Drug Trafficking on the Southern Route and Impact on Coastal States

Conference Paper (October 2016)
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Indian Ocean Heroin Trafficking

A major heroin route referred to as the Southern Route runs across the Indian Ocean. The route is significant as some of the largest heroin seizures outside of the source region have been made offshore, and in many cases where testing of drug samples has been carried out the purity levels have been high.

The route to the eastern coast of Africa has been visible since 2010, with a considerable number of seizures carried out in both international and territorial waters and onshore. Seizures in the central section of the Indian Ocean have confirmed there are multiple maritime heroin trafficking routes. Interceptions confirm a range of landing points from those on the Swahili Coast that runs along the seaboard of much of Eastern Africa, to the central section of the Indian Ocean in the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

Heroin is loaded onto dhows off the Makran Coast. Exit points for opiates cultivated in Afghanistan closest to this area are notable as being in areas where the Taliban operate and profit from the drug trade. The threat that al-Qaeda-linked groups can profit from the heroin flow should be monitored in Eastern Africa, as at least one case has been identified where there may have been dual use of a vessel by a drug trafficking gang and al-Shabaab.

In some regions, where drugs are trafficked on maritime routes, vessels attempt to outrun security forces. This is not the case on Indian Ocean heroin routes as dhows, the vessels most commonly used for trafficking on this route, travel slowly. Illicit cargo is concealed onboard the dhows, which are often dedicated trafficking vessels, carrying no additional cargo. Landing the drug involves traffickers being able to operate with impunity, through a lack of assets being available to interdict vessels, porous borders or corruption enabling illicit cargoes to be moved through entry points unimpeded.

As drug traffickers seek to safeguard routes through corruption they create numerous threats to peace and security.
Trafficking Patterns on the Southern Route

An analysis of when and where heroin has been trafficked on maritime routes across the Indian Ocean highlights how assets and capacity building can be deployed to provide maximum impact.

Monsoon Weather Patterns

Graph showing heroin seizures by month, from 2010 to 2015. Total for the month is shown, rather than individual seizures. The north-easterly monsoon, when conditions are favourable for mid-sized dhows, runs from November until May. There are also calm conditions either side of the north-easterly monsoon. The south-westerly monsoon, when harsher conditions are experienced, is at its peak in July and August.

![Favourable Monsoon Conditions](image)

Source: Law enforcement in Tanzania, official reporting from law enforcement in Kenya, Combined Maritime Forces.
Heroin traffickers moving drugs via dhow use traditional trading patterns, travelling during the calmer conditions experienced during the north-easterly monsoon, which covers November to May, with moderate weather also experienced during June. After this time the southerly winds build. In July and August the south-westerly monsoon is at its strongest, creating rough conditions which are not favourable for long voyages in wooden dhows. By September and October the south-westerly monsoon dissipates and it is possible to again make long open sea journeys in small wooden dhows. On the route to Eastern Africa the north-easterly monsoon also provides following winds, making for a faster crossing.

1 http://moocs.southampton.ac.uk/shipwrecks/2014/10/02/maritime-rhythms-indian-ocean-monsoon/
Thirty-two of the 37 seizures of more than 50kg made between 2010 and 2015 on the route to Eastern Africa took place during the north-easterly monsoon period. This represents 87 per cent of all seizures, underlining the pattern of traffickers travelling during favourable conditions, and the need to focus law enforcement efforts during this time-frame. Three seizures took place in September and October.

A single seizure in July 2014 in Kenyan territorial waters broke the trend of traffickers using wooden dhows, as a larger steel merchant ship was seized. This indicates that traffickers can operate year round, if larger vessels are used. In 2015, a seizure was made from a dhow in international waters in early July. There is some variation in the timing of the south-westerly monsoon, and this was seen in 2015.²

The quantity of heroin seized during the north-easterly monsoon period also totaled 87 per cent, further underlining the importance of this time frame. Seizures made in September and October, both in international waters and onshore, represented seven per cent of the total. The sole seizure made during the south-westerly monsoon accounted for four per cent.

² Compendium of Drug Seizures at Sea’, which is jointly collated by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), Regional Narcotics Interagency Fusion Cell (RNIFC) and the Global Maritime Crime Programme of UNODC.
The largest heroin seizures have also been made during the most favourable conditions, with more than a tonne interdicted from a dhow in April 2014. This is one of the largest seizures ever made outside of the source region. Traffickers not splitting this consignment between vessels underlines that they had previously operated with a sense of impunity on maritime routes across the Indian Ocean.

