



# 3<sup>RD</sup> QUARTER REPORT

JANUARY – SEPTEMBER 2023

**PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY  
AGAINST SHIPS IN ASIA**



***ENHANCING REGIONAL COOPERATION ...***

# CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Part Four</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Part One</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Insights of Incidents in Asia using Data Analytics</b>	
<b>Incidents of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of Incidents during 2007-2022 and January-September 2023</li><li>• Summary of analysis of incidents</li><li>• Details of Analysis</li><li>• ReCAAP Data Visualisation Map and Panel (Re-VAMP)</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of incidents</li><li>• Areas of concern</li><li>• Piracy Vs armed robbery against ships</li><li>• Significance level of incidents</li><li>• Status of ships</li><li>• Location of incidents</li></ul>		<b>Part Five</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Part Two</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Case Studies – Arrest of Perpetrators and Recovery of Stolen Items</b>	
<b>Situation of Armed Robbery Against Ships in Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS)</b>		<b>Part Six</b>	<b>35</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Situation update</li><li>• Modus operandi</li><li>• Efforts by authorities and ReCAAP ISC</li><li>• Poster on Guidelines and Reporting of Incidents by Vessels in SOMS</li><li>• Recommendations</li></ul>		<b>ReCAAP ISC's Main Activities (July-September 2023)</b>	
<b>Part Three</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Situation of Abduction of Crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and Waters off Eastern Sabah</b>		<b>Appendices</b>	<b>43</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Situation update</li><li>• Downgrading of threat level assessment</li><li>• ReCAAP ISC Advisory</li><li>• Guide Book</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Definitions &amp; methodology in classifying incidents</li><li>• Description of incidents</li><li>• Flow diagram on procedure for reporting incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia</li><li>• Contact details of ReCAAP Focal Points / Contact Point and Regional Authorities</li><li>• Acknowledgements</li></ul>	

# Executive Summary

All incidents reported during January-September 2023 were incidents of Armed Robbery Against Ships (ARAS). No incident of piracy (on high seas) was reported.

The ships boarded invariably were of low in freeboard and manoeuvring at slow speed in restricted waters, and with crew ill-prepared while traversing the area of concern. However, perpetrators escaped empty-handed or aborted their attempts to board ships where crew were alert and vigilant.

During the third quarter (Q3) (July-September) of 2023, a total of 23 incidents of ARAS in Asia were reported to the ReCAAP ISC. There was an increase in the number of incidents reported compared to the same period in 2022 (21). With the inclusion of 61 incidents reported in first half (January-June) of 2023, the period from January-September 2023 witnessed a total of 84 incidents of ARAS in Asia. This accounts for a **33% increase** of incidents compared to 63 incidents reported during January-September 2022.

The **increase** of incidents during January-September 2023 occurred in India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS), Thailand and Vietnam. Of concern was the continued occurrence of incidents in the SOMS, with 56 incidents compared to 41 incidents during the same period in 2022. However, there was a **decrease** of incidents in Bangladesh.

There was no report of abduction of crew for ransom by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and waters off Eastern Sabah during January-September 2023. The last incident of abduction of crew occurred on 17 Jan 2020. No crew is currently held in captivity by the ASG. With the presence of the remnants of the ASG in the area, the **threat** of abduction of crew for ransom in Sulu and Tawi-Tawi remains. With the reduction of incidents, the Philippine Coast Guard recommended the downgrading of the threat in Sulu-Celebes Seas from 'POTENTIALLY HIGH' to 'MODERATE', which implies that 'incidents are possible to occur, but are relatively less severe in nature'. The ReCAAP ISC advises ships transiting the area to follow the advisory issued by the ReCAAP ISC as updated on 15 Sep 2022, and the '*Guidance on Abduction of Crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and Waters off Eastern Sabah*'.

Through the Dialogue Session and Anti-Piracy Forum conducted by the ReCAAP ISC, the Centre engages the shipping industry in apprising them of the developing situation of piracy and ARAS in Asia with emphasis on the SOMS and recommends to adopt best management practices to detect, deny, delay and deter the perpetrators from boarding the ship. Further, the ReCAAP ISC stresses upon the maritime community for timely reporting of incident to the nearest coastal State RCC for arrest of the perpetrators.

In addition, the Centre urges the maritime authorities and law enforcement agencies to cooperate, coordinate, collaborate and communicate in information sharing amongst the littoral States, and step up the enforcement measures both on land and at sea in our endeavour to suppress the occurrence of piracy and ARAS in Asia.

# 01

## Incidents of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia

# Incidents of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia

## Number of Incidents

A total of **84 incidents** of ARAS<sup>1</sup> were reported in Asia during January-September 2023. No piracy<sup>2</sup> incident was reported during this period. Of the 84 incidents, 83 were actual incidents<sup>3</sup> and one was an attempted incident<sup>4</sup>. There was a **33% increase** in the number of incidents reported during January-September 2023 compared to 63 incidents (comprising 60 actual incidents and three attempted incidents) during the same period in 2022. Refer to the Appendix on 'Description of incidents' for details of the incidents.

Comparing Qtr 2 with Qtr 3 of 2023, there has been a **decrease** of incidents [34 incidents vs 23 incidents]. On a quarter-to-quarter comparison between 2023 and 2022, the number of incidents reported during Qtr 3 of 2023 has increased compared to the same period in 2022 [21 incidents].

Chart 1 shows the number of incidents reported to the ReCAAP ISC in each quarter of 2019-2023, and the total number of incidents each year.

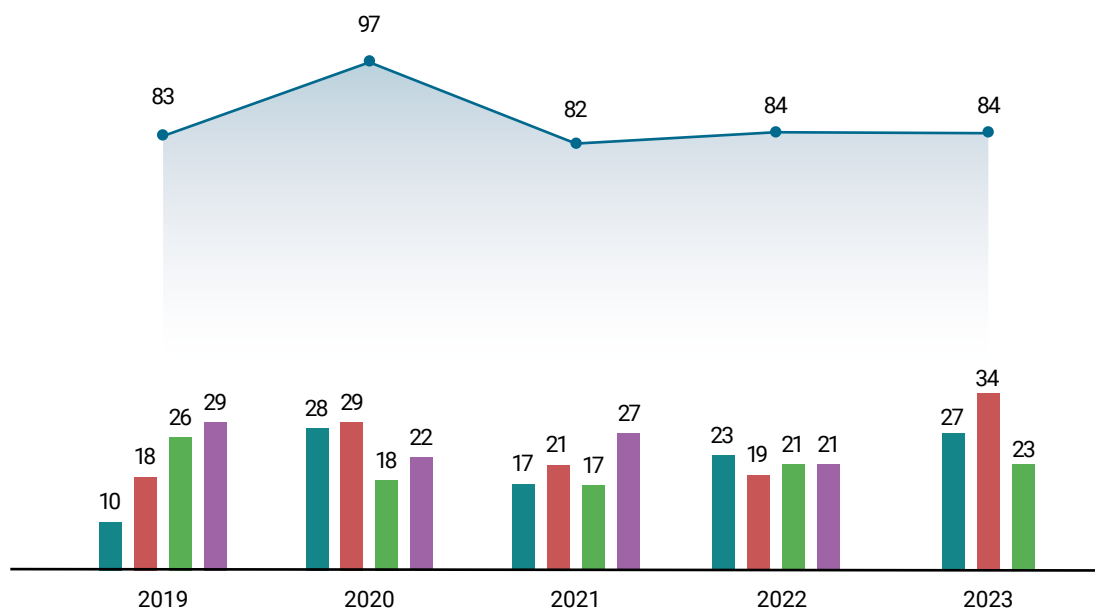


Chart 1 - Number of incidents (Quarterly number vis-à-vis total number of 2019-2022)

● Q1 ● Q2 ● Q3 ● Q4 ● Total

- 1 Definition of armed robbery against ships is in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Assembly Resolution A.1025 (26). Refer to Appendix for detailed definition.
- 2 Definition of piracy is in accordance with Article 101 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 82). Refer to Appendix for detailed definition.
- 3 Actual incidents are incidents where pirates/robbers boarded the ship; and regardless of whether they stole any items from the crew or took away any items found on board the ship.
- 4 Attempted incidents are incidents where pirates/robbers tried but failed to board the ship.

## Incidents of January-September 2023 Vs January-September 2022

The total number of incidents reported during January-September 2023 has **increased** compared to January-September 2022, in the following locations:

- In India, four incidents were reported compared to three incidents.
- In Indonesia, 12 incidents were reported compared to nine incidents.
- In the Philippines, eight incidents were reported compared to four incidents.
- In the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS), 56 incidents were reported compared to 41 incidents.
- In Thailand, one incident was reported compared to no incident.
- In Vietnam, two incidents were reported compared to no incident.

The ReCAAP ISC commends the efforts of Bangladesh as incidents in their waters have continued to **decrease** during January-September 2023 (**one incident**) compared to January-September 2022 (**four incidents**).

