



**NHSMUN**

**CRISIS - AU**  
**UPDATE PAPER**

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**Sofia Velasco**  
**Renata Venzor**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the African Union 2025 committee! My name is Amaya-Nan Lage (you can call me Amaya) and I'm originally from New York City. I'll be your Assistant Director for Session 1.

This is my first year on the NHSMUN staff, however, this is my 7th year doing MUN! I attended NHSMUN in 2022 and am so excited to be back again! I started MUN in 9th grade and have continued ever since - having attended around 20 conferences. MUN has taught me so much over the years - not only improving my writing and research skills but also, funnily enough, my social skills. I have found the memories throughout it have been some of the most cherished. My favorite committee has always been Crisis due to the flexibility and entertainment of new issues and the solution process.

I am currently a sophomore attending the University at Buffalo as a double major in Biology and Neuroscience. Some of my favorite pastimes are playing video games (though I am horrible at them), reading, and watching TV shows (my current favorite is Dexter). I also really love blind boxes - especially from the EMMA line!

My co-Assistant Director, Claire, and I have worked closely to research the current situation of piracy and maritime security. Hopefully, this paper will shed more light on the dire situation as new legislation and crises occur. I look forward to seeing how delegates react and handle situations as they occur throughout this conference and your creative solutions. I hope you guys enjoy the committee.

Best,

Amaya-Nan Lage

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Crisis: African Union

Session I





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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the African Union (AU)! My name is Claire Blakeley, and I am the Assistant Director for Session II. Although this is my first time staffing, I have attended NHSMUN twice as a delegate in the Legal Committee and DISEC. I am so excited to be attending NHSMUN again, and I can't wait to see the creative solutions you all come up with!

I am a freshman at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, studying Art History. Outside of school, some of my hobbies include reading, watching movies, and listening to music. Some of my favorite artists include Fleetwood Mac, Carly Simon, and Helen Reddy. Although I am part of my college's debate team, MUN still holds a big piece of my heart. MUN is such a great outlet to explore and share different perspectives. Equally important, it also provides a great opportunity to meet people and collaborate!

The topics discussed in these Update Papers should help to inform you about more current events affecting piracy in the Gulf of New Guinea. I'm so excited to see all of your research and the ideas that you have brought to the table! I wish you all the best of luck with the conference!

Sincerely,

Claire Blakeley

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Crisis: African Union

Session II







CRISIS - AU

NHSMUN 2025

## TOPIC A: PIRACY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

Photo Credit: Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet



## Introduction

The African Union (AU) is the continental organization that addresses security and economic challenges across Africa. The area that surrounds the Gulf of Guinea is a major talking point for the organization. This is related to the Gulf's complex ongoing struggle with corruption, specifically piracy. The recent escalations in the Gulf have increased tensions in the region. Piracy in the region threatens the economic stability of the countries which reside nearby. Moreover, it can undermine global trade and damage the livelihoods of millions in coastal communities. The African Union has tried time and time again to address this issue. Whether it is through international assistance or the promotion of maritime security, the organization has attempted to stop piracy, but with no real progress.

Nigeria is one of the larger member states of the Union and has recently implemented many solutions to the issue. Recent initiatives include the bill to establish a Nigerian Coast Guard, and the attempted connections with India. This two-pronged solution demonstrates Nigeria's attempts to improve its safety while also expanding its relationships. However, piracy attacks across major trading routes threaten to undermine this progress. Given the current weakness of legislation surrounding piracy, it is evident that current measures alone are not enough to stem these crimes. Internationally, global powers like China have attempted to police the Gulf. This only adds to the complex nature of the region's security. The African Union's leadership and decisive action are needed at this time. The Union must work to unite these initiatives to ensure that member states receive the proper support to quell maritime threats and to maintain their sovereignty and credibility on the world stage.