**Large Seizures on the Southern Route**

An analysis of the locations of large heroin seizures, totaling 50kg or more, highlights the role international naval forces have played in seizing drugs. Seventy eight per cent of these took place in international waters, involving warships from the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). Sixteen per cent took place onshore and five per cent in territorial waters. Seizures onshore and in territorial waters are key as they offer the opportunity for a legal finish, when suspects are arrested. In contrast, seizures made in international waters are documented and disposed of at sea as there is no legal mandate or basis, such as a Convention that covers international waters or UNSC resolution, to provide powers for arrests following heroin interceptions in the Indian Ocean.
The quantity of heroin caught offshore highlights the importance of interdictions carried out in international waters, where 87 per cent was seized. While 16 per cent of the total number of seizures were made onshore, this represented only seven per cent of the total quantity. Although the onshore seizures were made in coastal areas, smaller sizes (the largest was 211 kg) indicate that they may have been from larger shipments that had already been broken down.

Where heroin purity has been tested in international waters it has typically shown the drugs to be of high quality. Samples tested aboard CMF vessels have on occasion exceeded purity levels of 70 per cent. In addition to the large size of heroin consignments interdicted in international waters, which have often exceeded half a tonne, the high purity underlines the significance of these seizures.
Timeline of Large Seizures in the Western Indian Ocean

The statistics relating to drug seizures by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) need to be viewed in the context of naval assets (ships) being allocated by member states to CMF during the peak dhow traffic period. As the deployment of naval vessels to CMF is voluntary and is secondary national tasking and commitments of member states, the allocation of naval assets to CMF have not synchronized well with the high dhow activity periods for drug trafficking. As a result, statistics for drug seizures at sea have varied since 2014. There is no indication that the scale of heroin quantities trafficked on the route has reduced. Onshore and territorial water seizures have stopped being made, and a lack of asset availability has impacted operations in international waters. A major threat is that the reduction in seizures leads to assumptions that the route is reducing. In reality, the lack of seizures means traffickers are operating with impunity and the value of the route may be increasing.
2010 was significant as two large heroin seizures made onshore on the Swahili Coast of Tanzania provided confirmation that large amounts of heroin were being trafficked across the Indian Ocean on maritime routes.

2011 was notable for large heroin seizures onshore in Kenya and Tanzania, that law enforcement confirmed had arrived on maritime routes (where information was available).

2012 marked the first time a heroin seizure was made in international waters by the CMF. A single large onshore seizure was reported in the south of Tanzania, on the border with Mozambique. This indicates landing points may have tracked south in response to law enforcement pressure.

2013 was notable for the lack of onshore seizures. The CMF continued to make large heroin seizures in international waters.

2014 was significant for the start of seizures from vessels in territorial waters, offering the chance of a legal finish. The July 2014 seizure from a steel vessel in Kenyan territorial waters broke the trend of dhow travelling in favourable conditions, highlighting the threat that the window to traffic heroin on maritime routes to Eastern Africa is much broader than previously indicated.

2015 was notable for a reduction in large heroin seizures, despite no indications the flow has reduced. There were also no seizures of more than 50kg reported onshore or in territorial waters. The CMF noted seizures were impacted by a lack of asset availability for counter-narcotic operations during the first quarter of the year, coinciding with a key trafficking period during the north-easterly monsoon.3

3 Compendium of Drug Seizures at Sea, which is jointly collated by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), Regional Narcotics Interagency Fusion Cell (RNIFC) and the Global Maritime Crime Programme of UNODC.
• **2016** has been most notable for large seizures made in a more central sector of the Indian Ocean, with interdictions of around 100kg made in both the Seychelles and Sri Lanka. Seizures continued during the north-easterly monsoon season, with 1137 kg seized by the CMF from multiple interdictions. A further 163 kg seizure was reported by the Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police, also during the north-easterly monsoon.

**Seizure Locations and Shift in Drop-off Points**

A number of large onshore seizures were made in Eastern Africa between 2010 and 2012. One seizure was made in Kenya. In Tanzania the landing positions moved south, starting at Tanga on the northern border with Kenya and ending in Lindi near the border with Mozambique. This highlights a threat that traffickers may have moved landing points further south into Mozambique, in response to the seizures made by law enforcement in Eastern Africa. Furthermore, the use of border areas as landing points allows traffickers to evade law enforcement by moving between countries. This threat is magnified if cooperation agreements between neighboring countries are not in place and robust.

Seizures in territorial waters, important for the chance to have a legal finish, were reported in Kenya and Tanzania in 2014, but not since.

Several seizures of dhows with cargo onboard happened in 2014, when the CMF made two major hauls in international waters in April and May. These included the largest seizure on the maritime route, of 1,032kg of high purity heroin. At sea, searching a vessel with cargo onboard poses a significant challenge to boarding teams. Onshore, this trafficking methodology creates a burden for law enforcement, with the need to methodically check large cargo consignments unloaded at dhow quays.

