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Waterways and Illicit Actors
Threatening Security in the African
Great Lakes Region**

Eliza M. Johannes

December 2013

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IDA Document NS D-5085

Log: H 13-001814



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**Reviewing the Relationships between Waterways
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African Great Lakes Region**

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Reviewing the Relationships between Waterways and Illicit Actors Threatening Security in the African Great Lakes Region

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Paper submitted for consideration to *Proceedings Magazine*, published by the U.S. Naval Institute (<http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings>).

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Abstract

The new millennium has witnessed increasing growth of piracy and other illicit activities along East Africa brown waterways, with national governments seeking to contain them, despite immense challenges. The paper uses case study descriptions of Lake Victoria and Congo River economies to outline how illicit brown-water activities (e.g., pirates, illicit traffickers, and warlords) impede wealth and progress in areas desperately needing both. In light of current trends, these examples serve as exemplars for the effect of illicit activities occurring in the Great Lakes Region (GLR). These examples support the argument that Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya—countries bordering Lake Victoria, along with the DRC, which contains the Congo River (and possibly the Central African Republic, Zambia, and other river basin countries)—must pursue concerted action together and with other international partners, such as the United States, to address the problem of destabilizing, illicit activities in brown waters. Such efforts will help to strengthen the projection of central government influence while bolstering weak national economies. This paper addresses three main objectives: (1) identify and assess illicit trafficking and piracy activities in Lake Victoria and the Congo River; (2) examine the potential impact of these activities on the local economy and the local population; and (3) identify the potential intervention options by national and international partners.

Introduction

The new millennium has witnessed increasing trends of piracy and other illicit activities along East Africa brown waterways (i.e., river or littoral areas), with national governments seeking to contain them, despite immense challenges. While much research and attention has been given to support execution of blue (the open ocean) and green (coastal areas) water operations for countering piracy and illicit trafficking in the Horn of Africa, the Somali coast, and Gulf of Aden, there is a paucity of research analyzing the prevalence and nature of piracy and illicit trafficking activities in African lakes and rivers. A general problem faced is that brown-water piracy has hampered local economies by hindering transport of goods, people as well as the provision of services, problems which the national authorities are unequipped to counter. Examples of populations struggling against these problems include those living around Lake Victoria, around Lake Tanganyika, and downstream from Mkanza along the Congo River (also known as “Congo’s highway”) in Mbandaka. The 2010 murder of a police chief and his wife in Mbandaka highlights how inept national, regional, and local authority are at combatting insecurity in brown waterways in the Great Lakes Region of Africa (GLR).

Just as international trade between African coastal countries, the Middle East, and Europe depends on the safe passage of goods in the ocean, trade between inland communities without reliable roadway infrastructures requires access to secure navigation routes across lakes and along rivers. This paper therefore describes the nature of brown water threats in the GLR of Africa and their various impacts on U.S. partners in the region; it reviews national and international efforts taken to address them; and it assesses where these efforts prevail and where they fall short. It concludes by identifying potential areas of cooperation for U.S. maritime forces in nontraditional areas, where increased partner capacity building would result in better security, enhanced stability, and stronger partner governments.

The paper uses case study descriptions of Lake Victoria and Congo River economies to outline how illicit brown-water activities (e.g., pirates, illicit traffickers, and warlords) impede wealth and progress in areas desperately needing both. In light of current trends, these examples serve as exemplars for the effect of illicit activities occurring in the GLR. These examples support the argument that Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya—countries bordering Lake Victoria, along with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which contains the Congo River (and possibly the Central African Republic, Zambia, and other river basin countries)—must pursue concerted action together and with other international partners, such as the United States, to address the problem of destabilizing, illicit activities in brown waters. Such efforts will help to strengthen the projection of central government influence while bolstering weak national economies. In an era where the United States is looking to African partners to play critical roles in the resolution of African problems, the strategic importance of countering illicit brown-water threats is even clearer.

Thus far, GLR countries and the United States have not consistently addressed the issue of brown-water threats in the region to a large degree; only lip service has been paid to the fishermen who encounter pirates and to denizens struggling to survive amid a sea of unrealized potential and wealth. National and international efforts must review current

efforts in the region and outside to consider new and rekindled approaches to tackling brown-water problems—some of which have existed for decades.

