

OVERVIEW

Two incidents of armed robbery against ships in Asia (both CAT 3¹ incidents) were reported to ReCAAP ISC. The incident occurred on 17 Apr on board a container ship while anchored at Ho Chi Minh pilot station, Vietnam; and the incident on 22 May occurred on board a bulk carrier while underway in the Singapore Strait (SS). In both incidents, the perpetrators were armed with knives. Ship stores were stolen in the first incident, and engine spares in the other. The crew members were safe in the two incidents. Details of incidents are shown in table (*).



Factors	Location	
	Vietnam	Straits of Malacca and Singapore
	Ho Chi Minh pilot station (1 incident)	Off Pulau Cula, Indonesia (1 incident)
Type of ship	Container ship	Bulk carrier
Date/Time	17 April at 0030 hrs	22 May at 0200 hrs
Number of perpetrators	3-4 perpetrators	4-5 perpetrators
Weapons carried by perpetrators	Knives/Machetes	Knives/Machetes
Treatment of crew	No injuries	No Injuries
Significance level	CAT 3	CAT 3
Items stolen	Ship Property/Stores	Engine Spares

AREA OF CONCERN

The ReCAAP ISC is concerned with the continued occurrence of incidents in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS). With the incident occurred on 22 May 23, a total of 28 incidents were reported in the SOMS since January 2023. Of these, 27 incidents occurred in the SS, and one incident in the Malacca Strait (MS). The Centre advises ships to continue to exercise enhanced vigilance when transiting SOMS; and the littoral States to increase patrols and enforcement in the area.

SITUATION OF ABDUCTION OF CREW IN THE SULU-CELEBES SEAS AND WATERS OFF EASTERN SABAH

Downgrading of threat level

- The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), after careful consideration of inputs from stakeholders and counterparts with vital involvement in securing the Sulu-Celebes Seas maritime security measure, recommends the downgrading of the threat on the 'Abduction of Crew for ransom in the Sulu-Celebes Seas' from 'POTENTIALLY HIGH' to 'MODERATE'. The MODERATE threat level implies that '**Incidents are possible to occur but are relatively less severe in nature**'.

Update of ReCAAP ISC Advisory

- As the threat of abduction of crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas has diminished since January 2020 due to successful military operations and robust law enforcement initiatives, the ReCAAP ISC updates its Advisory to all ships to **consider re-route from the area as an option based on its prerogative**.
- For ships transiting the area, the **ship masters and crew are strongly encouraged to exercise extra vigilance and report** all incidents immediately to the Operation Centres of the Philippines and Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) of Malaysia. The **Contact Details** of the Operation Centres of the Philippines and ESSCOM of Malaysia are as shown in Picture 1.



Picture 1

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ship master and crew are to report all incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships to the nearest coastal State and flag State, referring to the Poster on the *Contact Details for Reporting of Incidents of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia*, exercise vigilance and adopt appropriate preventive measures taking reference from the *Regional Guide 2 to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia*.

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* Table at <https://www.recaap.org/resources/ck/files/Number%20of%20Incidents/2023/List%20of%20Incidents%20for%202023.pdf> for details of the incidents.

¹ CAT (Category) 3 incident is 'less significant' in nature. Under this category, the perpetrators are armed with knives/machetes or other items such as sticks or rods. Although the crew can be subjected to duress or threat during the incident, they are not harmed physically. In most CAT 3 cases, nothing is stolen. In cases where losses are reported, stores and engine spares are commonly stolen items.