS	19
ASIA	6
EUROPE	3

AFRICA 60.4%



Nigeria (36)..... 43%
Guinea (20)..... 24%
Gabon (10)..... 12%
Benin (9)..... 11%
Burundi (4) 5%
DRC (2) 2%
Ivory Coast (1) 1%
Kenya (1) 1%
Mozambique (1) 1%

MIDDLE EAST 19.4%



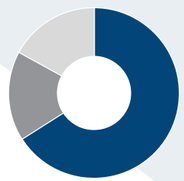
Iran (22) 81%
Saudi Arabia (2) 7%
Iraq (1)..... 4%
Lebanon (1) 4%
UAE (1)..... 4%

AMERICAS 13.7%



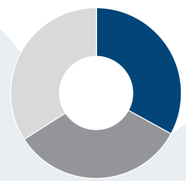
Colombia (4) 21%
Mexico* (4).....21%
Uruguay* (4).....21%
Brazil (1).....5.3%
Canada (1) 5.3%
Guatemala (1).....5.3%
Haiti (1) 5.3%
Honduras (1).....5.3%
Paraguay (1) 5.3%
US* (1).....5.3%

ASIA & PACIFIC 4.3%



Philippines (4).. 66.6%
Khazakhstan (1)16.7%
Pakistan (1)..... 16.7%

EUROPE 2.2%



Russia (1) 33%
Spain (1)..... 33%
Sweden (1)..... 33%

(Number of Victims)
* Including Migrants

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TOP 10 COUNTRIES FOR THE KIDNAPPING OF FOREIGN CITIZENS IN MAR-APR 2020



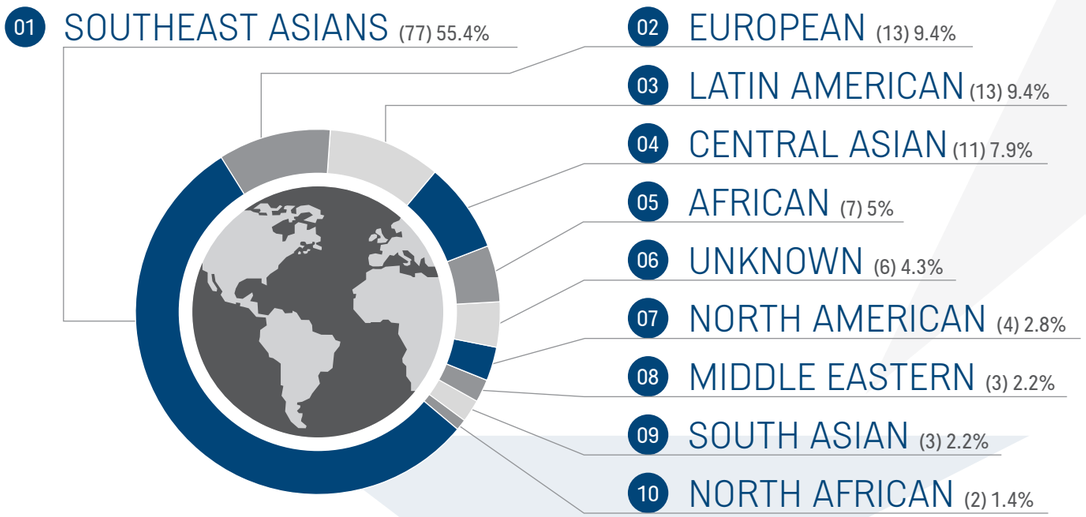
REST OF THE WORLD (42) 30.1%



01 NIGERIA (36) 25.9%
02 GUINEA (20) 14.4%
03 GABON (10) 7.2%
10 DRC (2) 1.4%
09 PHILIPPINES (4) 2.9%
08 URUGUAY (4) 2.9%
07 MEXICO (4) 2.9%
06 COLOMBIA (4) 2.9%
05 BURUNDI (4) 2.9%
04 BENIN (9) 6.5%