The Lake Victoria Basin

Lake Victoria, also known as Victoria Nyanza, is a source for the Nile River and the second largest freshwater lake in the world, after Lake Superior. It is a major fixture in the GLR of East Africa. Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya border the lake; while Burundi and Rwanda do not have any of its coastlines, they do fall into the lake's basin (see Figure 1). Internationally agreed-upon territorial boundaries designate 51% of the lake to Tanzania, 43% to Uganda, and 6% to Kenya.¹ The lake has approximately 26,828 square miles of surface area and approximately 2,000 miles of coastline.²



Source: Maritime Communication for safety on Lake Victoria (MCSLV) 2004

Figure 1: Lake Victoria and Its Basin

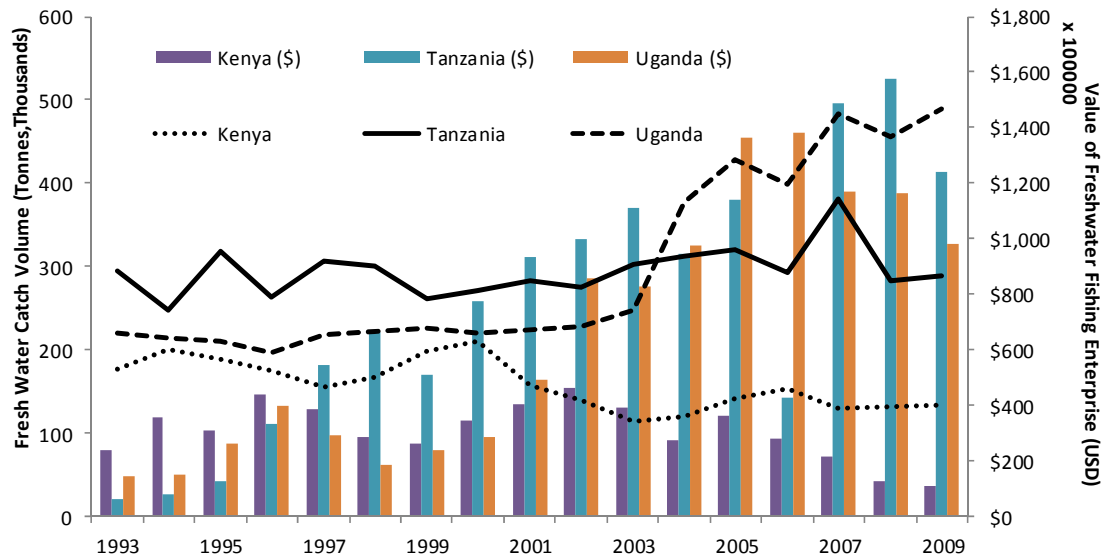
Lake Victoria is a major component to the economies of its surrounding countries. It has an abundance of fish (current estimates project over 200 different species), which supports local, regional, and international trade. Lake Victoria is often viewed as Africa's most important source of inland fishery production. In 2007, estimates described the lake as producing 500,000 metrics tons of catches annually.³ When considering the amount of fish captured in the lake in addition to its surrounding tributaries, the amounts are much higher. Figure 2 shows that in 2007, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya captured over 900,000

¹ Ofred Mhogole, "Microbiology and Spoilage Trail in Nile Perch (*Lates niloticus*)," Lake Victoria, Tanzania, University of Iceland, 2009, accessed September 15, 2013, <http://www.matis.is/media/utgafa/krokur/Mhogole.-Ofred-J.-M.-Thesis-on-MSc.-Food-Science-May-2009-sub.-at-UI.pdf>

² "Lake Victoria," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2013, retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/627661/Lake-Victoria>.

³ Eseza Kateregga and Thomas Sterner, "Indicators for an Invasive Species: Water Hyacinths in Lake Victoria," *Ecological Indicators* 7(2007): 362–370.

metric tons of freshwater fish for a total value of nearly \$300 million. Volume and value have fluctuated since, but overall economic contributions remain considerable.



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations
Figure 2: Fishing on Lake Victoria, Captured Tons and Total Sales

Fishing is part of an overall industry and is therefore one important element in a linked, interdependent economy. Lake Victoria and its basin contribute to the fishing industry (see Figure 3), along with agriculture, tourism, mining, commerce, and services among other economic sectors.

