



*Update on incident
involving
hijacking of Zafirah*

ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre
456, Alexandra Road, #11-02
Singapore 119962
Tel : (65) 6376 3091
Fax : (65) 6376 3066
Web : <http://www.recaap.org>

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Incident Update

Name of Vessel : *MT Zafirah*
Type of Vessel : Tanker
Flag of Vessel : Malaysia
IMO No. : 9016387
GT : 496

Description of Incident

1. The Malaysia-registered tanker, *Zafirah* carrying 320,173 litres of marine gas oil departed Pasir Gudang, Johor, Peninsular Malaysia for Miri, Sarawak, East Malaysia. On 20 Nov 12, the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) received information from various sources that the owner had lost communications with *Zafirah*. The last known position of *Zafirah* was at approximately 174.4 nm southeast of Con Son Island, Vietnam (07° 10.16' N, 109° 09.29' E) on 19 Nov 12 at or about 1641 hrs (local time). With the information, the ReCAAP ISC immediately informed the ReCAAP Focal Points in the region and the maritime authorities of Malaysia and Indonesia to alert them about the incident and keep a lookout for *Zafirah*.

Updates on position of *Zafirah*

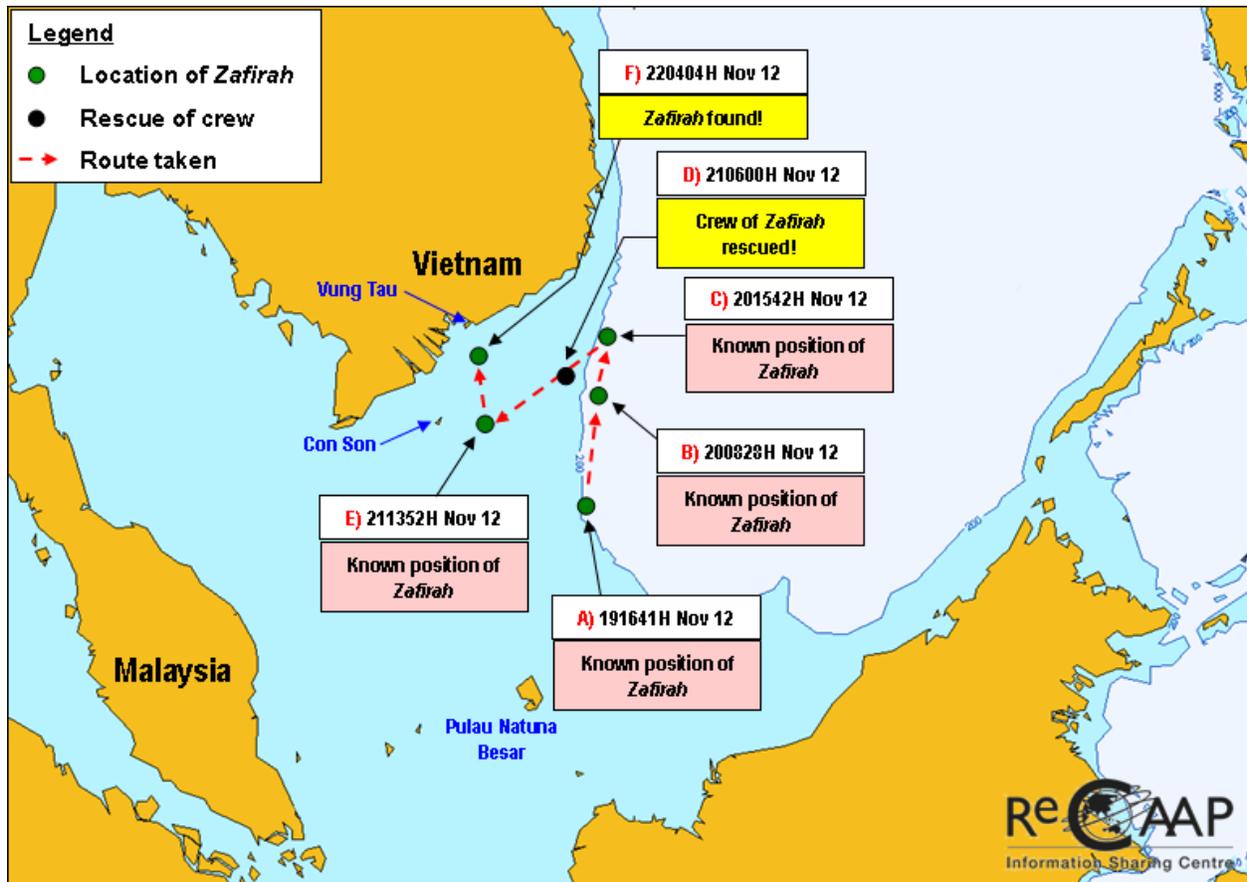
2. Throughout the incident, the ReCAAP ISC, Information Fusion Centre (IFC), the Vietnam Marine Police (VMP) who is also the ReCAAP Focal Point (Vietnam), Vietnam People's Navy (VPN), Vietnam Maritime Security Information Centre (MSIC), Vietnam Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centre (MRCC) and the shipping company had collaborated closely in sharing inputs on the positions and other essential information of *Zafirah*. From various other sources, it was assessed that the tanker had been hijacked and the hijackers might be targeting to sell the marine gas oil onboard the tanker illegally in Vietnam waters/port. Based on the initial positions gathered, *Zafirah* was proceeding in a northerly direction on 19 Nov 12 and 20 Nov 12, but on 21 Nov 12, the vessel appeared to be travelling in a south-westerly direction instead.