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REGIONAL ORIGINS OF VICTIMS



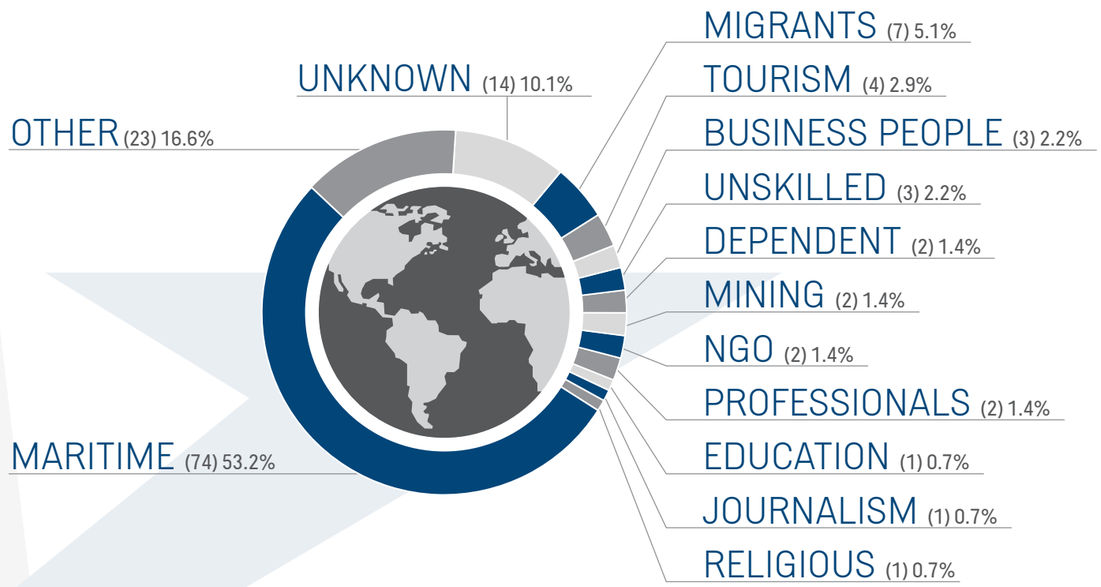
MOST VICTIMIZED SINGLE NATIONALITY

01 Chinese
02 Ukrainian
03 Georgian
04 Unknown
05 Venezuelan
06 Congolese
07 Filipino
08 American
09 Argentinean
10 Brazilian

MOST VICTIMIZED ORIGIN BY REGION

REGION	ORIGIN
Africa	Southeast Asians
Americas	Latin Americans
Asia	Southeast Asians
Europe	Central Asians
Middle East	Southeast Asians

VICTIMS BY SECTOR



MOST VICTIMIZED SECTOR BY REGION

REGION	OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR
Africa	Maritime
Americas	Migrants
Asia	Other
Europe	Dependents
Middle East	Maritime

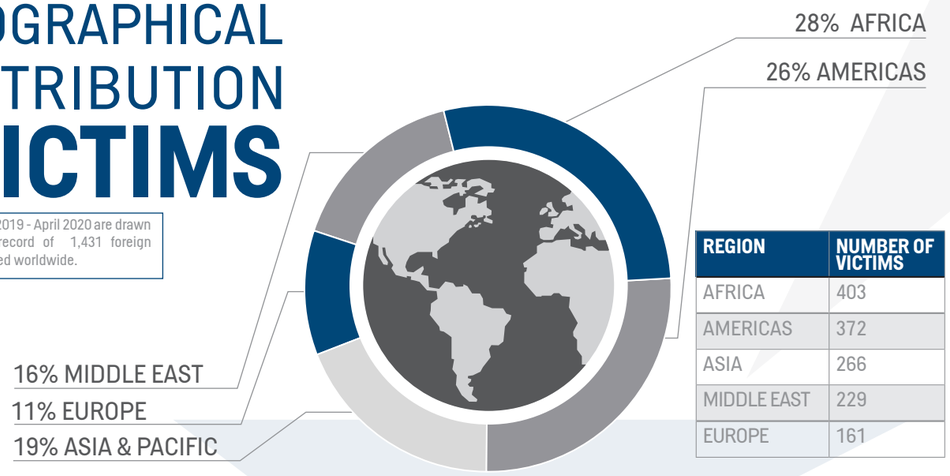
DISCLAIMER: These statistics herein presented are the result of a compilation of kidnapping incidents involving foreign nationals only, which have been reported in the media and other open sources. The information contained and its results are therefore partial as result of the incomplete nature of open-source material. Thus, this report should be taken only as a reference of general trends, taking its limitations into consideration.

