



1 May 2020

## Analyst Journal 1/20 - Sea Robberies, Sea Thefts and Attempted Actions in the Singapore Strait and Approaches

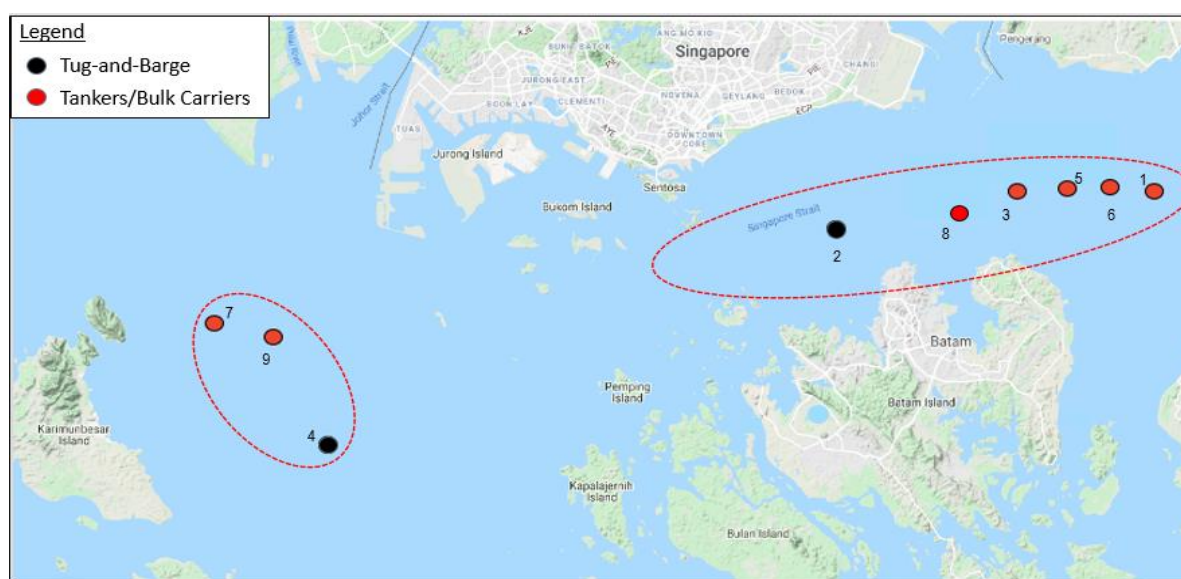
### OVERVIEW

1. IFC recorded a total of one Sea Robbery, four Sea Thefts, three Attempted Actions, and one Suspicious Approach between Jan to Mar 2020. All nine incidents occurred in the east-bound lane of the Traffic Separation Scheme in the Singapore Strait. This document aims to provide an update for the first quarter of 2020 on the situation in the Singapore Strait and its approaches<sup>1</sup> with insights into the incidents and the observed modus operandi.

### SUMMARY OF FACTS

2. Areas of Concern. Six of the incidents occurred at north of Batam while the remaining three incidents occurred at east of Pulau Karimun (see **Diagram 1**).

Diagram 1: Locations of Area of Concern



<sup>1</sup> The last update was provided in IFC Spot Commentary 3/19 – Observations of Sea Robbery, Sea Theft and Attempted Actions Incidents in Singapore Strait and Approaches dated on 30 Dec 2019.

- a. Incidents to the north of Batam. The six incidents involved three tankers, two bulk carriers and a tug-and-barge. Five out of six incidents (83.3%) involving the tankers/bulk carriers occurred in hours of darkness between 0115hrs to 0415hrs whereas the incident (16.7%) on the tug-and-barge occurred in daylight hours between 1100hrs to 1600hrs.
- b. Incidents to the east of Pulau Karimun. The three incidents involved two bulk carriers and a tug-and-barge. The incidents involving the bulk carriers (66.7%) occurred in hours of darkness between 0045hrs to 0511hrs whereas the tug-and-barge incident (33.3%) occurred in daylight hours at 1200hrs.
- c. The details of the incidents are found in **Annex A**.