**Possible Proliferation Southwards to the Mozambique Channel**

The Swahili Coast extends into northern Mozambique, where the dhow trade is also considerable. There are indications that heroin traffickers may have used landing points in Mozambique for several years. The Dublin Group has warned extensively of the threat posed by drug trafficking routes that transit Mozambique, noting intelligence reports that multi-tonne shipments of heroin are transhipped through Mozambique.⁴ Information provided to UNODC by a senior international law enforcement official in October 2016 indicates that possible storage sites include islands off the coast of Mozambique. This is not the first time that storage sites have been reported, as information in the 2012 Dublin Group report implied that it was likely that

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⁴ The 2012 Dublin Group report stated: “These figures are borne out by a number of multi-kilo seizure and arrest operations in 2010 that have taken place in South Africa, UK and Canada involving all three commodities.” Multi-tonne shipments of cocaine and cannabis resin were also reported.
large drug consignments were being broken down before onwards shipment.\textsuperscript{5} A threat reported to UNODC in 2015 outlined that there may now be landing points across the Mozambique Channel.\textsuperscript{6}

There is also a threat of significant cocaine trafficking via Mozambique. Cocaine routes in West Africa have previously been the focal point of international law enforcement activities to counter drug trafficking in Africa. The Dublin Group warned that “there is increasing evidence that drug traffickers are spreading their operations further south due to displacement from West Africa where interdiction efforts have been successful”.\textsuperscript{7}

A lack of large heroin and cocaine seizures in Mozambique is a concern, as this sharply contrasts with the intelligence picture. Heroin has been documented leaving Mozambique, most notably in a container seizure of more than 800kg made in Belgium in 2013.

**Southern Route -East Indian Ocean (Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Maldives)**

Further routes across the Indian Ocean have become apparent with large heroin seizures made in the Maldives, Seychelles and Sri Lanka. A route that runs on an easterly direction from the Makran Coast became apparent in 2014, when 24 kg of heroin was seized from a dhow in the Maldives.\textsuperscript{8} It was underlined in mid-2016 when a further 29 kg of heroin was seized after being dropped at sea in the Maldives, and collected by members of a local organised crime group.\textsuperscript{9}

In 2016 seizures of around 100kg of heroin were made from dhows in both the Seychelles and Sri Lanka. The track to the Seychelles is not a great deviation from the route to the seaboard of eastern Africa. Routes to the Maldives and Sri Lanka represent a new route, which tracks eastwards from the Makran Coast.

The seizures in the Seychelles and Sri Lanka indicated a similar methodology to the trafficking methods seen on the maritime heroin route to Eastern Africa, is being used to bring drugs to other landing points in the Indian Ocean. Where images of the vessels were available, they indicated the use of wooden dhows.

\textsuperscript{5} The 2012 Dublin Group report stated: “These figures are borne out by a number of multi-kilo seizure and arrest operations in 2010 that have taken place in South Africa, UK and Canada involving all three commodities.”
\textsuperscript{6} Briefings from CMF personnel in March 2015 and international law enforcement in February 2015. Details are limited and the route not confirmed.
\textsuperscript{7} 2012 Dublin Group country report on Mozambique (15457/12), Council of the European Union, Brussels, 29 October 2012.
\textsuperscript{8} http://minivannewsarchive.com/politics/last-of-the-pakistani-suspects-in-the-24-kg-heroin-bust-deported-88471
\textsuperscript{9} http://maldivesindependent.com/crime-2/historic-drug-bust-nets-four-suspects-and-29kg-of-heroin-124713
The north-easterly monsoon is also a key timeframe for smaller vessels to move in the central section of the Indian Ocean, covering the stretch of water that includes the Maldives and Sri Lanka.\footnote{http://www.slam.lk/marine-weather} During this time the weather conditions on the route to Sri Lanka are also lighter. From May to September stronger monsoon winds build in the region of Sri Lanka, with heavy rain adding to the rough conditions. The timing of the heroin seizures indicated that the dhows trafficking drugs to the central area of the Indian Ocean were also seeking to travel during favourable conditions, with a cluster of interdictions made around March and April.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Interdicting Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 June 2016</td>
<td>29 kg</td>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>Collected by small boats</td>
<td>Maldivian Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 April 2016</td>
<td>98.5 kg</td>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>Dhow</td>
<td>Seychelles Coast Guard and NDEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March 2016</td>
<td>101 kg</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Dhow</td>
<td>Sri Lanka Police Narcotics Bureau and Sri Lanka Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 March 2014</td>
<td>24 kg</td>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>Dhow to small boat</td>
<td>Maldivian Police,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is also the threat that additional routes are being used on easterly tracks from the Makran Coast, or that landing points may move. Vessels travelling to locations in the central section of the Indian Ocean have passed long stretches of coastline, including remote areas and places where maritime movements are frequent, with fishing and trading boats.

**Drug Seizures in Shipping Containers**

Heroin, cocaine and Amphetamine-Type Substance (ATS) precursor materials have all been seized from containers, or at points where they are destined for container routes in the region of the Indian Ocean.

