

19 January 2020



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# Incident Alert

## Abduction of Crew from fishing boat

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**Incident Alert** : 02/2020

**Name and Type of Ship** : Fishing trawler, SSK 00543

**Date/Time of incident** : 17 January 2020 at about 1500 hrs (local time)

**Area Description** : Approximately 4.24 nm northwest of Pulau Tambisan, Lahad Datu, Sabah, Malaysia

## Detail of Incident

The Philippine Coast Guard (ReCAAP Focal Point) reported to the ReCAAP ISC that six gunmen dressed in black suits with masks used a grey speedboat with twin engine (40 HP) and abducted eight crew from a Malaysia-registered fishing trawler (with marking SSK 00543). The fishing trawler was found abandoned and with no crew on board on 17 January 2020 at about 1500 hrs at approximately 4.24 nm off Pulau Tambisan, Lahad Datu, Sabah, Malaysia. On 18 January 2020, the Malaysian authorities reported that they had recovered three of the eight missing crew in the vicinity of Lahad Datu, Sabah.

The Philippine authorities were conducting maritime patrols in the area, particularly near the Sulade island (which was believed to be the staging area of the perpetrators). The Philippine and Malaysia authorities are stepping up their patrol efforts, conducting pursuit operations and intensifying its military operation to locate the five abducted Indonesian crew.



Location of the abandoned fishing trawler SSK 00543



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**Reported by:** Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)

## Comments

This is the first abduction of crew incident reported in 2020. There were two incidents of abduction of crew reported in 2019 (on 18 Jun and 23 Sep). All the abducted crew from the two incidents in 2019 were rescued and released.

As the risk of the abduction of crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and waters off Eastern Sabah is high as demonstrated by the recurrence of the incident on 17 January 2020, the ReCAAP ISC reiterates its advisory issued via the *ReCAAP ISC Incident Alert* dated 21 Nov 16 to all ships to reroute from the area, where possible. Otherwise, ship masters and crew are strongly urged to exercise extra vigilance while transiting the area, and report immediately to the Operation Centres of Philippines and Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) of Malaysia. The contact details of the Operation Centres of Philippines and ESSCOM of Malaysia (updated by ReCAAP ISC on 3 Jan 19) are as follows:



The map shows the Sulu Sea to the north and the Celebes Sea to the south. Four locations are marked with numbered red circles: 1 (Zamboanga), 2a and 2b (Bongao), and 3 (Lahad Datu).

- 1 Philippine Coast Guard District Southwestern Mindanao**  
Tel: +63 998 585 7972  
+63 917 842 8446  
VHF: Channel 16 with call-sign "NEPTUNE"  
Email: [hcgdswm@yahoo.com](mailto:hcgdswm@yahoo.com)
- 2a Philippine Coast Guard Station, Bongao (Central Tawi-Tawi)**  
Tel: +63 998 585 7941  
+63 917 842 8402  
VHF: Channel 16  
Email: [cgd\\_tawi2@yahoo.com](mailto:cgd_tawi2@yahoo.com)
- 2b Philippine Navy - Littoral Monitoring Station (LMS), Bongao, Tawi-Tawi**  
Tel: +63 955 714 0153  
VHF: Channel 16  
Email: [jointtaskgroup@gmail.com](mailto:jointtaskgroup@gmail.com)
- 3 Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM)**  
Tel: +60 89863181/016  
Fax: +60 89863182  
VHF: Channel 16 with call-sign "ESSCOM"  
Email: [bilikgerakan\\_esscom@jpm.gov.my](mailto:bilikgerakan_esscom@jpm.gov.my)



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In the event that the ship master is not able to establish contact with the Operation Centres of the Philippines as listed in the ReCAAP ISC Advisory, he can contact the **Philippine Coast Guard Command Centre** at the following contact details:

Tel: +63-2-5273877 (direct)  
+63-2-527-8481 to 89 (ext: 6136/37)  
+63-917-724-3682 (mobile)  
+63-929-825-3207 (mobile)

Email: [pcgcomcen@coastguard.gov.ph](mailto:pcgcomcen@coastguard.gov.ph)

The ReCAAP ISC advises the shipping industry and ships to enhance their situation awareness by referring to the “*Guidance on the Abduction of Crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and Waters off Eastern Sabah*” produced by ReCAAP ISC in July 2019. The Guidance is available at [www.recaap.org](http://www.recaap.org).