## New Developments in Nigeria

Maritime security has long been a critical concern for Nigeria. 90 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings come from the oil sector. Local communities heavily rely on non-oil resources like fishing. Given this, threats to the security of the ocean is a major threat to the economy in Nigeria. Therefore, the security of the oceans cannot be overstated, and protecting

the safety of these local communities, and maritime workers is incredibly important.<sup>1</sup>

In the past, many efforts have been made to combat piracy, yet they often lacked the proper emphasis, or required resources, to truly have a significant impact. For example, in 2019, Nigeria enacted the Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences (POMO) Act. This was done to improve maritime security.<sup>2</sup> However, this act failed to address two crucial parts of maritime security: connections between piracy and piracy-related crimes, and the money laundering associated with it. It was evident that the POMO Act could not gather intelligence and patrol waters, much less strengthen any of Nigeria's maritime agencies.<sup>3</sup> Also, the Act did not mention any solution for the money laundering associated with piracy beyond simply forfeiting what was obtained.<sup>4</sup>

Recently, the statistics have shown an increase in attacks in the region, adding to the ongoing challenges. For example, according to data from the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), in the first half of the year, there were over 70 safety incidents and four attacks on vessels.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in September of 2024, sea pirates targeted and abducted 20 maritime workers and 20 passengers along the Bonny-Port Harcourt route. Very few of these incidents lead to investigations, prosecutions, or trials.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, there have been significant developments

1 "Nigeria: Economy," globalEDGE, accessed December 28, 2024, <https://globaleedge.msu.edu/countries/nigeria/economy>.

2 "Maritime Security in West and Central Africa," International Maritime Organization, accessed January 7, 2025, <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Security/Pages/West-and-Central-Africa.aspx>.

3 Maurice Ogbonnaya, "Nigeria's Anti-Piracy Law Misses the Mark," ISS Africa, 2020, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/nigerias-anti-piracy-law-misses-the-mark>.

4 Ogbonnaya, "Nigeria's Anti-Piracy Law Misses the Mark."

5 Adaku Onyenuchey, "WMD 2024: Prioritising Global Action for Safety Standards," The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News, September 24, 2024, <https://guardian.ng/business-services/maritime/wmd-2024-prioritising-global-action-for-safety-standards/#>.

6 "Maritime Crime and Piracy," United Nations : UNODC Country Office Nigeria, 2024, <https://www.unodc.org/conig/en/stories/>

in Nigeria's maritime security sector. This includes a new bill for the establishment of a Nigerian Coast Guard in early November. Key responsibilities include combating piracy, ensuring safe trade routes, and protecting oil infrastructure. While it is too early to assess its progress, this bill is a step toward improving maritime security.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, in late November, Nigeria and India agreed to strengthen maritime security, intelligence, and counter-terrorism. In this meeting, Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi maintained their commitment to a strong strategic partnership, pledging to improve ties to improve economic development, defense, and food security.<sup>8</sup> They also agreed to protect maritime trade routes and combat piracy, given the recent increase of threats in the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>9</sup> This partnership is part of a broader effort by Nigeria to control piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

In 2023, Nigeria faced numerous issues. The country had a 21.8 percent unemployment rate, and numerous kidnappings

and mass shootings took place. Given these crises, the 2023 presidential election was very important.<sup>10</sup> Not only did this election decide the president of the country, but also the House of Representatives. All the presidential candidates - Bola Tinubu (All Progressive Congress), Peter Obi (Labor Party), Rabiu Kwankwaso (New Nigeria Peoples Party), and Atiku Abubakar (Peoples Democratic Party) - prioritized the security of Nigeria's economic stability through international trade. In the end, Bola Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress and Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party emerged as the leading figures.<sup>11</sup> Tinubu promised to "renew hope" in Nigeria. In his speech given on August 4, 2024, Tinubu highlighted his administration's achievements, including raising the minimum wage to N 70,000 per month (approximately USD 42). Moreover, Tinubu removed tariffs on medical supplies and essential food items.<sup>12</sup> He also created over 240,000 jobs through the building of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) hubs. These are platforms that

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7 "Nigerian Coast Guard Bill: Senate Advances Maritime Security Initiative," YouTube, accessed December 30, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zzu119KpSOE>.

