

OVERVIEW

Two incidents of armed robbery against ships in Asia (comprising one CAT 3¹ incident and one CAT 4² incident) were reported to ReCAAP ISC. Of the two incidents, one incident occurred to a barge towed by a tug boat while underway off Vung Tau, Vietnam, and one incident occurred on board a crude oil tanker while underway in the Singapore Strait. Details of the incidents in table (*).



Factors	Location	
	Vietnam	Singapore Strait
	Off Vung Tau (1 incident)	3.7 nm northwest of Pulau Cula, Indonesia (1 incident)
Type of ship	Tug boat and barge	Crude oil tanker
Date & time of incident	6 Dec at 1530 hrs	12 Dec at 0243 hrs
Number of perpetrators	2	5
Weapons	Not stated	Knives
Treatment of crew	No injuries	No injuries
Significance level	CAT 4	CAT 3
Items stolen	Scrap metal	Nothing was stolen

AREAS OF CONCERN

The ReCAAP ISC is concerned with the continued occurrence of incidents in the Singapore Strait (SS). With this incident, a total of 54 incidents were reported in the SS since January 2022. In November 2022, two Incident Alerts (IA 05/2022 dated 21 Nov 22, and IA 06/2022 dated 28 Nov 22) were issued to advise ships to intensify vigilance when transiting the area, and to urge the littoral States to increase patrols and enforcement. The IAs can be found at www.recaap.org.

SITUATION OF ABDUCTION OF CREW IN THE SULU-CELEBES SEAS AND WATERS OFF EASTERN SABAH

Downgrading of threat level

- The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), after careful consideration of inputs from stakeholders and counterparts with vital involvement in securing the Sulu-Celebes Seas maritime security measure, recommends the downgrading of the threat on the 'Abduction of crew for ransom in the Sulu-Celebes Seas' from 'POTENTIALLY HIGH' to 'MODERATE'. The MODERATE threat level implies that '**Incidents are possible to occur but are relatively less severe in nature**'.

Update of ReCAAP ISC Advisory

- As the threat of abduction of crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas has diminished since January 2020 due to successful military operations and robust law enforcement initiatives, the ReCAAP ISC updates its Advisory to all ships to **consider re-route from the area as an option based on its prerogative**.
- For ships transiting the area, the **ship masters and crew are strongly encouraged to exercise extra vigilance and report** all incidents immediately to the Operation Centres of the Philippines and Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) of Malaysia. The **Contact Details** of the Operation Centres of the Philippines and ESSCOM of Malaysia are as shown in Picture 1.



Picture 1

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ship master and crew to report all incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships to the nearest coastal State and flag State, exercise vigilance and adopt appropriate preventive measures taking reference from the *Regional Guide 2 to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia*.

* Table at <https://www.recaap.org/resources/ck/files/Number%20of%20Incidents/2022/List%20of%20Incidents%20for%202022.pdf> for details of the incident.

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¹ CAT (Category) 3 incident is 'less significant' in nature. Under this category, the perpetrators are armed with knives/machetes or other items such as sticks or rods. Although the crew can be subjected to duress or threat during the incident, they are not harmed physically. In most CAT 3 cases, nothing is stolen. In cases where losses are reported, stores and engine spares are commonly stolen items.

² CAT (Category) 4 incident is classified as "least significant" in nature. Under this category, the perpetrators are not armed, and the crew not harmed.