

ReCAAP ISC

PIRACY AND SEA ROBBERY

CONFERENCE
2023

27 APRIL 2023
SINGAPORE



Jointly Organized by:



Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), and the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC)

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) is the first regional government-to-government agreement to promote and enhance cooperation against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia. The Agreement entered into force on September 4, 2006 with 14 Asian countries as Contracting Parties, and the Information Sharing Centre established on November 29, 2006. To date, 21 States (14 Asian countries and 7 non-Asian countries) have become Contracting Parties to ReCAAP. To fulfil its vision as the Information Hub for combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia, ReCAAP ISC enhances regional cooperation through information sharing, capacity building and cooperative arrangements. At the 12th Governing Council Meeting in 2018, the Council announced that ReCAAP ISC has met the criteria to be a “Centre of Excellence” for information sharing in combating piracy and armed robbery at sea. For more information about ReCAAP ISC, please visit www.recaap.org.

BIMCO

BIMCO is the world’s largest international shipping association, with around 2,000 members in more than 120 countries, representing 56% of the world’s tonnage. Our global membership includes shipowners, operators, managers, brokers and agents. BIMCO is a non-profit organisation.



INTERTANKO

International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO)

INTERTANKO is the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners, a forum where the industry meets, policies are discussed and best practices developed.

INTERTANKO has been the voice of independent tanker owners since 1970, ensuring that the liquid energy that keeps the world turning is shipped safely, responsibly and competitively. As of January 2023, the organisation has 180 Members, whose combined fleet comprises over 3,900 tankers totalling nearly 360 million dwt.

INTERTANKO's Associate Membership stands at some 234 companies and organisations related to the tanker industry. Visit www.intertanko.com for more details.



S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) is a global think tank and professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. An autonomous school, RSIS' mission is to be a leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic and international affairs in the Asia Pacific. With the core functions of research, graduate education, and networking, it produces research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-traditional Security, Cybersecurity, Maritime Security and Terrorism Studies.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 27 April 2023, the Piracy and Sea Robbery Conference – 2023 was held at Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre, Singapore. The annual conference, organised by ReCAAP ISC jointly with BIMCO, INTERTANKO and RSIS, provided a platform for international and local shipping associations, shipping companies, enforcement agencies and academic experts to share information and best management practices in dealing with piracy and armed robbery against ships (PAR) in Asia and beyond. Held in conjunction with Singapore Maritime Week 2023, the conference was attended by over 100 participants and provided an opportunity to foster confidence, trust and cooperation among various maritime stakeholders.

The Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization, Mr Kitack Lim made a special appearance at the Conference to address the audience with an overview on the recent developments in the maritime environment globally and in the region. He appreciated ReCAAP ISC for its commitment in addressing PAR through effective information sharing; and commended all participants at the Conference for their relentless efforts in overcoming the challenges posed by the threat of PAR.

The consensus shared among the participants at the Piracy and Sea Robbery Conference – 2023 was that, whilst the impact of maritime piracy and armed robbery has declined compared to the early 2000s, caution must still be taken. All maritime stakeholders must exercise vigilance and more could be done to eradicate incidents of PAR in the Asian region.

From the perspective of maritime and shipping industry stakeholders, PAR remains a threat to the safety of seafarers. Although PAR incidents in Asia are comparatively less severe in comparison to other maritime criminal activities such as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and illegal human smuggling; the rate of PAR incidents has increased in recent years (though of low severity in nature). However, this is of concern as these incidents put the lives and safety of crew members at risk.

The regional enforcement agency representatives agreed that cooperation among all agencies is required to ensure safety and security in the Southeast Asian region. Enhanced communication is necessary to build trust amongst the regional maritime agencies and the maritime and shipping industry.



Mr Kitack Lim, Secretary-General of IMO addresses the audience



Speakers at the Conference



Participants attending the Conference

OPENING ADDRESS

CG Admiral Artemio M Abu
Chairperson of ReCAAP ISC Governing Council /
Commandant, Philippine Coast Guard



In his opening remarks, CG Admiral Artemio M Abu, Chairperson of the ReCAAP ISC Governing Council / Commandant of the Philippine Coast Guard, welcomed and rendered his warmth gratitude to the participants from international shipping organisations, the regional law enforcement authorities, international organisations, members of the academies for attending the conference, as well as his appreciation to BIMCO, INTERTANKO and RSIS for co-organising the event.