8 Dominica Ijeoma Nwabuo, "Nigeria, India to Strengthen Ties on Counter-Terrorism, Maritime Security," Voice of Nigeria, November 17, 2024, <https://von.gov.ng/nigeria-india-to-strengthen-ties-on-counter-terrorism-maritime-security/#>.

9 Nwabuo, "Nigeria, India to Strengthen Ties on Counter-Terrorism, Maritime Security."

10 Cecilia Macaulay, "Nigeria Elections 2023: What You Need to Know," BBC News, February 26, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64187170>.

11 Macaulay, "Nigeria Elections 2023: What You Need to Know."

12 "The 29 Policy Achievements Listed by President Tinubu in Nationwide Speech," Nairametrics, August 4, 2024, <https://nairametrics.com/2024/08/04/the-29-policy-achievements-listed-by-president-tinubu-in-nationwide-speech/>.



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Bola Tinubu's portrait as President of Nigeria

Credit: Nosa Asemota

provide funding and resources to start-ups.<sup>13</sup>

Despite these positive changes, some of Tinubu's policies have worsened the situation. Following his inauguration, he immediately removed a subsidy that was keeping the price of fuel low. This resulted in skyrocketing fuel prices and the increased cost of living and transportation.<sup>14</sup> He also removed the policy that kept the naira (Nigeria's currency) fixed at a stable exchange rate with the US dollar. This caused the naira's value to hit an all-time low.<sup>15</sup> Tinubu's policies will undoubtedly raise the risk of further exploitation of Nigeria's economy and people. With the removal of the fuel subsidy, fuel prices will continue to increase, which could result in higher costs of transportation and living.<sup>16</sup> This type of economic pressure could be catastrophic. It could force more people to resort to piracy in coastal waters. Even under these circumstances, President Tinubu has been making strides towards increasing maritime security. In November, the Nigerian Navy (along with the African Union and French Navy) hosted the eighth symposium of Heads of Navies and Coastguards in the GOG on the maritime environment. Represented by the national security advisor, Nuhu Ribadu, Nigeria promised to protect the Gulf.<sup>17</sup>

Nigeria's maritime security framework has undergone a major change in the last decade. However, the effectiveness of these developments has come into question time and time again. There is no doubt that President Tinubu is committed to decreasing crime in the Gulf of Guinea. Recent data, such as that presented by the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), shows that piracy is still a large issue in the region. Despite this, the Gulf of Guinea is a key player in the economy of Nigeria and Western Africa. This makes it all the more important to strengthen it and protect the citizens of these states.

## International Collaboration in the Gulf of Guinea

Internationally, the Gulf of Guinea has been an important region for many countries and organizations alike. For example, the European Union (EU) has initiated the Enhanced Maritime Awareness and Response (EnMAR) program.<sup>18</sup> This was done to combat issues like maritime insecurity in the region. This is done through the promotion of political dialogue, improving EU security initiatives, and strengthening the operational abilities of national and institutional partners in the region. EnMAR will aim to curb the burden of piracy and security costs. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has reported that the direct and indirect costs of piracy and security threats in the Gulf are massive, totaling USD 1.9 billion per year. Moreover, the governments of the Gulf itself, including Nigeria and Ghana, spend more than USD 524 million annually to reduce piracy and armed robbery. EnMAR will end in October of 2025 and has a EUR 4,900,00 budget.<sup>19</sup>

One of EnMAR's main goals is to enhance political dialogue. To achieve this, the EU hopes to increase the discussion of piracy in already existing forums, like the G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea. Through these dialogues, workshops on maritime security will be implemented as well as knowledge-sharing between gulf-related organizations. This is to ensure that the EU can have a streamlined approach to tackling the issue of piracy. Finally, the EnMAR project includes new training programs for 15 port security officials. These training courses focus on specific features of maritime security. The latest training session held in Pointe-Noire in the Republic of Congo was focused on handling dangerous goods. At the training session in Ghana's capital of Accra, Ghanaian delegate to the EU Jonas Claes explained how port security is directly

13 "The 29 Policy Achievements Listed by President Tinubu in Nationwide Speech," Nairametrics.