## Areas of Concern

There were two areas of concern arising from incidents of piracy and ARAS in Asia during January-September 2023:

### 1. Increase of incidents in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS)

A total of 56 incidents were reported in SOMS during January-September 2023 compared with 41 incidents during the same period in 2022. Of the 56 incidents - 52 incidents occurred in the Singapore Strait (SS) and four incidents in the Malacca Strait (MS). During January-September 2022, all 41 incidents occurred in the SS, and no incident was reported in the MS. More details of the situation in SOMS outlined in Part Two of this report.

### 2. Threat of abduction of crew for ransom in the Sulu-Celebes Seas

No incident of abduction of crew by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) was reported in the Sulu-Celebes Seas during January-September 2023. However, due to the presence of the remnants of the ASG in the Sulu and Tawi Tawi area, the threat of abduction of crew for ransom remains. More details of the threat of abduction of crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas outlined in Part Three of this report.

## Piracy Vs Armed robbery against ships

All 84 incidents reported during January-September 2023 were ARAS. No piracy incident was reported. Piracy takes place on the high seas while ARAS takes place in internal waters, archipelagic waters and territorial seas which are under the jurisdiction of the coastal States.

The majority of the incidents reported in Asia were ARAS. Over the 17-year period of January-September of 2007-2023, the number of piracy incidents fluctuated each year, with an average of 10% for piracy incidents and 90% for ARAS. However, from 2018 till 2023, the number of piracy incidents has **decreased** to 3% and ARAS accounts for 97%.

Chart 2 shows number of incidents of piracy vs ARAS for the period of January-September of 2007-2023.

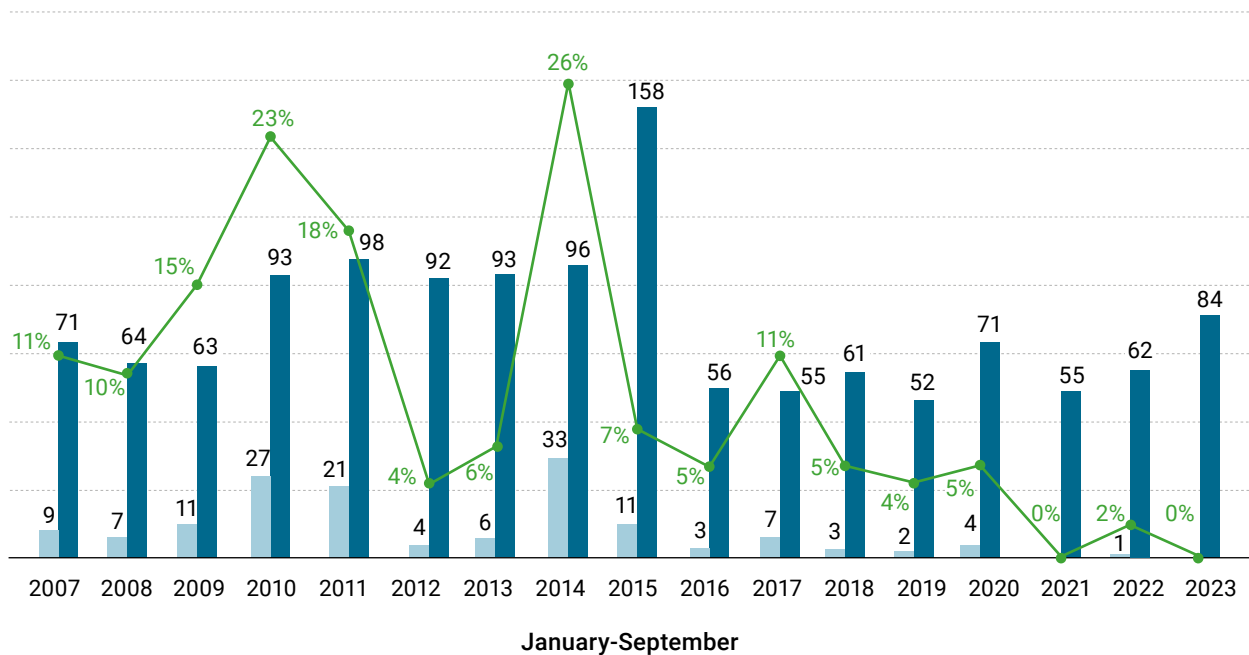


Chart 2 - Piracy Vs Armed Robbery Against Ships (January-September of 2007-2023)

● Piracy ● Armed Robbery ● % of Piracy

## Significance level of incidents

To provide a qualitative perspective of the incidents, the ReCAAP ISC classifies each actual incident into one of the four categories to determine its significance level (CAT 1<sup>5</sup> being most severe incident, CAT 2<sup>6</sup> moderately severe, CAT 3<sup>7</sup> less severe and CAT 4<sup>8</sup> least severe). Refer to the Appendix on pages 43-44 of this report on the 'Methodology in classifying incidents'.

The categorisation of 83 actual incidents reported are: six CAT 2, 24 CAT 3 and 53 CAT 4 incidents, with no CAT 1 incident reported during January-September 2023. On a quarter-to-quarter comparison of 2023, the severity of incidents during Qtr 3 **has increased** compared with the previous two quarters. In Qtr 3, 45% of incidents were CAT 2 and CAT 3 incidents, and 55% were CAT 4 incidents. This was an increase in severity of incidents compared to Qtr 2 [35% were CAT 2 and CAT 3 incidents and 65% were CAT 4 incidents].

Chart 3 shows the significance level of incidents reported for each quarter of 2019-2023.

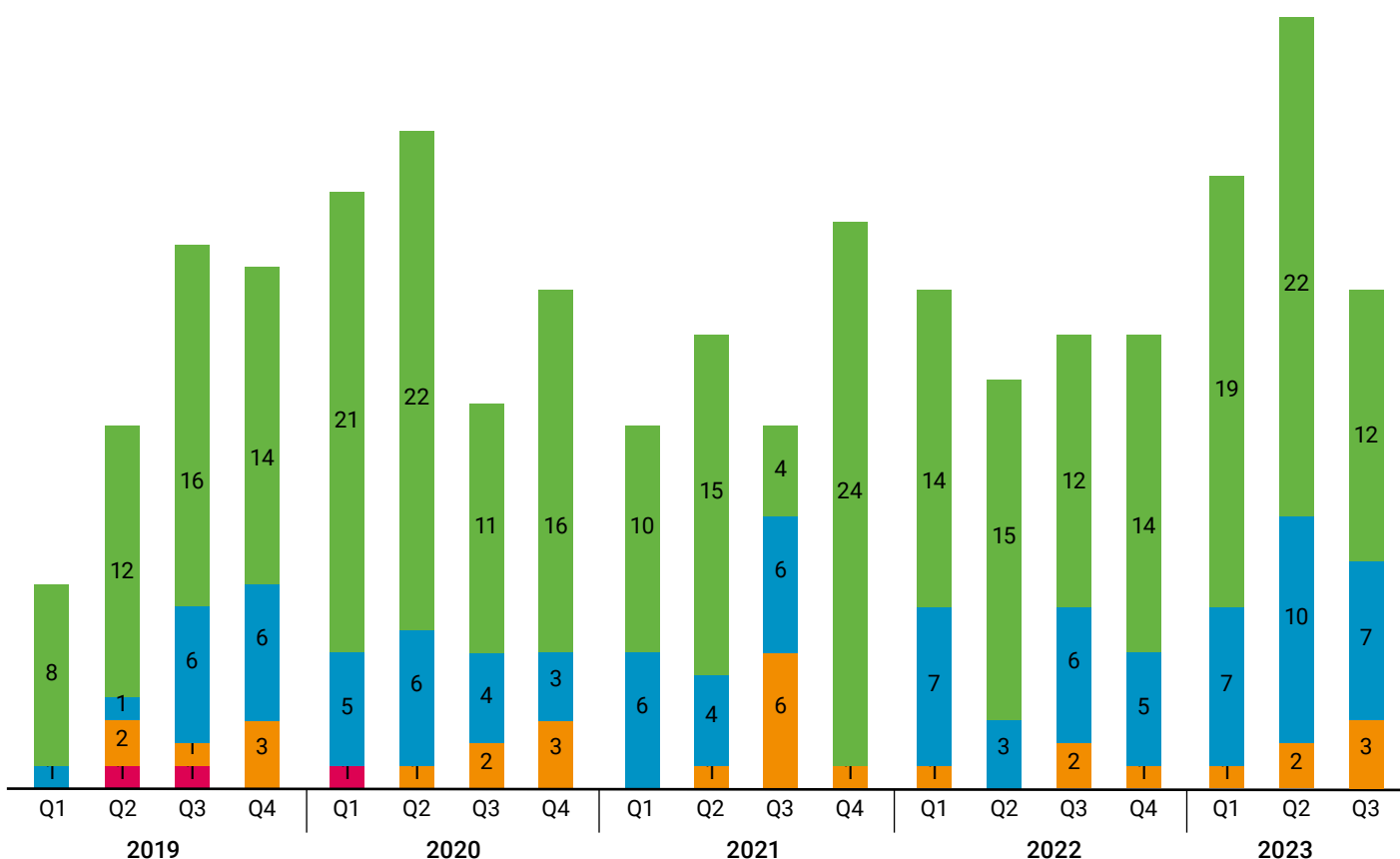


Chart 3 - Significance level of incidents (Quarterly of 2019-2023)

● CAT 1 ● CAT 2 ● CAT 3 ● CAT 4

- 5 **CAT 1** incident is classified as 'very significant' in nature. Under this category, the perpetrators are armed with guns and/or knives, and the crew suffered injury and/or subjected to physical violence. This include cases of the crew being abandoned or kidnapped or killed. The CAT 1 cases include the ship being hijacked for resale purposes, or took over control by the perpetrators to carry out siphoning of the cargo oil carried on board.
- 6 **CAT 2** incident is 'moderately significant' in nature. Under this category, the perpetrators are armed with knives/machetes and in some incidents armed with guns. The crew is threatened or held hostage temporarily and, in some cases, the crew suffered injury and physical violence.
- 7 **CAT 3** incident is classified as '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.
- 8 **CAT 4** incident is classified as 'least significant' in nature. Under this category, the perpetrators are not armed, and the crew not injured. In CAT 4 cases, either nothing is stolen or small items are stolen.