Several large seizures of heroin have been made from containers in Sri Lanka, with a cluster of interdictions made between August 2013 and August 2014. These four cases totaled 450 kg, ranging from 36 kg to 261 kg. In all of these cases the heroin was concealed in supposedly licit items, including grease tins and grinding machines.\footnote{Information provided to UNODC by official sources in Sri Lanka.}
Drug Seizures from Shipping Containers in Sri Lanka
2013 to 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Concealment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 July 2016</td>
<td>301 kg</td>
<td>cocaine, Sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 June 2016</td>
<td>80 kg</td>
<td>cocaine, Sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 August 2014</td>
<td>59 kg</td>
<td>heroin, Tea bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 July 2014</td>
<td>94 kg</td>
<td>heroin, Grinding machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 March 2014</td>
<td>36 kg</td>
<td>heroin, Metal bolts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 August 2013</td>
<td>261 kg</td>
<td>heroin, Grease tins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eastern Africa has seen seizures of cocaine made from container consignments. Nearly 100kg was seized from a container in Kenya in July 2016. This is not the first time large consignments of cocaine have been detected in Eastern Africa. Over a tonne of cocaine was intercepted in Kenya in December 2004, with 837.5 kg seized in Milindi, Mombasa and further 304 kg seized in a warehouse in Nairobi.¹²

Several cocaine seizures were also made in Tanzania in 2011, although the means of arrival in the country were not clear. In September 2011, 30kg of cocaine was seized alongside 67kg of heroin. This case confirms that organised crime gangs in the region are handling multiple drug types at the bulk level. In March 2011, 81kg of cocaine was found by police in Dar es Salaam. This case may also have involved an organised crime group trafficking large quantities of both drugs, as the police were reportedly looking for heroin when they made the cocaine seizure.¹³

In the central region of the Indian Ocean, several large cocaine seizures have been made in Sri Lanka during 2016. In July 2016, 301kg of cocaine was seized from a sugar consignment. One month before, 80kg of cocaine was seized.¹⁴ There are links between the July 2016 seizures in both Kenya and Sri Lanka. These cocaine consignments had been concealed with sugar in containers that departed Port of Santos in Brazil. It is believed the shipping containers for Sri Lanka and Kenya were loaded on the same vessel in Brazil and then transshipped in Europe to South Asia and East Africa.¹⁵

¹⁴ Information provided to UNODC by official sources in Sri Lanka.
¹⁵ http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/police-back-claim-aristocrat-is-victim-of-drug-smugglers-z3h9pg7z
Precursor chemicals that can be used to manufacture methamphetamine have been trafficked from South Asia to Eastern Africa.\textsuperscript{16} This further underlines that some organised crime groups trafficking heroin in the region are also involved in moving other drugs.

Containers pose a threat for the onwards trafficking of heroin and other illicit consignments. Several illicit flows leave Eastern Africa via container, most notably ivory. Interpol noted that interdicting containers offers “considerable opportunities to law enforcement agencies since maritime transport hubs represent logistics bottlenecks”.\textsuperscript{17}

Seizures of heroin leaving Eastern Africa in containers have not been reported, despite this methodology being documented on a route from neighboring Mozambique to Europe. This case was also notable for its size, as more than 850kg of heroin was seized from a container that travelled from Mozambique, to the port of Antwerp in Belgium in 2013.\textsuperscript{18} In comparison, the other heroin seizure from a container in Europe around the same time, that had travelled on a route from South Asia, weighed 230kg.

**Nexuses between Taliban/al-Qaeda Linked Groups and the Opiate Trade**

The opiate trade is a confirmed source of Taliban funding, that is particularly significant in areas close to exit points through which drugs are trafficked to maritime routes that cross the Indian Ocean. The nexus between the Taliban and the opiate trade has run as high as the leadership level. This highlights that efforts to seize large quantities of heroin that have exited southern Afghanistan and travel on the Maritime Route are significant for impacting both organised crime networks and an al-Qaeda-linked group.

Since 2006, Taliban activity and insecurity have been significant in Helmand. In 2005 opium cultivation in Helmand accounted for 25 per cent of the total for the country, and this rose to 42 per cent 2006, underlining the threat insecurity poses to the proliferation of the drug trade. By 2015, 47 per cent of the opiates cultivated in Afghanistan were grown in Helmand.

\textsuperscript{17} Interpol, *Elephant Poaching and Ivory Trafficking in East Africa: Assessment for an Effective Law Enforcement Response*, February 2014.
\textsuperscript{18} UNODC World Drug Report, 2015
Insecurity has been key for the drug trade to operate in parts of Afghanistan. There is overlap between territory where the Taliban operate and locations used for opiate cultivation, processing and sales. The following image shows Sangin, an area where opium production was significant, that also gained notoriety for some of the fiercest fighting of the conflict.
Exit points for opiate flows closest to the Makran Coast are located in southern Afghanistan. Two thirds of all opiates are cultivated in this region.\textsuperscript{19}

The southern border crossing of Helmand is of concern regarding heroin trafficked on the Indian Ocean maritime routes, as it is the closest to the Makran Coast and under Taliban control. This area poses a severe threat, as the Taliban can profit freely from the drug trade and move lethal aid through the same points. The Baramchah crossing in southern Helmand is beyond areas of Government control, and only occasional raids on the area have been conducted. Those raids have uncovered materials from extensive opiate processing facilities and IED warehouses. A statement from the US military issued in November 2010 in Afghanistan reported that a raid on Baramchah had uncovered large quantities of precursors for opiate processing and bomb making materials. Items uncovered included: “A homemade explosive factory with approximately 23.7 metric tons of ammonium nitrate was found in the bazaar. Also found were numerous artillery shells, 60 cases of .50 caliber machine-gun ammunition, 18 pressure plate and four pressure cooker IED’s, 500 liters of acid, 40kg of opium, 2,000kg of precursor chemicals, and numerous automatic weapons and assorted ammunition.”