CG Admiral Abu mentioned the importance of the annual Conference which served as a platform for ship owners, shipping associations and enforcement agencies to discuss on how stakeholders can synergise and work together to counter, and combat piracy and armed robbery against ships in the region. He added that the conference, focussing on discussion, comprised of an extended panel discussion in two segments to deliberate on the importance of partnership in ensuring safe and secure maritime environment for mariners. The panel will examine the different roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in incident reporting and law enforcement, and how the different agencies can work together in ensuring timely reporting of incidents, information sharing, and prompt responses.

The Chairperson also provided an overview of the piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia, and added that there was no incident involving the abduction of crew in the Sulu-Celebes seas which was made possible through the trilateral efforts of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. However, he noted that the Singapore Strait has been an area of concern given the reported rise of PAR incidents in 2023. CG Admiral Abu urged the concerned littoral States to enhance surveillance and enforcement. On the other hand, CG Admiral Abu lauded the efforts of other littoral states in bringing down the numbers of incidents in their respective waters.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr Heike Deggim

Director of the Maritime Safety Division,
International Maritime Organization (IMO)



Dr Heike Deggim, Director of the Maritime Safety Division at the International Maritime Organization (IMO), delivered the keynote address on behalf of its Secretary General, Mr Kitack Lim.

In her address, she recognised the excellent work done by the ReCAAP ISC and the achievements made since 2006, demonstrated by the growing numbers of Contracting Parties to the ReCAAP Agreement, which contributes greatly to ReCAAP’s mission of enhancing regional cooperation through information sharing, capacity building, and cooperative arrangements in combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia.

Dr Deggim encouraged the ReCAAP ISC to continue to play a leading role in driving regional initiatives to ensure safety and security of navigation in the region, aligned with the IMO’s objectives.

She commended and expressed gratitude towards the work of ReCAAP ISC, a “Centre of Excellence” for information sharing. She added that the reports produced periodically by ReCAAP ISC are useful for IMO and other partners in developing programmes and initiatives to promote maritime security.

Speaking as the Secretariat for IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee, Dr Deggim was most thankful for ReCAAP ISC’s active participation in the Committee’s meeting. The Centre’s regular updates are helpful to the Committee and other international organisations.

In the African region, she shared some best practices on cooperation such as the Djibouti Code of Conduct and the Jeddah amendment that leads to the significant decrease of incidents in Africa. In conclusion, Dr Deggim urged the Centre to focus on enhancing timely and accurate information sharing between ReCAAP ISC, ReCAAP Focal Points, regional authorities and the maritime community to enable timely response and accurate analysis, and to promote situational awareness among key stakeholders. She further urged ReCAAP ISC to continue organising workshops and meetings aim at building regional capacity to counter the menace of piracy and armed robbery against ships.

TACKLING PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AT SEA – SHIPPING INDUSTRY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Vice Admiral (Retired) Pradeep Chauhan
Director General of the National Maritime Foundation, India



Vice Admiral (Retired) Pradeep Chauhan, Director General of the National Maritime Foundation, shared his view of the Indian perspective that whilst PAR remained a concern in the Southeast Asian region; illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a bigger concern as a whole. But this doesn't mean incidents will not occur. Hence, he cautioned New Delhi not to become complacent given the recent PAR incident had occurred off the west coast of India. He stressed that India has been proactive to ensure that the number of attacks remains low through India's re-invigoration of its international maritime outreach. Vice Admiral (Retired) Chauhan also expressed the limitations of the jurisdiction of the different Coast Guards of the world in addressing the issue of PAR.

Vice Admiral (Retired) Chauhan was pleased to mention India's engagement with international agencies. He added that India has joined Japan, Norway, the UK, and the USA as an observer to the 2017 Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC), an associate partner to the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in April 2022, and recognising the potential value of an INDOMALPHI-like exercise in the Indian Ocean Region. In his slides, Vice Admiral (Retired) Chauhan presented the eastern African region where different information sharing centres and Regional Coordination Centre for Maritime Operations (RCOCs) are developing under the Indian Ocean Commissions edges. He added that India had deployed some frigates in the Western Indian Ocean and participated in some capacity building exercises.

