

Incident Report:	7/2010
Name and Type of Ship:	<i>Theresa Libra</i> / Chemical tanker
Date/Time of Incident:	7 Apr 2010 at 2300 hrs (local time)
Location of incident:	2° 44.2' N, 105° 16.3' E
Area Description:	6 nm west of Pulau Damar
Name and Type of Ship:	<i>Star Ypsilon</i> / Bulk carrier
Date/Time of Incident:	9 Apr 2010 at 0200 hrs (local time)
Location of incident:	3° 19.1' N, 105° 28.9' E
Area Description:	20 nm northwest of Pulau Jemanja

Details of Incident

On 7 April 2010, a Singapore-registered chemical tanker, *Theresa Libra* was underway at position 2° 44.2' N, 105° 16.3' E (approximately 6 nm west of Pulau Damar, South China Sea) when eight men armed with knives boarded the tanker from a boat at about 2300 hrs. Within 48 hours of the incident involving *Theresa Libra*, the ReCAAP ISC was informed by the ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore) about another incident involving a Marshall Island registered bulk carrier, *Star Ypsilon* which occurred in the vicinity. The incidents are described below.

Incident Involving *Theresa Libra* on 7 April 2010 at 2300 hrs

While underway at about 12 knots, eight men armed with knives boarded the tanker, held hostage the engineer who was on the deck and entered the accommodation area. On reaching the bridge, they threatened the crew with knives and held hostage the Master. The robbers then proceeded to raid the cabin of the Master and officers, and took away cash and valuables. They continued to hold the Master hostage until they escaped in their boat which was alongside the poop deck (aft). The entire episode was over in 20 minutes.

The men were casually dressed, spoke English with a local accent and were aggressive throughout the period when they were onboard the tanker. The Master reported the incident to the vessel's company immediately after the incident and initiated a VHF broadcast. The crew was not injured.



The company reported the incident to Singapore's POCC who in turn reported the incident to the ReCAAP ISC. The Singapore's POCC who is also the ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore) initiated a NAVTEX broadcast to warn mariners about the incident and reported the incident to the ReCAAP ISC, the Singapore's Police Coast Guard (PCG), the Republic of Singapore Navy, the MRCC of Malaysia (Putra Jaya) and the MRCC of Indonesia (BASARNAS).

Incident Involving *Star Ypsilon* on 9 April 2010 at 0200 hrs

On 9 April 2010, the ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore) reported to the ReCAAP ISC another incident which occurred at about 35 nm north of the location of the incident involving *Theresa Libra*. Seven men armed with guns and long knives boarded *Star Ypsilon* at position 3° 19.1' N, 105° 28.9' E (approximately 20 nm northwest of Pulau Jemaja) while underway and stole the ship's cash box and two mobile phones. The crew raised the alarm and informed the relevant authorities about the incident. The crew was not injured.

The Singapore POCC initiated a NAVTEX broadcast and informed the relevant agencies about the incident.

