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# Special Report on Abducting of Crew from Ships in Waters off Eastern Sabah and Southern Philippines (Part II)

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## Abducting of Crew from Ships in Waters off Eastern Sabah and Southern Philippines (Part II)

Following the spate of incidents involving the abducting of crew from ships in waters of eastern Sabah and southern Philippines, the shipping industry is advised to adopt the following measures when in the vicinity:

- Enhance vigilance and increase security watch rotations
- Sound alarm when sighted unknown people on board ship or suspicious boats in the vicinity
- Maintain a continuous watch to the advisories issued on NAVTEX
- Report all incidents in accordance with the IMO circular MSC.1/Circ.1334 on 'Revised guidance to ship owner, ship operator, ship master and crew on preventing and suppressing acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships'
- Maintain continuous communication with shipping company and enforcement agencies
- Avoid confrontation with the perpetrators
- Refer to ReCAAP ISC's website at [www.recaap.org](http://www.recaap.org) for updates on incidents and trends
- Conduct risk assessment
- Reroute/Avoid area if feasible

The shipping industry is advised to report to Philippine Coast Guard's Operations Centre when their ships are transiting the area; for monitoring by the Philippine Coast Guard and immediate response in any eventualities:

Philippine Coast Guard District  
Southwestern Mindanao Operation Centre  
+63 929686 4129  
+63 916626 0689  
Email: [hcgdswm@yahoo.com](mailto:hcgdswm@yahoo.com)

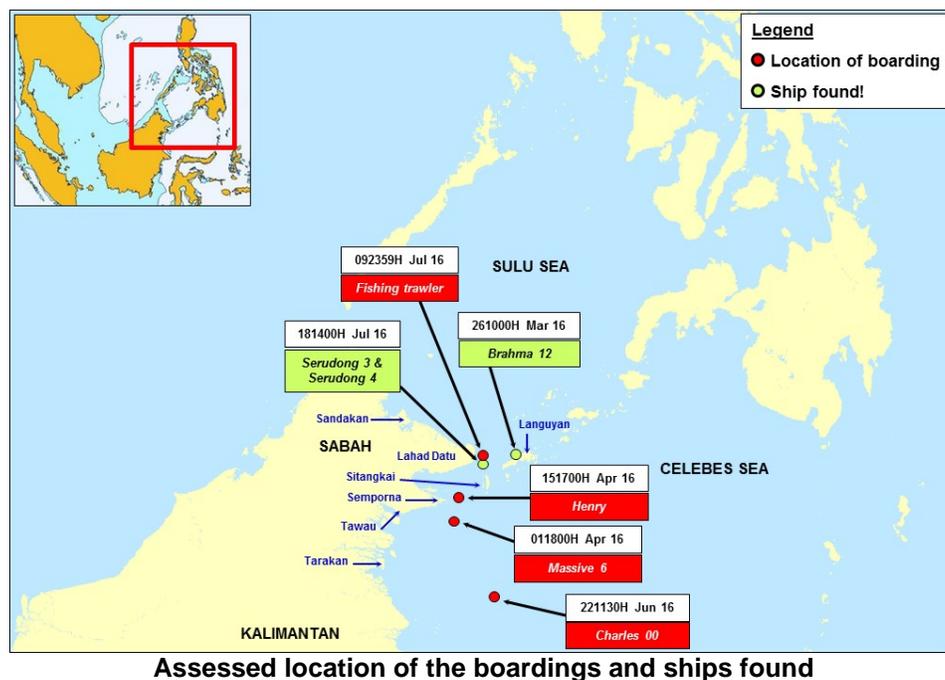
# Special Report

## Introduction

1. The ReCAAP ISC is concerned with the spate of incidents involving the abduction of crew from ships while underway in waters off eastern Sabah and southern Philippines which occurred since March 2016. A Special Report on 'Abducting of Crew from Tug Boats in Waters off Eastern Sabah and Southern Philippines'<sup>1</sup> was published by the ReCAAP ISC on 22 April 2016. This Special Report (Part II) provides an update of the situation, focuses on the modus operandi of the perpetrators, status of the abducted crew and actions carried out by the littoral States and the ReCAAP ISC.

