



IFC SPOT COMMENTARY 1/19

Observations of TRAPS incidents in the area off Tg Piai,
Malaysia/ Western Approaches-Singapore Strait
since 1 January to 27 May 2019

PURPOSE

1. This IFC Spot Commentary (SC) 1/19 is intended to provide factual and precise information relating to the recent Theft, Robbery And Piracy at Sea (TRAPS) incidents that transpired in the area off Tg Piai, Malaysia/ Western Approaches-Singapore Straits in the period of 1 Jan 2019 to 27 May 2019.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Based on IFC observations, in an area of the Singapore Straits (see **Figure 1**), for tugs with barges, the risk of being targeted has INCREASED but that the crew is UNLIKELY to be confronted.
3. From the time period that this SC 1/19 covers, the IFC has recorded a total of six TRAPS incidents (five Sea Theft, one Attempted Action) involving only tugs with barges, within the defined area (see **Figure 1**). It is slight increased from 2018 total incidents for the same period (with five incidents in total - three Sea Theft, two Attempted Action) two were not successful attempts (of which one was a Tanker, Tug with Barge). Incidents recorded in 2019 are listed below:
 - a. 5 February 2019 - 1715LT. Sea Theft incident occurred onboard a Malaysian Flagged tug "JIN HWA 43" and barge "JIN HWA 44". Perpetrators managed to escape with some scrap metals. No confrontation to the crew-members.
 - b. 5 March 2019 - 1110LT. Sea Theft incident occurred onboard a Malaysian Flagged tug "SUNG FATT 31" and barge "SUNG FATT 36". Perpetrators managed to escape with some scrap metals. No confrontation to the crew-members.
 - c. 24 April 2019 - 0510LT. Sea Theft incident occurred onboard a Cyprus Flagged tug "UNION TOPAZ" and barge "MAGNOR". Perpetrators managed to escape with few tins of paints and some other small stuff. No confrontation to the crew-members.
 - d. 25 April 2019 - 0538LT. Attempted Action incident occurred onboard a Malaysian Flagged tug "VECTOR 1" and barge "Yong Tat 319". Master and crew-members managed to shove the perpetrators away and no stolen were reported.
 - e. 18 May 2019 - 1930LT. Sea Theft incident occurred onboard a Niue Flagged tug "BARLIAN T1201" and barge "Smit Cyclone". Perpetrators managed to escape with some scrap metals. No confrontation to the crew-members.
 - f. 19 May 2019 - 1700LT. Sea Theft incident occurred onboard a Malaysian Flagged tug "MODALWAN 11" and unknown barge. Perpetrators managed to escape with some scrap metals. No confrontation to the crew-members.

