

KIDNAP+ RANSOM INSIGHT

GLOBAL SUMMARY

FOCUS
ARTICLE
SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

This issue of Constellis' Kidnap for Ransom Insight Report covers global kidnapping incidents and trends for the months of May and June, as well as July 2021. 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 May and June 2021 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, statistical information for the period of July 2020 – June 2021 can be found on page 17.

The Global Piracy Update gives an overview of the piracy threat by region, providing trend analysis for May and June 2021, as well as sample cases that took place during these months to illustrate identified trends.

The Cybersecurity section examines current issues affecting companies and individuals in the realm of IT security. This edition provides an insight into the newest, most profitable form of ransomware. Ransomware has seen exponential growth in recent years, with the global cost to businesses in the region of USD 20 billion over 2020. While initially limited to data encryption, hackers have diversified and evolved ransomware attacks to include data exfiltration, and now DDoS attacks – a combination known as 'triple extortion'. Such methods, along with various other tactics, have been increasingly employed by cyber criminals to place extra pressure on their victims to pay ransoms and retrieve their data.

The Focus Article examines the threat of active shootings at schools. These events occur not only in the US but also globally, and their shock reverberates throughout the lives of everyone they touch. Old thinking is not helping to resolve this problem. Given its impact, we will need new and creative ways to mitigate risk. In this piece, we explore warning signs, the profile of perpetrators, the role of the media and what can be done to better manage this threat.

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GLOBAL OVERVIEW

AMERICAS

Over May and June 2021, Constellis recorded a notable reduction in the number of foreign victims recorded in the Americas, decreasing from 176 to 62. This was explained in part by a decline in incidents involving foreigners in Haiti, following an exodus of the foreign population from the country, rather than a decrease in overall threat. Indeed, over the reporting period, the security situation further worsened with the murder of President Jovenel Moïse on 7 July, in what is suspected by some parties to have been an attempted coup planned abroad. This event and the ensuing battle for power among Haitian political leaders, all while gangs continue to take control of the streets, have consolidated Haiti's failed-state condition. In an acknowledgement of the situation, the interim government has asked the US for security assistance to stabilise the country and prepare the way for elections. Meanwhile, sources within the UN claim that although some level of support will be provided, the deployment of troops to Haiti is not being discussed. There is no easy solution to the situation. While perhaps needed, foreign military intervention could trigger a whole new set of problems. Moreover, without resolving structural issues, history will repeat itself, with a prolonged intervention that will only bear temporary fruits.

CASES:

- ▶ Two kidnapped South Korean missionaries were released in Haiti on 10 July, after being held captive for 17 days. The pair was abducted by an armed gang while traveling by car in the outskirts of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, on 24 June. Three other unidentified individuals who were kidnapped along with the South Koreans were also freed. Though the conditions for their release were not specified by the South Korean authorities, unconfirmed reports claimed that a ransom of USD 400,000 had been demanded. Since February 2019, the South Korean government has maintained a Level 3 security warning for Haiti, advising against all travel to the country and recommending its citizens already there to leave, due to rising political and security instability.
- ▶ On 31 May, Italian engineer Giovanni Cali was kidnapped while working in Haiti. The expatriate, who is an employee of an Italian construction company, was reportedly taken from a construction site in Port-au-Prince's Croix des Bouquets area, along with a technician whose nationality was not ascertained. It is suspected that the kidnapping was carried out by well-known local gang '400 Mawozo', which has been involved in a series of abductions of foreigners, including two French nationals in April 2021. According to local sources, the gang initially demanded USD 500,000 for the release of

the Italian and his colleague. On 23 June, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced Cali's release after 22 days in captivity, which it attributed to the work of the Italian intelligence services. It is unclear if any ransom was paid.

- ▶ A woman of Indian origin was kidnapped on 8 June in Trinidad and Tobago. The woman was in the company of her sister-in-law when three men approached them near a hardware shop in the area of Champ Fleurs, in the town of San Juan, taking the Indian woman away in their vehicle. Less than an hour later, the sister-in-law received several calls from the kidnappers demanding as ransom a red Mitsubishi Lancer car. According to local media, one of the assailants is known to the victim's sister-in-law.



The funeral of murdered Haitian President Jovenel Moïse on 23 July was marred with violence. (Photo: Nation World News)

Although also observing a decrease in numbers over this reporting period, Mexico continued to be the top regional hotspot for the number of foreigners affected by kidnapping. Over recent months, Mexico has observed an unprecedented increase in cartel violence across the country, but most acutely in its northern border region. While Tamaulipas state is a traditional major crime hotspot, violence on this scale has not been seen for at least four years. A similar situation is also being observed in other provinces that have not had a long history of violence, such as Zacatecas, now one of the states with the highest murder rates in the country. The reasons behind this new wave of violence are not themselves new: fragmentation of existing cartels, turf wars and settling of scores between groups and shows of force against the government. However, a number of groups have increasingly shown terrorist-like traits, turning to violence against civilians with no other apparent reason but a will to sow chaos. This was observed for example in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, in mid-June, when a total of 19 people, including 15 innocent bystanders, were killed when suspected members of the Gulf Cartel went on an indiscriminate shooting spree throughout the city.

CASES:

- ▶ Tamaulipas authorities announced the arrest of four kidnappers in several raids across the city of Reynosa. The Prosecutor's Office said that during the operations 18 kidnapping victims were also freed, including four US citizens. The first raid took place at a property in eastern Reynosa, where police found ten hostages, including two Americans males. One of them had been kidnapped three weeks earlier, and was still being held despite his relatives having paid a ransom for his release. A female from Texas and her 3-year-old daughter were found during an operation at a second property in the city. They had been kidnapped when they entered Mexico to search for the woman's husband, who had disappeared previously. The other 14 victims were Mexican citizens belonging to different economic sectors, the prosecution said. The police raids reportedly targeted members of the 'Escorpiones' and 'Ciclones' factions of the Gulf Cartel who had been involved in shootings in Reynosa.
- ▶ On 3 July, a body was discovered in an isolated area in Brazil's Matto Grosso do Sul, near the border with Paraguay. The Paraguayan authorities later confirmed the body belonged to Jorge Ríos, the 23-year-old son of a local cattle rancher, who was kidnapped by alleged militants at his family's estate in Concepción department, on 28 June. On the same day of the abduction, the kidnappers, who had identified themselves as militants of the Agrupación Campesina Armada Ejército del Pueblo (ACA-EP), demanded a ransom of USD 200,000 for his release. The family had requested proof of life from the abductors, but without success. The family also requested the Paraguayan authorities

to withdraw from the case, to allow negotiations to take place. It is reported that although the family had agreed to pay the full amount (which they had managed to gather despite the government having frozen their accounts as per existing law), and the place for the exchange had been established, the victim was nonetheless executed. The reason behind the killing is currently unknown. The ACA is a splinter group of the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP), which was thought to have been practically disbanded after their top leaders were killed in 2016. The group, which announced its comeback in 2019, has been linked to a series of kidnappings and other attacks in recent months. Among these was the 2020 abduction of former president Oscar Denis, who remains missing despite his family having fully complied with the group's demands.



ACA-EP militant. (Photo: primicias.ec)

EUROPE

Europe's figures of kidnapped foreign nationals continued at a similar level to March and April. Incidents over the reporting period also remained within previously established trends. Spain only recorded one foreign victim over the past two months, the country showed several cases involving locals. In many of these incidents, both victims and perpetrators were found to have links to organised crime. According to a 2020 report by the Spanish Intelligence Centre against Terrorism and Organised Crime, there are at least 500 organised criminal gangs operating throughout the country. This would indicate that Spain is home to approximately 10% of the groups active in the European Union. These activities are more prominent on Spain's southern coast, particularly the Costa del Sol, which is one of the main operational bases for these gangs. Over the past couple of years, Spanish authorities have identified a spike in organised crime activity in the area, where more than 30 groups are waging a gang war to take over the drug business originating in North Africa.

CASES:

- ▶ A Belgian man of North African origin was arrested by the Spanish police in hospital in Marbella, where he was being treated for injuries sustained during a kidnapping. The man was abducted on 1 June and was held for four days. According to reports, the Málaga authorities had already had knowledge of the event and had been looking for the victim. It is unclear if his release came about as a result of police pressure on the perpetrators or after the kidnappers obtained what they were looking for. It is likely that the kidnap was linked to the victim's participation in criminal activities.
- ▶ Agents of the Spanish National Police and the Civil Guard arrested eight people in separate operations in Huelva, Cádiz, and Seville, accused of belonging to an organised criminal group. Among those arrested was the leader of the gang, a businessman in the construction sector. Investigations had begun in April, following a kidnapping in Gelves, Sevilla. The target, a local businessman, was kidnapped by two armed people who forced him into a car and stripped him of any electronic devices that could give away his location. He was held in a farm in Benacazón, where he was threatened and physically assaulted while the criminals demanded EUR 90,000 for his release. The victim claimed he was also forced to sign several documents, including the title deeds for two vehicles and a house. Though he was eventually released, the man reportedly continued to be the

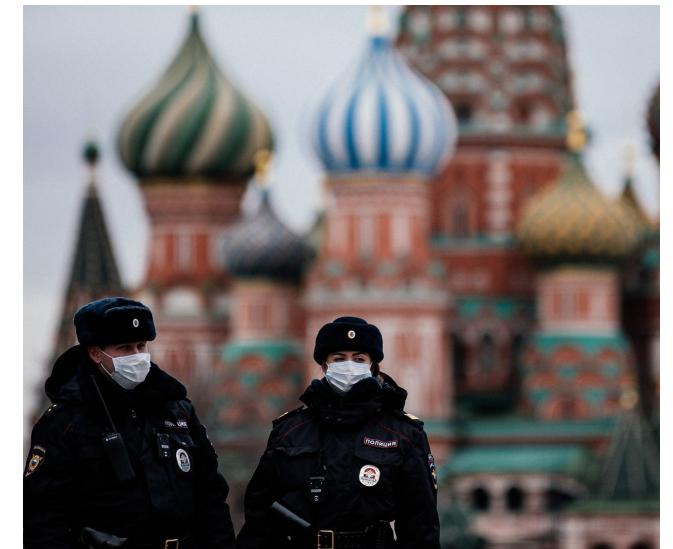
victim of extortion. While the reasons behind the targeting of the businessman are unclear, another case linked to the same criminals concerned a debt between the victim and the group's leader. In this other incident, the group demanded a payment of EUR 79,000. Separately, a businessman in the hotel sector also reported having been a victim of extortion by the same group, who threatened to kill him and his family if he did not pay.