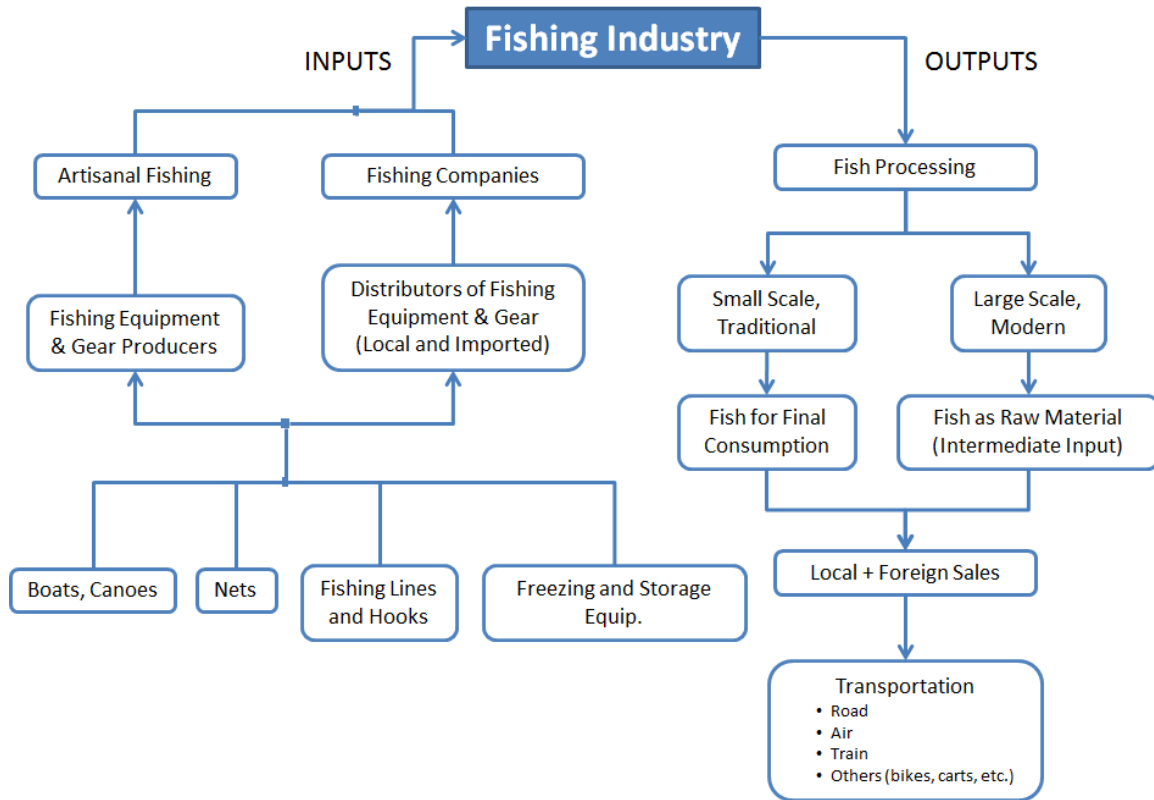
The Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) has pointed out that the lake and its basin boast a market of 84.1 million people within the East African Community (EAC). The region is strategic for attracting investment, as it is an ideal link between central Africa and other parts of the world.⁴ The EAC views Lake Victoria and its basin as an “area of common economic interest,” as well as the regional economic zone for development efforts. In 2012, EAC heads of states whose countries share the lake declared the intent to form a joint program for the overall management and rational utilization of the resources of the lake.⁵ An area needing attention is that of maritime security.

Maritime insecurity, specifically in the forms of piracy and illicit trafficking, hampers economic activity in the Lake Victoria basin. Although no concrete estimates for the negative effects are available, the consensus among state leaders is that they are appreciable and worth addressing. Not effectively wielding control over the entirety of internationally recognized, sovereign territory is one thing. Not doing so and losing economic benefits because of it is quite another. Later sections of this paper will describe

⁴ EAC, “Protocol for Sustainable Development of Lake Victoria Basin, Nairobi, Kenya,” 2003.

⁵ EAC, “The 2nd EAC Heads of State Retreat on Infrastructure Development and Financing,” Conference proceeding report held at Kenyatta International Conference Center, Nairobi, Kenya, November 29, 2012, on the theme of deepening EAC integration process through the development of efficient infrastructure systems to support trade and industrialization.

the security threats that Lake Victoria faces in addition to detailing how the U.S. military might work with its partners in the region to overcome these problems.



Source: Adapted from Kulindwa (2000)⁶

Figure 3: Lake Victoria and Its Fishing Industry

The Congo River Basin

At 3,000 miles in length, the Congo River is the fifth longest river in the world and Africa’s second longest after the Nile. Serving approximately 75 million people, it is the effective backbone of the DRC, a conflict-ridden country for over a decade. For the DRC, it is a vital source of food and a means for transportation. Few roads and even fewer sufficiently paved ones force many Congolese to rely on the river (easily navigable between Kinshasa and Kinsangani) as the primary method of shipping all manner of goods from Kinshasa upriver to the sprawling interior.⁷ Regionally, the Congo River along with its tributaries support approximately 9,000 miles of shipping routes to nine countries, including Zambia and Malawi (see Figure 4). Although securing territory throughout the Congo River Basin would seem straightforward given the presence of so many stakeholders, such is not the case. Combinations of “passing the buck” mentalities

⁶ Kassim Kulindwa, “The Contribution of Lake Victoria Fisheries to the Economy of Tanzania,” 2000, downloaded on November 6, 2013, <http://195.202.82.11/bitstream/handle/123456789/41/Contribution%20of%20Lake%20Victoria%20fisheries%20to%20the%20economy%20of%20Tanzania.pdf?sequence=1>.

⁷ “Commerce in Congo: A Mend in the River. With a Semblance of Peace, Trade is Flowing Again,” *The Economist*, 7 August 2003.

and competing interests among states combine to produce a significant maritime security challenge.