Rescue of crew

3. On 21 Nov 12 at or about 0600 hrs (local time), a Vietnamese fishing vessel, *BV92350* rescued the nine crew of *Zafirah* (comprising five Myanmar nationals and four Indonesians). The crew was transferred to Vietnam MRCC's search and rescue vessel, *SAR 413* on the same day at or about 2330 hrs (local time), and arrived at shore on 22 Nov 12 at or about 0815 hrs (local time). The crew was reported to be in good condition.

Zafirah found and pirates apprehended

4. On 22 Nov 12 at or about 0404 hrs (local time), *Zafirah* was located at approximately 35 nm south-east of Vung Tung (09° 50.10' N, 107° 19.59' E). The Vietnam Marine Police despatched two patrol vessels to the location to monitor the situation. The tanker was reported to have been renamed 'MD FEAHORSE' and has a different IMO number. From the statement made by the master of *Zafirah*, there were 11 pirates onboard the tanker and they were armed with long knives and pistols. On 22 Nov 12 at or about 1600 hrs (local time), the Vietnam Marine Police Special Task Force boarded *Zafirah* and apprehended all 11 pirates who are currently under the custody of the VMP. Refer to map for the positions of *Zafirah* and location where the crew was rescued.



Location of *Zafirah* and rescue of crew (19 Nov to 22 Nov 12)

Network of collaboration and information sharing

5. The successful outcome of this incident again demonstrated the significance of information sharing and collaboration involving the ReCAAP ISC, IFC, VMP, VPN, Vietnam MSIC, MRCC and the shipping company. The good cooperation and information sharing among these agencies has contributed towards the rescue of the crew, recovery of *Zafirah* and apprehension of the pirates

Conclusion

6. Notably, there has been an increase in activities involving illegal siphoning of fuel/marine gas oil from tankers in recent months. On 13 Sep 12, almost 750 tons of fuel oil was siphoned from *Scorpio* to *Sea Jade* southwest of Tanjung Piai, Malaysia; and on 11 Nov 12, about 80 tons of marine gas oil was siphoned from *Yunita* to an unknown barge. However, the incident involving *Zafirah* was the first in 2012 involving the hijacking of the vessel for its marine gas oil, abandoning the crew in a life raft, repainting and renaming the vessel. The ReCAAP ISC urges all vessels to exercise vigilance and make timely reporting of all incidents to the port/coastal States (by ship master), and the ReCAAP Focal Points (by ship owner/operator).