- ▶ Bomb threats are not uncommon in Europe. In France, on 26 June, an unidentified individual contacted the authorities in the town of Beaune, saying there were two bombs on board a train from Chagny to Dijon. The train was immediately stopped when it arrived at Beaune station and the police evacuated its passengers, as well as all people at the station. As the authorities were waiting for a bomb disposal team to arrive, the man called again and demanded payment of EUR 200,000. The culprit eventually confessed that there was no bomb. The police soon located the man and arrested him at his home in Saône-et-Loire. Nonetheless, the railway company, SNCF, issued an alert about suspicious packages. A total of five trains were delayed by this incident.

While typically kidnappings in Russia and other former Soviet republics are linked to organised crime and commonly only affect wealthy individuals or those linked to the underworld, random acts of crime can also take place and may affect foreign nationals. A number of such incidents recorded over the reporting period serve to remind visitors and expatriates that a good level of situational awareness should be maintained at all times.

CASES:

- ▶ On 19 June, Russian authorities found the body of missing American student Catherine Serou, in a wooded area near the city of Bor, 400 kilometres east of Moscow. Serou was last seen on 15 June after she got into a car she stopped on the road. It is reported that soon after boarding the vehicle, Serou texted her mother in Mississippi, saying she thought she was about to be kidnapped. Her mother said that Catherine had been in a rush to get to a clinic and had thus hitchhiked. She texted when the driver, instead of taking the road to the clinic, drove towards the forest. Russia's Investigative Committee reported that a suspect with a history of serious crimes had been arrested in connection with the case. Catherine Serou moved from California to Russia in 2019 to study law at a university in Nizhny Novgorod, close to Bor.
- ▶ On 28 June, Russian police were alerted to the kidnapping of a Chinese man at the courtyard of a residential building in the city of Yekaterinburg. The man was found unharmed by police in the city of Chelyabinsk, 214 kilometres away from Yekaterinburg, on 7 July. It is unclear if the man was rescued or had been released by his captors. The authorities did not release any details on the case, but colleagues of the 50-year-old cook said he was abducted by a former employer, in retaliation for his resignation and aiming to force him to come back. Two suspects have so far been arrested by the police in connection with the incident.
- ▶ Unidentified persons kidnapped a Serbian national in the Podol area of Kiev, Ukraine, on 7 June. The incident was reported by the victim's local friend after he could not establish communications with him for several days. The authorities retrieved a video from CCTV in the area, showing businessman Milovan Roganovic being dragged inside a black car. Police investigations determined that the abduction had been masterminded by his wife and her brother, who promised to pay USD 2 million for his kidnap and killing. They intended to seize his fortune after his death.



Russian police officers in front of Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow. (Photo: Axios)

MIDDLE EAST

Following a rare spike in kidnappings over the previous reporting period, linked to the discovery of dozens of abducted migrants in Turkey, numbers in the Middle East returned to previously observed levels, with only ten foreign victims recorded. In Iraq, the security situation continues to be fragile. Both the Islamic State (IS) and Shia militants remain highly active, while criminality continues unabated. Most security incidents are local in nature and unlikely to directly impact foreigners; however, given the scale of violence, a high collateral risk endures. In July, reports emerged of an impending decision by the White House to withdraw its approximately 2,500 remaining troops from Iraq. Though this was initially denied by official sources, the announcement was finally made on 27 July, setting an end to the over 18-year US deployment. According to the statement, the US role in Iraq will shift entirely to training and advising the Iraqi military. This is seen by many as an attempt to bring stability to the country in the context of mounting pressure on the al-Kadhimi government, characterised by high levels of civil unrest and hostile activity by pro-Iranian groups, particularly against US interests, while President Biden fulfils his campaign promise to end the US 'Forever Wars'. This can be interpreted by hostile forces as an opportunity, profiting from the potential security vacuum to make further inroads in the fragmented country.

CASES:

- ▶ Iraqi sources reported that an unidentified French-Iranian investor had been released by Iraqi security forces on 8 May, after several hours in captivity. Some of the sources claimed that the dual national had been kidnapped along with three companions in northern Baghdad. Other local sources on the same day indicated that a number of foreign nationals, including French citizens, had been abducted while on a business trip in Baghdad. Iraqi police reportedly conducted searches in areas around the Abu Ghraib district where the foreigners were last seen. It remains unconfirmed whether these incidents were the same.
- ▶ Kidnapping remains a common tactic by IS militants in Iraq. While this typically takes place in rural areas and mostly affects locals, foreign individuals remain desirable targets for the group. On 9 July, IS militants kidnapped an Iraqi construction worker in the locality of Sarkaran, in Kirkuk's Dibs district, later demanding USD 100,000 in ransom from the victim's family. This incident followed the 7 July abduction of a local shepherd in the village of Balanyan, in Erbil's Makhmour district. In this incident, the group reportedly demanded USD 120,000.
- ▶ Meanwhile, illegal detentions of foreign nationals in Iraq continue to appear in the media. In early July, a British national returned home almost a year after he was detained in Iraq. In July 2020, Thomas Simpson travelled to the country for work and was arrested as he arrived at Basra International Airport. He was held in solitary confinement for three days. Although he was allowed to leave the prison after the intervention of a lawyer, he was given a no-fly order. Simpson's legal quagmire was linked to a job he had had in the country in 2019. As a project manager, he was held responsible for his previous employer, a Lebanese organisation, who dissolved a joint venture with a local company halfway through an important project. Simpson was not aware the situation had escalated into a legal issue as he had already departed the country. Two other foreign nationals, an Australian and an Egyptian, remain in prison under similar circumstances.



Iraqi soldier standing guard in Qayyarah Airfield. (Photo: Atlantic Council)

Lebanon has been in a state of spiralling, generalised crisis since the Beirut port explosion in August 2020, with the country facing food and essential goods shortages, inflation, and severe, nationwide civil unrest. In the latest predicament to confront the country, Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri resigned on 15 July, after he was unable to form a working government with the Hezbollah-allied President Aoun over the last eight months. On 26 July, the parliament appointed Najib Mikati, Lebanon's wealthiest man, as prime minister designate. While Mikati counts with sufficient support in parliament, his nomination is not a popular one among the wider public, particularly in the current economic environment, as he was recently accused of illicit enrichment. At the same time, Lebanon continues to be a geopolitical playground, as Iran-backed Hezbollah vies for regional control, while the country also tries to counter spill over from the Syrian conflict. All these elements contribute to a highly complex security environment, and a country on the brink of becoming a failed state.

CASES:

- ▶ British Journalist Matt Kynaston and German freelance journalist Stella Männer were detained by men claiming to be members of Hezbollah. The arrest took place on the morning of 28 June in an area controlled by the group in the southern suburbs of Beirut, while they were covering the country's fuel crisis. Kynaston said they had been arrested despite having clearly identified themselves as journalists. Soon after the British Chargé d'Affaires was involved, the journalists were released and handed over to the Lebanese authorities. A Hezbollah spokesperson said the journalists had been detained as they did not have the necessary permissions to work in that specific area.
- ▶ In late May, businessman Adnane Dabaja managed to escape his captors in Tyre, in Lebanon's Bekaa region. According to a local politician, the kidnappers had demanded a ransom of USD 3 million for the release of the victim. Dabaja was abducted on 17 November 2020 by a group of unidentified armed men who intercepted his car on a highway near a tourism project he was developing between the towns of Kefraya and Jeb Jennine in western Bekaa. The Lebanese army had carried out a raid in December in the town of Brital, in which a number of Syrians were arrested in connection with the case. However, the hostage had not been found. This was the second time the businessman was kidnapped. He was previously abducted in 2016 in the context of a financial dispute. On that occasion, he was rescued by the Lebanese security forces.
- ▶ In an incident possibly related to the Yemeni conflict, on 17 June, tribal sources in Marib claimed that Houthi militants had kidnapped an Omani citizen. According to the sources, the Houthi faction led by Muhammad Tawaf kidnapped the foreigner, who also holds Saudi citizenship, from Marib's city centre. The victim, identified as 'Fares', had allegedly expressed his intention to go to the north to meet with the Houthis. Local activists believe that the Omani may have been carrying a message for the Houthi leadership from the government of Oman, which is pushing for a political settlement in Yemen. The fate of the missing man remains unknown.



