

Ugland attackers bite bullet

Gunmen onboard an JB Ugland-chartered tanker were forced to fire warning shots at pirates during an attack in the Gulf of Aden on Thursday.

A Torm-owned products tanker also managed to escape seizure but one crew member was injured in a “very severe attack” in the Arabian Sea.

Five pirates in one skiff set upon Ugland’s 33,600-dwt chemical tanker [JBU Oslo](#) in the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) in the Gulf of Aden, an informed source told TradeWinds.



An embarked security team on the 2010-built unit fired warning shots at the attackers who returned fire before breaking off their assault.

The master’s report seen by TradeWinds reads: “Vessel was approached from the port quarter by the skiff and was fired upon (two rounds) by an AK-47 rifle. The security team leader retaliated by firing two shots in the air upon which the skiff slackened speed but continued to follow closely. Another two shots were fired on which the skiff gave up chase.”

It continues: “Coalition warship was informed during the course of the incident, crew mustered at first mustering point, ready to proceed to the citadel.

“[A] suspicious craft is still present in the vicinity and the vessel is at a high alert level.”

There are no reports of any injuries to the unspecified number of crew or damage to the Panama-flagged vessel which is Japanese owned and on charter to Ugland.

Once the pirates had retreated they set their sights on another ship in the same convoy, Thoresen Thai Agencies' 23,900-dwt bulker [Thor Transporter](#) (built 1986). The assault is not thought to have lasted long, however, as a naval helicopter had already arrived to intervene and prevent any boarding.

The Thai owner will be particularly pleased to have avoided hijacking as its 20,400-dwt [Thor Nexus](#) (built 1989) was [seized by pirates in the Indian Ocean on Christmas Day and continues to be held.](#)

Danish owner Torm was also on the receiving end of a pirate assault in the past 24 hours after its 104,600-dwt products tanker [Torm Kristina](#) (built 1999) was set upon in the northern Arabian Sea late on Wednesday.

In what a spokesperson at the owner described as "a very severe attack", the Filipino second mate received a minor shoulder injury. None of the other 23 crew members, all of whom are understood to be Filipinos, was injured.

Rocket-propelled grenades as well as small arms were used in the attack and a boarding attempt was made. The master increased speed, took evasive manoeuvres and best management practices was applied to thwart a hijacking. An unidentified pirate mothership was spotted in the area.

The Denmark-flagged vessel is to make an unscheduled stop in Mumbai where it will be met by a Torm representative to offer the crew assistance. It was en route from India to the Bahamas with a cargo of gasoline.

The incident came a week after another of Torm's tankers was boarded by bandits off Malaysia. The men armed with knives and a gun clambered onboard the 45,000-dwt products tanker [Torm Clara](#) on Thursday but fled empty handed.