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\textsuperscript{19} UNODC and MCN Afghan Opium Survey, for 2015.
The Taliban nexus with the opiate trade has been confirmed to run as high as the leadership levels. Former leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, killed in a drone strike in early 2016, was noted by the United Nations Security Council for being "involved in drug trafficking".

Official reporting to the United Nations Security Council has indicated that the Taliban generate income totaling one hundred million dollars, which is just over 2.5 per cent of the estimated total value of the opiate crop. This highlights how a small percentage of a high value illicit flow can generate a significant amount of revenue.

Furthermore, the opiate trade is exploited by the Taliban for other benefits. The drug trade provides a major opportunity to recruit foot soldiers, as young men seeking work travel to the opium fields for the harvest. A senior member of the provincial council in Helmand stated that the opium harvest provides “a good time for the Taliban to interact with new faces — best time for new recruitment”.

Estimates of the Taliban taking only a small percentage of the opiate trade highlight that other actors take a significant share of the opiate profits. This poses a threat to Rule of Law, economic reform and the political process, which can all be undermined by illicit revenue associated with the drug trade.

The Taliban is not the only group operating in southern Afghanistan. Two al-Qaeda camps were discovered and then destroyed in the south of Kandahar province in late 2015. The US General John Campbell, then commander of the Resolute Support Mission and United States Forces—Afghanistan, confirmed the camps belonged al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS): “This was really AQIS, and probably the largest training camp-type facility that we have seen in 14 years of war.”

Further threats from terror groups in the opiate source area are developing. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province leadership swore allegiance to the Islamic State (Daesh) leadership in January 2015. The group has reportedly been active in three provinces where opium is cultivated – Helmand, Farah and Nangarhar.

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Possible Nexuses with al-Qaeda Linked Groups in Eastern Africa

Across the Indian Ocean, towards known landing points, there has been reporting of possible links between traffickers and an al-Qaeda linked group. In late 2015 a report to the Security Council indicated a possible link between a vessel trafficking heroin and al-Shabaab. The Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group reported that in 2014 the MV Amin Darya had stopped off Hobyo for 10 days, before the vessel was interdicted with heroin on board in the territorial waters of Kenya. The vessel "took on supplies as well as gunmen – possibly affiliated with Al-Shabaab - who later disembarked". The report also noted: “A businessman in Dubai, also possibly with links to Al-Shabaab, was in continual contact with the traffickers.” Nevertheless, the report does not find conclusive links with the group, noting "Al-Shabaab’s possible links to heroin trafficking".  

This is not the first nexus, or indirect nexus, with al-Shabaab and organised crime groups trafficking heroin. The Muene Network, in Tanga, northern Tanzania, was described in a 2012 report to the Security Council as linked (or providing logistics) to a Pakistani-Iranian drug ring. The network was involved in other activities including the smuggling of persons in support of al-Shabaab and a linked group, the Ansaar Muslim Youth Centre (AMYC), with routes operating in both directions between Tanzania and Somalia.

Taxation of the sugar trade that enters through ports in southern Somalia has become a significant source of revenue for al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab also raise illicit profits from the charcoal trade, which involves maritime routes that have been banned since 2012 under a Security Council Resolution.

Al-Shabaab and its affiliates are not the only groups with terror links operating in the coastal region of Eastern Africa. In late 2015 at least one al-Shabaab commander swore allegiance to the Islamic State (Daesh).

Terror-related incidents continue to be reported at several locations along the Swahili Coastline of Eastern Africa, including at two sites that have also been used by organised crime groups to land large consignments of heroin. These attacks have targeted security forces, and posed a threat to civilian bystanders. Terror-related attacks in Mombasa reportedly include the September 2016 incident at the Central Police Station. Several raids on a gang took place in Tanga in 2015, with a Tanzanian soldier killed by gunfire during the operation and explosives recovered.

25 S/2015/801
27 S/2012/544, Paragraph 39
Growth of the Southern Route a Threat to Peace and Security in the Region

Heroin trafficking threatens peace and security from the start of the route in the source region through Taliban revenue generation from the opiate trade. The maritime heroin route is notable as heroin passes close to, and in some places crosses areas where the al-Qaeda-linked group al-Shabaab operates. The amount of revenue that can be raised from just a small percentage of a major drug route indicates how this can be a significant source of revenue for an al-Qaeda linked group seeking illicit taxation or protection money. Furthermore, al-Qaeda linked groups can also benefit as corruption compromises of ports of entry, and undermines Rule of Law and the political process in countries along the trafficking routes.