STATISTICS

MAY 2019
-APR 2020

Global AND Regional GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMS

Statistics for May 2019 - April 2020 are drawn from Constellis' record of 1,431 foreign nationals kidnapped worldwide.



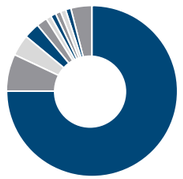
REGION	NUMBER OF VICTIMS
AFRICA	403
AMERICAS	372
ASIA	266
MIDDLE EAST	229
EUROPE	161

AFRICA 28%



Nigeria (107) 26.5%
Libya* (58) 14.4%
Togo (31) 7.7%
Benin (29) 7.2%
Equatorial Guinea (27) 6.7%
Cameroon (25) ... 6.2%
Guinea (20) 5%
Chad (17)..... 4.2%
Gabon (14) 3.5%
South Africa* (14)3.5%
Others* (61) 15.1%

AMERICAS 26%



Mexico* (282) 75.8%
US* (26)..... 7%
Venezuela (15)..... 4%
Colombia (10) 2.7%
Haiti (7) 1.9%
Honduras (4) 1.1%
Uruguay* (4) 1.1%
Canada (3)..... 0.8%
Ecuador (3)..... 0.8%
Paraguay (3)..... 0.8%
Others* (15) 4%

ASIA & PACIFIC 19%



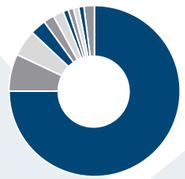
Philippines (87) 32.7%
Cambodia (49).. 18.4%
China (30)..... 11.2%
Pakistan* (27) .. 10.1%
Malaysia* (26).... 9.8%
North Korea (18). 6.8%
India (6) 2.3%
Myanmar (6)..... 2.3%
Vietnam* (4)..... 1.5%
Australia (3)..... 1.1%
Others (10)..... 3.8%

MIDDLE EAST 16%



Iran (146).....63.8%
Yemen (18)..... 7.9%
Lebanon (15) 6.6%
Syria* (15) 6.6%
Iraq (12) 5.2%
Kuwait (7)..... 3.1%
Turkey (7)..... 3.1%
UAE (4)..... 1.7%
Saudi Arabia (3) ... 1.3%
Israel (2)..... 0.9%

EUROPE 11%



Greece* (121)..... 75.2%
North Macedonia* (12)7.5%
Spain (8)..... 5%
Russia (6)..... 3.7%
Netherlands (3)..... 1.9%
Ireland (3)..... 1.9%
Portugal (2)..... 1.2%
UK (2) 1.2%
Italy (1) 0.6%
Sweden (1)..... 0.6%
Others (2) 1.2%

(Number of Victims)
* Including Migrants

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TOP 10 COUNTRIES

FOR THE KIDNAPPING OF FOREIGN CITIZENS IN MAY 2019-APR 2020





REST OF THE WORLD (491) 34.4%

01 MEXICO* (282) 19.7%
02 IRAN (146) 10.2%
03 GREECE* (121) 8.4%
04 NIGERIA (107) 7.5%
05 PHILIPPINES (87) 6.1%
10 BENIN (29) 2%
09 CHINA (30) 2.1%
08 TOGO (31) 2.2%
07 CAMBODIA (49) 3.4%
06 LIBYA* (58) 4%