Hariri's supporters blocked roads and clashed with soldiers in Beirut following the Prime Minister's resignation. (Photo: Al Jazeera)

AFRICA

Contrary to other regions of the world, Africa experienced an increase in the number of kidnapped foreign nationals, with 39% more victims than the previous two-month period. An upturn in incident reporting in Libya was the primary reason behind this growth, once again driven by mass abductions of migrants. This, however, was a return to figures observed in the country over previous periods, following a short hiatus over April-May. Meanwhile, a series of abductions affecting foreign workers was noted in the Sahel, where the Jihadist threat has been snowballing, despite the efforts of the French-led military campaign in the region. Since 2013, when the threat was mainly concentrated in northern Mali, Islamic militants have swept into the centre and across borders into Niger and Burkina Faso. The insurgency is now threatening to further destabilise the wider region, making inroads into West African coastal states such as Ivory Coast and Ghana, as militant groups aim to control routes connecting the coast and North Africa, as well as the resources along them. Indeed, al-Qaeda's affiliate Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Greater Sahara (ISGS) have profited from a series of destabilising elements, such as political instability – particularly in Mali –, ethnic conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic crisis, as well as disenchantment with foreign intervention, to expand their influence among the population and thus their operational capability. The recent announcement of the termination of Operation Barkhane in early 2022, with a subsequent gradual withdrawal of French forces, is likely to embolden the Jihadist movement in the region, despite French assurances.

CASES:

- ▶ On 17 July, three Chinese nationals and two Mauritians were abducted from a construction site 55 kilometres from the town of Kwala, in Mali, near the border with Mauritania. Those kidnapped are employees of Chinese construction firm Covec and Mauritanian road-building company ATTM, who had been building a road under the protection of a private security company, the Malian army said. Reportedly, a third Mauritanian worker had also been taken, but managed to jump out of the kidnappers' vehicle. The attackers also made off with five pick-up trucks before setting fire to much of the site, destroying a crane, trucks and other company equipment. The two Mauritanian hostages were released on 27 July. A Mauritanian official said the two men were in good health, but did not give further details of the circumstances under which they were freed. No information was given on the status of the three Chinese captives. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.
- ▶ Two Chinese nationals working for a Chinese mining company were kidnapped by armed men in Niger's Tillabéri region, near the country's borders with Mali and Burkina Faso, on 5 June. According to local authorities, the foreigners, who had a permit to search for gold, had received a number of warnings from armed groups in the area, but had nonetheless refused to go home. No group has claimed the abduction.

- ▶ An unknown armed group kidnapped two Syrian nationals in Benghazi, Libya, in early June. The two brothers had just arrived in the city, where they intended to work as carpenters, when they were abducted. Their family said that communication with the men was lost on 9 June. The kidnappers reportedly contacted the family and demanded USD 15,000 for the safe release of the brothers.



Images of IS fighters in the Sahel, released by the group's Amaq news agency in May 2019. (Photo: The Defense Post)

Ethiopia is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world and shares borders with six other countries, both factors complicating a highly complex socio-political and security environment domestically and internationally. Political tensions are currently very high in several regional states, particularly in Tigray – where an armed conflict is ongoing – and Oromia. The kidnapping threat in the country is generally assessed as moderate, mostly affecting locals in the context of ethnic conflict and banditry. However, foreign nationals have also been affected in the past. A number of incidents have taken place in recent months, as militants try to draw attention to their cause or in the context of generalised violence. While current developments in the different conflicts plaguing Ethiopia seem to be progressing in a more positive direction, travellers should remain extremely vigilant as the situation remains very fragile and fluid, with the possibility of violence escalating quickly and without warning.

CASES:

- ▶ On 15 May, Ethiopian militant group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) released a statement, claiming to have detained three Chinese nationals “involved in mining operations” around Mendi, Oromia region. According to the group, this was in response to the negative impact mining operations have had in the region. At the time, the OLA did not specify what the intended goal of the abduction was, but claimed they had no intention of holding the victims as leverage. After two weeks in captivity, the three Chinese workers, identified as Mr Huang, Mr He and Mr Wang, were released alongside an unidentified local citizen. In a 29 May statement on social media, the OLA shared on social media a picture of a ‘Certificate of Handover’ to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Neither the Chinese or Ethiopian authorities, nor the ICRC, commented on these events. 18 days later, on 16 June, the OLA announced a second detention of foreign nationals, two Afghans allegedly working for mining company Moon Rock Mining and Marble Development PLC, in Mana Sib, western Oromia. Subsequently, on 25 June, the OLA claimed that they had attempted to release the abductees to the ICRC, but the organisation had allegedly refused to take the hostages, citing a government ban. The OLA concluded that the government was using the situation of the Afghan victims for political means and declared they would not release the miners to the government, out of concern for their safety. Meanwhile, local officials refuted all the OLA's claims, saying that no Afghan nationals were working in the area.
- ▶ Two aid workers and their driver, who had been kidnapped while working in Ethiopia's Tigray region, were found dead on 25 June. Details surrounding their deaths are unknown, but at the time, their employer, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), said they had lost contact with the workers on 24 June and their bodies had been found the next day not far from their car. The exact location of the discovery was not disclosed. The victims were identified as Spanish citizen Maria Hernandez, and local nationals Yohannes Halefom Reda and Tedros Gebremariam Gebremichael. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident. MSF halted work in parts of Tigray after the murder of their staff. This event followed a series of violent incidents targeting aid workers in the region. For example, in early June, a local aid worker employed by Italian charity International Committee for the Development of Peoples was killed by a stray bullet. A local USAID employee was also murdered in May. It is reported that at least 11 aid workers have been killed in Tigray since November 2020.



Photo of three Chinese miners allegedly detained by the OLA. (Photo: Addis Standard)

ASIA

After a slight increase in the previous reporting period, Asia returned to the low levels of incidents observed in earlier periods. Regional statics in May-June 2021 continued to be largely driven by the abduction of Chinese nationals in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Philippines, linked to activities of Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs). After a lull observed over the past year, these incidents are once again increasing. This takes place together with an easing of COVID-19 restrictions in the Philippines, which forced POGOs to shut down as of March 2020, with many of their workers forced to return to China. Therefore, it is likely that an increase in numbers will be observed in the near future as both workers and gamblers begin to travel back into the country. Chinese nationals have also continued to be targeted in virtual kidnapping scams across the region. The typical modus operandi of these criminal gangs is to convince their victims over the phone that they are Chinese law enforcement or government officials. Utilising social engineering tactics, the criminals persuade the victim to comply with their demands and reveal contact details of their family members. After isolating the victim, relatives are contacted and a ransom is demanded for the 'release' of the 'kidnapped' person. Sometimes, money is also demanded from the original victims.

CASES:

- ▶ On 18 May, police rescued a Chinese national and arrested his three captors – two Chinese and a Filipino – from a room at a hotel in Pasay City. The victim, identified as Sun Xia Lin, had been abducted two days earlier while on his way to a clinic in Makati City, where he was scheduled to undergo a PCR test that was required for a job at a POGO firm. The kidnappers demanded an undisclosed ransom from the man's cousin on the same day. The victim's relatives reportedly paid PHP 1.5 million (USD 31,000); however, Lin was not released, prompting them to report the incident to the police on 17 May.
- ▶ A 21-year-old Chinese student received a call from a person who said he was a police officer from China executing an outstanding warrant against him for money laundering offences. Convinced that the alleged police officer was taking X-rays with the computer camera, the student agreed to pose topless, blindfolded and gagged, while on a video call with the scammer. The criminal recorded the video call and later sent the footage to the student's parents in China to prove possession of the victim and demand a ransom of CNY 6 million (nearly USD 1 million). As instructed by the caller, the student ceased all contact with his family and friends after checking into a hotel. The fact that the

family was not able to reach him seemed to verify the criminal's claims that the student had been kidnapped. The family immediately reported the incident to the Chinese authorities, on 16 May. A second ransom call was subsequently received on 20 May, but the family did not pay. The student was later found safe at an apartment in Singapore. The owner of the property was initially arrested, but it was later determined that he was also a victim of the gang, who had been convinced that the student was a police witness who needed to be kept under protection.



Chinese student simulating her kidnap, as ordered by Chinese extortionist. (Photo: New South Wales Police)

In Afghanistan, as the final withdrawal of US forces approaches (31 August), justified concerns are mounting regarding the country's future. The Taliban have been encouraged by the opportunities that the withdrawal presents. Recent reports have shown clear indications of the rapid deterioration of the security situation in the country. According to a 21 July report by the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Taliban insurgents are in control of about half of Afghanistan's district centres, an increase of more than double on the previous month. Meanwhile, the UN say that over the first half of 2021, Afghanistan has seen more civilian deaths than any other identical period since 2009. The effect has also been seen in neighbouring countries, where extremist groups have also stepped up attacks, both motivated by the Taliban example and taking advantage of the security vacuum that the withdrawal of foreign forces from the area is creating. More widely, extremists across the world are expressing their desire to travel to Afghanistan to be under the umbrella of the Taliban.