**CAT 2** Of the six CAT 2 incidents reported during January-September 2023, five occurred onboard bulk carriers while underway in the SOMS and one occurred onboard a container ship while anchored at Manila Anchorage, Philippines.

All five incidents that occurred in the SOMS involved perpetrators who were armed with either a jungle bolo (1 incident), knives (3) or a gun-like object (1). Engine spares were stolen in four of the incidents, while a crew's personal mobile phone and a torchlight were stolen in one incident. In terms of crew treatment, one incident reported that a crew member was assaulted and suffered minor head injury; three incidents reported that the perpetrators tied the crew members to restrict their movement; and one incident reported that the crew was safe and accounted for.

The incident at Manila Anchorage reported that the perpetrators were armed with guns and knives, boarded the ship, stole a duty crew's mobile phone, and escaped. The crew was not injured.

**CAT 3** Bulk of the 24 CAT 3 incidents reported during January-September 2023 occurred onboard ships while underway in the SOMS (15 incidents). The other incidents occurred in Indonesia (6), Bangladesh, Philippines and Vietnam (1 each).

All 15 CAT 3 incidents in the SOMS involved perpetrators who were armed with knives, spanners, adjustable wrenches or a shovel-like weapon. However, 14 of the 15 incidents indicated that the crew was not injured. There was one incident where two crew members sustained minor injuries when the perpetrators threw knives and spanners at them. Of the 15 incidents, four incidents reported losses of engine spares, one reported loss of scrap items and 10 reported nothing was stolen.

For the other nine incidents in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Philippines and Vietnam, the perpetrators were armed with knives or metal bars, and similar to incidents in the SOMS, most of the incidents reported that the crew was not injured. In terms of stolen items, losses of paint, unsecured items such as breathing apparatus cylinder and lights, and engine spares were reported in seven incidents. The other two incidents indicated that nothing was stolen.

**CAT 4** As with past trend observed in Asia, the majority of the incidents reported during January-September 2023 were CAT 4 incidents. This accounts for 64% of the number of incidents (53 of 83). In CAT 4 incidents, perpetrators are not armed and the crew not injured.

## Status of ships

Of the 84 incidents reported during January-September 2023, 28 incidents (33%) occurred to ships while at anchor/berth and 56 incidents (67%) occurred to ships while underway.

Chart 4 shows the location of the incidents occurred to ships at anchor/berth. All incidents reported in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam occurred onboard ships while they were anchored/berthed.

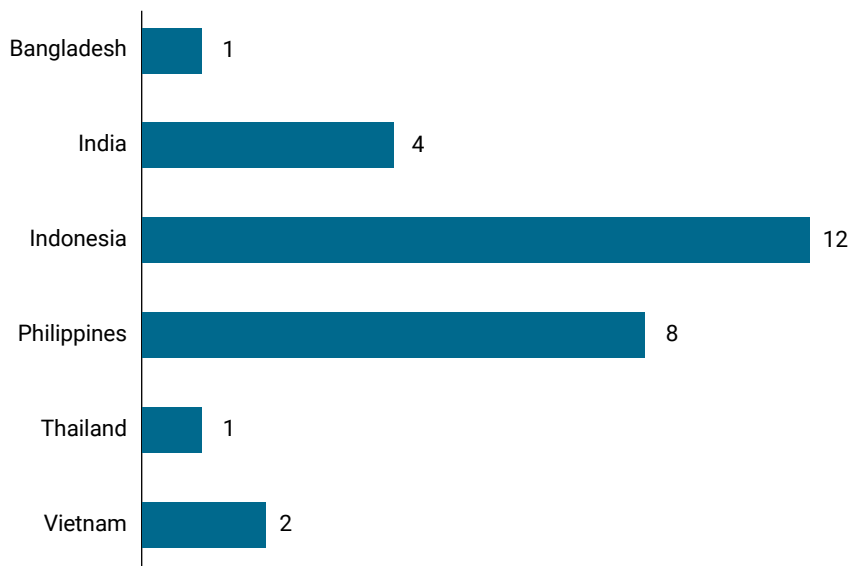


Chart 4 - Incidents on board ships at anchor/berth (January-September 2023)

Chart 5 shows the location of the incidents occurred to ships while underway. All incidents in SOMS occurred onboard ships while underway.



Chart 5 - Incidents on board ships while underway (January-September 2023)

## Location of Incidents

Table 1 shows number and location of incidents reported in Asia for past 10 years (January-September of 2014-2023).

Act = Actual, Att = Attempted

January-September																				
	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Act	Att	Act	Att	Act	Att	Act	Att	Act	Att	Act	Att	Act	Att	Act	Att	Act	Att	Act	Att
<b>North Asia</b>																				
China					3		1					3								
<b>Sub-total</b>					<b>3</b>		<b>1</b>					<b>3</b>								
<b>South Asia</b>																				
Bangladesh	11		10		1	1	7		9	2			3				3	1	1	
Bay of Bengal	2																			
India	9	1	6		12		1		2	1	3		8		4		2	1	4	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>11</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>Southeast Asia</b>																				
Indian Ocean		1																		
Indonesia	36	5	16	1	20		20	2	20	6	14	3	18	1	9	1	9		12	
Malaysia	3	1	3		1		1	1	5		7		2		1		1			
Pacific Ocean												1								
Philippines	3		5	1	3		14		3	1	2	1	13		10	1	4		8	
South China Sea	29	1	10	1	2	1	4		2	1	1		3	1			1			
SOMS	23	3	88	8	1	1	2	1	6	2	15		22		26	1	40	1	55	1
Sulu-Celebes Seas					7		3	4	1	1	2		1							
Thailand			1																	1
Vietnam	1		19		6		1		2		2		3		2					2
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 1 - Location of incidents (January-September of 2014-2023)

## Location of Incidents

The location of incidents reported during January-September 2023 are shown in Map 1.



Map 1- Location of incidents (January-September 2023)