Source: Congo River, Wikipedia⁸

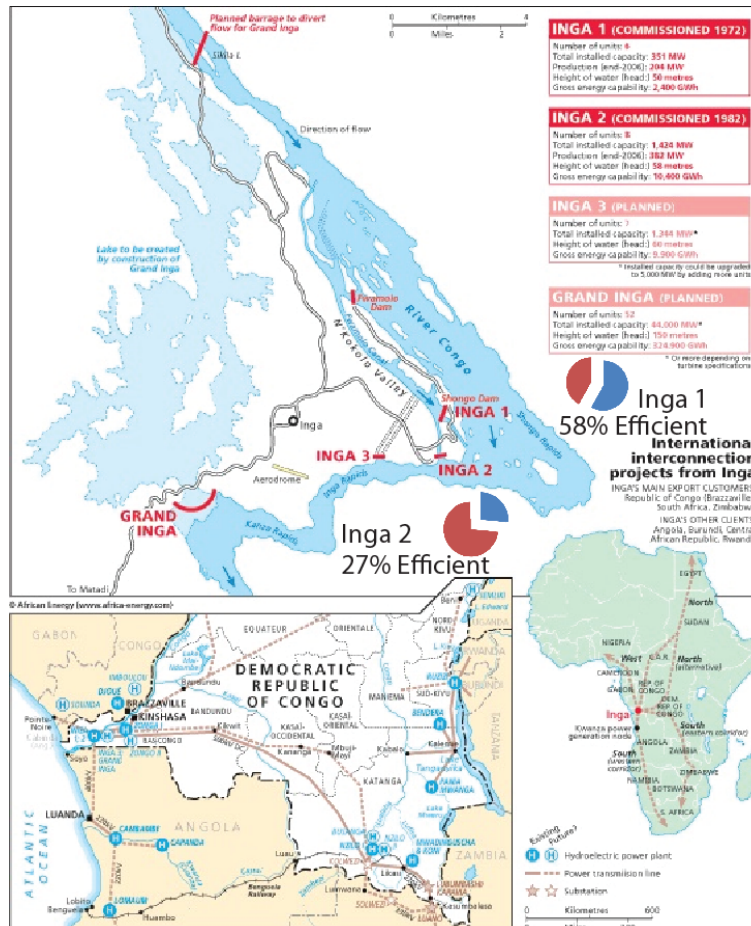
Figure 4: The Congo River and Its Basin

Supporting the flow of people and goods is an important attribute of the Congo River but not its most valuable. Wealth and other benefits (e.g., economic and infrastructure development) potentially garnered from hydroelectric power generation along the river are immense. Over the years, Congolese officials in combination with an array of national and international partners have variously described an ambitious effort that could ultimately produce more than 47,000 megawatts of power, according to estimates reported in *African Energy*.⁹ If fully realized, the Ingas 1-3 and Grand Inga projects would represent an increase of over 66% in power generation for the entire continent¹⁰ (see Figure 5). This amount of electricity could provide power to nearly 500 million people. The World Bank has forecast that completing and fully realizing phases of the project could provide significant catalysts to economic development locally and regionally. In addition, it could serve as a major source of state revenues from trade on the continent (especially to South Africa) and abroad to Europe.

⁸ "Congo River," *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_River

⁹ Located at: <http://www.africa-energy.com>.

¹⁰ The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, *Africa's Infrastructure: A Time for Transformation* (Washington, DC, 2010).



Source: Adapted from African Energy (<http://www.africa-energy.com>)

Figure 5: Deficits in Power and Efficiency, Current and Proposed Hydroelectric Power Projects along the Congo River

A problem, however, is that these figures are theoretical, as long as Inga 3 and Grand Inga remain in the planning stages. Scheduled to take place over six phases, work on Inga 3 (phase one) is not set to begin until October 2015, with the expectation it will take 5 years to complete.¹¹ Grand Inga, the largest power project, potentially netting the most benefits, does not have an official start date yet. Meanwhile, Inga 1 and Inga 2 (commissioned in 1972 and 1982, respectively), are operating but they are not doing so at full capacity. Figure 5 shows that Inga 1 is located at the top of the bend and is only 58% efficient. Inga 2 is located farther down and is only 27% efficient. Together, they combine to be no more than 33% efficient. A host of challenges are to blame; these include militia-borne insecurity, corruption, politics, and bureaucracy.

Illicit Activities on Lake Victoria and along the Congo River

It is reasonable to argue that the influx of light weapons supported by cash, diamonds, gold, and oil, among other commodities, did not start African wars; nevertheless, the influx has helped sustain and prolong them, in addition to making them

¹¹ "Industry Briefing: Congo (Democratic Republic) Alternatives: Quick View – World’s Largest Hydropower Scheme Is Taking Shape," *The Economist*, 16 August 2013.

more lethal. The GLR of East Africa has seen many conflicts, and they are cumulatively responsible for 7–10 million deaths. Furthermore, roughly 5 million out of the more than 45.2 million refugees in the world are in Africa. Of the approximately 29 million internally displaced people in the world, 10.4 million are in sub-Saharan Africa.¹² Armed conflicts contribute to political instability in the region, and there is no doubt they facilitate state collapse. For the case of the DRC, armed conflicts have resulted in more than 2.2 million displaced people.