CASES:

- ▶ On 19 July, US Senator Tammy Duckworth said she spoke with Secretary of State Antony Blinken about the importance of securing the safe return of kidnapped US national Mark Frerichs. Duckworth also said that during a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) in May, she had secured a commitment from Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs David Helvey to pursue all opportunities to advocate for Frerichs' safe return. Separately in June, a spokesperson for the Pakistani embassy in Washington pledged that Islamabad would make all endeavours to assist in Frerich's recovery as a "moral and humanitarian responsibility". However, the embassy spokesperson also said that Islamabad had no evidence to suggest that Mark Frerichs is being held in Pakistan as previously suggested. According to US media outlets, a number of options have been considered for the release of Frerichs, including a controversial prisoner exchange involving an Afghan drug lord. Under this arrangement, Pakistan would act as a lobbyist with the Haqqani Network, who are believed to be holding the American engineer. These efforts come at a time when there is strong concern that as the US troops leave Afghanistan, all possible leverage for Frerich's release may be lost. Mark Frerichs was abducted near his Kabul home on 31 January 2020.
- ▶ In Myanmar, politically-motivated arrests have continued, also affecting foreign nationals. On 24 May, American journalist Danny Fenster, managing editor of independent news outlet Frontier Myanmar, was arrested as he tried to board a flight at Yangon International Airport on 24 May. He was subsequently taken to Insein Prison on unknown charges. Meanwhile, US citizen Nathan Maung, editor-in-chief of Kamayut Media, who was arrested on 9 March, was released on 14 June after the charges of 'spreading misinformation' laid against him were dropped and his case dismissed. The court nonetheless ordered his deportation to take place the next day. According to Myanmar's Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, about 90 journalists have been arrested since the February coup, with more than half still in detention.

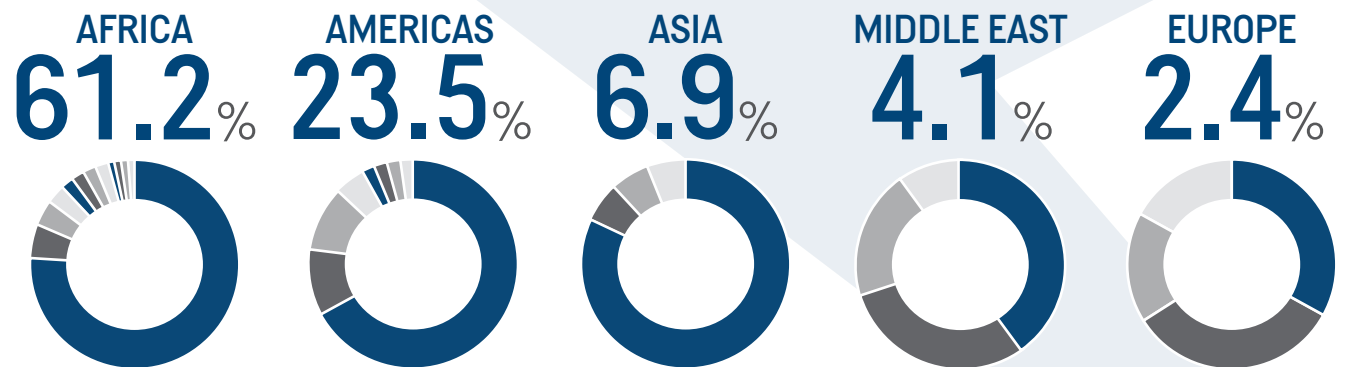
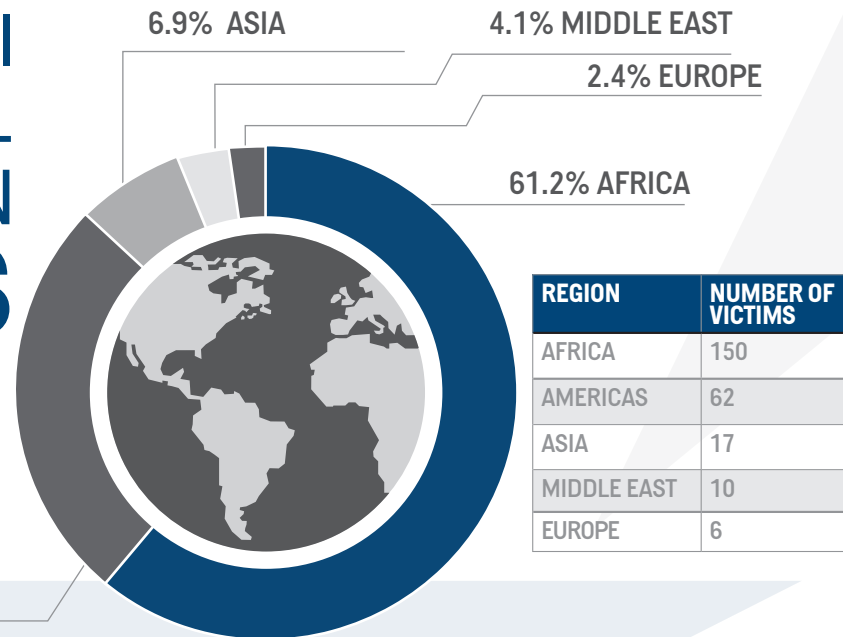


Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. (Photo: Gandhara)

KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS

Global AND Regional GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMS

Statistics for May-June 2021 are drawn from Constellis' record of 245 kidnapped foreign nationals. Over March-April, Constellis recorded a total of 432 foreigners kidnapped across the world.



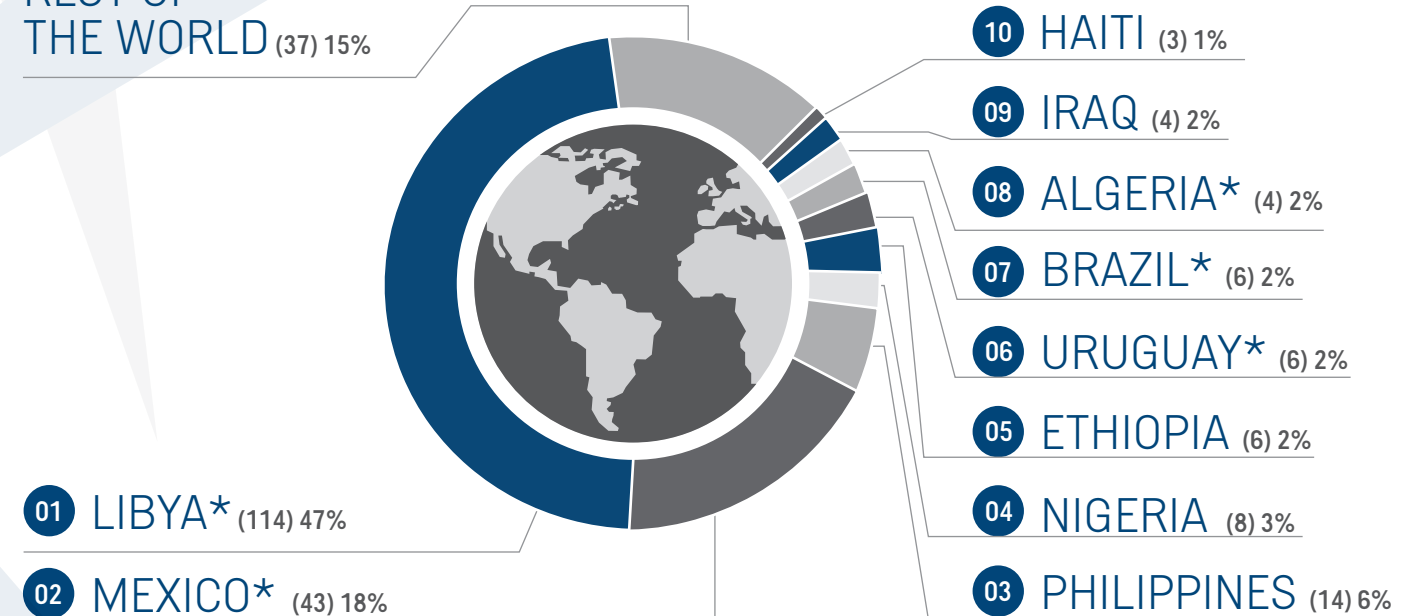
Region	Country	Number of Victims	Percentage	
AFRICA	Libya*	114	76%	
	Nigeria	8	5%	
	Ethiopia	6	4%	
	Algeria*	4	3%	
	Benin	3	2%	
	Egypt*	3	2%	
	Ghana	3	2%	
	Mozambique	3	2%	
	Kenya	2	1%	
	Niger	2	1%	
	Morocco	1	1%	
	South Africa	1	1%	
	AMERICAS	Mexico*	43	69.4%
		Brazil*	6	9.7%
Uruguay*		6	9.7%	
Haiti		3	4.8%	
Antigua & Barbuda		1	1.6%	
ASIA	Philippines	14	82%	
	Kyrgyzstan	1	6%	
	Myanmar	1	6%	
	Singapore	1	6%	
MIDDLE EAST	Iraq	4	40%	
	Lebanon	3	30%	
	UAE	2	20%	
	Yemen	1	10%	
EUROPE	Russia	2	33%	
	Ukraine	2	33%	
	Belarus	1	17%	
	Spain	1	17%	