14 Wedaeli Chibelushi, "Nigeria Independence Day: President Bola Tinubu Pleads for 'patience' amid Tough Economy," BBC News, October 1, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdd4me6qmd4o>.

15 Chibelushi, "Nigeria Independence Day: President Bola Tinubu Pleads for 'Patience' amid Tough Economy."

16 Peterson K Ozili, "Implications of Fuel Subsidy Removal on the Nigerian Economy," Munich Personal RePEc Archive, March 26, 2024, <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/120509/>.

17 Idowu Isamotu, "Tinubu Vows to Protect Gulf of Guinea," Daily Trust, November 28, 2024, <https://dailytrust.com/tinubu-vows-to-protect-gulf-of-guinea/>.

18 European Commission, "Maritime Security: EU Updates Strategy to Safeguard Maritime Domain against New Threats," European Commission, accessed February 1, 2025, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_1483](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_1483).

19 "EnMAR Factsheet," Expertise France, accessed January 7, 2025, <https://www.expertisefrance.fr/documents/20182/886575/EnMAR%2BFactsheet.pdf/3e353689-9114-d62b-b996-c96ea8de97ba>.





U.S. Navy sailors conduct visit, board, search and seizure training

Credit: Petty Officer 1st Class Darryl Wood, U.S. Navy

connected to global trade and security.<sup>20</sup> Improved security at ports ensures a stable flow of raw materials and goods not only critical to Gulf states but to the entire world. If piracy in the Gulf of Guinea remains unchecked, European states would be vulnerable to supply disruptions. It is in the EU's best interest to invest resources into EnMAR and future training up until October 2025, the project's estimated end date.<sup>21</sup>

Outside of EnMar, many West African countries have partnered with international organizations to launch "Exercise Grand African NEMO". Since 2018, Grand African NEMO has become the annual meeting of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>22</sup> This seventh edition brought together a large number of military personnel, including land, sea, and air forces. This was done to share expertise amongst one another. Moreover, this improved the operational efficiency of each force in terms of fighting illegal fishing, piracy, maritime pollution, and sea rescue.<sup>23</sup> Grand African NEMO

2024 was supported by many outside partners. This includes, but is not limited to, the UNODC, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and the Center for Documentation, Research, and Experimentation on Accidental Water Pollution (CEDRE).<sup>24</sup>

This exercise was officially announced in November 2024. It aims to enhance cooperation among local naval forces and address the staggering rise of piracy and other maritime crimes.<sup>25</sup> Chief of Staff for the Ghana Navy, Issah Adam Yakubu, stated that through multinational exercises like the Grand African NEMO, the Gulf of Guinea has experienced a drastic decline in transnational maritime crimes.<sup>26</sup> Yakubu highlighted the complex nature of transnational crimes and criminal networks that makes it imperative for all countries involved to coordinate their efforts through partnerships.<sup>27</sup> The French Ambassador to Ghana, Jules-Armond Aniambossou, described the importance of international cooperation in

20 "EU Enhances Maritime Security in Sub-Region," The Business & Financial Times, Accessed December 31, 2024, <https://thebftonline.com/2024/06/28/eu-enhances-maritime-security-in-sub-region/>.

21 "Ghana Begins Pilot Program to Trace Cocoa as EU Deforestation Law Looms, Official Says," Reuters, September 5, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ghana-begins-pilot-program-trace-cocoa-eu-deforestation-law-looms-official-says-2024-09-05>.