Militias, rebel groups, and others similarly inclined have vested interests in promoting the persistence of instability throughout the regions.¹³ Arms and ammunition, among other illicit goods, make their way into the DRC with dealers crossing the Congo River on a daily basis.¹⁴ Illegal logging, often granted using falsified permits, is widespread in the country, and the most effective route to transport the hardwood is the Congo River.¹⁵ The GLR, no longer just a departure point and transit area for illicit goods, is now widely known as a destination and a hub for illegal commodities. Counterfeit medicines, drugs, small arms and light weapons, as well as human trafficking industries, have become prevalent and continue to expand as state resources for countering them are limited.

Lake Victoria

In Lake Victoria, illicit trafficking includes humans and drugs along with AK47, weapons among other small arms and light weapons.¹⁶ Some estimate that illicit traffickers buy, sell, and kidnap hundreds of children in Busia, an international area between Uganda and Kenya. According to Mr. Ouma, a beach management unit chairman at the Majanji landing site, the trafficking of children is due to the strategic location of the district, which is located at the Uganda-Kenya border, in an “invisible” or under-governed space where national and local authorities have no presence.¹⁷ The district probation officer adds that over 300 children in the municipality are trafficked annually through Busiro, Lugala, and Wakaka landing sites. As a sign of how economically attractive the fishing and mining industries on Lake Victoria are, many trafficked children are victims who succumbed to promises of positions in those industries in Buteba and Busitema sub-counties.

All the same, drug smuggling is the dominant form of illicit activity in the island areas of Remba, Ringiti, and the disputed Migingo Islands. Criminals, illicit traders, and

¹² UNHCR, “Internally Displaced People Figures,” accessed September 13, 2013, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c23.html>.

¹³ Jendayi E. Frazer, “Update on the Evolving Security Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Implications for U.S. National Security,” testimony of Jendayi E. Frazer, Distinguished Service Professor, Carnegie Mellon University, Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Before the House Armed Services Committee, 2012, accessed on September 13, 2013, http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=c1dda89c-a9c6-484a-affb-20c9175d5951.

¹⁴ S. Demetriou, R. Muggah, and I. Biddle, “Small Arms Availability, Trade and Impacts in the Republic of Congo,” *Small Arms Survey*, 2010.

¹⁵ *Presse Agence*, “Illegal Logging Ravages DR Congo Forests,” 2013, accessed September 12, 2013, <http://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2013/06/illegal-logging-ravages-dr-congo-forests>.

¹⁶ Benjamin Ochieng, “Smuggling of Goods in East Africa Killing Revenue Authorities,” 2009, accessed September 12, 2013, <http://www.africanpress.in/February%202009/SMUGGLING%20OF%20GOODS%20IN%20EAST%20AFRICA%20KILLING%20REVENUE%20AUTHORITIES.html>.

¹⁷ Racheal Ninsiima, “Children for Sale: Child Trafficking in Busia,” *The Observer*, August 21, 2011, accessed September 12, 2013, http://observer.ug/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14818&Itemid=59.

smugglers value their remote locations off the surrounding coasts, which makes them suitable points of refuge from authorities located on the mainland. Cannabis, heroin, and bhang make their way through other parts of the region via Lake Victoria. Remba, an island often referenced as an “island of no boundaries,” is known as a safe haven for drug traffickers. It is here that distribution throughout the region begins, as traffickers import drugs in bulk before further processing and repackaging them for shipment elsewhere.¹⁸ Signaling just how under-governed and lawless the islands have become are reports that local criminals have declared them to be independent.

Piracy is a category of illicit activity on Lake Victoria deserving individual attention, as its occurrences increase along the Tanzanian, Ugandan, and Kenyan sides of the lake. Fishermen have lost fishing vessels and engines to pirates who attack and harass them while they are on their fishing expeditions.¹⁹ Countries sharing Lake Victoria cannot engage in discussions of improving the fishing industry until they have sufficiently resolved piracy and illicit trafficking challenges dominating the regional lakes and rivers. Fishing organizations and institutions regularly report how pirates victimize fishermen. Cases of people missing have become common, and stolen boats remain a problem. A general fear hijacking and other crimes pervades the area and impedes the flow of licit goods and people. “There is anxiety amongst fishermen because of piracy as they hijack our equipment and take whatever resources they find,” said Mr. Salum, a fisherman from Mwanza.²⁰

Somali-type piracy was first reported taking place in Lake Victoria in 2000 when Tanzanian pirates attacked and killed Ugandan fishermen.²¹ Since then, cases of piracy have continued to dominate the region’s waterways and interrupt its economic flow. The recent attacks of September 3, 2013, in Kisaranzi Island, in Sengerema District attest to the fact that Lake Victoria has become an increasingly dangerous body of water for the communities who depend on it economically and industrially, as well as for transportation and other activities.²² Pirates stole boat engines (see Figure 6) from the fishermen worth 3.4 million Tanzania shillings (TZS) or \$2,120. As a sign of how embedded licit and illicit economies are around Lake Victoria, local Tanzanian authorities eventually retrieved the missing engines from drivers in Sengerema District who had mounted them on their buses.