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GLOBAL PIRACY UPDATE

Levels of hostile maritime activity over March and April 2020 observed a decrease of 16%, with a total of 58 maritime security events recorded worldwide by Constellis, compared to 68 during the previous two-month period. Despite this reduction, the number of incidents remains high in comparison to those in previous years, highlighting the prevalent threat to the maritime sector along the globe's main shipping routes. Moreover, according to observed patterns of activity so far this year, 2020 is set to record a higher total of security incidents than 2019. It is highly likely that the COVID-19 crisis will further validate this assessment. Over March and April, criminal boardings continued to account for the majority of recorded incidents, representing 54% of them. There were five successful kidnaps and two hijackings/seizures, as well as a number of criminal boardings thought to be aimed at kidnapping crew. Additionally, there were four incidents where crew were momentarily held hostage on board their vessels. Of note, this reporting period saw an increase in violent activity in the Gulf of Mexico, resulting in the US Maritime Administration (MARAD) issuing an alert on 17 April, warning of the maritime threat in the vicinity of Ciudad del Carmen and Dos Bocas, Mexico. Attacks in this region are highly under-reported, with official databases only recording four incidents in 2019, in contrast with local sources that mention an average of 16 attacks per month. Perpetrators in this area typically use small, high-speed boats, are armed and tend to be very violent, with a number of crew members having been injured in past incidents. Most targeted vessels have been involved in the oil sector. With attacks occurring up to 75 nautical miles (NM) from the coast, it is assessed that increased activity in the area is closely linked to the development of the Mexican offshore fields and the arrival of foreign companies. It is additionally suspected, as is the case in other regions, such as the Gulf of Guinea (GoG), that corruption at ports and within oil companies is feeding this criminal activity by leaking information on potential targets. Meanwhile, an increase in hostile activity was also noted off Iranian waters, following an apparent lull over the first two months of the year. However, most incidents comprised suspicious approaches and harassment of vessels, with only one successful hijacking recorded. This increase converged with a growth in hostile rhetoric by the Iranian regime, which was accompanied by other shows of force.

Hostile activity in the Gulf of Aden and the wider East Africa region decreased 60% over March and April, with only four incidents recorded, a return to previously observed levels after a spike of incidents over January and February. Furthering the trend observed in recent months, all recorded events were suspicious approaches, most of them off Yemen, where contact with unmanned suspicious craft continued to be reported. This follows a number of attacks over the past 12 months, actual and attempted, using such devices that sometimes carry IEDs and are thought to belong to hostile actors in Yemen. Given that none of the incidents recorded over the reporting period included the sighting of ladders or other boarding materials, it is possible these may relate to the Yemeni conflict or another type of illicit activity rather than piracy.

A decrease in incident levels was observed in the GoG, with 22 incidents recorded over March and April, compared to 28 over the previous two months. While criminal boardings remained the most common type of incident, this was closely followed by kidnappings of crew (6). Notably, a number of the boardings recorded are considered to be failed kidnap attempts. The adherence to recommended response protocols has proved key in these cases. While incidents stretched from Guinea to Angola, they continue to be concentrated in the waters between Ghana and Nigeria. In this reporting period, Ghana emerged as a hotspot, with the same number of registered incidents as Nigeria (6). This contrasts with the fact that only three incidents were recorded there throughout 2019. While it is believed that activity off Ghana remains opportunistic, this increase may hint to a change in dynamics. Moreover, attacks in the GoG are taking place increasingly further away from the coastline at distances of between 45 and 75 NM, delaying even further the response of the security forces. The economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the steep drop in oil prices are expected to drive incident levels in the region upwards in the near future.

Pirate activity in Southeast Asia remained largely unchanged, with 16 incidents reported over March and April 2020. As per established trends, activity remained largely low-level, with most criminal boardings carried out by a few individuals armed at best with bladed weapons. The Singapore Straits remain the main area of concern for this type of attack. No abductions of crew were recorded in the region over the reporting period. However, this remains a serious concern, evidenced by continuous threat reporting. For instance, the Malaysian intelligence services warned in late March that an Abu Sayyaf kidnap unit travelling on two speedboats had left Jolo Island in the southern Philippines towards Sabah, Malaysia. According to reports, the militants were targeting fishermen in Felda Sahabat and Tambisan.