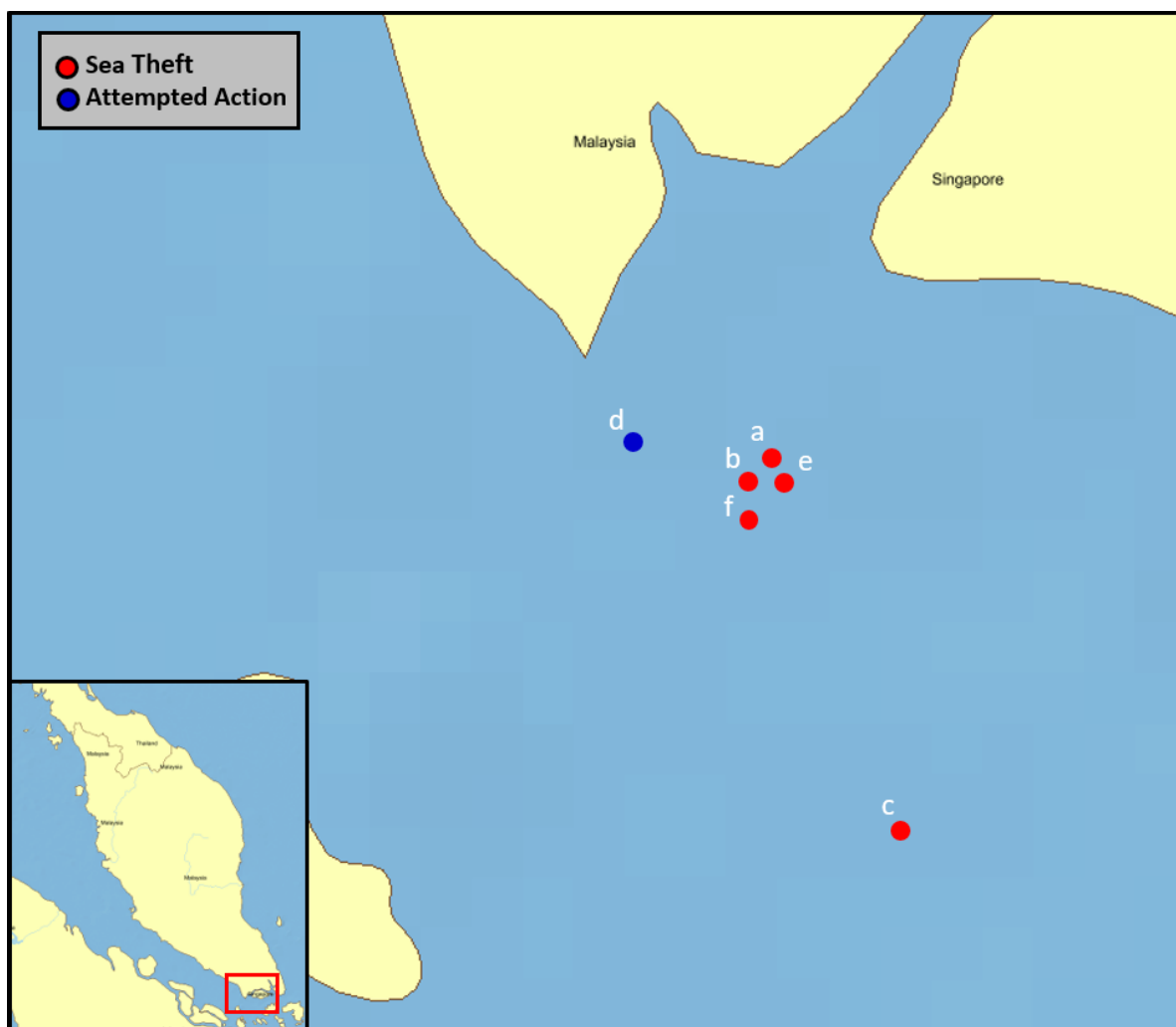


Figure 1: Location of the recent TRAPS incidents off Tg Piai, Malaysia/ Singapore Strait-Western Approaches

ASSESSMENT

4. In all cases, the Modus Operandi (MO) observed remains UNCHANGED, where we have identified;
 - a. a group of unarmed perpetrators are
 - b. using numbers of small wooden boats or “sampans” to
 - c. target a towed barge due to its slow speed and its low free-board and
 - d. the perpetrators are avoiding any confrontation with the crew.
5. It is assessed that these recurrent events are caused by a group of fishermen, from the same or different criminal syndicate(s) or operating alone. They are taking advantage of heavy maritime traffic in an area where there is confluence of maritime close boundaries.
6. It is important to note that:
 - a. in most cases, perpetrators managed to escape with some scrap metals or whatever loose material they could find and grab. It is assessed that they are targeting items they can find on the barge that are easy to take and that have the opportunity for being turned in to easy money as scrap metal or as used parts/items etc...
 - b. In all cases, no confrontation with the crew took place and the perpetrators appeared to be unarmed.

