



## Latest development from The Information Fusion Centre (IFC)

### Maritime Awareness Week Campaign from 21 to 25 August 2023



As of the end of July 2023, the IFC has recorded a total of 46 reported incidents in the Singapore Strait, marking a notable increase compared to 33 incidents in 2022 and 22 in 2021. With the surge in sea theft and robbery activities within the region, it was timely that the IFC launched its inaugural Maritime Awareness Week campaign from 21 to 25 August 2023.

The IFC actively encourages ships out at sea to adopt shipboard protection measures. It is important to note that perpetrators involved in sea robbery incidents tend to (1) avoid confrontation and (2) flee upon sighted by the ship's crew. Consequently, ships have the capacity to deter such incidents in the region by following the "IFC" recommendations:

- 1) Implement shipboard measures before entering Phillip Channel**
- 2) Forward images of suspicious activities to IFC**
- 3) Call the IFC to timely report incidents**

During the Maritime Awareness Week campaign, the IFC encouraged vessels participating in the Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) initiative (see below for more information) to send photos of shipboard protection measures to IFC and call the IFC to receive the latest 24 hrs MARSEC update to reinforce the above practices and exercise IFC's direct linkage with ships out at sea. In return, IFC provided real-time MARSEC updates to vessels transiting Malacca Strait en route to Singapore Strait.

Many of our partners willingly shared the shipboard measures they adopted. During the 5-day campaign, the IFC reached out to a total of 369 VCR ships from 185 companies. It was heartening to witness such a high level of awareness and adherence to recommended shipboard protection protocols. These measures encompassed practices such as maintaining vigilant lookouts and promptly sounding the ship's alarm in response to incidents. Furthermore, some vessels went above and beyond by providing visual documentation of their citadel, exemplifying their preparedness to respond effectively to potential incidents.

The IFC strongly encouraged all vessels to participate in VCR when transiting in our Area of Interest and adopt the above said practices. The collaborative spirit displayed by our partners during this campaign serves as a testament to the collective effort to enhance security in the industry. The IFC extends its heartfelt gratitude to all our partners and participating ships for their contributions to this campaign.

### **Importance of IFC direct linkage with ships out at sea via VCR**

An incident during the campaign week demonstrated the importance of establishing direct communication with ships out at sea. One evening, the IFC received information of a ship's distress signal in the Indian Ocean and we immediately alerted nearby VCR ships to be on the lookout. Within 2.5hrs, the IFC received real-time information from a VCR ship, which allowed us to promptly relay the update to the relevant stakeholders involved in the search operation.

The IFC strongly encourages ships out at sea to participate in this neighbourhood watch where the shipping community can share MARSEC incidents and anomalous behaviours at seas. See more below.

### **IFC Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) scheme**

The Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) scheme was established in 2010, with more than 800 vessels providing updates to IFC daily. Through such "neighbourhood watch spirit", ships out at sea provide reports on any MARSEC information and anomalous behaviours. Merchant vessels sailing under any flag which are operating in the VCR Area are strongly encouraged by the IFC to make reports. As this is a voluntary-reporting scheme, the VCR does not seek to overwrite the respective coastal state's regulatory framework.

With the information provided to the IFC, we will pass them to the relevant authorities or OPCENs through our International Liaison Officers to cue operational responses.

Please see here for more information:

[https://www.ifc.org.sg/ifc2web/app\\_pages/User/commonv2/aboutvcr.cshtml](https://www.ifc.org.sg/ifc2web/app_pages/User/commonv2/aboutvcr.cshtml)

