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# Missing Tug Boat, *ASTA*, Found !!

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## Missing tug boat, *ASTA* found !!

Name of ship : *ASTA*  
Type of ship : Tug boat  
Flag of ship : Singapore  
IMO number : 9522984  
GT : 296



Photograph courtesy of IFC-MSTF

1. The ReCAAP ISC issued an Incident Alert 02/2010 on 7 February 2010 when the ship agent reported lost communications with a Singapore-registered tug boat, *ASTA* at about 0130 hrs (local time) on 6 February 2010 at position 2° 59.40' N, 104° 00.60' E, off Pulau Tioman, Malaysia. The tug boat had reportedly deviated from its planned course and was tracked to be heading north-easterly in the South China Sea. The ship agent reported the incident to the Singapore's Port Operation Control Centre (POCC) who is also the ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore). Similar updates and details were also received from the Information Fusion Centre-Maritime Security Task Force (IFC-MSTF).

2. The *ASTA* towing barge *CALLISTA* departed Singapore for Cambodia on 5 February 2010 and was deemed to have been hijacked as its deviation profile/lost of communication was similar to an earlier incident that involved a tugboat *PROSPAQ T1* and its barge *PROSPAQ B1* in April 2009.

### Recovery of Barge, *CALLISTA*

3. The maritime authorities in the region and all ReCAAP Focal Points were immediately alerted to the missing vessels. Subsequently, five sightings of the barge were received from passing ships from 10 to 14 February 2010, and on 17 February 2010, *CALLISTA* was located and recovered off Pulau Tioman. On the same day, the Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) informed the ReCAAP ISC that a Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) vessel had spotted a life raft off the Adraiser Reef and rescued 11 crew of the *ASTA*. However, the Chief Engineer was missing. According to the crew, eight armed robbers boarded the barge on 6 February 2010 at 0115 hrs (local time), took control of the vessels, and set them adrift in a life raft on 10 February 2010 at 2100 hrs (local time). The ReCAAP ISC issued a Special Report on 18 February 2010 to report on the missing tugboat *ASTA* and the Chief Engineer.

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4. The ReCAAP ISC received an update from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), who is also the ReCAAP Focal Point (Philippines) that *ASTA* (renamed *ROXY-I*) has been 'positively' identified in the area of Dinagat Island, Surigao City, Philippines on 25 February 2010 (see map below). The PCG reported that she received information from the Philippine National Police that a tug boat named *ROXY-I* (with the same IMO number as *ASTA*) was found. The PCG dispatched a patrol craft to the area to take custody of the tug boat. See photographs taken of the *ROXY-I*.



5. The ReCAAP Focal Point (Philippine) also informed the ReCAAP ISC that the Chief Engineer (who was reported to be missing with the tug boat) and seven pirates are currently under the custody of the Philippine National Police for investigation.

### **The ReCAAP ISC Information Sharing Mechanism**

6. The successful recovery of the missing barge, *CALLISTA* on 17 February 2010, the rescue of the 11 crew by the Malaysian authorities on 17 February 2010, the locating/recovery of the tug boat, *ASTA* by the Philippine authorities on 25 February 2010 and the arrest of the seven pirates is attributed to the good inter-governmental agencies cooperation and information sharing between the RMN and the MMEA, and between the Philippine National Police and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG). Worth commending are the close cooperation and information sharing between the ReCAAP ISC and the Information Fusion Centre-Maritime Security Task Force (IFC-MSTF), the timely information sharing between the ship agent and the ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore) when the first report of the lost of communication with the tug boat was made, and the sightings reported by passing ships to the ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore).

7. The network of information flow through multi-channel reporting is evident in bringing a successful closure to this hijacking episode. It demonstrated the importance of timely reporting, good information connectivity and the will of the governmental agencies to suppress piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia.



Photograph courtesy of the PCG  
The ASTA, renamed *ROXY-I*



Photograph courtesy of the PCG

Positive identification of ASTA via its IMO No: 9522984