3. Comparison with Oct to Dec 2019 and Assessment. There was a total of 19 incidents from Oct to Dec 2019, of which 15 involved eight tankers and seven bulk carriers while the remaining four cases were tug-and-barge incidents. The total number of incidents in the first quarter of 2020 has decreased in comparison with the last quarter of 2019. Incidents involving tankers/bulk carriers and tug-and-barges have decreased from 15 to seven [see **Diagram 2a**] and four to two respectively [see **Diagram 2b**]. It is important to note that one of the tugs-and-barges was targeted in last quarter of 2019 and first quarter of 2020.

Diagram 2a: Number of Incidents on Merchant Ships from Oct 19 to Mar 20

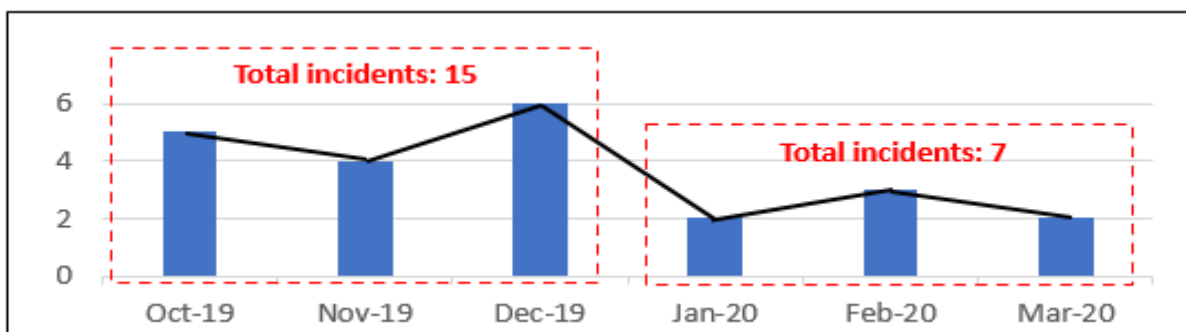
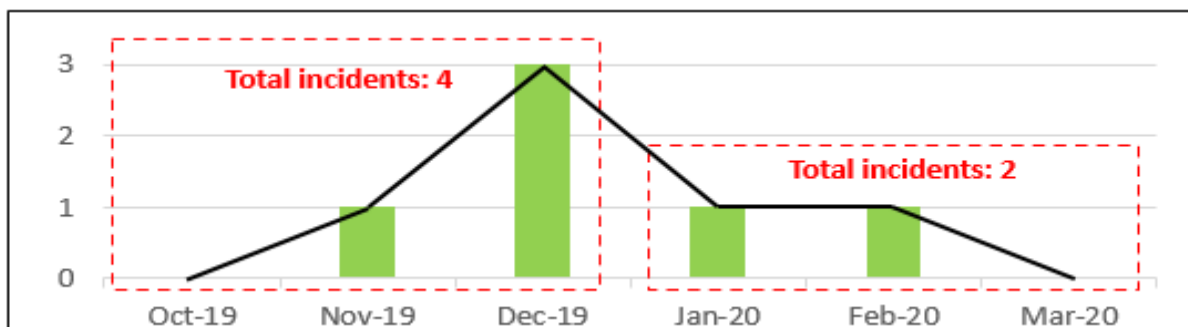
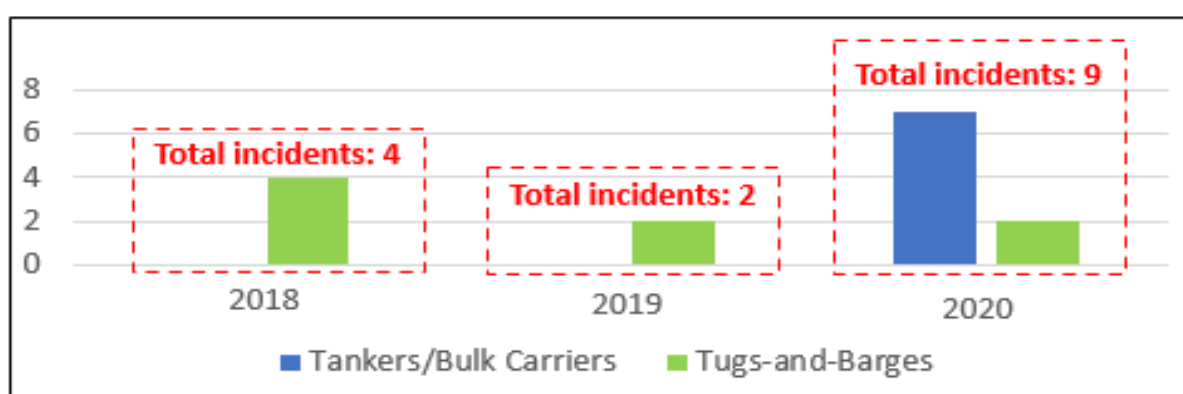