Vice Admiral (Retired) Chauhan updated on the CMF, wherein he mentioned that during the India-US 2+2 meeting held in April 2022, India announced that it would join the CMF. Comprised of three task forces, CMF is a 34 nation US-led naval partnership to promote security, stability and prosperity across approximately 3.2 million square miles of international waters, which encompasses some of the world's important shipping lanes. India had continuously sent warships to join the series of exercises, and these exercises were geared towards counter-maritime crimes at sea, and cultivate confidence within the merchant shipping community, both at the ship level and company level.

He also talked about the recent India's enactment of the Maritime Anti-Piracy Act, 2022, which came into Force on 22 February 2023. It has been enacted to give effect to UNCLOS (1982) provisions relating to the repression of piracy on the high seas for matters connected therewith or incident thereto. The Act enables India to implement death penalty on pirates.

PANEL DISCUSSION - PARTNERSHIP TO ENSURE SAFE AND SECURE SEAS

Two Panel Discussions to discuss the perspective of maritime piracy and armed robbery from the shipping industry and law enforcement agencies

PANEL DISCUSSION 1:

Shipping Industry Stakeholder's Perspective on Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery

The shipping industry stakeholders shared their views that the PAR threat is an ever-present concern. The speakers represented three specific industry stakeholders - BIMCO, INTERTANKO, and the BW Group. They agreed that the rate of reports regarding maritime piracy and armed robbery in Asia has been low compared to other maritime threats, such as IUU Fishing and maritime accidents. Globally, there was less concern regarding PAR in Southeast Asia compared to the Gulf of Guinea, where PAR remains a serious threat. Nevertheless, they warned that the various maritime stakeholders must remain vigilant, as 2023 has brought an increased number of incident reporting, already surpassing the entire year of 2022.



Panel Discussion 1 - Captain Geoffrey Pearson (1st from left), Mr Ashok Srinivasan (2nd from left), Ms Jane Chan (Moderator), and Mr Elfian Harun (extreme right)



BIMCO

Mr Ashok Srinivasan

Manager, Maritime Safety & Security

Mr Ashok Srinivasan stated that his organisation viewed PAR as a significant problem. However, he noted that the reported incidents in Southeast Asia were mainly petty thefts and armed robberies, with no reports of hijackings of ships or kidnappings of crew members. He explained that the primary difference between the Gulf of Guinea and Southeast Asia was that the coastal states in the Gulf of Guinea depend on external actors' assets to intervene and stop these actions, whereas, in Southeast Asia, the local littoral States work together in combating PAR. The ASEAN member States have better inter-agency and inter-state collaborations to more effectively counter PAR.



INTERTANKO

Mr Elfian Harun

Regional Manager Southeast Asia & Environment Manager

Mr Elfian Harun shared similar views with the BIMCO representative. INTERTANKO also viewed PAR as an ongoing threat to the interests of the maritime stakeholders despite their decreased presence in the region. Mr Elfian remarked that INTERTANKO's Members are concerned that the slight increase in PAR reports in the region may highlight the inadequacies of the authorities in tackling the crime. He suggested a greater frequency of border patrols to better combat these incidents and called for increased information sharing among maritime stakeholders. Mr Elfian argued that information and partnership are keys to foster trust between seafarers and state maritime border authorities.

BW GROUP



Captain Geoffrey Pearson

General Manager and Global Head of Fleet Security

Captain Geoffrey Pearson stated seafarers' safety and security is BW Group's utmost responsibility. He advocated for the absolute necessity of prioritizing the safety of crew against PAR. For the BW Group, the safety protocol and procedures should be one of the most important functions that any crew must follow in case of an incident. He stressed that it is mandatory that all ships owned by the BW Group to report on PAR incidents immediately and that absolute compliance is a must. At the same time, he explained that statistics show that criminals only target the slow and ill-prepared ships; as they were most vulnerable.

PANEL DISCUSSION 2:

State Enforcement Agency's Perspective on Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery

The representatives of Southeast Asian Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies (MLEA) expressed confidence in their ability to handle the current increase in PAR incidents while calling for improved cooperation, especially between their forces and the commercial sector. The three speakers, representing MLEA agencies of Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore, agreed that regional cooperation and increased collaboration with other maritime stakeholders are of key importance to better enforce the region.