● CAT 2 ● CAT 3 ● CAT 4 ▲ Attempted

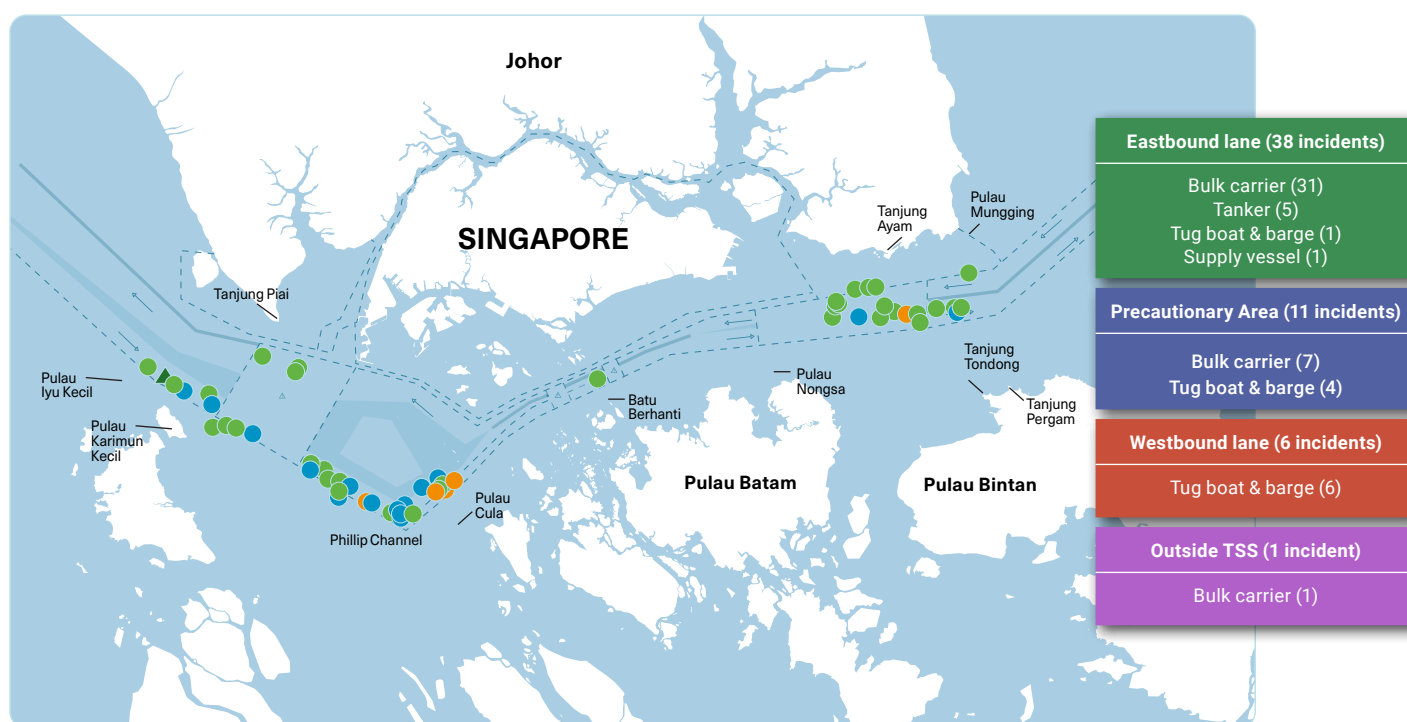
# 02

## Situation of Armed Robbery Against Ships in Straits of Malacca and Singapore

# Situation of Armed Robbery Against Ships in Straits of Malacca and Singapore

## Situation update

A total of 56 incidents were reported in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) during January-September 2023. Of these, four incidents occurred in the Malacca Strait (MS) and 52 incidents in the Singapore Strait (SS). All four incidents in the MS occurred in the **eastbound lane** of the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS). Of the 52 incidents in the SS, 34 incidents occurred in the eastbound lane of the TSS, 11 incidents in the **precautionary area**, six incidents in the **westbound lane** and one incident **outside the TSS**. Map 2 shows the location of the 56 incidents in SOMS.



Map 2 - Location of incidents in SOMS (January-September 2023)

● CAT 2 ● CAT 3 ● CAT 4 ▲ Attempted

The ReCAAP ISC is concerned with the continued occurrence of incidents in the SOMS, in particular, the cluster of incidents off Pulau Cula (Indonesia) [23 incidents], and the involvement of armed perpetrators reported in 14 of these incidents in this cluster. Also of concern are the clusters of incidents off Tanjung Tondong, Bintan Island (Indonesia) [12 incidents] and off Pulau Karimun Kecil (Indonesia) [10 incidents].

In 2023, the ReCAAP ISC had issued three Incident Alerts (IAs) on 31 Mar 23, 13 Jun 23 and 9 Aug 23 to the maritime community, advising ships to intensify vigilance and maintain sharp look-out while transiting the SOMS and report all incidents immediately to the nearest coastal State. The IAs can be found at [www.recaap.org/alerts](http://www.recaap.org/alerts).

## Modus Operandi

The modus operandi of the 56 incidents that occurred to ships while underway in SOMS during January-September 2023 are summarised in table below:

Factors of incident	Eastbound lane of TSS (38 incidents)		Precautionary area of TSS (11 incidents)		Westbound lane of TSS (6 incidents)		Outside of TSS
	Western Part (30 incidents)	Eastern Part (8 incidents)	Western Part (4 incidents)	Eastern Part (7 incidents)	Western Part (1 incident)	Eastern Part (5 incidents)	Western Part (1 incident)
<b>Type of ship</b>	<b>Bulk carrier (26)</b> Tanker (3) Supply vessel (1)	<b>Bulk carrier (5)</b> Tanker (2) Tug boat & barge (1)	Bulk carrier (2) Tug boat & barge (2)	<b>Bulk carrier (5)</b> Tug boat & barge (2)	Tug boat & barge (1)	<b>Tug boat &amp; barge (5)</b>	Bulk carrier (1)
<b>Number of perpetrators</b>	9 men (1) 6 men (1) 5 men (5) <b>4 men (11)</b> 3 men (4) 2 men (2) 1 man (2) Unknown (4)	5 men (1) <b>4 men (3)</b> 3 men (2) 1 man (2)	10 men (1) 6 men (1) 4 men (1) 3 men (1)	6 men (2) 5 men (1) <b>4 men (3)</b> Unknown (1)	Unknown (1)	10 men (1) <b>4 men (2)</b> 3 men (1) Unknown (1)	5 men (1)
<b>Weapons carried by perpetrators</b>	Gun-like object (1) <b>Knives (11)</b> Jungle bolo (1) Adjustable wrench (1) Shovel-like weapon (1) Not armed (7) Not stated (8)	Knives (1) Not armed (3) <b>Not stated (4)</b>	Knives & spanners (1) Knives (1) Not armed (1) Not stated (1)	Knives (2) <b>Not stated (5)</b>	Not stated (1)	<b>Not stated (5)</b>	Not armed (1)
<b>Treatment of crew</b>	Crew member tied (3) <b>No injuries (27)</b>	<b>No injuries (8)</b>	Threw spanners at crew that injured two crew members (1) <b>No injuries (3)</b>	Assaulted & injured one crew member (1) <b>No injuries (6)</b>	Not stated (1)	<b>No injuries (4)</b> Not stated (1)	No injuries (1)
<b>Items stolen</b>	Crew's mobile phone & a torchlight (1) Chief engineer's watch & mobile phone, & spare parts of generator (1) Engine spares (12) A small air compressor for filling of Breathing Apparatus (1) Items inside a container & one coil of mooring rope (1) <b>Nothing stolen (13)</b> Not stated (1)	Spare parts of fuel pumps (1) Engine spares (2) Scrap metal on board barge (1) <b>Nothing stolen (4)</b>	Scrap items (1) <b>Scrap metal on board barge (2)</b> Nothing stolen (1)	Engine spares (2) Spare parts (1) Scrap metal on board barge (2) <b>Nothing stolen (2)</b>	Scrap metal on board barge (1)	<b>Scrap metal on board barge (5)</b>	Engines spares (1)
<b>Time of incident</b>	<b>Hours of darkness (30)</b>	<b>Hours of darkness (7)</b> Daylight hours (1)	<b>Hours of darkness (4)</b>	<b>Hours of darkness (5)</b> Daylight hours (2)	Hours of darkness (1)	Hours of darkness (2) <b>Daylight hours (3)</b>	Hours of darkness (1)

The observations are as follows:

1. Majority of the incidents occurred to bigger ships, namely bulk carriers and tankers (44 incidents). The other 12 incidents occurred onboard tug boats towing barges (11 incidents) and a supply vessel (1 incident).
2. Of the 56 incidents, 32 incidents reported groups of 4-6 perpetrators while another 14 incidents involved groups of 1-3 perpetrators. There was one incident that involved 9 perpetrators, two incidents involved 10 perpetrators, and seven incidents had no information on the number of perpetrators involved.
3. Majority of the incidents (64%) had no information if the perpetrators carried weapons (24 incidents) or the perpetrators were not armed (12 incidents). Of the remaining 20 incidents, the perpetrators carried a gun-like object, knives, jungle bolo and other weapons such as adjustable wrench, spanners and a shovel-like weapon. Notably, 15 of the 20 incidents that involved armed perpetrators were reported in the western part of the eastbound lane of the TSS.
4. 91% of the incidents reported that the perpetrators did not harm the crew (49 incidents) or there was no information on the well-being of the crew (2 incidents). In another five incidents, the perpetrators were violent to the crew. In two of these incidents, the crew were assaulted and resulted in minor injuries. Of the remaining three incidents, the perpetrators tied the crew who managed to free themselves and raise the alarm.
5. The perpetrators were sighted in or in the vicinity of the engine room in 25 incidents, and engine spares were stolen in 13 of these incidents. In addition, the perpetrators were sighted in the steering gear room in six incidents, but nothing was stolen in all six incidents.
6. Of the 56 incidents, 50 incidents occurred during hours of darkness. The other six incidents that occurred during daylight hours were reported onboard tug boats towing barges, with three of these incidents occurring in the westbound lane of the TSS.

## Efforts by authorities and ReCAAP ISC

The littoral States of SOMS have stepped up enforcement efforts both on land and at sea. Through initiatives such as the Malacca Strait Patrol and the Indonesia-Singapore Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT INDOSIN), they have strengthened operations coordination and patrolling efforts in areas of concern during vulnerable time windows. The authorities, together with ReCAAP ISC have also stepped up engagements of industry stakeholders to, inter alia, encourage adoption of appropriate shipboard security measures and timely reporting of incidents. They also continue to cooperate in sharing information of incidents, sightings of small boats' concentration and suspicious activities, to enable prompt enforcement actions. Singapore's ReCAAP Focal Point has issued advisories to ships transiting the strait to remind ship masters to be vigilant and adopt recommended shipboard security measures.

The ReCAAP ISC, on its part, has been providing the maritime community with the latest information and analytics by issuing periodic reports and Incident Alerts. The Centre also organised Nautical Forum, Piracy & Sea Robbery Conference and Dialogue Sessions to engage the shipping industry. Through these means, the ReCAAP ISC is highlighting the areas of concern and modus operandi of the perpetrators while encouraging all ships to adopt preventive measures and make immediate reporting of incidents to the nearest coastal State RCC and flag State.



## Poster on Guidelines and Reporting of Incident by Vessels in SOMS

For ships transiting the SOMS, the ReCAAP ISC has produced a poster that highlights best management practices and contact details of the authorities of the littoral States for incident reporting. The poster is aimed to provide ships transiting SOMS an overview of key measures to undertake and encourage ship master and crew to report incidents to the appropriate local coastal State authority for timely response by the enforcement agencies.