Diagram 2b: Number of Incidents On Tugs-and-Barges from Oct 19 to Mar 20



4. Comparison with Jan to Mar 2018, Jan to Mar 2019 and Assessment. There were four incidents involving four tugs-and-barges from Jan to Mar 2018 and two incidents involving two tugs-and-barges from Jan to Mar 2019. Incidents involving tankers/bulk carriers increased significantly when compared to the first quarter in the past two years whereas incidents involving tugs-and-barges reduced when compared to first quarter 2018 and remained the same when compared to first quarter 2019 [see **Diagram 3**]. Location of incidents involving tugs-and-barges have shifted from the westbound lane of Singapore Strait (off Tanjung Piai) from last year to the eastbound lane of Singapore Strait this year.

Diagram 3: Number of Incidents for Jan to Mar comparison in 2018, 2019 and 2020



## OBSERVATIONS ON MODUS OPERANDI (MO)

5. Assessed Modus Operandi. The modus operandi was assessed to be consistent with past observations.

a. Incidents Against Tankers/Bulk Carriers. All incidents in this quarter happened against underway vessels. The attacks are assessed to be opportunistic where perpetrators steal tools/machinery spares/relatively small ship's equipment, target slow moving and low freeboard vessels during hours of darkness. Three vessels reported stolen spare parts while remaining three reported that perpetrators left empty handed. The perpetrators may carry weapon (machete/knife) but mostly avoiding any confrontation with the crew. In all the incidents, the perpetrators left after the ships' alarms were sounded.

b. Incidents Involving Tugs-and-Barges. The perpetrator's modus operandi remains consistent with previous trends<sup>2</sup> involving the use of small wooden boats or "sampans" with a small number of crew, targeting towed

<sup>2</sup> The modus operandi is consistent with IFC's assessment provided in IFC Spot Commentary 1/19 and 3/19.

barge due to its slow speed and its low free-board. Perpetrators are usually unarmed and avoid any confrontation with the crew.

## **ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS BY COASTAL STATES SECURITY AGENCIES**

6. Actions by Indonesian Authorities. There were two operational successes by the Indonesian Navy where they (1) successfully uncovered and captured a theft syndicate in Batam dealing in stolen scrap metal, following a sea theft incident on-board a tug-and-barge at north of Batam, and (2) successfully apprehended three perpetrators on-board a bulk carrier at east of Pulau Karimun after the crew reported sighting of perpetrators on-board and locked them in the engine room.

7. Actions by Malaysian Authorities. The Malaysian authorities had implemented additional security measures, which included increased patrol and continuous surveillance at areas of concern, and will continue to engage the maritime community to raise awareness on potential threats and promote best practices. There is also increased collaboration among enforcement agencies.

8. Actions by Singapore Authorities. The Singapore authorities shared information and cued operational responses from the Indonesian Navy, achieving operational successes in both above-mentioned incidents. The Republic of Singapore Navy and the Police Coast Guard continue to work closely together to patrol and safeguard the Singapore waters.

9. All three authorities will continue to monitor the situation closely and collaborate with one another to deter sea theft and robbery incidents in the Singapore Strait which remains an area of concern. Measures taken by authorities resulted in a decrease of sea theft and robbery incidents compared to previous quarter. Despite the increase in incidents when compared with Jan to Mar in the past two years, the severity of incidents remains low.

## **IFC RECOMMENDATIONS**

10. In both operational successes by the Indonesian Navy, the maritime community provided real-time and actionable information to the IFC which was shared timeously with the enforcement agencies to cue operational responses. In consideration of the economic downturn which could potentially result in an increase of sea theft and robbery incidents, the IFC recommends that ships should continue to maintain a proper and vigilant lookout, adhere to ship security standard operating procedures, and provide timely reporting of incidents to local authorities. Ship masters are reminded to contact the local authorities and the IFC immediately, when they sight suspicious activities (including suspicious small boats approaching)

and not confront the perpetrator when boarding had occurred. Details of IFC recommendations are found in **Annex B**. The contact details of local authorities are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Contact Details of Local Authorities