The lack of large onshore heroin seizures since 2012 highlights the threat that organised crime groups trafficking large amounts of drugs on maritime routes have compromised some efforts to counter these illegal activities. If organised crime groups dealing with illicit flows are able to operate with impunity, they become increasingly entrenched and their actions can then threaten peace and security.

Corruption of a facility, such as a landing point, rapidly goes up through the levels of personnel. Nevertheless, compromising the lower levels of staff, who have direct access to cargo, can be a key action for organised crime groups.

Author interviews at several major landing areas along the maritime heroin route found that law enforcement officers intent on challenging organised crime groups were fearful of repercussions from the traffickers and in some case their protectors. In some cases law enforcement officers described being afraid for their lives. A notable factor in the areas where law enforcement spoke of fear for their safety if they moved to counter organised crime groups trafficking large amounts of heroin, is a lack of successful court cases against the higher levels of networks. As the value of entry points and hubs increase to organised crime groups trafficking high value illicit consignments, the threat to any law enforcement seeking to counter them is likely to increase. The key driver for this threat is impunity, as organised crime groups, rather than law enforcement and the judicial system, exert control over areas used to move large illicit consignments.

28 While opportunities to profit become more limited away from the source region (flows can be ‘taxed’, but there are not farmers and processing facilities to extort), the wholesale value of heroin increases the further it moves away from the source region.
29 Interview with senior international law enforcement officer working on issues concerning the maritime heroin route.
30 Author interviews in several coastal regions where heroin has been trafficked.
Organised crime groups in Eastern Africa also receive funding from illicit consignments that flow outwards through ports. If any routes through ports have been compromised allowing impunity for organized crime groups trafficking illicit flows it creates a more permissive environment for activities such as poaching and wildlife trafficking. For example, in 2014 the Security Council noted that poaching in the Central African Republic was a destabilizing force.\(^31\) The UNODC Threat Assessment for Eastern Africa (TOCTA) reported that the area most heavily targeted for ivory poaching is Central Africa, and that most of this ivory is then shipped through Eastern Africa.

Many of the areas where heroin has been landed suffer from porous borders, which is a key challenge for law enforcement seeking to make interdictions. It is notable that most large onshore seizures were considerably smaller than those made in international waters. This indicates that in the six cases where onshore seizures were made, it is likely that only parts of the consignments were found.

A further challenge for law enforcement seeking to interdict drugs that arrive on the maritime route is that traffickers using boats can shift landing points between countries. Where there is a lack of robust cooperation agreements and available assets, drug traffickers will be able to evade law enforcement by shifting landing points across borders.

The threat of political protection being sought by organised crime groups establishing drug routes is well documented. Threats identified as a risk in some countries where there are landing points on the heroin route include the provision of documents and passports.\(^32\) Drug money has been documented as funding political campaigns, most notably at the start of the cocaine route. In a number of countries in West Africa political protection resulted in key facilitators being released from prison and allegations that drug traffickers utilized diplomatic passports and pouches.\(^33\)

Impacts of the use of areas of West Africa to land large amounts of cocaine highlight how severe the impact of drug trafficking via hubs can be on the political process, including the role it has played in coups and coup attempts. A UNODC study on the region stated: “There have been a series of coups, attempted coups, and other forms of political unrest in Guinea-Bissau, including the assassination of President Vieira in 2009. While the conflict appears to have occurred along well-established political fault lines, competition for cocaine profits raised the stakes and augmented tensions between rival groups.”\(^34\)

\(^{31}\) S/2134 (2014)  
\(^{32}\) Interview with senior international law enforcement officer working on the maritime heroin route.  
\(^{34}\) Cases documented in the UNODC Transnational Organised Crime Threat Assessment for West Africa, p9.
The threats posed by drug trafficking to the region of West Africa drew support from the Security Council: “In 2009, the Security Council held a session on drugs for the first time, under the “Peace and Security in West Africa” agenda, in order to alert the international community to the threats posed by drug trafficking to peace and security... The Security Council also took account of these threats in the definition of the mandates of missions in West Africa, by including the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking as well as border management in [numerous mandates concerning peace building and support].”

The corruption and impunity associated with drug routes also open them up to the trafficking of other illicit commodities. The creation of a permissive environment for the trafficking of illicit flows poses a severe threat to peace and security when lethal aid can be moved through entry points that have been compromised or through porous borders. At the start of the heroin route this has been demonstrated by seizures of both heroin and explosives at sites such as the Baramchah border crossing. The CMF have made a number of weapons seizures from dhows on trafficking routes in the Indian Ocean. Weapons seized include assault rifles, machine guns and anti-tank weaponry. The first seizure of weapons by the CMF was made in September 2015, on a dhow bound for Somalia. CMF reporting noted that the vessel was similar to those used for drug smuggling. Other weapons shipments have been made on a track that was likely destined for Yemen.