### Contact Details of the littoral States

Indonesia	Phone Number	Fax Number
<p><b>Indonesian Coast Guard (BAKAMLA) [Jakarta]</b>            Email: <a href="mailto:puskodal@bakamla.go.id">puskodal@bakamla.go.id</a>            (maritime incident reporting)</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:contactcenter@bakamla.go.id">contactcenter@bakamla.go.id</a>            (general purposes reporting)</p>	<p>+62 895 6003 00846            (maritime incident reporting)</p> <p>+62 821 2518 9898            +62 021 1503 21            (general purposes reporting)</p>	
<p><b>BAKAMLA – Contact Centre Western Zone [Pulau Batam]</b></p>	<p>+62 813 6387 7299</p>	
<p><b>Regional Marine &amp; Air Police of Riau [Pulau Batam]</b></p>	<p>+62 822 8372 3721</p>	
<b>Malaysia</b>		
<p><b>Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) [Putra Jaya] (Maritime Operation Center)</b>            Email: <a href="mailto:pomarhq@mmea.gov.my">pomarhq@mmea.gov.my</a></p>	<p>+60 38 943 4001            +60 38 995 7201            +60 19 261 1833</p>	<p>+60 38 941 4527</p>
<p><b>MMEA [Johor Bahru]</b>            Email: <a href="mailto:pusopjohor@mmea.gov.my">pusopjohor@mmea.gov.my</a></p>	<p>+60 7 219 9402            +60 7 219 9403</p>	<p>+60 7 227 9285</p>
<b>Singapore</b>		
<p><b>Port Operations Control Centre (POCC)</b>            Email: <a href="mailto:pocc@mpa.gov.sg">pocc@mpa.gov.sg</a></p>	<p>+65 6226 5539            +65 6325 2493</p>	<p>+65 6227 9971            +65 6224 5776</p>

## Recommendations

To address the increase of incidents in the SS, the ReCAAP ISC strongly urges the littoral States of the SS to continue to enhance surveillance and enforcement in their internal water, archipelagic waters and territorial seas; and respond promptly to incidents. The littoral States are encouraged to promote cooperation and coordination for patrols and information sharing on incidents and criminal groups involved to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators.

While transiting the SS or area of concern, the ship masters and crew are strongly advised to heighten vigilance and proactively adopt the following measures to prevent boarding by the perpetrators:

- Keep abreast of the latest situation (at [www.recaap.org](http://www.recaap.org)) particularly the incident-prone areas in the SS. The ReCAAP ISC's reports indicate detailed locations of incidents with latitude and longitude.
- Tune-in to advisories and navigational broadcasts announced by the authorities.
- Maximise vigilance, lookouts for suspicious small boats and increase watch keeping; particularly for crew on board tug boats towing barges during daylight, and for crew on board bigger ships during night time.
- Keep the CCTV and other devices including communication equipment operational to alert the ship crew and record the movement of perpetrators.
- Rounds of the ship's compartment be taken and locked prior entering the area of concern and record on the log book. Ensure that all doors and hatches having direct access to the bridge, accommodation, store rooms, steering gear compartment and engine room are closed/properly secured.
- Maintain communication with their shipping company by providing periodic updates and establish daily communication checks.
- Sound alarm when suspicious boats are sighted loitering in the vicinity of the ship or barge or suspicious individuals are sighted on board the ship or barge.
- Report all incidents, suspicious activities and presence of suspicious small boats in the vicinity to the nearest coastal State and flag State.

# 03

**Situation of Abduction of Crew in the  
Sulu-Celebes Seas and Waters off Eastern Sabah**

# Situation of Abduction of Crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and Waters off Eastern Sabah

## Situation Update

There was no report of incident of abduction of crew for ransom during January-September 2023. The last known incident occurred on 17 Jan 2020. No crew is currently held in captivity by the ASG. The Philippines, Malaysian and Indonesian authorities continued to maintain surveillance and military operations to neutralise the ASG.

## Downgrading of Threat Level Assessment

With inputs from stakeholders and counterparts with vital involvement in securing the Sulu-Celebes Seas maritime security measure, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) recommends the downgrading of the threat of the 'Abduction of crew for ransom in the Sulu-Celebes Seas' from 'POTENTIALLY HIGH' to 'MODERATE'. The MODERATE threat level as per their orders, implies that 'incidents are possible to occur but are relatively less severe in nature'. This is based on the perception that despite the presence of the remnants of the terrorist group in the islands of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, the government's continued ground military operations have reduced the strength of the perpetrators to conduct atrocities at sea.

## ReCAAP ISC Advisory

With the PCG's recommendation to downgrade the threat of abduction of crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas, the ReCAAP ISC updated its Advisory on 15 Sep 22 to all ships to consider re-route from the area as an option based on its prerogative.

However, for ship masters and crew transiting the area, they are strongly encouraged to exercise extra vigilance while transiting the area, and report 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 shown on the next page in Map 3.

**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

**2b Philippine Navy – Littoral Monitoring  
Station (LMS), Bongao, Tawi-Tawi**

Tel: +63 955 714 0153  
VHF: Channel 16  
Email: jointtaskgroup@gmail.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

**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



Map 3 - Contact details

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

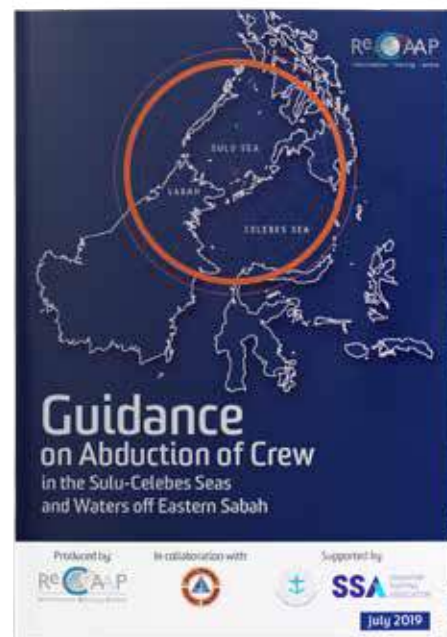
Tel: +632-8-527-8481 (ext: 6136/37)  
+632-998-585-5327 (mobile)  
+632-917-842-8249 (mobile)  
+632-8-527-3877 (fax)  
Email: pcgcommandcenter2022@gmail.com  
(updated on 10 Oct 22)

## Guide Book

The ReCAAP ISC recommends the shipping industry to refer to the '*Guidance on Abduction of Crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and Waters off Eastern Sabah*' produced in July 2019.

The Guide book consists of advisory on the measures to be taken by the ships transiting the area, including contact details and the Notice to Mariners (NOTAM) issued by the Philippines and Malaysia. It also shares the analysis of incidents based on the information collected from past incidents. The Guide Book can be found at [www.recaap.org](http://www.recaap.org).

The Guide book is produced in collaboration with the Philippine Coast Guard (ReCAAP Focal Point) and supported by the Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) and Singapore Shipping Association (SSA). It complements the general guidance contained in the '*Regional Guide 2 to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia*' produced by the ReCAAP ISC.



# 04

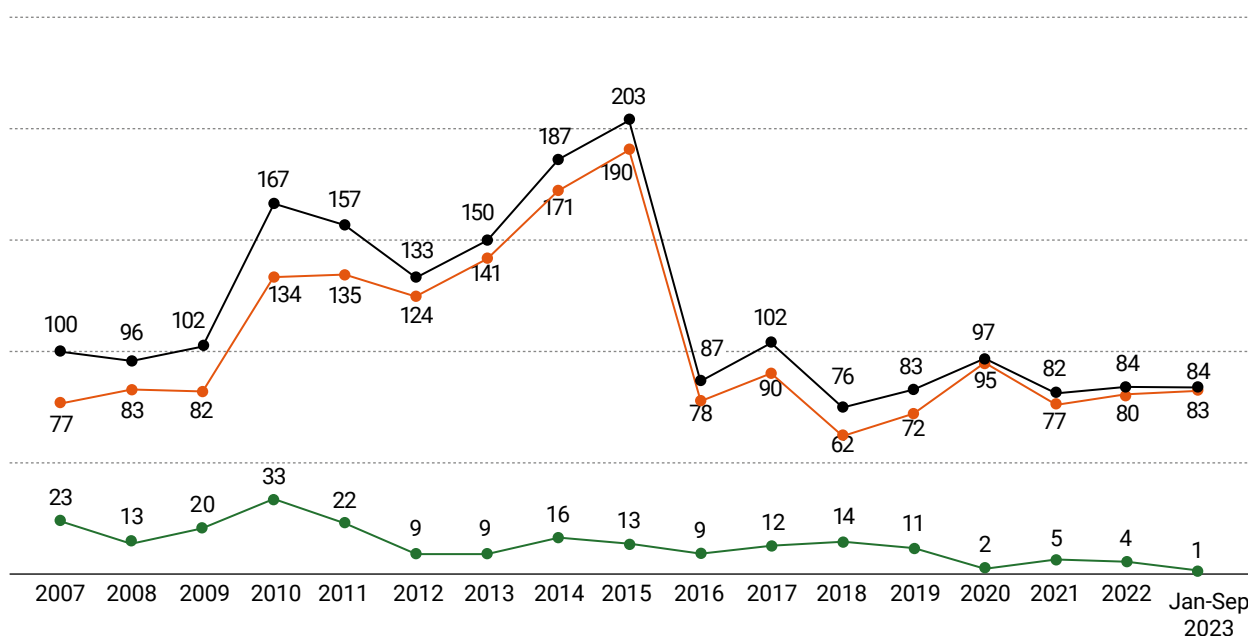
Insights of Incidents in Asia using  
Data Analytics

## Insights of Incidents in Asia using Data Analytics

This section provides an insight into the incidents reported in Asia during January-September 2023 compared to the trend of past incidents during the 16-year period of 2007-2022. The analysis focuses on the number of perpetrators, weapons carried, treatment of crew, stolen items, type of ships boarded and time of the incidents.