CASES:

- Offshore accommodation vessel TELFORD 28 was boarded and attacked by six heavily-armed men on 14 April, around 12nm north of Ciudad del Carmen, Mexico. The attackers entered the accommodation by opening fire on its outer structure, resulting in the injury of one crew member. After the alarm was raised, the crew mustered in the citadel and a naval boat was dispatched to the location. The pirates stole valuables and escaped.
- On 3 March, Saudi Arabia's military prevented an "imminent terrorist attack" against a Saudi oil tanker about 90 nm southeast of Nishtun, Yemen, as it headed to the port of Aden. The attempt involved four vessels, including an unmanned, explosives-laden, remote-controlled boat. Though no group claimed responsibility for the attempted attack, the incident followed a statement by the Houthis threatening Saudi-Emirati forces in the southern and eastern provinces. Saudi vessels have previously been the target of remotely-controlled water-borne IED attacks by Houthi forces in the Red Sea.
- On 19 April, German-owned containership TOMMI RITSCHER was boarded at Cotonou anchorage. Although 11 crew members managed to lock themselves in the citadel, another eight remained outside and were held hostage by the perpetrators, who took control of the vessel. While Nigeria and Benin forces intercepted and boarded the vessel the next day, neither the pirates nor the hostages could be found. The kidnapped crew comprised three Ukrainians, one Russian, three Filipinos, and a Bulgarian, who is the vessel's captain, all of whom were allegedly rescued in Nigeria, on 25 May.

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CYBER SECURITY

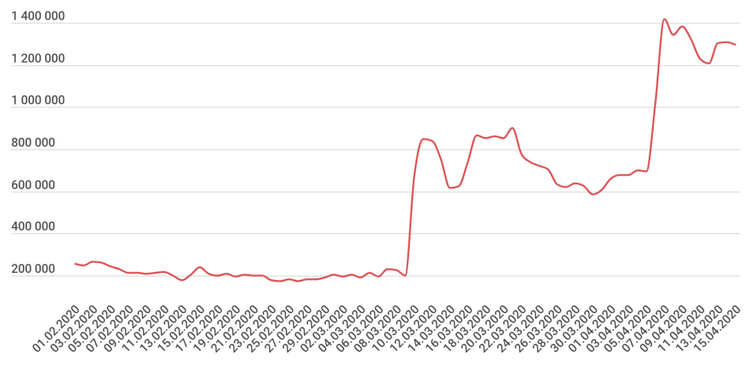
HACKING THE REMOTE WORKSPACE

With the coronavirus pandemic pushing more workers into the virtual workspace, cybercriminals are seeking to take advantage of the increased vulnerabilities that have emerged. A recent study in the US indicated that at least 78% of the working population has been able to work remotely since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, up from 31% in mid-March. Over the same period, further surveys found that security experts from some of the largest organisations in the US have observed at least a 26% increase in cyberattacks, while almost half of enterprises canvassed have encountered at least one cybersecurity incident. In addition to coronavirus-themed phishing and spam campaigns (detailed in the last issue of the Constellis Global Kidnap for Ransom Insight), a significant proportion of these attacks has attempted to exploit Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) software and other tools associated with working from home (WFH).

A myriad of reasons have contributed to the uptick in attacks of this type, most of them related to a significant proportion of organisations being ill-prepared to switch to WFH. With the rapid spread of the coronavirus and the implementation of lockdown measures across the globe, businesses were required to hastily adopt WFH procedures, something at least only half of organisations were ready to do from a security standpoint. As such, lacking the necessary time and resources to prepare for the transition, many businesses have enabled their employees to use personal devices and email addresses, which do not make use of corporate cybersecurity software and firewalls. Further concerns have been raised regarding a lack of security awareness when it comes to WFH, with the governments of the US, UK, France and Germany assessing that there is a significant gap in knowledge amongst their countries' respective workforces. When combined with employees using their own devices for work purposes, vulnerabilities for hackers to exploit are drastically multiplied. Compounding the issue, almost 40% of businesses have reportedly had to reduce their cybersecurity budgets because of the financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

Another area cybercriminals have targeted to gain access to valuable business data are digital communications, which have increasingly been used between employers and their remote workforces. Internet-enabled communication tools, such as Zoom, UberConference and Microsoft Teams, have seen exponential adoption by companies across the world, as teleconferencing with remote workers becomes the new norm. Such applications have however been found to have significant security and privacy vulnerabilities, enabling cybercriminals to gain access to online meetings. While some hackers have engaged in 'zoombombing', or trolling of digital teleconferences, other cyberattackers have exploited them for far more nefarious purposes, namely the gleaning of valuable business information to gain access to critical systems or hold it to ransom. This has led to some organisations banning the use of such platforms. For example, Google, NASA, SpaceX and Smart Communications, as well as several international governments have banned their staff from using Zoom.