¹⁸ UNODC, “Organized Crime and Trafficking in Eastern Africa: A Regional Ministerial Meeting on Promoting the Rule of Law and Human Security in Eastern Africa,” 2012,

¹⁹ D. Howden, “Migingo: Big trouble on Small Island. Uganda,” *The Independent*, March 23, 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/migingo-big-trouble-on-small-island-1651736.html>.

²⁰ Interview with Salum, local fishermen, Mwanza, Tanzania, February, 15, 2012.

²¹ Bernard Natha, “Piracy Risk as Region’s Common Marker Takes Shape,” *East African News Agency Media for Peace, Stability and Integration*, 2010.

²² *Pesa Times*, “Boat-Jacking Threatens Lake Victoria Safety,” <http://www.pesatimes.com/news/governance/boat-jacking-threatens-lake-victoria-safety/>.

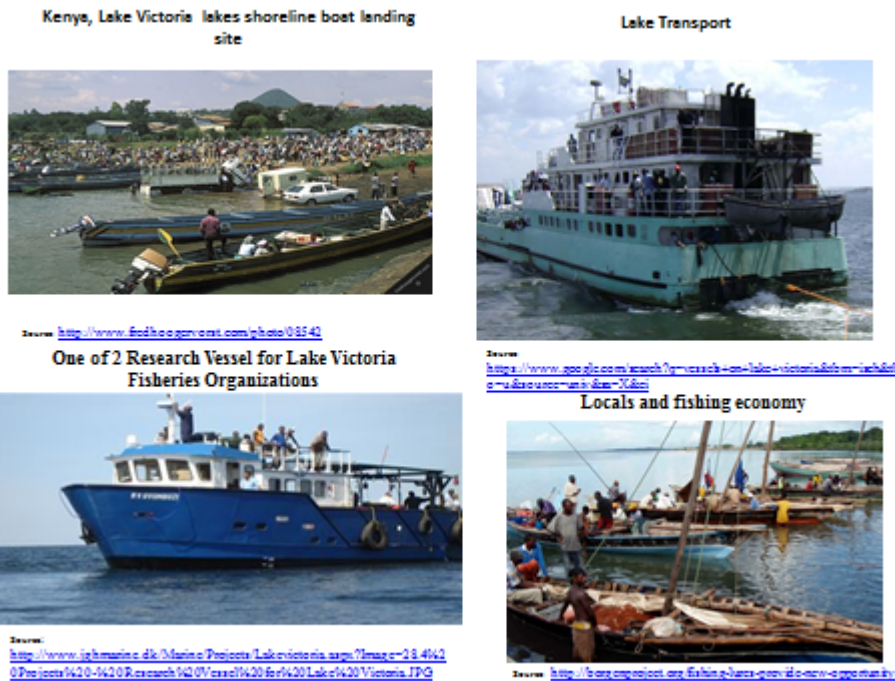


Figure 6: Vessels Attacked on Lake Victoria

A majority of pirates are said to have been local fishermen who have been robbed of their equipment themselves. In their frustration and when opportunities present itself, they attack other fishermen and on other occasions, accept jobs of transporting illicit items from the islands to the mainland to replace their fishing equipment. According to Kenyans interviewed, people crossing into Kenya from Tanzania are responsible for much of the observed piracy. Here, theft and transit of trawlers and *tembeas* (Swahili for “drifting”) constitute an illegal, international trade.²³

As pirate activities and attacks from others continue on Lake Victoria, it is becoming clearer that the lake is dangerous water for fishing vessels and local denizens alike.²⁴ Ugandan, Tanzanians, and Kenyans rely on the lake for transportation and as an economic resource. Debates on how to handle piracy and other illicit activities form an ongoing conversation among officials occupying multiples levels of government in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya; yet the three have little to show, in terms of concerted and effective, joint action. Practically nonexistent maritime and riverine security on the lake and throughout its surrounding basin allows traffickers, pirates, and others involved in illicit activities to operate with impunity and without fear of punishment.

The Congo River

The conflicts in the Congo have been a recurring problem and are not related to how much fish are left in the river; rather, the sources of conflict encompass many areas, including resources such as diamonds, petroleum, gold, coltan, timber, as well as disputes

²³ Interview with a Kenyan local fisherman, February 20, 2012.

²⁴ EAC, “Lake Victoria Basin Commission Secretariat: Maritime Communications for Safety on Lake Victoria (MCSLV)” (Kisumu, Kenya, 2012), 51.

over political conflicts, limited governance, and poverty.²⁵ For the DRC, a wealth of research attests to understanding that natural resources play major roles regarding the initiation and duration of civil as well as regional conflict. Given the location of the Congo River, communities along its path in the basin pay the price. Wars there involve groups of militia and combatants that are constantly on the move, taking partial control over towns and settlements before shifting to the next location. The constant movement of militias who exists outside state's control and the unpredictability of their actions have devastated populations on the riverbanks.²⁶ Uncertainty and conflict-driven chaos seriously compromise economic activity and development on the Congo River.

