Maritime Security – South East Asia

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Introduction

Piracy in South East Asia has been a threat for many years and continues to evolve.

The South East Asia high risk area is ever changing; initially the main areas of concern were the Malacca and Singapore straits with reports of simple theft. However the piracy area continues to expand as do the severity of the crimes being committed. Vessel hijacks and crew kidnappings are becoming more common, in particular in areas such as the Sulu Sea, off the coasts of the Philippines and Indonesia.

This briefing provides background on the reporting schemes and organisations involved throughout the region, as well as outlining the methods and tactics employed by the pirates in this region.

This briefing should be read in conjunction with the Loss Prevention Briefing, *Maritime Security - General Recommendations* which can be found here:

lp-briefings/ships

For a glossary of the abbreviations used in this briefing please see appendix 2 here.

Disclaimer

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Security organisations

ReCAAP and the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC)

ReCAAP and the ISC is an intergovernmental agreement between 20 contracting parties to promote and enhance cooperation against piracy in the SE Asia region.

A key purpose of the RECAAP ISC is to improve information sharing between Government parties and improved incident response. In addition, collect statistical information on attacks in the region is collected allowing a better understanding of the situation in Asia with regards to piracy and armed robbery and how to prevent it.

More information can be found here:

http://www.recaap.org/AboutReCAAPISC.aspx

Information Fusion Centre (IFC)

The IFC is a regional maritime information sharing centre based in Singapore. Using its extensive links within the region, the IFC aims to provide timely responses to vessel attacks via their 24 hour watch deck.

The IFC runs a Voluntary Community Report (VCR), which vessels are encouraged to use when transiting in the area. This ensures that a rapid response to any reported incidents is possible.

Details of the reporting areas can be found on UKHO security charts Q6112 and Q6113 (See Appendix I). The reports are sent in the forms of initial, daily and final report.

Reports should be sent to:

informationfusioncentre@defense.gov.sg

Regional guide to counter piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia

This regional specific guidance aims to assist crews and companies with operating inside the South East Asia high risk area.

It contains guidance on the voyage risk assessment, Master and company planning, piracy tactics, vessel hardening and reporting.

It is recommended that Members distribute this guidance among their Masters and crew and it can be downloaded here:

http://www.recaap.org/resources/ck/files/guide/Regional%20Guide%20to%20Counter%20Piracy%20and%20Armed%20Robbery%20Against%20Ships%20in%20Asia%20(high-res).pdf

Global counter piracy guidance for companies, Masters and seafarers

As well a general advice in relation to all forms maritime security, the Global counter piracy guidance for companies, Masters and seafarers contains regional specific advice for this region as well. This includes important contact details.

It is recommended that Members distribute the guidance among their Masters and crew and it can be downloaded here:

https://www.ocimf.org/media/91171/Global-Counter-Piracy-Guidance-For-Companies-Masters-and-Seafarers.pdf

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Maritime global security site

The site provides guidance and information for companies and mariners seeking on a wide range of Maritime Security Issues.

This includes regions specific links to the military supporting the region and well as the regional guide to counter piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia.

The maritime global security website can be found at the following link:

https://www.maritimeglobalsecurity.org/geography/south-east-asia/

SE Asia piracy tactics

The most prominent forms of piracy in SE Asia is theft and kidnap. However there have been reported vessel hijacks in recent times.

Unlike the pirates of the Western Indian Ocean Region, and West Africa, who favour the high speed approach vessels, the pirates in SE Asia are often disguised as fishing vessels to avoid suspicion.

The main activities are considered in more detail below:

Armed robbery

Often occurs while the vessel sailing in coastal waters, or at anchor. Theft whilst the vessel is underway most often occurs in the Malacca and Singapore Straits, in particular in the Eastern Approaches of the Singapore Straits.

Usually the attackers aim is often to board and leave the vessel undetected by the vessels crew.

Hijacking

Often the primary reason is to steal oil cargoes. This most commonly occurs in the South China Sea and Sulu Sea areas. The cargo is siphoned off to smaller vessels and landed ashore in remote locations. There have also been reports of hijacking smaller vessels for re-sale.

Kidnap

There are some recorded cases of crewmembers being kidnapped from vessels for a ransom. This is most prevalent in the Sulu Sea and the Celebes Sea.