## Situation Update

2. Between March till July 2016, the ReCAAP Focal Point (Philippines) reported to the ReCAAP ISC a total of six incidents occurred on board five tug boats towing barges and one fishing trawler. Of these, one occurred in March 2016 (*Brahma 12*), two in April 2016 (*Massive 6* and *Henry*), one in June 2016 (*Charles 00*) and two in July 2016 (unnamed *fishing trawler* and *Serudong 3*). The abducted crew of *Brahma 12*, *Massive 6* and *Henry* had been released after ransom was believed to have been paid to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). See map below on the location of the six incidents, and refer to **Annex A** for description of the incidents.



<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the ReCAAP ISC website at [www.recaap.org](http://www.recaap.org) for the report.

## Modus Operandi

3. Generally, the modus operandi of the perpetrators involved in the six incidents was fairly similar, except for one incident (*Charles 00*) where the perpetrators abducted the crew twice within a duration of 75 mins on the same day. In all six incidents, the target was the crew, and not the ships nor its cargo. In two incidents (*Brahma 12* and *Serudong 3*), the tug boats were abandoned after the perpetrators abducted the entire crew. Refer to **Annex B** for details of the modus operandi of the six incidents, which is summarized as follows:

- a. Type of ship. Of the six incidents, five involved tug boats towing barges, and one involved a fishing trawler. Tug boats engaged in towing operations operate at a slow speed of between 2-3 knots, with low freeboard are vulnerable and easy target for boarding. There was one incident involving a fishing trawler which was boarded on 9 July 2016, an indication that slow moving ship was targeted regardless of its type.
- b. Time of incident. Five of the six incidents occurred during daylight hours of between 1000 hrs - 1800 hrs. Ship master and crew are strongly encouraged to exercise vigilance, and should there be any suspicious boats in the vicinity, they are to raise the alarm and report to PCG Operations Centre in southwestern Mindanao and the coastal State immediately.
- c. Type of boats used by perpetrators. Five of the six incidents reported the use of speed boats by the perpetrators. Of these, two incidents reported the use of green and red 'jungkong' pump boats (small wooden traditional fishing boats), and three incidents reported the use of grey and white speed boats.
- d. Number of perpetrators. Three of the six incidents involved perpetrators operate in groups of between 5-8 men. There was one incident where 17 perpetrators were reported (*Brahma 12*).
- e. Weapons. The perpetrators were reported to carry firearms. In the incident involving *Henry* and *Charles 00*, the perpetrators opened fire at the tug boats and forcibly boarded the ships. Ship master and crew are strongly advised to avoid confronting or antagonising the perpetrators.
- f. Treatment of crew. In most incidents the perpetrators did not harm the crew except in *Henry* on 15 April 2016 when one of the crew was reportedly injured and subsequently brought to a hospital for treatment by the Malaysian Marine Police.

g. Flag of ships. Of the six incidents, three were Malaysia-registered ships and three were Indonesia-registered ships. No evidence to indicate that certain flag ships were targeted.

h. Nationality of abducted crew. Of the 33 crew abducted, 24 were Indonesians and 9 were Malaysians. It appeared the perpetrators were particular about the nationality of the crew to abduct, as evidenced from the incident involving the fishing trawler when the perpetrators inquired who among the crew had passport, and three replied that they had. The perpetrators abducted the three with their passports and fled in their speed boat, leaving the remaining four on board the fishing trawler.

i. Economic loss. Some reports mentioned that the perpetrators stole other items on board the ship, including navigational equipment, and crew's personal belongings such as mobile phones and laptops. Apart from abducting the crew, the perpetrators were opportunistic in stealing ship items and crew's personal belongings. The possibility of the 'abduction for ransom' group carried out the abduction and handed the abducted crew over to the ASG for a fee, cannot be ruled out.

## Status of the abducted crew

4. Of the 33 crew who had been abducted in the six incidents, 18 (from *Brahma 12*, *Massive 6* and *Henry*) had been released, and ransom was believed to have been paid to secure the releases. The remaining 15 crew (from *Charles 00*, fishing trawler and *Serudong 3*) are still being held in captivity.

## Action by the littoral States

5. On 5 May 2016, the Foreign Ministers and Defence Ministers of Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia met in Yogyakarta, Indonesia to discuss immediate regional maritime and security challenges affecting the three countries. A Joint Declaration<sup>2</sup> to address the security issues in maritime areas of common concern was drafted and agreed upon. On 20 June 2016, a trilateral meeting among the Defence Ministers of the three littoral States was held in Manila to reaffirm the commitments made on 5 May 2016. A Joint Statement<sup>3</sup> of the trilateral meeting was released thereafter. On 20 July 2016, Philippine Defence Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana announced that he would be meeting his Malaysian and Indonesian counterparts in Indonesia in the first week of August 2016, to follow up on the 20 June 2016 meeting to address the growing security challenges that undermine peace, security and prosperity in the region<sup>4</sup>.