(Number of Victims) * Including Migrants

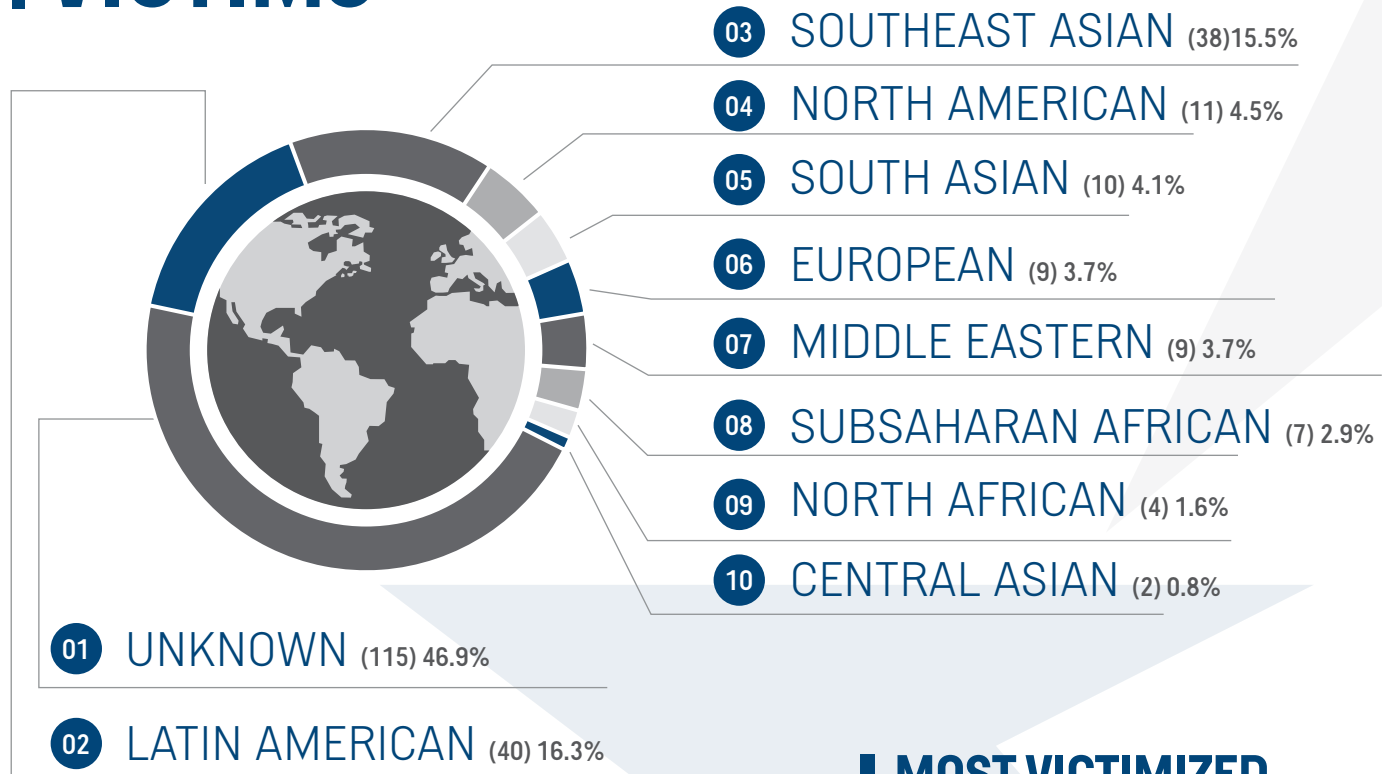
TOP 10 COUNTRIES FOR THE KIDNAPPING OF FOREIGN CITIZENS MAY-JUN 2021



REST OF THE WORLD (37) 15%



ORIGINS OF VICTIMS



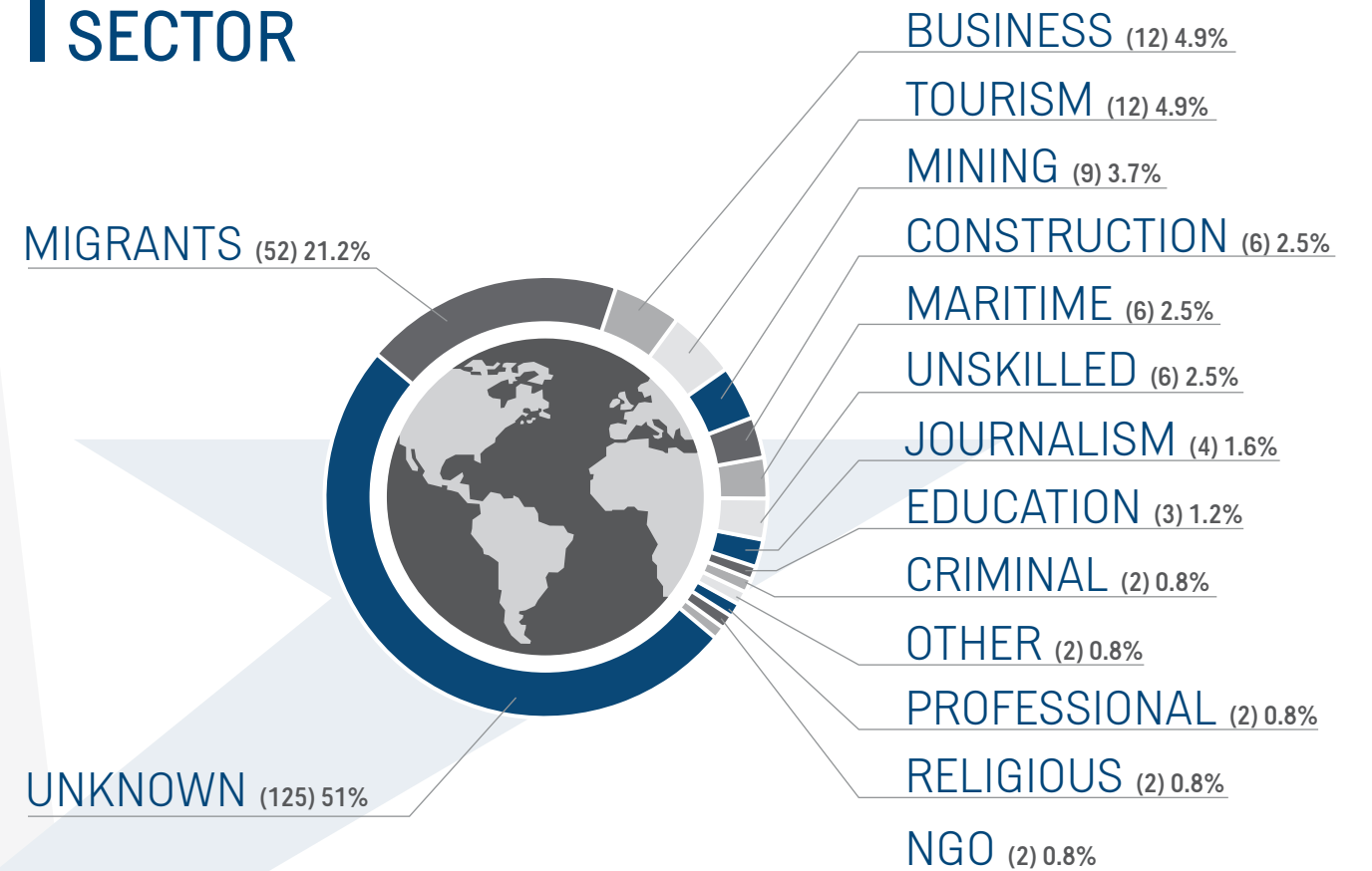
MOST VICTIMIZED SINGLE NATIONALITY

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 01 Chinese | 06 Bangladeshi |
| 02 American | 07 Guatemalan |
| 03 Cuban | 08 South Korean |
| 04 Ecuadorian | 09 Indian |
| 05 Honduran | 10 Salvadorean |

MOST VICTIMIZED ORIGIN BY REGION

REGION	ORIGIN
Africa	Unknown
Americas	Latin American
Asia	Southeast Asian
Europe	European
Middle East	European