High risk area (HRA)

The HRA for the SE Asian region should be considered to be the same as the VRA which is considered later in this briefing. This is a large area formed between:

- Latitude 13 degrees South; Longitude 074 degrees East.

- Latitude 21 degrees North; Longitude 074 degrees East.

- Latitude 13 degrees South; Longitude 141 degrees East.

- Latitude 21 degrees North; Longitude 141 degrees East.

The Sulu archipelago in particular should be considered an area with an increased risk of attack. This area is a known stronghold of the terrorist group the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), notorious for kidnappings, and piracy. In the Sulu and Celebes Sea areas, the ASG activity is mainly led by a fraction group named Radulan Sahiron. Initially they targeted yachts, tug and tourist vessels; however in more recent times they have started targeting merchant vessels. There has been a notable escalation of crew kidnappings with ship's crew being taken from merchant vessels and landed ashore in the Southern Philippine Islands.

As such, the International Maritime Bureau is advising all charterers and ship owners to consider avoiding the Sulu Sea altogether and where possible routing the vessels West of Kalimantan.

In 2018 the countries of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines agreed to patrol a set of established security transit corridors. This was to allow law enforcement agencies to more easily monitor traffic in the area. Vessels must report into the authorities 24 hours prior to entry into the corridors. More information on the corridors and the reporting requirements can be found here:

http://www.nepia.com/insights/industry-news/sulu-sea-maritime-security-starupdatestar/

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A Sulu and Celebes Sea security image showing recent reports of Piracy and Armed Robbery. Image courtesy of CSO Alliance.

Voluntary reporting area (VRA)

Singapore IFC reporting requirements are found on UKHO charts Q6112 and Q6113.

Vessels are encouraged to participate in the scheme to allow the authorities to react to any reported attacks.

Reports are required when:

- Entering the AOI.
- Any changes have been made since the initial entry report.
- If the vessels is subject to a security breach.
- The vessel witnesses any suspicious behaviour.
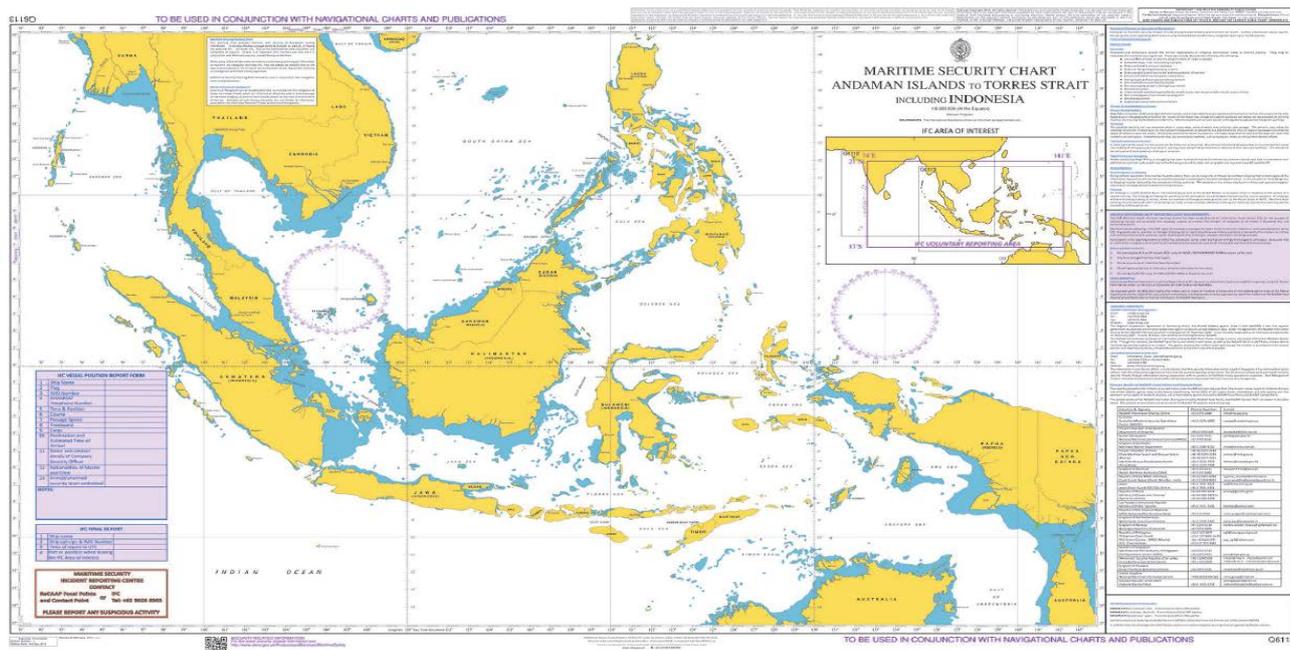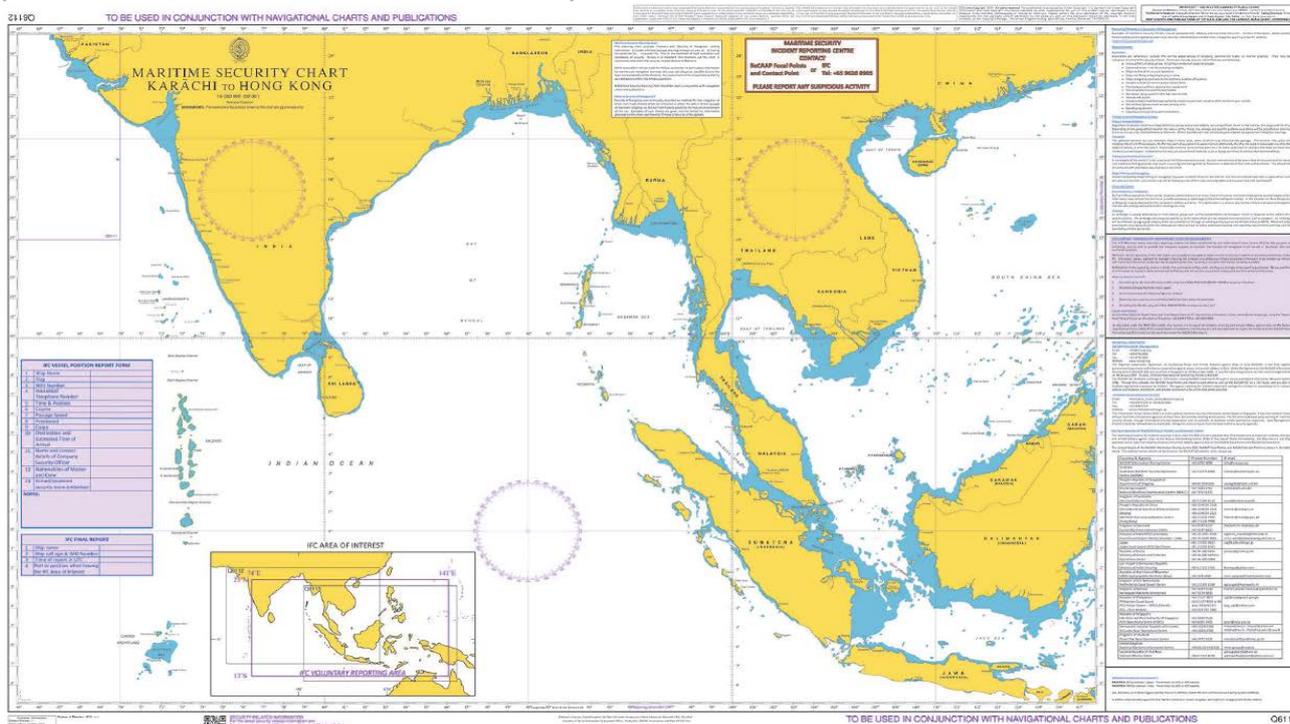- When exiting the AOI.

Reporting information sheets can be downloaded on the UKHO website also here:

https://www.admiralty.co.uk/maritime-safety-information/security-related-information-to-mariners

Appendix 1 - UKHO security chart Q6112 & Q6113

Appendix 2 – Glossary of abbreviations

AOI:	Area Of Interest
HRA:	High Risk Area
IFC:	Information Fusion Centre
ReCAAP ISC:	ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre
RECAAP:	Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia
SE Asia:	South East Asia
UKHO:	United Kingdom Hydrographic Office
VCR	Voluntary Community Report
VRA:	Voluntary Reporting Area