Additional vulnerabilities have been observed around remote desktop tools such as Microsoft's Remote RDP, which enables staff to access their corporate networks. The use of remote access tools is considered highly vulnerable, particularly when they have been set up quickly to make corporate resources available to remote workers during the pandemic. According to cybersecurity provider Kaspersky, attacks on RDP have skyrocketed across the globe since mid-March. In the US, for instance, such attacks numbered approximately 200,000 per day from January to February 2020, growing to over 1.2 million per day by early April 2020. Attackers exploit RDP by cracking usernames and passwords to connect to corporate networks and gain access to company data. Though VPN technology can largely alleviate this threat if utilised on secure home networks, only 53% of remote workers reportedly use it to access their corporate network.



RDP attacks in the US from 1 February to 15 April 2020 (Kaspersky)

With the coronavirus pandemic set to transform the working world for the foreseeable future, if not forever, cybercriminals are expected to continue to find ways to exploit WFH protocols. Over the past few months, ransomware has been the top-recorded type of attack, facilitated by the panic created by the COVID-19 crisis and likely compelling more companies into paying ransom fees to release their encrypted data. This phenomenon has in turn been enabled by the greater vulnerabilities associated with remote working practices – gifting hackers greater opportunities to access corporate networks to steal data and hold it to ransom. Unless organisations take greater steps to secure their remote workforce and digital communications, attacks exploiting WFH vulnerabilities will continue to grow exponentially over the lockdown period at least, and likely beyond.

Guidance from cybersecurity experts includes the following:

- Ensure disaster recovery plans are in place
- Ensure there is a Remote Working Policy, and that employees are educated on best practices for WFH and are cybersecurity-aware
- Ensure all network configurations and cybersecurity software is up-to-date
- Close any corporate VPN connection when not in use
- Do not use work machines for personal activities or personal machines for work-related activities
- Ensure passwords for machines and personal networks are strong
- Ensure online meetings are password protected and do not share meeting IDs outside of attendee lists
- Avoid using a personal ID to host public meetings
- Screen meeting attendees by using teleconferencing applications' 'waiting room' tool
- Once lockdown measures are relaxed, staff should avoid using public networks

CASES:

- On 30 March 2020, the FBI issued a warning related to teleconferencing applications. The advisory came after hackers, who had gained access to online classes being held on Zoom, trolled two Massachusetts-based high schools during virtual seminars.
- In April 2020, cyber risk assessment company Cyble discovered over half a million stolen Zoom credentials being sold on the dark web at very cheap prices. Information being sold included meeting URLs and host keys.
- On 5 May 2020, Australia-based Toll Group announced that it had been infected with a ransomware distributed through a vulnerable RDP configuration. The company did not disclose the ransom demanded but said it would not pay. Toll Group had to fall back on manual processes as a result of the attack.

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FOCUS ARTICLE

COVID-19 RECOVERY: ADVICE FOR NAVIGATING THE POST-CRISIS LANDSCAPE

As businesses and workers emerge from their various hibernation states as a result of the easing of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, they will enter a brave new world of partial restriction, social distancing, and uncertainty. There will be uncertainty about how to fully recover and restart business in a safe and socially responsible manner whilst meeting various national guidelines and requirements, as well as dealing with individual employee risk tolerance. Individual attitudes towards returning to work outside the home will vary widely depending on each person's natural risk appetite as well as their personal circumstances; an employee caring for a vulnerable person will probably want to be far more careful than someone with no such responsibilities. These uncertainties will have an impact on productivity across all sectors and throughout the supply chain, which will make any resumption of business activity challenging and unpredictable.

Management teams responding to the initial crisis who were keen to keep business running, albeit often in some restricted form, may have responded by ripping up the rulebook and tearing down barriers to rapid progress in order to respond quickly and keep essential operations running. Businesses will need to be wary of maintaining these new practices, which although possibly acceptable for short-term crisis response, may not be suitable for the medium- and long-term. Some of the short-cuts adopted may have inherent risks that are manageable in the near term but could incubate into serious threats to worker safety over time.