6. On 25 July 2016, the Philippine President Rodrigo R. Duterte during his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) mentioned that the "full force" of the Armed Forces of the Philippines will be applied "to crush" the terrorist ASG, whom he described as "criminals who operate under the guise of religious fervour." Among other things, he plans to increase coordination with Malaysia and Indonesia and strengthen the government's counter-terrorism program by amending various laws on terrorism, terrorism financing and cybercrime<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2016, May). *Joint Declaration of Foreign Ministers and Chiefs of Defence Forces of Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines*. Retrieved from <http://www.kemlu.go.id/id/berita/Pages/Joint-Declaration-Foreign-Ministers-and-Chiefs-of-Defence-Forces-of-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Department of National Defense, Republic of the Philippines. (2016, June). *Joint Statement: Trilateral Meeting among the Defence Ministers of the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia*. Retrieved from <http://dnd.gov.ph/PDF%202016/Press%20-%20Trilateral%20Meeting%20among%20the%20Defence%20Ministers%20of%20the%20Philippines,%20Malaysia%20and%20Indonesia.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Department of National Defense, Republic of the Philippines. (2016, July). *SND to meet with Malaysian, Indonesian counterparts*. Retrieved from <http://dnd.gov.ph/PDF%202016/Press%20-%20SND%20to%20meet%20with%20Malaysian,%20Indonesian%20Counterparts.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> CNN Philippines. (2016, July). *SONA 2016: What are Duterte's priorities?* Retrieved from <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2016/07/25/sona-2016-duterte-priorities.html>

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## Actions by the ReCAAP ISC

7. The ReCAAP ISC is working closely with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) which is also the ReCAAP Focal Point for Philippines in monitoring the situation closely, and sharing the latest situation, best practices and lessons learned with the shipping industry and regional authorities; amongst others at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA)'s Maritime Safety and Security Sub-Committee held in Singapore on 12 May 2016, the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) in Shanghai, China on 19 May 2016, the 116<sup>th</sup> Session of the IMO Council Meeting in London on 5 July 2016 and the ReCAAP ISC Piracy and Sea Robbery Conference in Bangkok, Thailand on 14 July 2016.

## Conclusion

8. With concerns over the escalation of the situation involving the abduction of crew from ships in waters off eastern Sabah and southern Philippines, the ReCAAP ISC reiterates the need to strengthen regional coordination and cooperation among the littoral States in conducting joint/coordinated patrols and surveillance; and apprehension of the mastermind.

9. The shipping industry is strongly advised to adopt relevant preventive measures, taking reference from the *Regional Guide to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia*, to contact the PCG Operation Centre when transiting the area and report all incidents to the relevant authorities. As tug boats are most vulnerable especially when engaged in towing operation, re-routing away from the area would lessen the probability of being attacked. The ReCAAP ISC reiterates collective and shared responsibilities among all stakeholders to institutionalise their respective efforts.

Enclosures:

**Annex A:** Description of Incidents

**Annex B:** Modus Operandi of Perpetrators Involved in Incidents of Abduction of Crew

## Annex A

### Description of Incidents

S/N	Ship Name, Type of Ship, Flag, GT, IMO No.	Date Time	Location of Incident	Details of Incidents
1.	<p><b><i>Brahma 12</i></b> Tug boat Indonesia 198 9765407</p> <p><b><i>Anand 12</i></b> Barge</p>	26/03/16 1000 hrs	<p>05° 16' N, 120° 05' E</p> <p>Vicinity of Tubig Dakula, Languyan Municipality, Tawi-Tawi Province, Philippines</p>	<p>On 26 Mar 16, Indonesian-registered tug boat <i>Brahma 12</i> towing barge, <i>Anand 12</i> loaded with 7,000 metric tons of coal departed Kalimantan, Indonesia for a power plant in Batangas, Philippines when 17 perpetrators armed with firearms boarded the tug boat from one grey speed boat powered by three outboard engines and one wooden-type motorised pump boat propelled by double built-in engine. The perpetrators forcibly abducted all its 10 Indonesian crew, and abandoned the tug boat. The exact date, time and location of the boarding have yet to be determined.</p> <p>A passing motor launch, <i>Ashana II</i> discovered <i>Brahma 12</i> with no crew on board drifting in the vicinity waters of Languyan, Tawi-tawi on 26 Mar 16. The crew of <i>Ashana II</i> boarded the tug boat and towed the boat to a wharf in Marang, Languyan and subsequently turned over to the local police for custody. Two days after the tug boat was found, Mr. Joey Mirasole, Operations Manager of World Mariners Philippines who is also the Manila-based agent of <i>Brahma 12</i> was informed by the owner of <i>Brahma 12</i> that the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) claimed responsibility over the incident and allegedly demanding 50 million pesos (S\$1.45 million) in ransom for the release of the crew. A media article mentioned that the owner of <i>Brahma 12</i> has reportedly agreed to pay ransom for the release of the 10 crew.</p> <p>The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) elements in Bongao, Tawi-tawi conducted Port State Control Inspection of <i>Brahma 12</i> at Languyan Municipal Police Station on 30 Mar 16 and reported that several navigational equipment was missing, including the Global Positioning System (GPS), radar apparatus, radio communication and firefighting equipment. The PCG is working closely with the Philippine Armed Forces, Philippine National Police and other enforcement agencies to gather relevant information and updates about the whereabouts of the abducted crew. The 10 abducted crew was subsequently released on 1 May 16.</p>

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S/N	Ship Name, Type of Ship, Flag, GT, IMO No.	Date Time	Location of Incident	Details of Incidents
2.	<b>Massive 6</b> Tug boat Malaysia 269 9265823	01/04/16 1800 hrs	04° 06.65' N, 118° 53.87' E  Approximately 27 nm southeast of Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia	<p>On 1 Apr 16, Malaysian-registered tug boat <i>Massive 6</i> with nine crew on board was underway from Manila, Philippines towards Tawau for bunkering. Between 1815 and 1840 hrs in the vicinity about 27 nm southeast of Semporna, Sabah, East Malaysia, eight perpetrators armed with firearms approached and boarded the tug boat. The perpetrators, allegedly spoke Tagalog-English, took with them four Malaysian crew in their speed boat, along with their mobile phones and laptops.</p> <p>The shipping company managed to establish contact with the remaining crew on or at about 2000 hrs on 1 Apr 16, and reported the incident to the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), Philippines authorities based in Zamboanga City, Philippines, and the ReCAAP ISC. The remaining five crew continued their voyage to Tawau, Sabah escorted by a MMEA ship. The Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) and Malaysia Marine Police vessels had reportedly stepped up maritime and security patrols in vicinity. The four abducted crew was subsequently released on 8 Jun 16.</p>
3.	<b>Henry</b> Tug boat Indonesia 245 9302231  <b>Christi</b> Barge	15/04/16 1700 hrs	04° 31' N, 119° 00' E  Approximately 25.37 nm southwest of Sitangkai Island, Philippines	<p>On 15 Apr 16, an Indonesian-registered tug boat <i>Henry</i>, towing barge, <i>Christi</i> while underway from Cebu, Philippines to Tarakan, Indonesia was boarded by armed perpetrators from a speedboat at approximately 25 nm southwest off Sitangkai Island, Tawi-tawi. The tug boat was fired at, and one of the crew was injured and four others abducted. The Malaysian Maritime Police in Sabah assisted in bringing the wounded crew to a hospital for treatment. The four abducted crew was subsequently released on 11 May 16.</p>