VICTIMS BY SECTOR



MOST VICTIMIZED SECTOR BY REGION

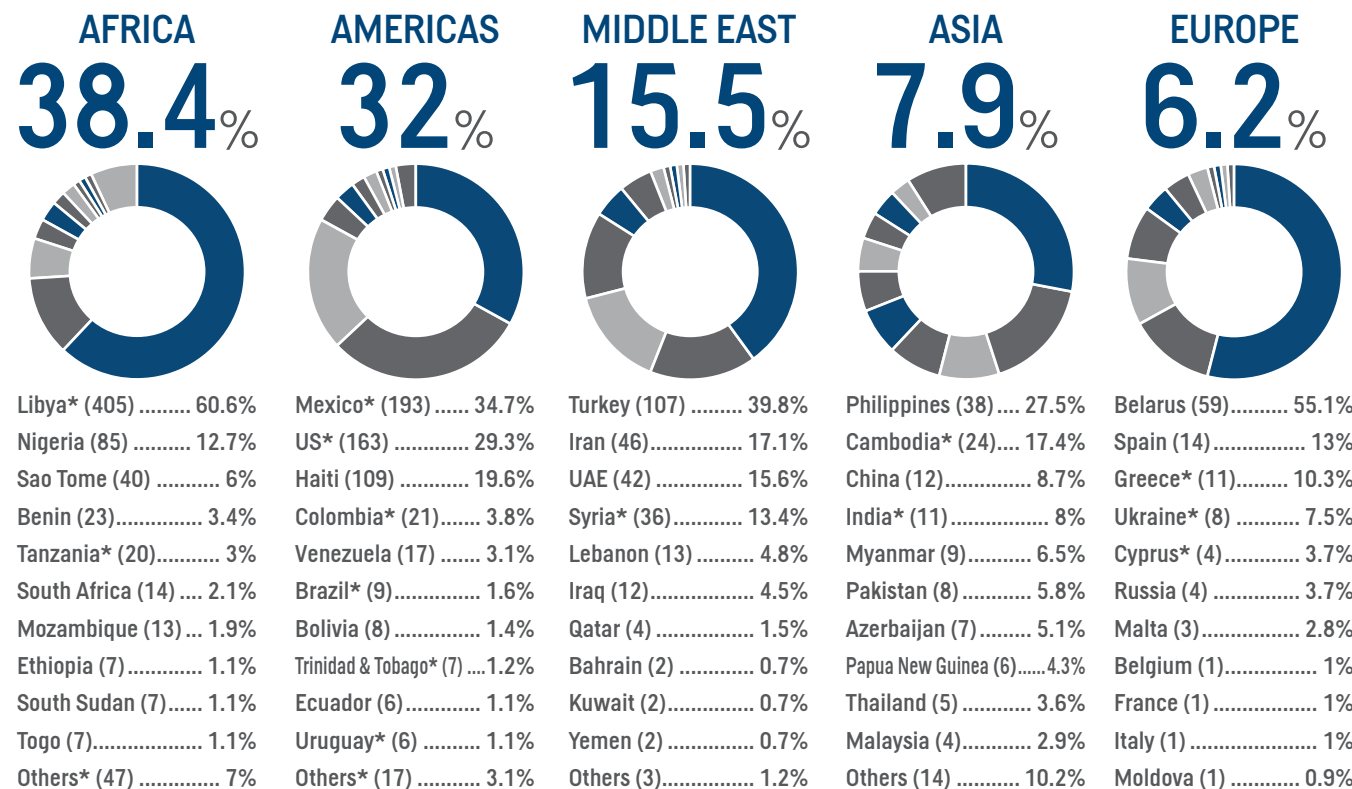
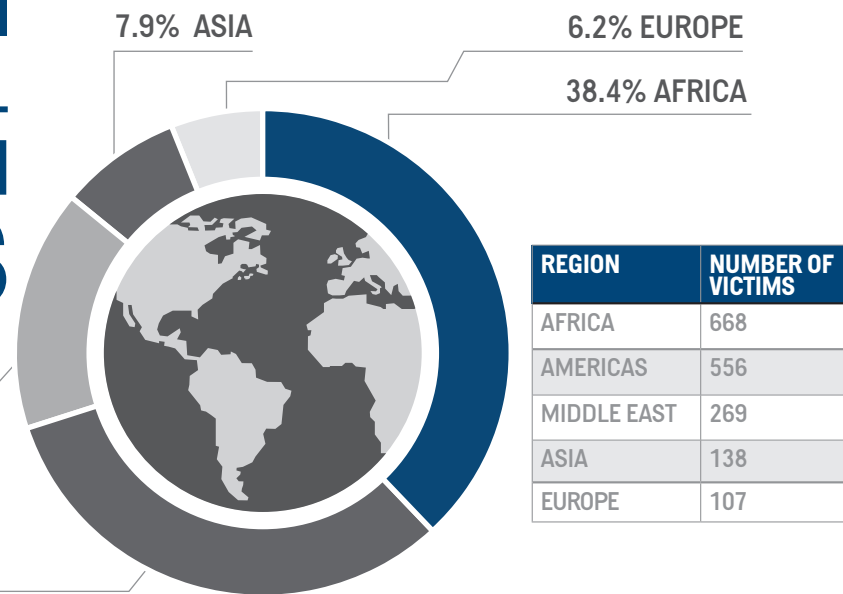
REGION	OCCUPATIONAL SECTOR
Africa	Mining
Americas	Migrants
Asia	Unskilled
Europe	Criminal
Middle East	Business

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.

KIDNAPPED FOREIGN CITIZENS

Global AND Regional GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMS

"Statistics for July 2020 - June 2021 are drawn from Constellis' record of 1,738 foreign nationals kidnapped worldwide."

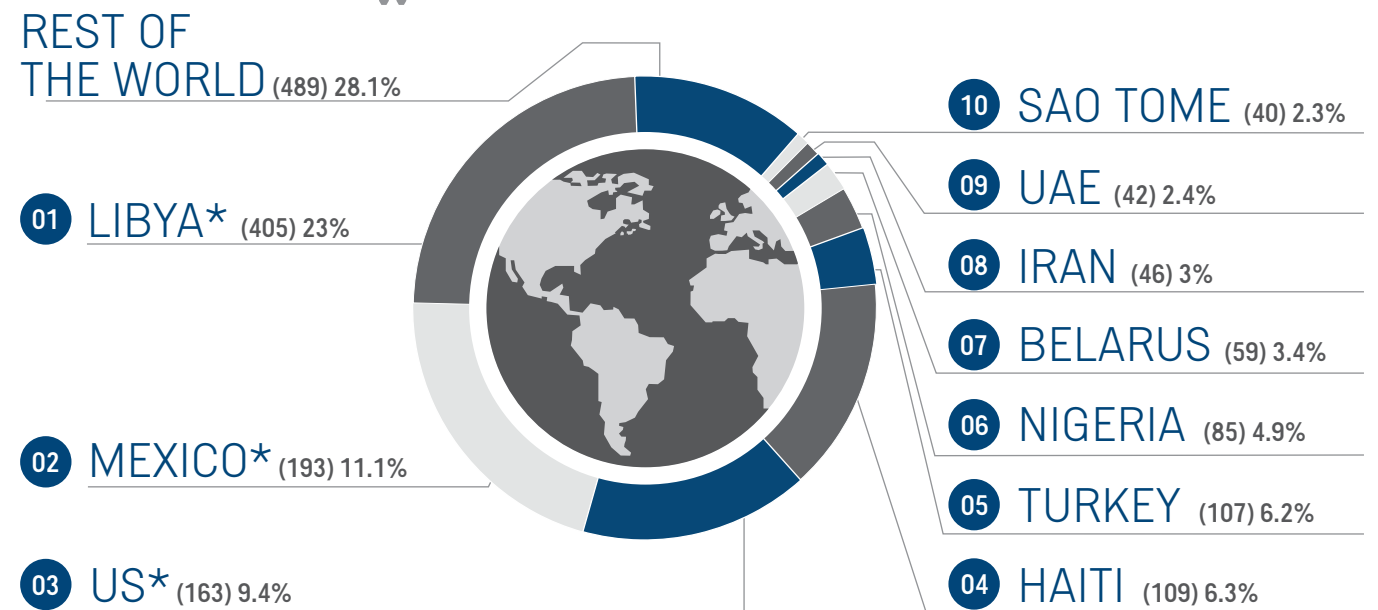


Libya* (405) 60.6%	Mexico* (193) 34.7%	Turkey (107) 39.8%	Philippines (38) 27.5%	Belarus (59)..... 55.1%
Nigeria (85) 12.7%	US* (163) 29.3%	Iran (46)..... 17.1%	Cambodia* (24).... 17.4%	Spain (14) 13%
Sao Tome (40) 6%	Haiti (109) 19.6%	UAE (42) 15.6%	China (12)..... 8.7%	Greece* (11)..... 10.3%
Benin (23)..... 3.4%	Colombia* (21)..... 3.8%	Syria* (36)..... 13.4%	India* (11) 8%	Ukraine* (8) 7.5%
Tanzania* (20)..... 3%	Venezuela (17) 3.1%	Lebanon (13) 4.8%	Myanmar (9)..... 6.5%	Cyprus* (4) 3.7%
South Africa (14) 2.1%	Brazil* (9)..... 1.6%	Iraq (12)..... 4.5%	Pakistan (8) 5.8%	Russia (4) 3.7%
Mozambique (13) ... 1.9%	Bolivia (8) 1.4%	Qatar (4) 1.5%	Azerbaijan (7) 5.1%	Malta (3) 2.8%
Ethiopia (7) 1.1%	Trinidad & Tobago* (7) 1.2%	Bahrain (2) 0.7%	Papua New Guinea (6)..... 4.3%	Belgium (1)..... 1%
South Sudan (7)..... 1.1%	Ecuador (6)..... 1.1%	Kuwait (2)..... 0.7%	Thailand (5) 3.6%	France (1) 1%
Togo (7)..... 1.1%	Uruguay* (6) 1.1%	Yemen (2) 0.7%	Malaysia (4)..... 2.9%	Italy (1) 1%
Others* (47) 7%	Others* (17) 3.1%	Others (3)..... 1.2%	Others (14) 10.2%	Moldova (1) 0.9%

(Number of Victims)
* Including Migrants

TOP 10 COUNTRIES

FOR THE KIDNAPPING OF FOREIGN CITIZENS IN JULY 2020 - JUNE 2021



GLOBAL PIRACY UPDATE

During May and June, Constellis recorded 45 maritime incidents, a 41% decrease on the last reporting period (March-April). The decline was largely driven by a reduction in attacks in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG), which was attributed to the beginning of the West African monsoon period that brings heavy rainfall and thus unfavourable maritime conditions. Asia recorded the highest number of incidents, which mainly consisted of armed robberies, while events in the Gulf of Aden (GoA) recorded a minor decrease.