Panel Discussion 2 – Colonel Augustine Lim (1st from left), Rear Admiral Gregorius Agung W.D., M.Tr (Han) (2nd from left), Ms Jane Chan (Moderator), and Commodore Jay T Tarriela (extreme right)

REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE NAVY (RSN)



Colonel Augustine Lim

Commander, Maritime Security Task Force (MSTF) and MARSEC Command of RSN

Colonel Augustine Lim highlighted the strategic importance of the island nation as providing the key context regarding how Singapore views PAR as a threat to its national security. The Singapore Strait is one of the busiest in the world, with around 70% of the global maritime economy passing along its length, the second-highest volume of oil transported through any checkpoint, and around 130,000 vessels transiting each year. Therefore, safeguarding the strait is challenging for a small State like Singapore with finite resources. He observed that the current PAR spike in incidents could be traced to a consistent pattern of behaviour. The criminals operate seasonally, adjusting to the calendar of monsoons or festivities, and target vessels in locations where there are potential gaps in security oversight. The most targeted type of ships were bulk carriers. He explained that most of the perpetrators avoid confrontation and usually flee when confronted, unlike attacks in the Gulf of Guinea. He stated that the RSN will continue to collaborate with the Singapore Police Coast Guard and other MARSEC agencies, as well as closely cooperate with regional partners and actively support activities such as Coordinated Patrols Indonesia-Singapore, Malacca Straits Patrols, and the Maritime Security Info-sharing Exercise.



BAKAMLA

Rear Admiral Gregorius Agung W.D., M. Tr (Han)
Deputy of Policy and Strategy for BAKAMLA

Rear Admiral Gregorius Agung W.D., M. Tr (Han) stated that Jakarta faces similar issues as Singapore regarding PAR. Hence, Indonesia continues to operate BAKAMLA under Government Regulation No.13 Year 2022 as Indonesia's Coordinator for Maritime Security, Safety and Law Enforcement Cooperation. He explained that Indonesia requires the construction of a national policy for Maritime Security, Safety and Law Enforcement. He stressed Indonesia's continued efforts to enhance its maritime security, including through the activities of the Maritime Security and Safety Information Centre Task Force and the Coordinating Ministry for Politics, Law and Security under Decree No. 55 Year 2022 on Maritime Security, Safety and the Law Enforcement Forum. He also highlighted that Indonesia hosted the first Heads of the ASEAN Coast Guard Meeting in Bali in November 2022, with representatives of five-member States attending, as a path to improve coordination and push back against PAR. He expressed hope that the ASEAN Coast Guard Forum can be institutionalized in 2023.



PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD (PCG)

Commodore Jay T Tarriela
Deputy Chief of Coast Guard Staff for Personnel and Maritime Security Adviser to the Commandant of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)

Commodore Jay T Tarriela was confident of Manila's improving maritime domain capacity to combat PAR. He explained that the PCG is proactively collaborating with its partners and allies to better counter these threats, with the objective of enhancing the interoperability, particularly in the Tri-border area, a shared boundary of the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. He discussed PCG's efforts to strengthen its bilateral partnerships including efforts to establish a memorandum of understanding with Indonesia's maritime agencies; and cooperation with the US and Japan to conduct joint training and capacity building activities. The PCG also plays an active role in strengthening multilateral and other global initiatives to create a more secure environment for the various maritime stakeholders.

Panel Discussions

The pertinent points of the discussion are as follows:

- a. **Improving the efficacy of enforcement operations in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS).** Industry stakeholders suggested increasing the frequency of coordinated patrols from MLEAs in the region. Panellists also discussed the need to further streamline responses and reporting protocols in order to reduce delays.
- b. **Best practices for information sharing during PAR incidents.** The panellists identified 'immediate report' as the key best practice during a PAR incident. They stated that it is within the responsibility of the master and crew to take action. It was also pointed out that the crew could use their marine VHF radio to alert nearby ships of incidents. If this fails to deter the attack, crew members should barricade themselves within the ship's citadel room and call for help. Representatives stressed that they would like to see the process of reporting incidents to be further simplified and streamlined in order to further increase the efficiency and timeliness of reporting.
- c. **Coastal States provision of port security.** Panellists held divergent views on the level of port securities within the region but concur that port security is an important element when considering the safety and security of regional waters. The respective law enforcement agencies represented were committed to working collaboratively with their relevant counterparts.
- d. **The prospects of MLEAs to strengthen their capabilities and expand engagement with the maritime industry.** Panellists were confident about the trajectories of the MLEA development in the region with room for further regional cooperation and opportunities to engage the maritime industry. Industry representatives were supportive of the proposal of an ASEAN Coast Guard Forum.