22 "Beginning of the Grand African Nemo 2024 Exercise," MARITIM AFRICA, October 27, 2024, <https://maritimafrika.com/en/beginning-of-the-grand-african-nemo-2024-exercise/>.

23 "Beginning of the Grand African Nemo 2024 Exercise," MARITIM AFRICA.

24 "Beginning of the Grand African Nemo 2024 Exercise," MARITIM AFRICA.

25 Abdul-Latif Seidu, "EXERCISE GRAND AFRICAN NEMO 2024 OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED," GHANA NAVY, November 5, 2024, <https://navyonline.mil.gh/blogs/exercise-grand-african-nemo-2024-officially-launched>.

26 Abdul-Latif Seidu, "EXERCISE GRAND AFRICAN NEMO 2024 OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED."

27 Abdul-Latif Seidu, "EXERCISE GRAND AFRICAN NEMO 2024 OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED."



combating piracy and ensuring maritime security in West Africa.<sup>28</sup> Reiterating France's dedication to supporting West African states, the Ambassador stated that the state is committed to helping build the capacity of regional navies.<sup>29</sup>

Exercise Grand African NEMO ran from November 4 to November 11, 2024, and involved naval forces from twenty-eight countries including all the states of the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>30</sup> Participating navies engaged in a series of simulated scenarios designed to test and improve their response to piracy, smuggling, and illegal fishing.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, outside countries helped to simulate these scenarios. For example, the United Kingdom's Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship turned into a 'smuggler' ship that was determined to make things difficult for their African counterparts.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, navy ships from France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, and Mauritania made appearances in the duration of the exercise.<sup>33</sup> NEMO took place across 5,700 kilometers of maritime territory, from Senegal to Angola. Fifty-five naval units were deployed, twelve aircraft were used, and many specialized maritime personnel were utilized as well.<sup>34</sup> This initiative was a small part of the Yaoundé Architecture, the interregional maritime security mechanism formulated in 2013.<sup>35</sup> Exercise Grand African NEMO 2025 was a success. The simulated exercises no doubt helped foster confidence in the navies that make up the Gulf of Guinea.

The Gulf of Guinea has also recently seen an increase in Chinese naval presence. In July of 2023, three Chinese ships, Nanning, Sanya, and Weishanhu stopped in Gabon. The Chinese navy

repaired equipment on the Gabonese frigate Mbini and also showed the Gabonese navy how to use various equipment.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, they carried out anti-terrorism, anti-piracy, and rescue operations with them. This stop in Gabon was just one of five visits to countries bordering the Gulf.<sup>37</sup> Slowly, China has been increasing its military engagement in the region. Experts believe that the Chinese government sees the opportunity to protect China's interests in the region as well as the region's citizens.<sup>38</sup> Also, it is a way for the state to test the People's Liberation Army's abilities. Paul Nantulya, a China specialist at the National Defense University's Africa Centre for Strategic Studies in Washington, explained how the expansion into the Gulf of Guinea would increase the deployment distance from China's home waters. This allows China to continue testing and deploying its military abilities.<sup>39</sup> Nantulya notes how China has been using African waters as a testing ground to build these capabilities.<sup>40</sup>

Due to friendly Africa-China relations, many Gulf states welcome Chinese engagement in the region. Currently, there are 33 Chinese port projects in West Africa, five in Southern Africa, four in North Africa, and 17 in East Africa.<sup>41</sup> However, many Chinese vessels have been attacked by pirates. For example, in December 2024, Somali pirates hijacked a Chinese fishing boat. They demanded a ransom payment for the vessel and its eighteen crew members.<sup>42</sup> Many experts hypothesize that the Chinese navy's main goal is to put an end to these illicit activities off the coast of Guinea, both for its interests and because African governments welcomed the

28 Abdul-Latif Seidu, "EXERCISE GRAND AFRICAN NEMO 2024 OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED."

29 Abdul-Latif Seidu, "EXERCISE GRAND AFRICAN NEMO 2024 OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED."

30 Giulia Bernacchi, "Exercise NEMO Boosts Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea," *The Defense Post*, November 13, 2024, <https://thedefensepost.com/2024/11/12/exercise-nemo-guinea-gulf/>.