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S/N	Ship Name, Type of Ship, Flag, GT, IMO No.	Date Time	Location of Incident	Details of Incidents
4.	<b>Charles 00</b> Tug boat Indonesia 175  <b>Robby 152</b> Barge	22/06/16 1130 hrs	02° 44.40' N, 119° 35.34' E  Vicinity waters bordering the Philippines and Indonesia	<p>While the tug boat <i>Charles 00</i> towing barge <i>Robby 152</i> were on its way back to Indonesia after discharging 7,500 metric tons of coal in Gracia, Cagayan de Oro, groups of armed perpetrators in two jungkong-type pump boats (one green and the other red) opened fire and forcibly boarded the tug boat. The armed perpetrators took seven crew on two separate occasions, with three crew abducted at around 1130 hrs on 22 Jun 16 and another four at around 1245 hrs on the same day.</p> <p>The abduction of the seven crew members is believed to be carried by ASG. The remaining six crew continued their voyage to Samarinda, Indonesia. The shipping company's local agent reported the incident to the PCG, who relayed the information to the Philippine Armed Forces for monitoring of the abducted Indonesian crew. Maritime patrol operations in the area in coordination with other law enforcement agencies had been intensified.</p>
5.	<b>Name not available</b> Fishing trawler Malaysia	09/07/16 2359 hrs	Approximately 8 nm east of Lahad Datu, Sabah, Malaysia	Five armed men who spoke Malay and local Tausug dialect, boarded an unnamed fishing trawler carrying seven Indonesian fishermen on board. The perpetrators inquired who among the crew have passport; and three fishermen replied that they had. The perpetrators abducted the three fishermen with passports, fled in their white speed boat towards the Philippine waters, leaving the remaining four fishermen on board the fishing boat.
6.	<b>Serudong 3</b> Tug boat Malaysia 60  <b>Serudong 4</b> Barge	18/07/16 1400 hrs	05° 08' N, 119° 24' E  Tanjung Labian, Lahad Datu, Sabah, Malaysia	A ship passing by at the waters in Tanjung Labian, Lahad Datu, Sabah discovered an abandoned tug boat, <i>Serudong 3</i> with barge, <i>Serudong 4</i> . The tug boat with engine still running had no crew on board, the ship compass missing and the crew's belongings in a mess. The tug boat and barge were later towed to Lahud Datu Jetty Port for further investigation by the authorities. The five Malaysian crew of <i>Serudong 3</i> were missing and they were later confirmed to be abducted by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

## Annex B

### Modus Operandi of Perpetrators Involved in Incidents of Abduction of Crew

Name / Type / Flag / GT	Date/Time	Intended route	Number of perpetrators / Type of ship used	Weapons used	Treatment of crew	Economic loss	Status of kidnapped crew(1)
<i>Brahma 12</i> Tug boat Indonesia 198	26/03/16 1000 hrs	Kalimantan, Indonesia to Batangas, Philippines	17 A grey speed boat powered by three outboard engines; and one wooden-type motorised pump boat propelled by double built-in engine	Firearms	10 Indonesian crew abducted	Detachable items on board, including navigational equipment  Tug boat abandoned; barge casted off	10 Indonesian crew released on 1 May 2016 <b>(35 days in captivity)</b>
<i>Massive 6</i> Tug boat Malaysia 269	01/04/16 1800 hrs	Manila, Philippines to Tawau, Malaysia	8 One 'jungkong' pump boat	Firearms	4 Malaysian crew abducted  Remaining five crew continued voyage	Mobile phones and laptops	4 Malaysian crew released on 8 June 2016 <b>(68 days in captivity)</b>
<i>Henry</i> Tug boat Indonesia 245	15/04/16 1700 hrs	Not known	5 A speed boat	Firearms	4 Indonesian crew abducted  Remaining six crew continued voyage. One of the crew was injured during a shoot-out between perpetrators and Malaysian Marine Police	Not known	4 Indonesian crew released on 11 May 2016 <b>(26 days in captivity)</b>
<i>Charles 00</i> Tug boat Indonesia 175	22/06/16 1130 hrs	Gracia, Cagayan de Oro, Philippines to Samarinda, Indonesia	Not known Two 'jungkong' pump boats (green and red)	Firearms	7 Indonesian crew abducted (4 crew at 1130 hrs, 3 crew at 1245 hrs)  Remaining six crew continued voyage	Perpetrators opened fire at tug boat	<b>7 Indonesian crew still in captivity</b>
<i>Name not available</i> Fishing trawler Malaysia	09/07/16	Not known	5 A white speed boat	Firearms	3 Indonesian crew abducted  Remaining four crew left on board	Special permit, six mobile phones and trawler registration card	<b>3 Indonesian crew still in captivity</b>
<i>Serudong 3</i> Tug boat Malaysia 60	18/07/16 1400 hrs	Sandakan, Malaysia to Semporna, Malaysia	Not known	Not known	5 Malaysian crew abducted	Belongings of crew left in a mess  Tug boat and barge abandoned	<b>5 Malaysian crew still in captivity</b>

(1) Correct as on 27 July 2016