

## NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

21 July 2023

### **59 incidents of armed robbery against ships in Asia in first half of 2023**

The ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) today released its Half-Year Report (Jan – Jun) of 2023 on Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia. The key highlights of the report are:

#### **Overall Situation**

- No incident of piracy (on high seas) in Asia and abduction of crew for ransom in Sulu-Celebes Seas for the third consecutive year since 2020.
- A total of 59 actual<sup>1</sup> incidents of armed robbery against ships (in internal, waters, territorial seas, and archipelagic waters under **coastal States jurisdiction**) were reported. This represents a 40% increase compared to 42 incidents in the first half of 2022.
- The nature of the incidents is generally opportunistic and of lesser severity, committed by perpetrators who are non-confrontational and adopting a ‘hit-and-run’ approach. In most incidents, the criminals board ships that are ill-prepared, have low freeboard, and manoeuvre at slow speed in restricted areas of the **Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS)**. The most commonly stolen items are ship stores, scrap metal and machinery spares.
- Of the 59 incidents reported, of the three incidents (CAT 2), two cases involved crew suffering minor injury. In 16 of the incidents (CAT 3), the crew was not injured, perpetrators used knives to remove unsecured items. For the remaining 40 incidents (CAT 4), perpetrators were not armed and the crew was not injured, and nothing was taken in 12 incidents.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

## **Area of Concern – Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS)**

- The SOMS continues to be an area of concern, with 41 incidents reported during Jan - Jun 2023 compared to 27 incidents during the same period in 2022.
- Of the 41 incidents reported in the SOMS,
  - 38 incidents occurred in the Singapore Strait (SS), a 41% increase compared to 27 incidents in the first half of 2022.
  - Three incidents occurred in the Malacca Strait compared to no incident in the first half of 2022.
- 61% of the incidents in the SS belong to CAT 4 (least severe).
- In 42% of the incidents in the SS, nothing was stolen or losses cannot be ascertained. Items like engine spares, ships store and unsecured items were taken in the remaining 58% of incidents.
- Approximately two thirds of the ships boarded in the SS were bulk carriers while underway/sailing.
- 87% of incidents occurred during hours of darkness between 1800 to 0559 hrs.

ReCAAP ISC Executive Director, Mr Krishnaswamy Natarajan, said “The increase in incidents in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore is likely due to the socio-economic situation worsened by the pandemic, lower fish catch due to climate change as also the prevailing Southwest monsoon. These factors may have led the locals of the Strait to turn to sea robbery and petty crimes to make ends meet. I urge the law enforcement agencies of coastal States to enhance surveillance, increase patrols and respond promptly to reports of incidents.”

He added, “To tackle the increasing number of incidents, ReCAAP ISC has been actively engaging the littoral States of the SOMS, shipping industry and relevant agencies to discuss ways to enhance cooperation and information sharing, to expedite operational response to deter sea robbery incidents in the SOMS. Ships transiting the SOMS are strongly advised to enhance vigilance, maintain all round look-out and report all incidents immediately to the nearest coastal State authorities. ReCAAP ISC has updated the contact details of the law enforcement agencies of the littoral States of SOMS to facilitate timely reporting by ships.”

## **Use of data analytics to provide deeper insights**

As part of efforts to provide deeper insights into the piracy and sea robbery threat in Asia, ReCAAP ISC uses data analytics to draw correlations between different data sets, identify relevant trends and provide visualisation of data to aid understanding.

The Centre has recently completed Phase 2 of the data analytics project which explores the impact of external factors such as wind speed, weather conditions and moon phases on incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships.

Ship masters can refer to insights featured in our reports to make informed decisions on risk assessment when planning their voyages through the areas of concern.

– End of Release –

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### **About ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP ISC)**

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) is the first regional government-to-government agreement to promote and enhance cooperation against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia. The Agreement entered into force on September 4, 2006 with 14 Asian countries as Contracting Parties, and the Information Sharing Centre was established on November 29, 2006. To date, 21 States (14 Asian countries, 5 European countries, Australia, the USA) have become Contracting Parties to ReCAAP. To fulfil its vision as the Information Hub for combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia, ReCAAP ISC enhances regional cooperation through information sharing, capacity building and cooperative arrangements. At the 12th Governing Council Meeting in 2018, the Council announced that ReCAAP ISC has met the criteria to be a Centre of Excellence for information sharing in combating piracy and armed robbery at sea. For more information about ReCAAP ISC, please visit <http://www.recaap.org>