Another source of economic disruption and insecurity along the river is piracy. While it has existed for some time on regional lakes (e.g., Lake Tanganyika), reports of pirates operating out of Mbandaka on the Congo River first appeared in 2010. As the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) started its drawdown pullout of its Senegalese contingent from Dinglia, Northern DRC, reports surfaced that Congo had a new security threat. Authorities in Kinshasa, the capital, received information that acts of piracy had taken place on the Congo River. According to reports made on the local radio, Okapi, armed pirates carried out attacks on three boats leaving from Mbandaka, not far from the city of Makanza²⁷ (see Figure 7 for type of vessels pirates attack on the Congo River). Their destinations had been Kisangani and Akula. Consequences of the incidents varied. In one report, victims explained that the attackers demanded ransom as a condition of release. In another, pirates stole sheet metal slated for the constructing a health care center along the river. In an altogether separate incident, highlighting lawlessness along the river to the point that even local authorities are unsafe, pirates kidnapped and killed a village commissioner and his wife in Makanza. Despite these and other reports of Congo River insecurity, local and national authorities, along with their international partners, remain incapable of reliably responding to reported attacks and consistently securing the 3,000-mile long area.



Source. <http://alexengwete.blogspot.com/2010/04/new-security-nightmare-pops-up-in-drc.html>

Figure7: Fishing Vessels on the Congo River Targeted by Pirates

²⁵ *Worldwildlife*, "Congo Basin," 2013, retrieved from <http://worldwildlife.org/places/congo-basin>.

²⁶ J. Thomson and R. Kanaan, *Conflict Timber: Dimensions of the Problem in Asia and Africa. Volume I. Synthesis Report: Final Report Submitted to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)*, 2013.

²⁷ Alex Engwete, "A New Security Nightmare Pops up in the DRC: Piracy on the Congo River," 2010, accessed September 15, 2013. <http://alexengwete.blogspot.com/2010/04/new-security-nightmare-pops-up-in-drc.html>.

Conclusion: Thoughts and Reflections on Efforts to Stabilize Africa’s Brown Waters

U.S. military engagement for riverine activities on the African continent appears limited primarily to West Africa, particularly in countries such as Ghana, Senegal, and Nigeria. For example, on April 25, 2013, a contingent of U.S. military (4 Navy sailors and 14 Marines) trained a Senegalese Company Fusiliers Marine Commandos (COFUMACO) along with 2 Togolese representatives (see Figure 8).



Source: Marine Corps Forces Africa: U.S. Africa Command, <http://www.marforaf.marines.mil/News/NewsArticleDisplay/tabid/5697/Article/143335/us-marines-sailors-train-senegalese-companie-de-fusilier-commandos.aspx>

Figure 8: U.S. Marine Training Senegalese Marine Commandos, in Senegal

COFUMACO has the task of countering terrorism in the region, which it has managed to make considerable gains on, despite a paucity of resources.²⁸ Upon closer review, however, it is understandable that West Africa would indeed be somewhat advanced in protecting its brown waterways. Although challenges common to Africa such as low-intensity conflict, terrorism, and endemic poverty affect West African nations as well, cultures of riverine insurgency and counterinsurgency there extend back to the 1950s. This is when Portugal, a then-descending imperial power, sought to combat insurgents in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea.²⁹ Today, this spirit of wanting to preserve and wrest control of inland brown waters from those seeking to destabilize them is alive and strong in the countries of Nigeria, Senegal, and Ghana. Alignment of these perspectives of African leaders in the region with U.S. strategic interests (i.e., combatting terrorism and transnational organized crime) has produced many opportunities for training and development that have benefited the area. They stand as examples for what other regions on the continent might achieve provided similar degrees of attention and effort.

²⁸ M. Seavey, “Spartans of Senegal,” *The American Legion Magazine*, December 1, 2012.

²⁹ J. Cann, *Brown Waters of Africa: Portuguese Riverine Warfare, 1961-1974*. Solihull, United Kingdom: Helion & Company.

During the 21st century, the U.S. military has not been the only force seeking to assist in the stabilization of African brown waters; however, its emphasis of “by Africans, for Africans” is a perspective that has been learned from failings in the past. Thirteen years ago, in 2001, the United Nations Mission in the DRC (MONUC) received the first shipment of fast patrol boats. The goal was to secure the Congo River for the shipment of humanitarian aid between Kinshasa and Kisangani and—by extension—other forms of legal trade such as gold, cobalt, copper and timber, among others in the basin (see Figure 9).³⁰



Source: MONUC (www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/monuc)

Figure 9: United Nations Mission in the DRC (MONUC) Efforts to Stabilize Transport on the Congo River

Irrespective of how successful support to the secure transport of lawful goods might have been at that time, the gains were fleeting because it was a Uruguayan force and not a Congolese one (or that of some other African stakeholder) responsible for executing the mission. Although the MONUC pursued riverine operations with the intention of stabilizing and securing the Congo River, as reports in this paper make clear, piracy and illicit activities continued whenever the operations did not take place and re-emerged when they did once attention shifted elsewhere.³¹ Ultimately, outside assistance that did not impart skills, expertise, and knowledge to Congolese responsible for the area effectively resulted in no assistance at all. Before there can be a way, there must be a will.