Improvised Explosive Device (IED) use by al-Shabaab has been significant. The group has struck a range of targets with IEDs, including sites of the UN, and those of a political, judicial, military and educational nature. IED strikes have also been carried out across the Region of Eastern Africa, with attacks in Djibouti, Kenya, Puntland, Uganda and Somaliland. The toll on civilians and security forces has been devastating, and the area where IEDs are being routinely deployed by al-Shabaab has spread to Kenya. IED attacks create an immediate threat to peace and security, and in the long term are a barrier to development when the political process is impacted and efforts to provide capacity building are hindered.

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35 S/2013/728
36 UNODC and CMF Compendium. The CMF noted that the weapons smuggling to Somalia was in breach of UNSCR 2182.
37 http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2014/05/04/three_dead_in_nairobi_bus_bombings.html
Currently al-Shabaab relies on harvesting explosives from munitions to produce IEDs. If al-Shabaab loses access to munitions stores the group will need to find other sources of explosives. It is common for groups to turn to Home-Made Explosives (HME). There are several sites that manufacture ammonium nitrate (a fertilizer that is commonly used as a precursor for HME) and components used in the commercial blasting industries on the perimeter of the Indian Ocean. Precursors and components needed for the manufacture and detonation of IEDs could potentially be trafficked on dhows.

 Traffickers can also use shipping containers to transport the precursors for HME. Nevertheless, this methodology is less likely to go unobserved as many of the dual-use precursors used in making HME are monitored when shipped, offering a chance for flows to be interrupted. Programme Global Shield has been operated by the World Customs Organisation since 2010, and is partnered with UNODC and Interpol. In contrast, there is not this protective oversight for dhows, particularly when they are loaded or unloaded away from major ports.

 Spillover from heroin trafficking has increased drug user groups in the coastal regions, with some reporting of heroin use also following inland routes. Heroin is notable as a drug that can generate increased street crime as users seek revenue. Furthermore, injecting drug usage associated with heroin increases the spread of blood-borne disease.

Onwards Trafficking and Couriering of Heroin

Seizures of heroin being trafficked onwards from heroin arrival points in the Indian Ocean region have been minimal and represent only a small percentage of the drugs that reach the coast in each consignment. The small size and number of interdictions made from vehicles and at airports highlights the importance of seizing heroin in bulk quantities, before it can be broken down and moved across porous borders, gaining value for the trafficking gangs as it moves towards consumer markets.

The significance of Indian Ocean maritime routes is being recognised in consumer markets. Heroin routes that involve maritime trafficking to eastern or southern Africa are noted as a threat in the UK.

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38 Information provided to UNODC during 2016.
40 Details in the UNODC conference paper produced for the Seychelles meeting in 2015
41 Interview with senior international law enforcement officer working on issues concerning the maritime heroin route.
42 http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/crime-threats/drugs
Official reporting and senior law enforcement state that heroin that has arrived on maritime routes to Eastern Africa is moved overland to South Africa. There were three large heroin seizures on road routes from Mozambique to South Africa made in 2016. In one case, where an amount was recorded, it was stated to likely be more than 50kg. Significant efforts had been made to conceal the consignments, with drugs found in secondary or false fuel tanks in two of the vehicles. In terms of onwards routes from South Africa, in 2009 an air freight route was identified when large heroin seizures were made in the UK. There have been other routes from Southern Africa, as in 2013 more than 800 kg of heroin was seized from a maritime heroin container in Belgium, that had departed Mozambique.

There are also concerns that heroin consignments are being broken down in Eastern Africa, with some routes targeting airports in landlocked countries where there is a lack of capacity or where penalties for drug trafficking are not robust. Seizures of heroin made on air routes from areas where the drug is known to be landed in Eastern Africa ranged from several hundred grams to 6.7kg. Heroin was carried by couriers, concealed in luggage and sent via fast parcel. Most seizures were of consignments totaling less than two kg. Heroin couriered on air routes from Eastern Africa targeted countries in most regions including West Africa, North America, Europe and Asia. There is also heroin trafficking by air courier from countries that do not have a coastline. There have been a number of air couriers intercepted in Uganda on routes to West Africa, the UK and Mozambique. West Africa was the primary destination for heroin seized at airports in Eastern Africa. From West Africa, there were cases reported of heroin trafficking via air courier to consumer markets in Europe and the United States. Heroin has also been seized on overland routes travelling to and from Uganda, and on roads between Tanzania and Kenya. In all sectors of the Indian Ocean there have been cases of drug trafficking on regional air routes.