The GoA recorded only three maritime events over May and June, two less than the previous reporting months. All recorded events consisted of suspicious approaches. While piracy remains largely suppressed in the region due to the presence of international naval forces, the decline in activity most likely resulted from the Indian Ocean Southwest Monsoon season, which makes maritime conditions unfavourable for small boats. Other significant developments in the wider region were connected to the conflict in Yemen. Of most note, on 8 June, Saudi-backed forces removed a naval mine field that was laid by the Houthis in the Red Sea, 450 meters off Yemen's western coast. As a result, the Saudi authorities said that they will increase surveillance in the area and search for other naval mine fields, which pose a serious threat to maritime navigation in the region. A Yemeni commander suggested that the rebel group had received support from the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to sow the minefield. Although not acknowledged by Iran, it is plausible that Tehran is supplying the group with WBIEDs.

Over this reporting period, Constellis recorded 14 maritime incidents in the GoG, signifying a 48% decline on March-April. The majority of recorded events during this reporting period consisted of criminal boardings (65%), followed by suspicious approaches (21%) and attempted boardings (14%). While most of the incidents consisted of petty thefts, at least three of the attacks

resulted in the kidnapping of a total of 14 crew members off the coasts of Benin, Ghana, and Nigeria. As evidence of the ongoing threat, the Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG) issued a warning to seafarers on 5 July to exercise extreme caution, especially in GoG's E zone, which covers the waters off the coast of Togo, Benin, and Nigeria. Meanwhile, following growing international concern over an increase in kidnappings in the region, in May, 125 companies from across the maritime industry, as well as law enforcement and naval forces from GoG coastal states, signed a cooperation agreement called the Gulf of Guinea Declaration on Suppression of Piracy, which aims to reduce the number of attacks in the region by 80% by the end of 2023. The agreement, which would allow the companies to increase their exchange of information, is also meant to raise awareness and pressure West African governments to 'deter and suppress piracy' and 'increase law enforcement activity ashore to disrupt the underlying criminal enterprises'. Concurrently, the Nigerian authorities launched the maritime security operation 'Deep Blue Project' on 21 May, which also seeks to provide an integrated surveillance and security architecture against piracy in GoG waters. While an increase in international cooperation and further patrols could improve the GoG's maritime security environment in the short term, these measures alone are unlikely to prove sufficient, given that piracy in the region is a

highly organised and lucrative industry. This has been demonstrated by the significant increase in robberies and abductions since the beginning of 2020, as pirates are becoming considerably more sophisticated, acquiring various resources to remain offshore for longer periods of time. Combined, these advances give pirates the opportunity to take a large number of hostages at any one time, which in turn results in higher ransom payments.

Constellis recorded 20 maritime incidents in Asia, only two less than March – April. As per pre-established trends, the majority of events consisted of criminal boardings (75%), most of which were successful robberies (73%). For a successive period, there were no reports of abductions of crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and waters off Eastern Sabah; however, a threat to commercial vessels endures due to a lingering Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) presence in the area. At the end of June, Philippine security forces said that intelligence available suggested that ASG militants are hiding in islands off Sabah, Malaysia, and have made attempts to enter Malaysia and the Philippines in the last few months. Meanwhile, tension in South Asia remains elevated, due to the ongoing territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Of most note, China has increased the presence of its militia fishing vessels, from 200 in March to 300 in May. This fleet, whose activities are part of the Chinese government's 'grey zone' tactics, comprises civilian vessels deployed to target any craft challenging China's territorial claims. As China claims they are not part of their military, it provides the country with a degree of deniability, thus avoiding escalation with other states. As a result of China's aggressive aerial and naval activities, a number of countries, including Indonesia and New Zealand, have taken measures to bolster security in the region. Such measures vary from the unveiling of new maritime polices to the establishment of new maritime training centres.

Meanwhile, in Mozambique, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) warned vessel owners to avoid changing crew along the Mozambican coast, due to possible kidnap for ransom attempts following March's siege on the energy hub of Palma by the Islamic State-linked group Ahl al-Sunnah wa al Jamma'ah (ASWJ). While the conflict currently remains predominately onshore, the insurgency has the potential to severely

destabilise the maritime domain in the long run. In the short-term, ASWJ militants could attack offshore gas fields and installations, LNG tankers, and offshore supply and drilling vessels, in an attempt to gain leverage and as a potential revenue source, which could include ransoms. Meanwhile, the ongoing suspension of foreign projects in the region due to security concerns is dealing a devastating blow to the local economy. This could in turn further exacerbate insecurity in the area, as locals could turn to criminality, including piracy, also potentially increasing the insurgency's numbers.

Naval exercises, part of 'Obangame Express', the largest multinational maritime exercise in Western Africa. (Photo: Naval Post)



CASES:

- ▶ On 3 May, an unidentified vessel reported a suspicious approach 60nm west of Hodeidah, Yemen, which included two small craft with six people on board. The two skiffs came within 15 metres of the ship; however, they altered their course shortly after. There were no reports of ladders, and it is believed that the approach may have been opportunistic.
- ▶ On 19 May, fishing vessel ATLANTIC PRINCESS was attacked and boarded 25nm off South Tema, Ghana. Five of the 30 crewmembers were confirmed kidnapped, including three Chinese nationals (chief officer, second officer and chief engineer), a Russian bosun and the South Korean captain. There is a strong possibility that the pirates used a mothership to launch the attack, given the significant distance from Nigerian waters. In apparent confirmation, the remaining crew claimed they sighted a rusted-looking small tanker two hours prior to the assault. The five hostages were released on 30 June, following a suspected ransom payment. According to reports, the pirates had allegedly demanded USD 1 million for their release.
- ▶ On 29 June, a crewmember of the bulk carrier J MARE spotted four robbers in the engine room and notified the bridge. The alarm was raised, however, the robbers escaped with stolen engine parts.

CYBER SECURITY

RANSOMWARE: FROM DOUBLE TO TRIPLE EXTORTION

The growth in ransomware attacks over previous years has been exponential. So far in 2021, the number of organisations affected by ransomware has more than doubled compared to the same period last year, with an average of some 1,000 government and commercial entities targeted every week. Over 2020, the global cost to businesses from ransomware attacks amounted to approximately USD 20 billion, representing a 75% increase from 2019. The escalation of the ransomware phenomenon can be explained by several factors. These include the increase in value of cryptocurrencies over the past year and the seismic shift to remote working practices with their associated cyber security vulnerabilities, but also by evolving tactics deployed by hackers.

Basic ransomware attacks involve threat actors infecting targeted machines with malware to encrypt files and restrict user access. Decryption keys are then only provided once a ransom payment has been made. To place additional pressure on their targets to pay up, since 2019 hackers also began to exfiltrate victims' data, threatening to release it if ransoms are refused or delayed. This is known as double extortion. In the intervening period, the average ransom payment correspondingly increased to approximately USD 310,000, a jump of 171%. Toward the end of 2020, this double threat evolved to include various additional components, in what is now referred to as 'triple extortion' ransomware attacks.

One method involves hackers not only threatening the victim with a data leak, but also contacting third parties affected by the initial attack, such as clients or partners whose data has been compromised, to demand smaller payments from them. Some reports have also indicated that senior management and other key company stakeholders have been sent threatening calls in a bid to force a ransom payment. Another triple threat tactic recently observed involves the added threat of a DDoS attack. Not only does the target organisation have its data encrypted and expunged, but cyber criminals also threaten to launch

DDoS attacks to bring down their services and force them to pay up. Where a company might have previously been able to avoid paying a ransom by resorting to backups, or surviving the exposure of a sensitive data leak, they now need to ensure their networks are robust enough to withstand a DDoS attack as well. An additional advantage of the DDoS attack from the criminals' point of view is that it is relatively easy and inexpensive to execute.

In a public disclosure of the new triple extortion threat, hacking group REvil announced in February 2021 that it would add DDoS attacks and calls to victims' business partners and journalists to make attacks public. REvil functions as a ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) operation, and with this 'enhanced product', it enables its customers to exert greater pressure on their targets to pay ransoms. As the attack radius grows to include not only the targeted organisation, but also its clients and partners, the opportunities for greater financial gains also increase. Other ransomware gangs known to employ these tactics include SunCrypt, Avaddon and RagnarLocker.

At present, the sector experiencing the highest frequency of ransomware attacks is healthcare. Globally, organisations in this sector experience, on average, 109 attempted attacks per week. This is followed by the utilities sector, insurance/legal, software vendors and manufacturing. With regards to the location of victims, organisations in the Asia Pacific region (APAC) currently experience the largest proportion of ransomware attacks. They suffer on average 51 attacks per week, compared to 29 weekly attacks on North American companies and 14 each for European and Latin American organisations. While the percentage of ransomware attacks using triple extortion threats is unknown, figures are likely to be increasing given the higher chances of a payout. As an indicator, it is believed that nearly half of the ransomware cases in Q3 2020 utilised a data theft element, i.e. double extortion, just prior to the emergence of the triple threat.



