



IFC SPOT COMMENTARY 2/19

Observations of TRAPS incidents in the Southern Approaches-
South China Sea (SCS)
since 31 May to 26 Sep 2019

PURPOSE

1. This IFC Spot Commentary (SC) 2/19 aims to provide advice to the maritime community of Theft, Robbery And Piracy at Sea (TRAPS) maritime security incidents in the southern approaches of the South China Sea (SCS). This document is not to provide an in-depth analysis but is meant for awareness of a possible emerging trend.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Based on the observation from 31 May to 26 Sep 2019, IFC has observed six incidents in the Southern approaches of the SCS. Four Sea Thefts, one Sea Robbery, and one Attempted Action occurred on-board anchored vessels, involving three Tankers, a General Cargo Vessel, a Tug and Barge and a Bulk Carrier. Incidents recorded are listed below:

- a. 31 May 2019 - 2330LT. Attempted Action incident occurred onboard a Liberia Flagged bulk carrier "SAFESEA NEHA II". The ship crew managed to shove the armed perpetrators away and no stolen items were reported.
- b. 9 Aug 2019 - 1900LT. Sea Theft incident occurred onboard an Indonesian Flagged Tug "CRYSTAL AURIGA" and Barge "CRYSTAL 128". The Master discovered that the items on board the barge were missing upon arrival at Crystal Offshore Yard, Singapore. Vessel was anchored off Pulau Bintan prior entering Singapore. Upon investigation, the Master was not certain of the chronology of the events, in particular the exact time and location of the incident.
- c. 26 Aug 2019 - 0445LT. Sea Robbery incident occurred onboard a Marshall Flagged tanker "EAGLE". Armed Perpetrators managed to escape with a 6-man life raft and fire hoses/nozzles.
- d. 8 Sep 2019 - 1708LT. Sea Theft incident occurred onboard an Isle of Man Flagged LNG tanker "BRITISH CONTRIBUTOR". Perpetrators managed to escape with a life raft, ship properties and stores. No confrontation to the crew-members.
- e. 26 Sep 2019 - 0415LT. Sea Theft incident occurred onboard a Marshall Flagged tanker "FRONT LEOPARD". Perpetrators managed to escape with a few ship properties and stores. No confrontation to the crew-members.
- f. 26 Sep 2019 - 0606LT. Sea Theft incident occurred onboard a Hong kong Flagged LNG tanker "TSL ROSEMARY". Perpetrators managed to escape with mooring ropes. No confrontation to the crew-members.

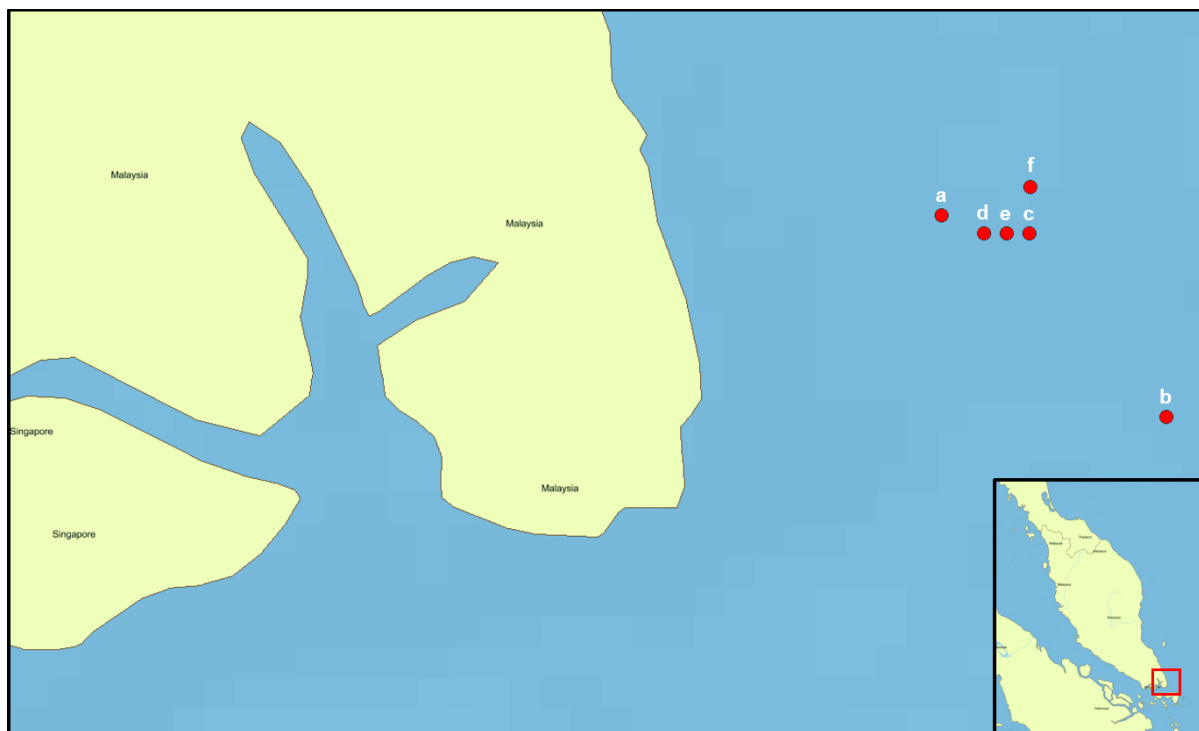


Figure 1: Location of the recent TRAPS incidents in the Southern Approaches of South China Seas

ASSESSMENT

3. In all cases, the assessed Modus Operandi (MO) is as follow:
 - a. The attacks appear to be opportunistic.
 - b. Ships at anchor have been attacked during periods of darkness between 1900H to 0630H except one incident that occurred during the day.
 - c. The weapons used were long knives/sharp objects.
 - d. Items taken includes mooring ropes, life rafts, fire hoses/nozzles and ship stores.
4. It is important to note that:
 - a. in most cases, perpetrators managed to escape with whatever loose material they could find and grab.
 - b. In all cases, no confrontation with the crew took place.

CONCLUSION

5. 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 any vessels anchored which have long forecastle deck that allow them to climb up the vessel unnoticeably.
6. Strong deterrence measures and timely reporting remain key to mitigating the risk of TRAPS incidents continuing in the defined area (see **Figure 1**).
7. 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

8. 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

9. 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.

j. Rig safety precautionary measures on the anchor cable haws pipe while anchored.