It is important to note that heroin is also trafficked to countries surrounding the Indian Ocean on air routes. It is not clear how heroin couriered from the region on air routes arrived, so it is not possible to make a direct link with the maritime route for all cases. Nevertheless, the small number and size of seizures from air and land routes underline the value in heroin being seized in bulk quantities on the maritime route before consignments can be broken down onshore and moved across porous borders. Another key point is that a lack of seizures at a point such as an airport or in some cases a country can highlight a need for capacity building, or transport facilities that have been compromised, rather than the lack of an illicit flow.

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43 US Department of State 2016 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)
44 Information gathered from a systematic search of news reports, from 2010 to 2016.
45 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8259456.stm
46 UNODC World Drug Report, 2015
47 Interview with a senior international law enforcement officer based in Eastern Africa.
48 Information gathered from a systematic search of news reports, from 2010 to 2016.
Seizures on air routes also highlight that cocaine and ATS trafficking takes place. Many of the seizures at airports have been on routes from source countries, but some highlight cocaine and either ATS or ATS precursor consignments that are being trafficked from countries in which there is no manufacture. This indicates that multiple types of drug consignments may be trafficked or diverted to the region, and then broken down for onwards trafficking. Of particular concern for ATS manufacture are a number of large ephedrine seizures, in several cases totaling more than 20 kg.\textsuperscript{49}

The lack of information on onwards routes for heroin trafficked across the Indian Ocean on maritime routes highlights the need for court cases, as many trafficking networks are operating with impunity.\textsuperscript{50} Documentation of heroin packaging stamps can help with the understanding of routes, and this is particularly valuable when bulk drug seizures with packaging are made in regions where there are established consumer markets [see box].

**Heroin Stamps**

Heroin packages are often marked with stamps. These are key identifiers that can be exploited by law enforcement to build a picture of routes.

Markings are applied to wholesale packages of heroin, and are also seen on marijuana in the source region.\textsuperscript{51} On cocaine routes from South America cocaine stamps were meticulously documented, and in some cases these were linked to specific cartels. There is a need for more work to be done on heroin stamps in the source region, as there is “uncertainty as to the purpose of these [drug stamps], from serving as a means to differentiate between crime groups in consolidated shipments to a marketing technique guaranteeing a high quality product”.\textsuperscript{52}

Stamps on drug consignments have the potential to contain considerable amounts of information, providing detail on the manufacturer and location of production. Prior documentation of heroin stamps has been used to identify production points, northern routes out of Afghanistan and the final destination. Markings were catalogued, linked to purity and production areas, and law enforcement encouraged to report any seizures, with this latter action marking routes.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{49} Information gathered from a systematic search of news reports, from 2010 to 2016.
\textsuperscript{50} At least one major court process is ongoing.
\textsuperscript{51} Author interview with contacts on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, October 2016
Stamps have been methodically documented from heroin seizures made in the Indian Ocean since 2014, before the drugs are disposed of at sea. Equipment carried by agents who have operated aboard CMF vessels has enabled a high level of detail to be gathered, including listing composition and purity of a heroin sample alongside imagery of a stamp. These findings have been published in the ‘Compendium of Drug Seizures at Sea’ in October 2015, jointly collated by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), Regional Narcotics Interagency Fusion Cell (RNIFC) and the Global Maritime Crime Programme of UNODC. An updated version with seizures at sea by CMF and regional states is expected to be released in October 2016 by the Global Maritime Crime Programme of UNODC.
This information has the potential to link drug consignments to specific production areas. Opiate production sites in southern Afghanistan straddle an area where the Taliban, Al Qaeda and the Islamic State (Daesh) operate, and in some cases hold territory. The ability to link consignments to specific production areas could indicate which trafficking networks are providing revenue to groups that are sanctioned for al-Qaeda links and/or involved in terror-related activities.

Heroin stamps have also been documented on packages seized from the wholesale drug market in Europe. This information has been combined with purity and composition testing. Links can be built between samples of drugs seized on the maritime routes and seizures at points related to distant consumer markets.

Documentation of Drug Stamps and Testing of Samples

• High resolution pictures of drug stamps are key, for example sizes of 1mb and above. There should also be a large image of each individual package of the drugs. If it is a mixed consignment, with drug packages with different markings all should be included with a count of each e.g. 15 x packages marked '555'.

• Images documenting a full count of drug packages can promote transparency as the case works its way through the legal system.

• There is a need for purity testing to be carried out by Government Chemists when heroin consignments are seized. Testing of purity levels is important, with purity tested from multiple samples from each seizure, rather than just identification of the drug type. This can be used to monitor trends such as whether the drugs are being cut at the transit point or before, and to link purity levels to specific networks if heroin stamps are also available. Any other notes such as materials used to cut the drugs can also be useful, both in analysis of the networks and to assess public health risks if a particularly toxic substance is used.

• Samples will provide useful information for analysis if they can be linked to specific heroin stamps.

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54 Interview with a senior law enforcement officer, October 2016
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For further information contact :

Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP)
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
Nairobi, KENYA

Email : shanaka.jayasekara@unodc.org

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