7. It is important to note that last year there were two incidents in the exact same location and four incidents this year. Also that for the incident listed in **Paragraph 3.b** involving the Malaysian Flagged tug “SUNG FATT 31” and barge “SUNG FATT 36” (see **Figure 2.b**), this is the same tug and barge targeted in another incident on 3 July 2018 using the same MO (see **Figure 2.a**).

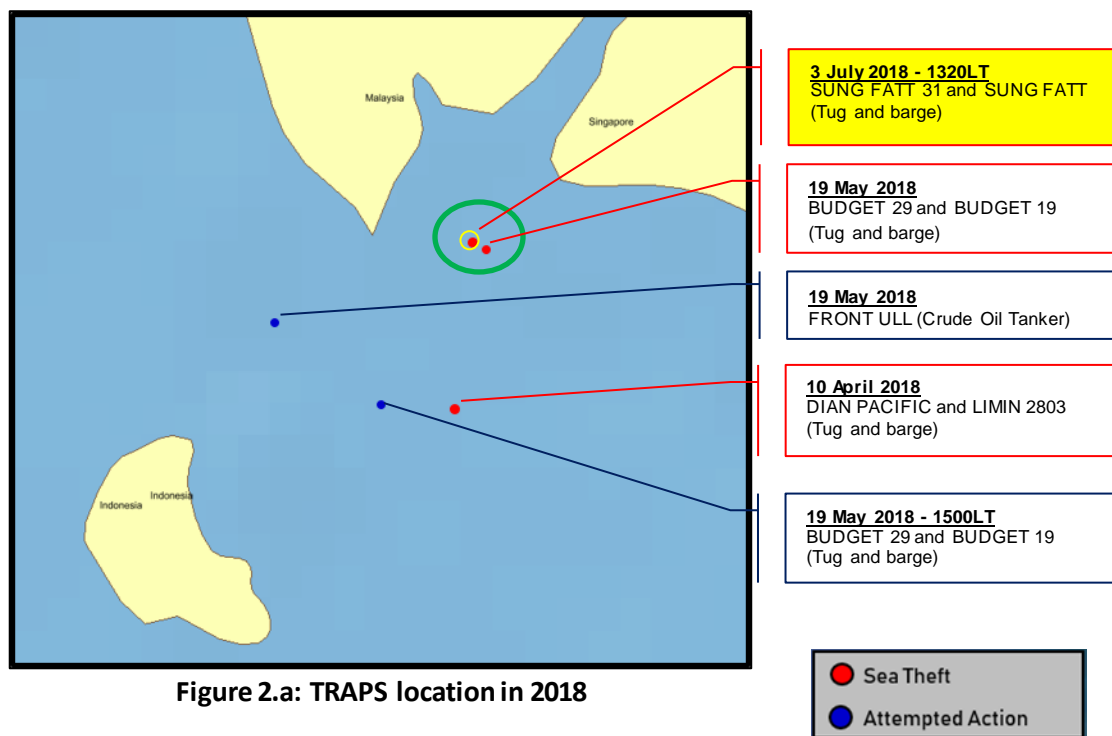


Figure 2.a: TRAPS location in 2018

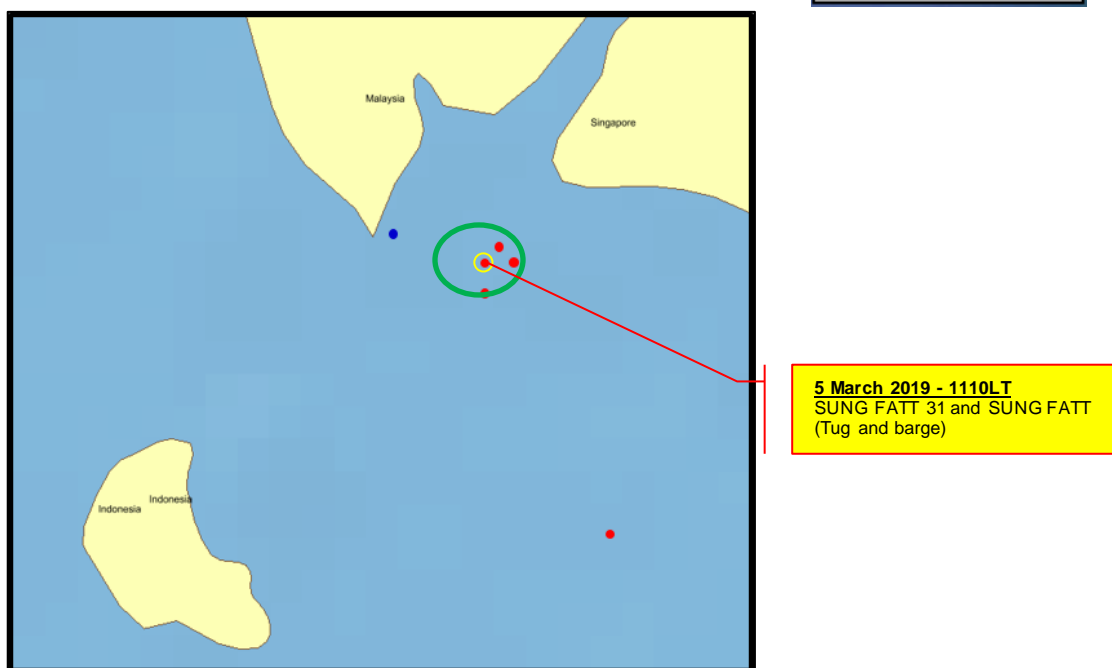


Figure 2.b: TRAPS location in 2019

CONCLUSION

8. While efforts and measures have been taken by the local authorities in the region to counter illegal activities, it remains that there are still a number of individual perpetrators or a criminal group operating in the mentioned area and posing a threat to tugs with barges, and possibly any vessels with slow speed and low free-board.

9. Strong deterrence measures and timely reporting remain key to mitigating the risk of TRAPS incidents continuing in the defined area (see **Figure 1**).
10. These incidents underscore the importance of maintaining a proper lookout, maintaining and adhering to ship security standard operating procedures and reporting incidents in a timely manner to the local authorities. The Master of the vessel is recommended to **contact the local authorities** and the IFC, when:
 - a. they feel threatened at sea,
 - b. when an attack is imminent or underway (and it is safe to do so) or
 - c. immediately after the perpetrators have left.

Authority contacts are as follow:

Malaysia	Radio channel : Ch 16 Phone number: (+60) 7 219 9401/9407
Indonesia	Radio channel : Ch 16 Phone number: +62 812 7754 8766
Singapore	Radio channel : Ch 10, 14 or 73 Phone number: (+65) 6325 2493
IFC	Phone number: +65 9626 8965 (Mobile) Phone number: +65 6594 5728 (Office) Email: ifc_do@defence.gov.sg

11. Masters and operators are encouraged to participate in the IFC's 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).

IFC RECOMMENDATIONS

12. The IFC maintains its recommendations for the following measures to be implemented while transiting in the area:

- a. *Strictly follow the reporting procedure, before, during, and after transiting the area of common concern and maintain good communications via VHF Channels 08 and 16 with the following MCC Contacts :*
 - Indonesia*
 - Malaysia*
 - Singapore*
- b. *Activate the ship's Automatic Identification System (AIS) at all times.*
- c. *Increase vigilance in watch-keeping and deploy additional lookouts. Be wary of suspicious boats approaching or observing the vessel while in transit. Take the photo of the suspicious boat and send to **nearest MCC**, and IFC through any convenient method for operational cueing and profiling purposes.*
- 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) eg. Rig the water spray hoses and foam monitors in a fixed position. Evasive manoeuvres have also been proven to deter perpetrators in the reported incidents in this specific area.*
- i. *Firmly secure all doors and hatches providing access to the accommodation and machinery spaces.*