

FACTSHEET ON THE MT HEROIC IDUN INCIDENT

What is MT HEROIC IDUN?

- MT HEROIC IDUN is a very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) with length 336m, width 60m, draught 11m and 299995MT, and IMO Number 9858058.
- It was built in 2020 and is currently sailing under the flag of Marshall Islands.
- The vessel is owned by Messrs. Idun Maritime Ltd, with Messrs Inchcape Shipping as its agent in Nigeria, and OSM Ship Management AS as the vessel manager.

Why is MT HEROIC IDUN in the news?

- The vessel entered Nigerian waters, specifically the Akpo Oilfield, deep offshore Bonny, a joint venture operated by Total Energies EP, to load crude oil at about midnight on 7th August 2022.
- The vessel was duly accosted by a Nigerian Navy (NN) ship on patrol on 8th August 2022 (shortly after midnight) for not having due NNPC approval and naval clearance.
- It must be pointed out that at the time it was accosted, it had not lifted any crude oil from the oilfield, and it also subsequently did not lift any Nigerian oil. It however stands accused of breaking the laws of Nigeria in other ways (see below)
- The vessel, following its initial encounter with Nigerian law enforcement, subsequently sailed out of Nigeria's waters towards the Nigeria-Sao Tome & Principe Joint Development Zone and into the Equatorial Guinea EEZ, seeking to flee. (The Captain of MT

HEROIC IDUN would later claim he was told by the ship's agent to NOT obey any directive from the Nigerian authorities).

- The vessel thereafter raised a false international piracy alarm of being under attack by the NN ship. It is instructive to note that this is the same ship MT HEROIC IDUN had earlier had contact and communicated with, that she later referred to as a pirate ship.
- Nigerian authorities later made contact with the Equatorial Guinea Navy (EGN), and based on exchange on information, the Vessel was arrested by the Equatorial Guinea Navy on 10th August 2022.

Why didn't Nigeria arrest MT HEROIC IDUN at the time it was accosted?

- There was no need for the Nigerian Navy to pursue the fleeing ship, or forcefully attempt to arrest it, considering the fact that there is a robust regional security architecture that could be depended on to ensure that the ship is held accountable. This is what was successfully done. Credit should go to the 'Yaoundé Architecture', as it is known, for enabling this seamless security cooperation.
- Equatorial Guinea is a friendly neighbouring country, located like Nigeria in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The country belongs to GoG Maritime Zone D along with Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe as well as Cameroon, while Nigeria belongs to Zone E along with Benin, Togo and Niger.
- Both Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea are signatories to the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa of 2013 commonly referred to as the 'Yaounde Code of Conduct'.

- The Code is backed by appropriate UN Security Council Resolutions and provides the platform for information sharing as well as coordination amongst signatories. This includes handover of vessels or persons suspected to have committed offences in each other's States.

What has so far happened in Equatorial Guinea since MT HEROIC IDUN was arrested?

- After arresting the vessel, and investigating the circumstances of its entry into the country, Equatorial Guinea imposed a sizable fine on her, for sailing through the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) without displaying the Equatorial Guinean flag. The company managing the vessel has since confirmed payment of the fine.
- The Equatorial Guinea Government has now handed over the vessel to the Nigerian Navy, as confirmed by a November 6, 2022 tweet from the Vice President of Equatorial Guinea <https://twitter.com/teonguema/status/1589386631232245761>
- The handover was carried out in Equatorial Guinea on November 6, 2022. It is now expected that the Vessel will return to Nigeria, for further investigations by the Nigerian Government.

What Offences can MT HEROIC IDUN be charged for in Nigeria?

- Entering the restricted zone around an Oilfield without authorization.
- Illegally attempting to load crude oil from Nigeria without appropriate documentation, which is tantamount to economic sabotage.

- Falsely accusing a Nigerian Navy Ship of piracy on international maritime reporting platforms. It should be noted that she had communicated with the Naval Ship, and there was therefore no ambiguity about the identity of the NN Ship.

What are the implications of the false Piracy Claim made by the MT HEROIC IDUN against Nigeria?

- This action of MT HEROIC IDUN is capable of denting the international image of Nigeria, and also making nonsense of the gains recorded by the country's security agencies in the maritime sector. It is on record that Nigeria has not recorded a pirate attack in her maritime environment over the last one year (since 2021). Note that Nigeria was also struck off the list of piracy prone countries by the International Maritime Bureau in March 2022.
- The false claim can equally impact negatively on insurance premium fees for vessels coming into the country. This would ultimately affect prices of goods imported into the country and by extension the lives of ordinary Nigerians.

So, what are the next steps?

- Having been handed over to the Nigerian Navy, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, on November 6th, 2022, the MT HEROIC IDUN will now be brought back to Nigeria in order to clear any misconceptions about its involvement in crude oil theft.
- Everything necessary must therefore be done to successfully return MT HEROIC IDUN from Equatorial Guinea to Nigeria in order for the owners, Messrs. Idun Maritime to answer any charges brought against the vessel or otherwise clear her name. This would indeed

send a strong message to any collaborators involved in crude oil theft in Nigeria, and the international community at large.

- If the vessel is found innocent, it will be released. If found guilty of breaking the laws of Nigeria, the appropriate sanctions will be enforced, to send a strong message of deterrence.

- It is important for the Nigerian Government to sustain its anti-crude oil theft efforts/operations for the prosperity of Nigeria as well as national security objectives.

- Nigeria is aware of international media campaigns being planned and executed and sponsored by the Vessel's owners/agents, in a bid to muddy the waters and to make false claims of human rights violations against the Nigerian Government.

- It is thus necessary to resist any pressure from internal or international collaborators in the matters of crude oil theft or any matters allied. The Government of the citizens of the sailors onboard the vessel – India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Poland – would do exactly the same.

- It is important to stress that Nigeria has followed due process in its handling of this entire incident, and will continue to abide by the principles of due process and fair and transparent investigations.