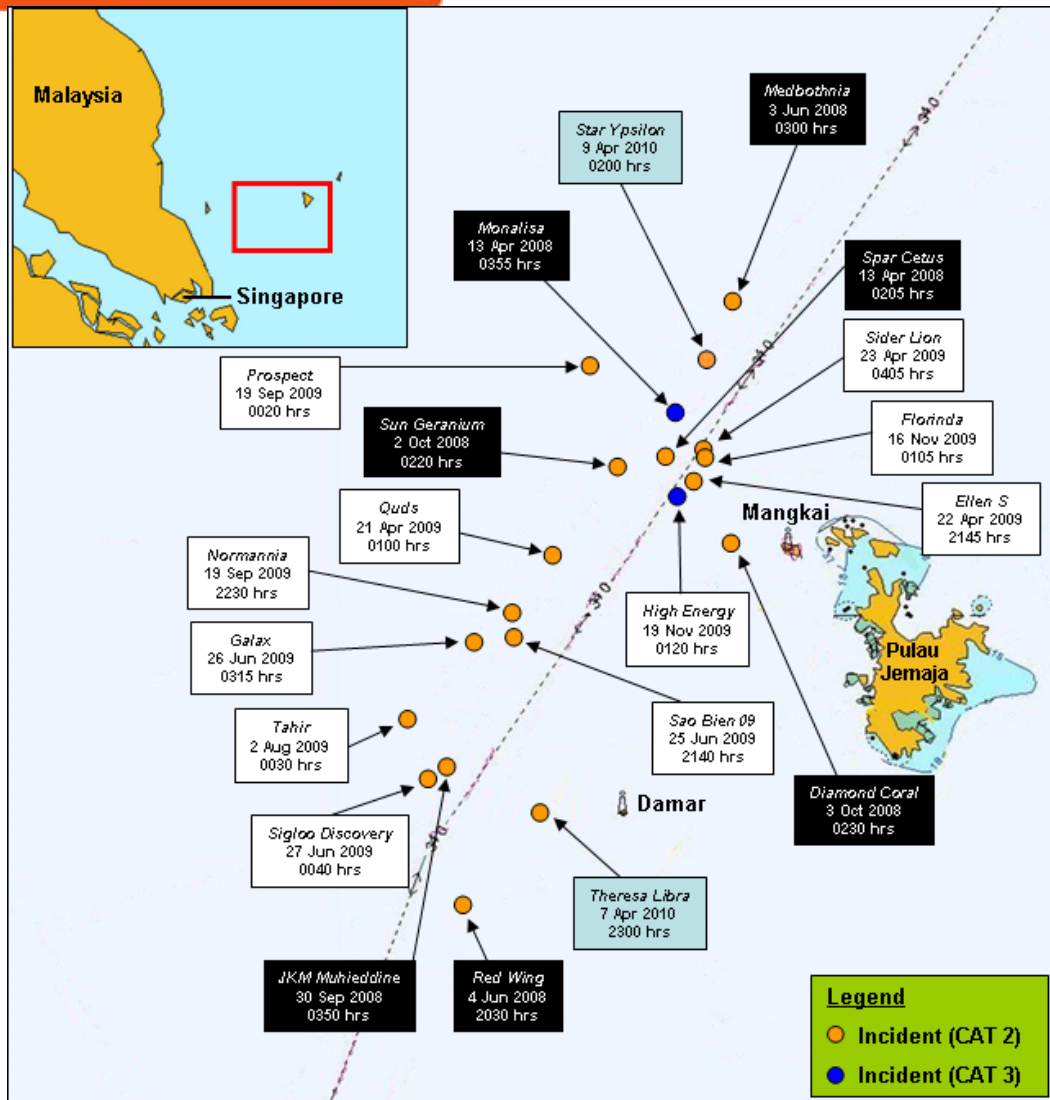
Reported by

ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore)

Past Incidents

These are the first two incidents reported in the area since January 2010. A total of 18 incidents were reported in 2008 and 2009, of which seven incidents were reported in 2008 and 11 incidents in 2009. The ReCAAP ISC notes that most of the incidents occurred in the months between April and November of 2008 and 2009. Based on past records of these incidents, the ReCAAP ISC notes that incidents occurred repeatedly on consecutive days or alternate days, and in some cases, two incidents on the same day. Refer to map below.





Approximate location of incidents

Of the seven incidents reported in 2008, two incidents occurred in April 2008 (both on 13 April 2008), two in June 2008 (on 3 June and 4 June 2008) and three incidents in September-October 2008 (on 30 September 2008, 2 October and 3 October 2008). Of the 11 incidents in 2009, three incidents occurred in April 2009 (on 21, 22 and 23 April 2009), three incidents in June 2009 (on 25, 26 and 27 June 2009), one incident on 2 August 2009, two incidents in September 2009 (both on 19 September 2009) and two incidents in November 2009 (on 16 and 19 November 2009).

All incidents occurred while the ships were underway and mostly Category 2 (moderately significant) incidents. The ReCAAP ISC notes that the men were normally armed with knives, some with iron bars, axe, hammers, iron rods, pipes (guns were used only in one incident). Eight out of the 18 incidents involved groups of 5–6 men while another eight incidents involved groups of 7–8 men. There were two incidents involved more than eight men.



Of the 18 incidents, 16 reported loss of cash, laptops, camera, mobile phones etc. Generally, the modus operandi of these incidents involved the robbers came alongside the victim ship, boarded and proceeded to the cabins of the Master, officers and Engineer to steal cash and their personal belongings. In three of the 18 incidents, they took about 15 to 20 minutes to board the ship and rob the crew before escaped in their speed boats.

All incidents occurred during hours of darkness; four incidents occurred between 2000 hrs and 2359 hrs, 13 incidents occurred between 0001 hrs and 0359 hrs, and one incident occurred at 0405 hrs. The recent two incidents involving *Theresa Libra* occurred at 0200hrs on 7 April 2010 and *Star Ypsilon* at 2300 hrs on 9 April 2010.

Comments by the ReCAAP ISC

The ReCAAP ISC notes that the incidents were likely involving the same group of men as the modus operandi was similar. All incidents occurred during hours of darkness while the ships were underway, mostly along the north-easterly recommended route in the South China Sea. Ship masters and crew are advised to maintain vigilance and adopt precautionary measures when operating in the area as past trends indicated that the culprits might attack more vessels on consecutive or alternate days in the vicinity. Additional lookouts and radar watches, especially towards the aft sector are recommended as the robbers usually approach from the stern. Early detection of a possible boarding by suspicious personnel is the best deterrent and reduces risk to the crew.

The ReCAAP ISC strongly advocates that ship master reports all actual and attempted incidents to the nearest coastal State and the relevant authorities immediately. Immediate reporting may permit the authorities to assist the ship masters, and initiate broadcast to warn mariners operating in the area.