The Fourth East African Community (EAC) development strategy for 2011 through 2016 includes broader priorities and initiatives for the region. In addition, in 2012, the Lake Victoria Basin Commission addressed maritime security and the need to adapt policies and measures to address ongoing maritime security in Lake Victoria. It officially cites piracy as a problem requiring immediate attention from the three countries sharing the lake, and it emphasizes the need to accelerate economic growth, social development, and EAC regional integration. Other points of emphasis included addressing ongoing maritime security and improving global competitiveness for rapid and sustainable economic growth. Enabling the status of industrialization of the region appear to be a priority for the EAC. “It is important for the East African Community

³⁰ United Nations Department of Public Information, “First Patrol Boats for Congo River Arrive in Kinshasa, UN Mission says,” 2001, <http://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/first-patrol-boats-congo-river-arrive-kinshasa-un-mission-says>.

³¹ Lawrence Smith, “MONUC’s Military Involvement in the Eastern Congo (Maniema and the Kivus),” 2004, <http://www.issafrika.org/uploads/SMITH.PDF>.

(EAC) partner states to intervene in the growing piracy problem in Lake Victoria,” says Fumbaka, a maritime transport safety and security officer of the Lake Victoria Basin Commission.³² Recognition of these issues as priorities is important, but the EAC did not outline how to implement these measures and policies. Without action, ideas for the efforts remain words on paper.

A potential model for action supported by the U.S. military, in addition to those taking place in West Africa, is the Africa Partnership Station (APS). It is an international initiative developed by the United States Naval Forces Europe and Africa that works cooperatively with American and international partners to enhance African maritime security. APS can serve as a precedent for understanding and shaping similar efforts inland in the GLR. Nonetheless, brown-water operations present a variety of challenges distinguishing them as well. There are possible legal, policy (political), and materiel resource challenges (logistical, financial) that may act as hurdles to such joint efforts. Basin-wide management of international watercourses is generally effected through treaties, which may be bilateral or multilateral in nature. Further, states in the region may be willing to cooperate toward basin-wide security but regime survival and the power struggles between protagonists in the regions in question will pose challenges. Some weak governments in Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes Region are more concerned with protecting regime interests, potentially making watercourse security cooperation and management a farfetched policy course to pursue on their part. Others may be technically, logistically, and financially inept. The stark reality is that brown waters are and do hold the potential to be ungovernable and potential havens for human trafficking, arms smuggling, illicit drugs transit, terror and cross-border banditry flows, and potential hideouts for inland pirates and other categories of transnational crime. Against this background, the role and place of U.S. involvement at various levels, local, national, regional, cannot be overemphasized.

³² Interview with Fumbaka, LV Maritime Transport safety and security officer, February 15, 2013.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 17-12-2013			2. REPORT TYPE IAD Final		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Reviewing the Relationships between Waterways and Illicit Actors Threatening Security in the African Great Lakes Region					5a. CONTRACT NUMBER DASW01-04-C-0003	
					5b. GRANT NUMBER — — — —	
					5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER — — — —	
6. AUTHOR(S) Eliza M. Johannes					5d. PROJECT NUMBER IAD OH	
					5e. TASK NUMBER — — — —	
					5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER — — — —	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Institute for Defense Analyses 4850 Mark Center Drive Alexandria, Virginia 22311-1882					8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER NS D-5085 H 13-001814	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Institute for Defense Analyses 4850 Mark Center Drive Alexandria, Virginia 22311-1882					10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
					11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) — — — —	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited (28 January 2014).						
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES — — — —						
14. ABSTRACT The new millennium has witnessed increasing growth of piracy and other illicit activities along East Africa brown waterways, with national governments seeking to contain them, despite immense challenges. The paper uses case study descriptions of Lake Victoria and Congo River economies to outline how illicit brown-water activities (e.g., pirates, illicit traffickers, and warlords) impede wealth and progress in areas desperately needing both. In light of current trends, these examples serve as exemplars for the effect of illicit activities occurring in the Great Lakes Region (GLR). These examples support the argument that Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya—countries bordering Lake Victoria, along with the DRC, which contains the Congo River (and possibly the Central African Republic, Zambia, and other river basin countries)—must pursue concerted action together and with other international partners, such as the United States, to address the problem of destabilizing, illicit activities in brown waters. Such efforts will help to strengthen the projection of central government influence while bolstering weak national economies. This paper addresses three main objectives: (1) identify and assess illicit trafficking and piracy activities in Lake Victoria and the Congo River; (2) examine the potential impact of these activities on the local economy and the local population; and (3) identify the potential intervention options by national and international partners.						
15. SUBJECT TERMS brown water, Great Lakes Region, GLR, Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC, Lake Victoria						
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 18	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Philip Major	
a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 703-845-2201	