### Number of Incidents during 2007-2022 and January-September 2023

During 2007-2022, a total of 1,906 incidents (comprising 1,691 actual incidents and 215 attempted incidents) were reported in Asia. During this period, the number of incidents fluctuated over the years, with the highest number of incidents in 2015 (203) and the lowest in 2018 (76). Graph 1 shows the number of incidents reported during 2007-2022 and January-September 2023.



Graph 1 - Number of incidents (2007-2022 and January-September 2023)

● Total ● Actual ● Attempted

### Summary of Analysis of Incidents

The 84 incidents reported in Asia during January-September 2023 were consistent with the trend of past incidents during the 16-year period of 2007-2022, in terms of the number of perpetrators, type of weapons carried by perpetrators, treatment of crew and time of incidents. However, there was a deviation in the type of stolen items and type of ships boarded.

During January-September 2023, engine spares were more commonly stolen from ships as compared to other types of losses, and bulk carriers were boarded in more incidents than other types of ships. This is in contrast to the past 16-year period of 2007-2022, where ship stores were mostly stolen, and tankers were boarded.



The characteristics of incidents reported in Asia during January-September 2023 are as follows:

- **63%** (including attempted incident) were CAT 4 incidents
- **49%** involved perpetrators in groups of 4-6 men
- **65%** involved perpetrators who did not carry weapons or no information on the weapons carried, If armed, perpetrators most likely armed with knives, machetes or other weapons (33%)
- **85%** reported no injuries sustained by crew, 5% had no information on well-being of the crew
- **32%** reported nothing was stolen, 1% reported losses cannot be ascertained  
Type of items stolen: engine spares (27%), unsecured items (20%), ship stores (16%), crew’s personal belongings (4%)
- **51%** occurred on board bulk carriers, 24% on board tankers, 14% on board tug boats/supply vessels, 10% on board container ships and 1% on board fishing trawlers
- **90%** occurred during hours of darkness

## Details of Analysis

### Number of perpetrators

2007-2022. Among the 1,906 incidents, 628 incidents involved **4-6 men** (33%), 518 incidents involved 1-3 men (27%), 181 incidents involved 7-9 men (10%), 138 incidents involved more than 9 men (7%), and 441 incidents had no information available (23%).

January-September 2023. Of the 84 incidents, 41 incidents involved **4-6 men** (49%), 26 incidents involved 1-3 men (31%), two incidents involved more than 9 men (2%), two incidents involved 7-9 men (2%) and 13 incidents had no information available (16%). The details of the number of perpetrators involved in an incident is indicated in Chart 5 shown below.

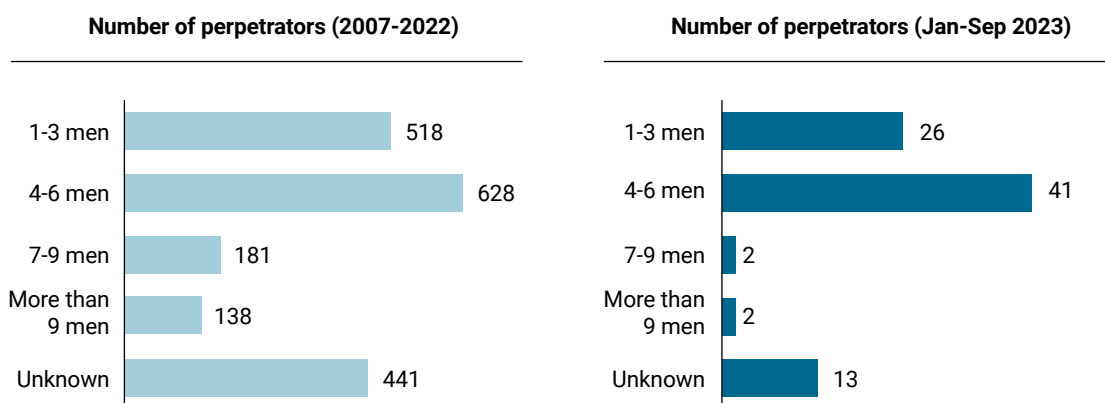


Chart 5 – Number of perpetrators – Asia (2007-2022 & January-September 2023)

## Type of weapons

2007-2022. Of the 1,906 incidents, 932 incidents had **no information on the weapons carried by the perpetrators** (49%), 614 incidents reported knives/machetes (32%), 190 reported guns and knives (10%) and 170 did not carry weapons (9%).

January-September 2023. Among the 84 incidents, two incidents reported that the perpetrators were armed with guns or a gun-like object (2%), 28 incidents reported that the perpetrators carried knives, machetes and other weapons such as metal bars, shovel-like weapon and adjustable wrench (33%), 15 incidents reported the perpetrators did not carry weapons (18%) and 39 incidents had **no information of weapons carried by the perpetrators** (47%). In both incidents involving perpetrators who carried guns, they did not discharge their firearms. Chart 6 shows the types of weapons carried by the perpetrators.

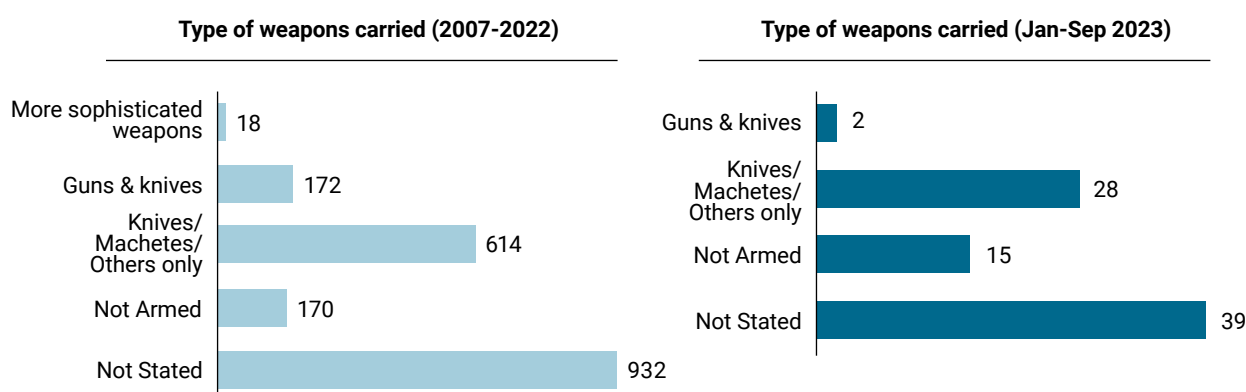


Chart 6 – Type of weapons carried by perpetrators – Asia (2007-2022 & January-September 2023)

## Treatment of crew

2007-2022. Among the 1,906 incidents, 1,076 incidents reported that the **crew was not injured** (57%) and 435 incidents had no statement of injury (23%), while 180 incidents reported crew being taken hostage temporarily (9%), 80 incidents of crew being threatened (4%), 77 incidents of crew were assaulted (4%) and 26 incidents of crew kidnapped (1%).

January-September 2023. Of the 84 incidents, 71 incidents reported that the **crew was not injured** (85%) and four incidents (5%) had no information on the well-being of the crew. Of the remaining nine incidents, six incidents reported that the perpetrators tied the crew members to restrict their movement and prevent them from alerting other crew members (7%); one incident reported perpetrators threw knife and spanner at crew, as well as one incident reported a crew member was assaulted that resulted in minor head injury (2%), and one incident reported the duty crew was threatened by the perpetrators (1%). The details of treatment meted out to the crew by the perpetrators is shown on the next page in Chart 7.