Country	Contact Details	
Malaysia	MMS Radio Channels	88 (VTS Johor), 16
	Phone Number	+60 7 219 9401/9407
Indonesia	MMS Radio Channel	16
	Phone Number	+62 812 7754 8766
Singapore (VTIS)	MMS Radio Channels	10, 14, 73
	Phone Number	+65 6325 2493
IFC	Phone Numbers	+65 9626 8965
		+65 6594 5728
	Email	IFC_DO@defence.gov.sg

11. Masters and operators are encouraged to participate in the IFC’s Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) program as this allows vessels to receive timely information from the IFC on reports of incidents in the IFC’s Area of Interest (AOI).

## CONCLUSION

12. While efforts and measures have been taken by the local authorities in the region to counter illegal activities, maintaining vigilance, adopting strong deterrence measures and timely reporting remain key to mitigating the risks of such incidents from proliferation.

**Incidents East of Pulau Karimun / North of Batam**

#	Incident Classification	DTG	Vessel Type/ Flag/ Movement	No of Perpetrators	Armed/ Unarmed	Items Stolen	Remarks
1	Attempted Action	080415H Jan	Tanker/ UK Flagged/ Underway	2	Unarmed	NIL	Perpetrators fled after alarm sounded
2	Sea Theft	181551H Jan	Tug and Barge/ Singapore Flagged/ Underway/	4 - 7	Unarmed	Scrap Metal	Two approaches occurred, Sampans fled upon seeing the Police Coast Guard craft.
3	Sea Theft	280205H Jan	Bulk Carrier / Panama Flagged/ Underway	Unknown	Not reported	Engine parts	Perpetrators escaped after being spotted.
4	Sea Theft	071200H Feb	Tug & Barge/ Malaysia/ Underway	8	Not reported	Steel construction material (20kg)	4 small wooden boats approached the barge
5	Sea Robbery	090220H Feb	Bulk Carrier/ Marshall Islands Flagged/ Underway	6	Knives	Spare parts	Master reported to local authorities.
6	Sea Theft	090252H Feb	Tanker/ India Flagged/ Underway	1	Not reported	Valves	Master reported to local authorities.
7	Attempted Actions	280045H Feb	Bulk Carrier/ Philippines Flagged/ Underway	4	Not reported	NIL	Singapore Police Coast Guard conducted a search onboard the vessel

Releasable to Shipping Industry

#	Incident Classification	DTG	Vessel Type/ Flag/ Movement	No of Perpetrators	Armed/ Unarmed	Items Stolen	Remarks
							No unauthorized person found on board.
8	Suspicious Approach	090115H Mar	Oil Tanker/ France Flagged/ Underway	Unknown	Not reported	NIL	Tanker was approached by a fast boat at her stern in position. Master reported to local authorities.
9	Attempted Actions	160511H Mar	Bulk Carrier/ Liberia/ Underway	3	Not Reported	NIL	Indonesian Navy captured 3 perpetrators.

### **IFC Recommendations**

1. The IFC recommends the following measures to be implemented while transiting or anchored.
  - a. Activate the ship's Automatic Identification System (AIS) at all times.
  - b. Timely reporting to the local authorities.
  - c. Increase vigilance in watch-keeping and deploy additional lookouts. Be wary of suspicious small boats approaching. Take photo of the suspicious boat and send to IFC.
  - d. Participate in the IFC Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) System and provide status update, while in transit, as much as possible.
  - e. Use CCTV cameras for coverage of vulnerable areas (if available).
  - f. Keep ship's whistle, search lights and fog horn ready for immediate use.
  - g. Secure or lift external ladders to prevent their use and to restrict external access to the bridge.
  - h. Deploy Self-Protection Measures (SPM) e.g. Rig the water spray hoses and foam monitors in a fixed position. Evasive manoeuvres have also been proven to deter perpetrators in the areas of concern.
  - i. Secure all doors and hatches preventing access to the accommodation and machinery spaces.
  - j. Rig safety precautionary measures on the anchor cable hawse pipe while anchored.
2. Ships should apply the appropriate security measures that are mentioned in the Tugs and Barge Guide, Guide for Tankers Operating in Asia, and/or Regional Guide to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia.



3. Ship masters should also be aware and refer to the Maritime Security Charts Q6112 and Q6113, both published by the UK Hydrographic Office