(Photo: The Daily Swig)

CASES:

- ▶ On 1 October 2020, SunCrypt hackers reportedly conducted a DDoS attack against an undisclosed business it had previously targeted with ransomware. The hacker warned the victim that it had taken down its website, and would keep it inoperable until payment negotiations were initiated. The cyber criminals had demanded a ransom of USD 100,000 to provide a decryption key, and exerted additional pressure on its target via the DDoS attack. The target organisation is believed to have been a relatively small enterprise, and the combined ransomware and DDoS attack almost completely shut down its operations, reportedly leading to the victim eventually paying the ransom.
- ▶ On 24 October 2020, customers and employees of Vastaamo, a 40,000 patient Finnish psychotherapy clinic, began to receive individual blackmail messages, each demanding a small ransom of approximately USD 600, and threatening to leak their confidential data if these were not paid. This was the third element of a triple extortion attack, following a ransomware attack against Vastaamo and the theft of its patient data. The clinic was reportedly faced with a 40-bitcoin (USD 560,000) ransom demand. Due to the financial impact of the attack, the company filed for bankruptcy in February 2021 and ceased operating.
- ▶ US-based IT company Kaseya was the target of a ransomware attack on 2 July 2021 which also affected nearly 200 organisations in at least 17 countries that use the company's software. Russian hacking group REvil is believed to be behind the attack. The group reportedly demanded USD 70 million in bitcoin for the decryption of Kaseya's data, additionally making smaller demands from every individual collateral victim. The company refused to indicate whether they would pay or not, refusing also to disclose the advice given to them by the FBI. Meanwhile, the White House said it was reaching out to victims of the outbreak in the US to provide assistance based on an assessment of national risk. According to IBM data, REvil was responsible for around 29% of ransomware attacks in 2020, gaining an estimated USD 123 million in that year alone.

FOCUS ARTICLE

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

By Frank Grimm



(Photo: Buffalo News)

THE PROBLEM

School shootings have occurred all too frequently in recent years, not only in the United States but also globally. Even one incident is one too many. The impact is horrific on the families, schools, and communities in which these incidents occur. Quite simply, the shock reverberates throughout the lives of everyone it has touched for the rest of their existence. All survivors, faculty, children, families and even emergency response personnel will live with the scarring memory of the loss and indescribable sorrow. Many will reflect on the incident as a 'before-and-after' event of their lives. Most will also suffer from some degree of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), not unlike soldiers returning from war.

Of course, the initial attention goes to the victims, while the survivors will also be forever impacted – although they often fade into the background as news cycles move on. Survivors can suffer issues at school and work, with social interaction and forming relationships, trust and confidence, anxiety and depression and general mental health. Likely, mental health and general well-being will suffer the greatest hit.

WARNING SIGNS

While there seems to be no absolute way to predict if or when someone might act violently, there are certain general indicators we can look for. Rarely do violent outbursts occur with no warning or precursor events at all. There is often a lengthy build-up of some sort (a history), a catalyst event, followed by actions taken by the perpetrator. These indicators can often be found in observed behaviour, diaries, social media proclamations, spontaneous statements, espoused philosophies, and unusual worldviews. It can also sometimes be observed in the types of social circles with which the individual chooses to associate. Being or feeling socially ostracised is often a key indicator. While none of these indicators alone could ever be viewed as potentially increasing the likelihood of a violent event, several of these together may form an observable cluster that may tend to increase likelihood. For this reason, we may want to consider sensitising those adults, friends and family members who are associated with troubled adolescents who may exhibit some of these characteristics.

PERPETRATOR BACKGROUND

- ▶ Lack of strong family structure, few trusting relationships
- ▶ Parents exhibit modest involvement
Adolescent receives little or no praise or encouragement
- ▶ Exhibiting signs of despair and hopelessness
- ▶ History of neglect and/or abuse
- ▶ Series of run-ins with the law
- ▶ Drug and alcohol experimentation
- ▶ Difficulty in meeting academic standards
- ▶ Impulsive behaviour, anger management issues, often openly frustrated
- ▶ Poor coping skills
- ▶ Feelings of rejection and general social ostracisation
- ▶ Depression/anxiety/borderline personalities/psychopathic and sociopathic characteristics
- ▶ On various medications or perhaps in need of medication, drug titration issues
- ▶ Has alluded to violence being an acceptable means of dealing with a problem
- ▶ Animal abuse, starting fires
- ▶ Poorly structured/disconnected thinking
- ▶ General lack of respect for authority and rules
- ▶ Exertion of revenge fantasies and or getting back at someone for something

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Passive approaches have obviously not worked. Hoping that local or federal authorities will provide all the answers has not worked. Leaving critical security in the hands of well-intended school administrators who are neither selected nor well trained in this area has not worked. So, how do we organise schools to better protect themselves?

Before the 1950's school fires happened with far greater frequency than they do today. Why was this? What changed? We created a multi-pronged thoughtful and deliberate response. Fire alarms were installed, fire drills instituted, flame-retardant materials were used, policies were adapted and rewritten to help guide new thinking that would curb the frequency and likelihood of children perishing in school fires. Quite simply, we had reached our pain threshold, had enough, and took action. The same needs

to happen with respect to school shooters. Although some actions have been instituted already insofar as mitigating the risk of school shooters and general school violence, we obviously still have a long way to go in protecting our most valued asset – our children.

We cannot continue to do what we have always done, or we will get what we have always gotten. We must create a security culture that will help to properly sensitize faculty, staff, parents, and friends to a new kind of thinking. They need to know what to look for and how to react. We need to enforce and perhaps even modify gun laws, we need real and applicable psychological and background checks (not just rubber stamping applications), and training for faculty in first aid, triage, and speedy evacuation, perpetrator resistance, and recovery exercises. School staff and faculty must become more self-sufficient. An unfortunate truth is "when seconds count, police are 15 minutes away". Adding to this, an especially tragic statistic to keep in mind is that someone dies roughly every six seconds in an active school shooter event. No matter how well trained, or how speedy their response time, police are simply not on the scene when these situations start. The adults present in the school must be trained to conduct a coordinated and well-rehearsed response. In an event such as this, what you have onsite is all you have to work with. So, schools should begin to plan accordingly and not remain fully dependent on the arrival of police. They must become self-sustaining at least until the arrival of authorities.

Consider training staff on hand to react properly and efficiently since police and other first responders will be arriving several minutes after the incident is in motion. Typically, the first thing police do is to cordon off the area and form a 360-degree perimeter around the school, keep others from entering and await instructions from their chain of command. This rote response does little to help what's going on inside. The quicker this sort of situation is ended, the better the outcome - ALWAYS.

Teachers, parents, and communities have shown frustration with how little realistic and functional action has been taken. Those with whom we entrust our children need to be afforded the proper training opportunities and equipment that will best position them for success. While some teachers have self-selected and acted on the spot to save others, it would seem more would be better prepared if a more systemic approach were to be instituted. Training for teachers might include spotting/screening for behavioural



(Photo: Furman University)

outliers, basic security training and first aid training and equipment in every classroom. We should also consider well trained guards, proper physical security of school grounds, exit doors or windows leading out and away from classrooms and cordoning of halls to limit access or movement of the bad actor.

Part of the issue is that teachers are not drawn to the profession, not recruited, not selected, and trained based on how to prepare for emergencies, they are prepared to be teachers.

HELPFUL POINTS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Understanding of “Run, Hide, Fight, Tell.” Run if you can, Hide if you can’t leave, Fight if you must and Tell someone immediately
- ▶ See something, say something. Don’t be afraid of not being politically correct
- ▶ Raise the issue when you see something out of the ordinary (odd people, unusual cars, long covering gowns/coats)
- ▶ If the shooter is found guilty, the system should carry out his sentence IMMEDIATELY to discourage copycats. Lean toward maximum penalties.
- ▶ Municipalities could consider raising the age to purchase any firearm to at least 21 years of age
- ▶ Make gun safes and training a mandatory part of gun purchase (no exceptions)
- ▶ Mental health and cognisance checks for those who apply for weapons permits need to be deep and mandatory. Not just a basic records check, but rather an actual psychological evaluation. There will need to be some changes in the laws surrounding confidentiality of mental health treatments and other issues to ensure that disturbed individuals are prevented from acquiring weapons.



(Photo: The Apprentice Academy)

THE ROLE OF MEDIA

The media can also play a part in helping to limit the damage caused by this issue. They can ensure that they do not publish the name and photos of the shooter, as this encourages and magnifies the status and recognition of the perpetrator and his actions. Doing so might only serve to give them a place in history. This could be a motivating factor and may have also been one of their goals. Media can help by not showing police on television, SWAT teams, lights and sirens and news crews covering the event. This is too intriguing and could potentially motivate someone else thinking of committing similar crimes. It also serves to play to the egotistical needs of perpetrators. Media could help by not showing the same violent clips of horrific scenes repeatedly on every network for days and even weeks. This is far too stimulating for other potential wrongdoers and gives them a little more of what they might have initially been looking for. Don’t make the death toll the lead as perpetrators may wish to compare themselves with others in the past to fill some need for recognition or place in history. Sensationalising the story to gain listenership is also not helpful, i.e., the shooter rained down hell on the innocent students, he wore black or camouflage clothing with frightening military style weapons, etc. Also, not helpful from the media is when they use words like bloodbath, slaughter, carnage, murder, maimed and destroyed.

While less appealing to the media, making the story very matter of fact and playing down the sensational factors, will help to avoid copycat incidents.

CONCLUSION

Societal and cultural opposition to many of these changes is expected and will be strong. This especially includes the issues surrounding mental health laws and confidentiality. A true psychological evaluation of potential gun buyers will be difficult to implement, in part because of the expense involved. Changing the selection and training criteria for teachers throughout the entire educational system will be expensive. The supplementary training for teachers will be expensive.

Our children are worth this expense. Our society must make the decision to incur these expenses just as we did with fire safety back in the 1950’s. The life of a child is priceless.

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

Constellis' intelligence analysts and security consultants produce bespoke political and security reports, threat assessments and security risk assessments to inform decisions and to protect people and assets across the world.



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