CLOSING ADDRESS

Mr Krishnaswamy Natarajan
Executive Director, ReCAAP ISC



Mr Krishnaswamy Natarajan, Executive Director of the ReCAAP ISC, in his closing remarks highlighted the main takeaway from the Conference is that combating PAR incident, a transnational maritime crime, is not the sole responsibility of the coastal State, international organisation or shipping industry, but a common responsibility shared by all. Building trust and confidence among stakeholders is necessary to promote cooperation, collaboration and information sharing, which is the most effective way forward to reduce the occurrence of PAR incidents in Asia.

Mr Natarajan highlighted two incidents that illustrated the importance of partnership in ensuring safe and secure seas for the seafarers. The first incident involved an Indonesia-flagged cargo ship which lost communication with its company and reported missing on 11 November 2022. The ReCAAP ISC raised an Incident Alert to the ReCAAP Focal Points and shipping community to lookout for the missing ship. Through information sharing by a Focal Point, the ship was found and discovered that it encountered technical difficulty which render her unable to operate in normal mode. The ship was subsequently rescued with all 15 crew on board on 15 November 2022, and taken to safety. The second incident involved a Singapore-flagged tanker boarded by pirates off the Ivory Coast on 10 April 2023. Due to the communication and collaboration among agencies, the 20 crew was rescued and the ship recovered.

These incidents clearly bring to fore the coordinated effort, cooperation, and collaboration of all stakeholders, namely the government authorities, enforcement agencies, Information Fusion Centre (IFC), ReCAAP ISC Focal Points, and shipping industry during the hour of need. It is the only way forward to collectively address the issue of PAR, and to ensure safe and secure passage for mariners.

The ReCAAP ISC is committed to closely monitor the situation and respond quickly to emerging threats or increasing trend of incidents. With a mindset of shared responsibility, whether it is maintaining vigilance, enhancing patrols, or filing timely and accurate incident reports, the efforts are towards reducing the occurrence of PAR incidents in Asia.

PROGRAMME

Time	Event
0800 hrs	Registration
0830 hrs	Opening Address CG Admiral Artemio M Abu Chairperson, ReCAAP ISC Governing Council / Commandant, Philippine Coast Guard
0840 hrs	Keynote Address (Pre-recorded video) Dr Heike Deggim Director, Maritime Safety Division, International Maritime Organization (IMO)
0850 hrs	Tackling Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea – Shipping Industry & Law Enforcement Vice Admiral (Retired) Pradeep Chauhan Director General, National Maritime Foundation, India
0905 hrs	Partnership to Ensure Safe and Secure Seas Panel 1: Shipping Industry's Perspective on Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery Moderator: Ms Jane Chan Senior Fellow & Coordinator of Maritime Security Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) Panellists: Mr Ashok Srinivasan Manager, Maritime Safety & Security, BIMCO Mr Elfian Harun Regional Manager Southeast Asia & Environment Manager, INTERTANKO Captain Geoffrey John Pearson General Manager, Global Head of Security, BW Group
1020 hrs	Coffee/Tea break

Time	Event
1040 hrs	<p data-bbox="443 409 1086 443">Partnership to Ensure Safe and Secure Seas</p> <p data-bbox="443 488 1449 562">Panel 2: State Enforcement Agency's Perspective on Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery</p> <p data-bbox="443 595 1473 745">Moderator: Ms Jane Chan Senior Fellow & Coordinator of Maritime Security Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)</p> <p data-bbox="443 763 1453 1133">Panellists: COL Augustine Lim Commander Maritime Security Task Force (MSTF) / MARSEC Command, Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) Rear Admiral Bakamla Gregorius Agung W.D., M.Tr(Han) Deputy for Policy and Strategy, BAKAMLA CG COMMO Jay T Tarriela Deputy Chief of Coast Guard Staff for Personnel (CG-1), Philippine Coast Guard / Maritime Security Adviser to CPCG</p>
1145 hrs	<p data-bbox="443 1200 834 1234">Presentation of Mementos</p>
1155 hrs	<p data-bbox="443 1305 898 1417">Closing Address Mr Krishnaswamy Natarajan Executive Director, ReCAAP ISC</p>
1200 hrs	<p data-bbox="443 1473 715 1507">End of Conference</p>

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**Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy
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