31 Giulia Bernacchi, "Exercise NEMO Boosts Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea."

32 "Royal Navy Helps African Navies Enhance Security Skills During Exercise Grand African Nemo," *Royal Navy*, November 12, 2024, <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news/2024/november/12/20241112-royal-navy-helps-african-navies-enhance-security-skills-during-exercise-grand-african-nemo>.

33 "Royal Navy Helps African Navies Enhance Security Skills During Exercise Grand African Nemo," *Royal Navy*.

34 Giulia Bernacchi, "Exercise NEMO Boosts Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea."

35 Giulia Bernacchi, "Exercise NEMO Boosts Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea."

36 Jevans Nyabiage, "In Africa's Gulf of Guinea, China Is Proving It Is Master of the Sea," *South China Morning Post*, December 29, 2024, [https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3291559/africas-gulf-guinea-china-proving-it-master-sea?module=perpetual\\_scroll\\_0&pgtype=article](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3291559/africas-gulf-guinea-china-proving-it-master-sea?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article).

37 Jevans Nyabiage, "In Africa's Gulf of Guinea, China Is Proving It Is Master of the Sea."

38 Jevans Nyabiage, "In Africa's Gulf of Guinea, China Is Proving It Is Master of the Sea."

39 Jevans Nyabiage, "In Africa's Gulf of Guinea, China Is Proving It Is Master of the Sea."

40 Jevans Nyabiage, "In Africa's Gulf of Guinea, China Is Proving It Is Master of the Sea."

41 Jevans Nyabiage, "In Africa's Gulf of Guinea, China Is Proving It Is Master of the Sea."

42 "Somali Pirates Ransom Chinese Vessel, after First Being Paid to Protect It," *South China Morning Post*, December 7, 2024, <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/africa/article/3289839/somali-pirates-demand-ransom-chinese-vessel>.

help.<sup>43</sup> This would allow China to extend its influence in the region. However, it is still too early to confirm whether or not this is the Chinese navy's main goal in the region. Regardless, this has proved to be a major development in the modern-day situation in the Gulf of Guinea.

## Conclusion

The African Union has the power to oversee 55 member states. This comes with its unique set of challenges. However, many themes connect these African states. These similarities give the Union a realistic path to create solutions. The Grand African NEMO program was designed to share information, not just amongst domestic states, but with international agencies as well. Through their innovative exercises, they seek to limit the nearly USD 10 billion loss due to maritime crime.<sup>44</sup> This concept can be applied even further and sharing expertise to better these countries as a whole.

New issues are being uncovered in individual member states. For example, Nigeria's poor economy and employment rate show that efforts must be carried out to improve all member states. Many solutions can be implemented to target economic components and improve basic living conditions in the Gulf. However, these actions are useless if not balanced with managing the short-term nature of the problem. Delegates must work together to preserve, uplift, and boost the African Union. Combating piracy can only be accomplished with all countries working together to face the threats. They also must understand how to maximize each state's contribution to the collective cause. Only through this can these member states become united.

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<sup>43</sup> Jevans Nyabiage, "In Africa's Gulf of Guinea, China Is Proving It Is Master of the Sea."

<sup>44</sup> "Gulf of Guinea: Grand African Nemo Strengthens Collaboration to Combat Sea Crimes," Global Upfront Newspapers, December 14, 2024, <https://globalupfront.com/2024/12/14/gulf-of-guinea-grand-african-nemo-strengthens-collaboration-to-combat-sea-crimes/>.



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