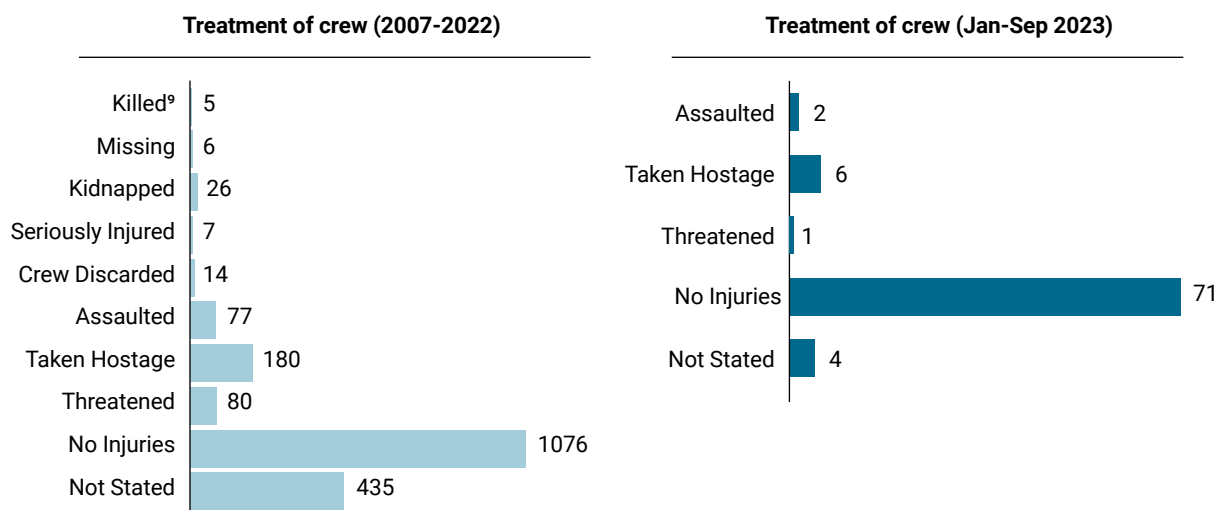


Chart 7 – Treatment of crew – Asia (2007-2022 & January-September 2023)

### Stolen items

2007-2022. Of the 1,906 incidents, **losses of ship stores** were reported in 620 incidents (32%), losses of cash/personal belongings in 231 incidents (12%), losses of engine spares in 165 incidents (9%), losses of unsecured items in 107 incidents (6%), 71 incidents with losses not stated (4%) while 636 incidents reported nothing was lost (33%).

January-September 2023. Among the 84 incidents, 23 incidents reported losses of engine spares (27%), 17 incidents reported losses of unsecured items such as scrap metal onboard barges (20%), 13 incidents reported losses of ship stores such as paint, fire nozzle and welding machine (16%), three incidents reported losses of crew’s personal belongings such as mobile phones and watch (4%), one incident reported the type of losses could not be ascertained (1%), and 27 incidents reported **nothing was lost** (32%). Chart 8 shows the details of stolen items from ships.

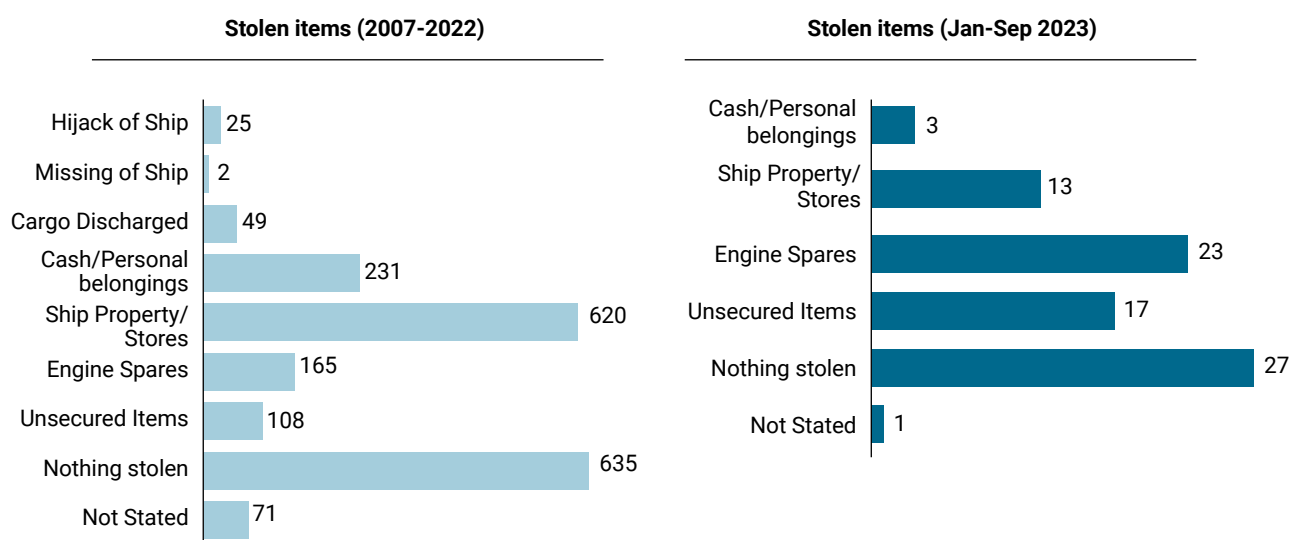


Chart 8 – Stolen items – Asia (2007-2022 & January-September 2023)

9 Regarding the 'Treatment of Crew for 2007-2022', the number of incidents of crew "killed" does not include the number of incidents of abducted of crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas where crew were killed or died. These incidents are counted as the incidents of crew "kidnapped" in order to avoid the double counting of incidents.

## Type of ships boarded

2007-2022. Of the 1,906 incidents, 668 incidents occurred onboard **tankers** (35%), 545 incidents onboard bulk carriers (29%), 279 onboard tug boats/supply vessels (15%), 236 incidents onboard container ships (12%) and 110 incidents onboard general cargo ships (6%).

January-September 2023. Of the 84 incidents, 43 incidents occurred onboard **bulk carriers** (51%), 20 incidents onboard tankers (24%), 12 incidents onboard tug boats towing barges (14%), eight incidents onboard container ships (10%) and one incident onboard a fishing trawler (1%). The type of ships boarded by the perpetrators is shown in Chart 9 below.

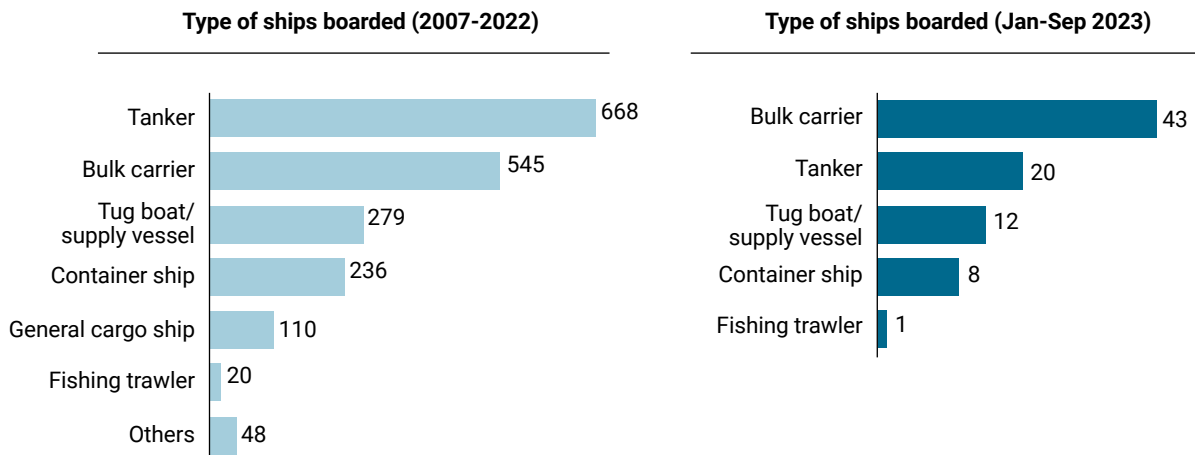


Chart 9 – Type of ships boarded – Asia (2007-2022 & January-September 2023)

### Time of incidents

2007-2022. Among the 1,906 incidents, 1,553 incidents occurred during **hours of darkness** (81%) and 353 incidents occurred during daylight hours (19%).

January-September 2023. Of the 84 incidents, 76 incidents (90%) occurred during **hours of darkness** and eight incidents (10%) occurred during daylight hours. The time of incidents reported against ships in Asia is shown in Chart 10 below.