Frustrations with earlier, possibly more time-consuming ways of achieving the same result may lead to a reluctance to revert to previously established arrangements. Shortcuts made *in extremis* may be more efficient and bring a positive result, but not always; it is important to look closely at each new system, practice, or structure to ensure it is fit for long-term use and not just assume that it will continue to work. Procurement practices and decisions made in haste can sometimes miss critical parts of the process, such as rigorous quality checks. This can lead to future problems, not all of which will be immediately apparent. An example directly linked to the pandemic is the problems experienced with procuring suitable COVID-19 tests and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): in some cases, due to hurried decisions, materials have proven to be unusable, resulting in waste and further delay. This is not acceptable, and there is a real risk that other potentially flawed materials and products could have made it through new fast-tracked systems of checks and balances. Similarly, in other situations, due diligence checks on new vendors may have been speeded up, and critical red flags missed as a result of decisions made in haste. In the coming recession where financial hardship will be felt across most sectors, it would be all too easy to maintain less costly and less stringent practices and processes; this temptation must be resisted if businesses are to avoid problems further down the road.

Traditional decision-making processes may have been ignored in order to move forwards rapidly, which is often necessary in a crisis, but this more directive approach will not serve most businesses well over the medium- to long-term. Likewise, where crisis management teams have been set up to lead organisations through the crisis, they may not be the best people or management structure to lead companies out of the crisis and into the recovery/restart phase. Crisis leaders are usually good at short-circuiting traditional processes and making snap decisions based on limited information. The phase we are entering now suits a more cautious approach, still governed by pragmatism but with a level of scrutiny and detail that suits a more analytical mindset. Thin slicing, a technique adopted by many crisis managers, is not necessarily best suited to managing normal business processes. Also, many of the people who have led the business through the crisis will be weary now and need a break. A fresh pair of eyes is more likely to be more effective as we move forwards.

In a similar vein, practices adopted during the crisis, such as working from home, may have been manageable for many employees throughout the lockdown, but may not be so over a longer period. It would be dangerous to assume that because it worked over the short-term, it will continue to work *ad infinitum*. Working remotely and using virtual collaboration tools may be more efficient in many circumstances, but not in all. In some situations, there is no adequate substitute for face-to-face interaction. A careful assessment of home working, employee performance, and the impact on productivity during the lockdown phase is needed to inform business continuity plans and future decisions on the need for and use of office space.

For many companies, the resumption of business travel will be a major hurdle and pose many questions. Travel and journey management has become a discipline in its own right in many businesses; this will come under much greater scrutiny with the complete rethinking of safe workspaces, customer engagement, employee relations and working conditions in the post-lockdown world of continued social distancing and other health and safety requirements. Travel restrictions, quarantines and questions around insurance coverage for COVID-19 related travel disruption and illness, all highlight the importance of comprehensive risk assessments and mitigation plans for all business travel. This also needs to take into account the additional risks posed by the dynamic nature of the pandemic. Ensuring that travellers explicitly recognise and accept the risks before embarking on any journey and that they are not put under any pressure to travel is essential. Employers should log all such conversations with travellers and file them securely for future reference in case of a claim. It is even more important now for employers to provide comprehensive briefings, advice and support for travellers, not only prior to, but also during travel. Smartphone travel apps provided by companies like Kinetic Global ensure that employers have a means to locate and advise their personnel at any time of day or night and provide travellers with a toolkit in their pocket to keep themselves safe and informed of relevant threats.

Economic hardship due to COVID-19 will bring increases in insecurity, crime and social unrest and limits to government support. Xenophobic attitudes and associated hate crime against foreign nationals in places where foreigners are considered to be potential virus spreaders will also become widely manifest. The degradation of safety and security in the wake of the pandemic will have serious consequences for most businesses with global operations and supply chains. It is therefore essential that companies look closely at their current approach to risk and resilience and that they adapt in the light of the changing business environment. Organisational resilience must be given high priority as we emerge into this new risk landscape in order to ensure that businesses can learn from recent experience, modify their policies, plans and working practices, and better absorb future shocks.



Covid-19 measures at Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport (Photo: eturbonews)

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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, 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



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