

Tanker seized in seas off Abidjan

ABIDJAN, COTE D'IVOIRE - Pirates seized a Panama-flagged oil tanker which was anchored in the Ivory Coast's economic capital of Abidjan, authorities said on Monday (21 January).

A statement from Abidjan port authorities said "armed individuals" hijacked the vessel *Itri* last Wednesday (16 January). The ship, which was due to discharge 5,000 tons of oil, was unable to put out a distress call in time for a rescue. It was later located off neighbouring Ghana, the port authorities said.

Authorities said a crisis team has been established for the hijacked vessel and its crew, adding that "the highest military and civilian authorities" are involved in handling the case.

In October, a Greek tanker in Abidjan was hijacked by pirates who looted the vessel before releasing it. Piracy attacks in west Africa have mostly taken place in Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer, but they have recently increased in the waters off Benin.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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