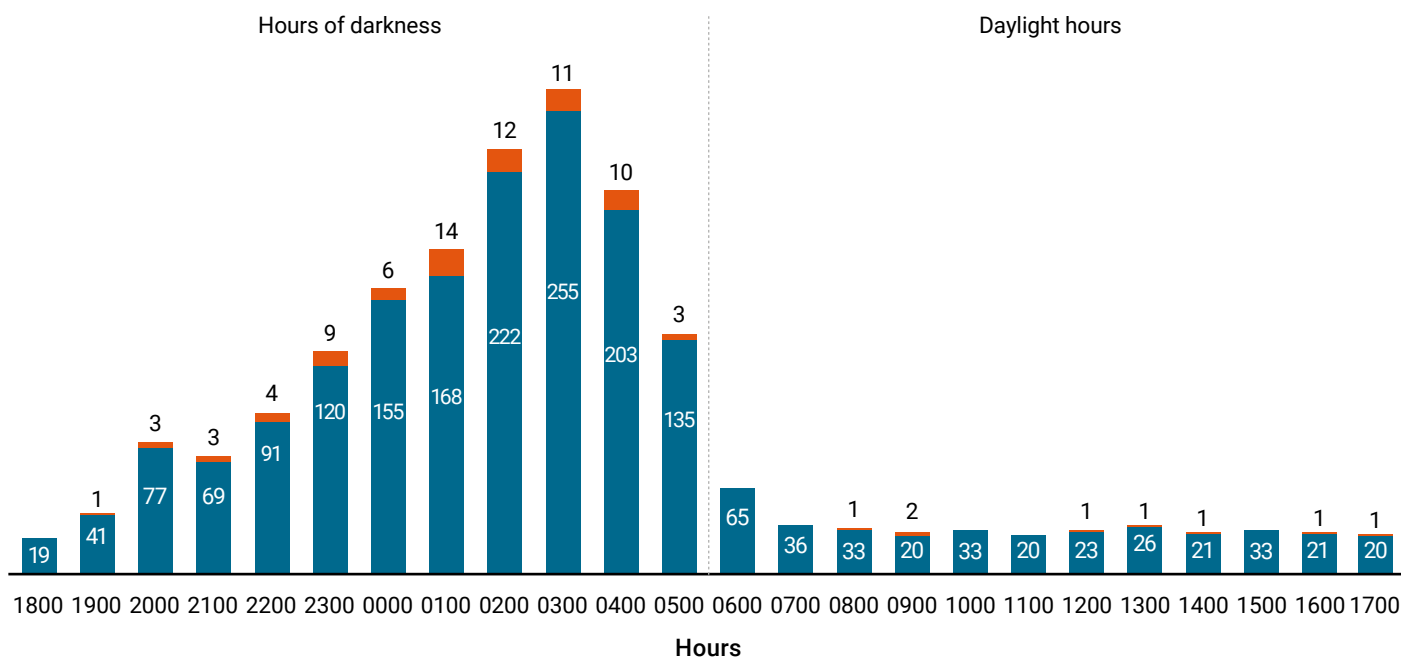
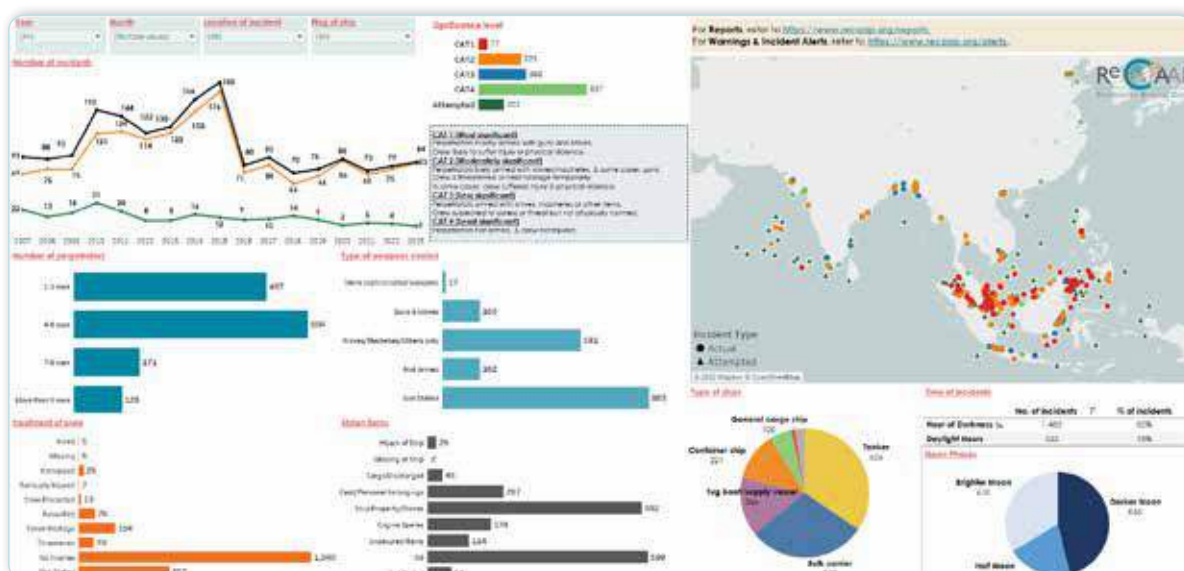


Chart 10 - Time of incidents - Asia (2007-2022 & January-September 2023)

● 2007-2022 ● Jan-Sep 2023

### ReCAAP Data Visualisation Map and Panel (Re-VAMP)

The ReCAAP ISC had developed a data visualisation dashboard, known as *Re-VAMP*, for the maritime community. *Re-VAMP* provides a comprehensive overview of past and current data on incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia through data visualisation using an interactive dashboard. Through its interactive functions, users are able to view co-relations with other data, gather key insights and information to make informed risk assessments and decisions.



# 05

**Case Studies – Arrest of Perpetrators  
and Recovery of Stolen Items**

## Case Studies – Arrest of Perpetrators and Recovery of Stolen Items

This section features the case studies on the arrests of perpetrators in the Philippines and SOMS, as well as recovery of stolen items in Bangladesh.

### Philippines

#### Arrest of perpetrators by PCG (15 September 2023)

On 15 Sep 23, while the PCG Covert Monitoring personnel were conducting operation along Baseco Beach, Baseco Compound, Port Area, Manila, the team sighted two unidentified personnel disembarked from the motorised banca named “MB OMER” and unloaded a large entanglement of wires. The wires were believed to have been stolen from an unknown vessel anchored at/off Manila Bay. The team immediately coordinated with the nearest Police Station for the conduct of verification of the said illegal activities and apprehension of the alleged suspects. Upon coordination, Baseco Police Station 13 immediately deployed its personnel to conduct verification and augmentation with PCG which resulted in the apprehension of two perpetrators, who was later identified to be members of a syndicate responsible for the robberies in Manila anchorage area. The perpetrators were detained and criminal charges filed by the PCG in the Court of Law.



Stolen items and the small boat used by the perpetrators  
(Source: PCG)

05

## Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS)

### Arrest of Perpetrators by Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) (10 April 2023)

On 10 Apr 2023, at about 1228 hrs (local time), while the tug boat, *Target 10* was towing barge, loaded with scrap metals at approximately 3.7 nm off Tanjung Setapa, Malaysia, perpetrators in several boats approached and boarded the barge. The perpetrators then started to loot scrap metals from the barge, transferring it to their boats. Upon being informed, MMEA deployed patrol boat to the location of the incident and intercepted a wooden boat laden with stolen scrap metals, and arrested six perpetrators on board.



Perpetrators arrested (left) & stolen scrap metal onboard wooden boat used by perpetrators (right)  
(Source: MMEA)

### Arrest of Perpetrators by Malaysia Marine Police (1 July 2023)

On 1 Jul 2023, at about 2050 hrs (local time), Malaysia Marine Police patrol boat spotted two boats moored to barge, *Sung Fatt 36*, at approximately 2.6 nm from Tanjung Piai, Malaysia. Several men were spotted on top of scrap metals piled on board the barge. Upon seeing the Malaysian Marine Police patrol boat, the perpetrators immediately jumped and escaped in their boats, which eventually crashed into the side of the Malaysia Marine Police patrol boat, leading to the arrest of the perpetrators and detaining of their boats loaded with scrap metals. An estimated 100 tons of scrap metals with a market value worth RM180,000 were seized by the Malaysian authority during the incident, and investigation is in progress.



Scrap metal in perpetrators' boat  
(Source: New Straits Times)



Perpetrators stealing scrap metal from barge  
(Source: Shipping company)



### Arrest of Perpetrators by MMEA (23 July 2023)

On 23 Jul 2023, at about 2230 hrs (local time), tug boat, *Jin Hwa 49* was towing the barge, *Jin Hwa 39* at approximately 2.5 nm southwest of Tanjung Ayam, Malaysia when four perpetrators were spotted unloading scrap metal from the barge. The incident was immediately reported to the local authority, and upon receipt of the information, MMEA despatched patrol boat to location. MMEA successfully arrested the perpetrators, seized their boats and initial investigation revealed perpetrators were members of syndicate targeting scrap metals in the area.



Scrap metal in perpetrators' boats seized by Malaysian authorities  
(Source: Shipping company)

## Bangladesh

### Recovery of stolen items by Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) (24 May 2023)

On 24 May 2023, at about 0115 hrs (local time), six perpetrators armed with long knives boarded motor tanker, *MT Success* while berthed at Dolphin Jetty No. 3, Chattogram, Bangladesh. During the incident, ship's store lock was broken by the perpetrators and 10 cans of paint were stolen. The master immediately reported the incident to the local authorities, which resulted in the quick response of the BCG, who then immediately conducted investigation on board the ship. The BCG carried out follow-up investigation near the land and water areas of the port, and successfully recovered all stolen items which were handed back to the victim ship.

## Conclusion

Timely reporting of the incidents by the crew and immediate response by the law enforcement agencies resulted in the arrests of the perpetrators as demonstrated in the above mentioned incidents.

The ReCAAP ISC commends the efforts of PCG, MMEA and Malaysia Marine Police that led to the arrests of perpetrators involved in incidents of ARAS in their waters, as well as BCG on the recovery of stolen items. The ReCAAP ISC urges the authorities to step up surveillance and conduct patrols to deter perpetrators operating in their area of responsibility, and respond immediately to incidents reported by ship master.