



वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्
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भारत सरकार/ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
पत्तन, पोत परिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
नौवहन महानिदेशालय, मुंबई
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SHIPPING, MUMBAI

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NT Wing DGS Circular No. 25 of 2023

Sub.: Maritime Security Advisory on Piracy & Armed Robbery on Vessels - reg.

For the attention of Ship Owners, Ship Managers, Shipping Agents, RPSL Agents, Ship Masters, Seafarers, Charterers, Recognised Organisation & Recognised Security Organisation, Coastal Indian States including Administrations of Union territories and State Maritime Boards.

1. From the statistics collated from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS), a trend analysis line chart that visually represents the number of Piracy, armed robbery, and petty theft incidents across various regions over a nearly five-year period, from 1st January 2019 to 30th November 2023 is as presented in **Figure 1**.

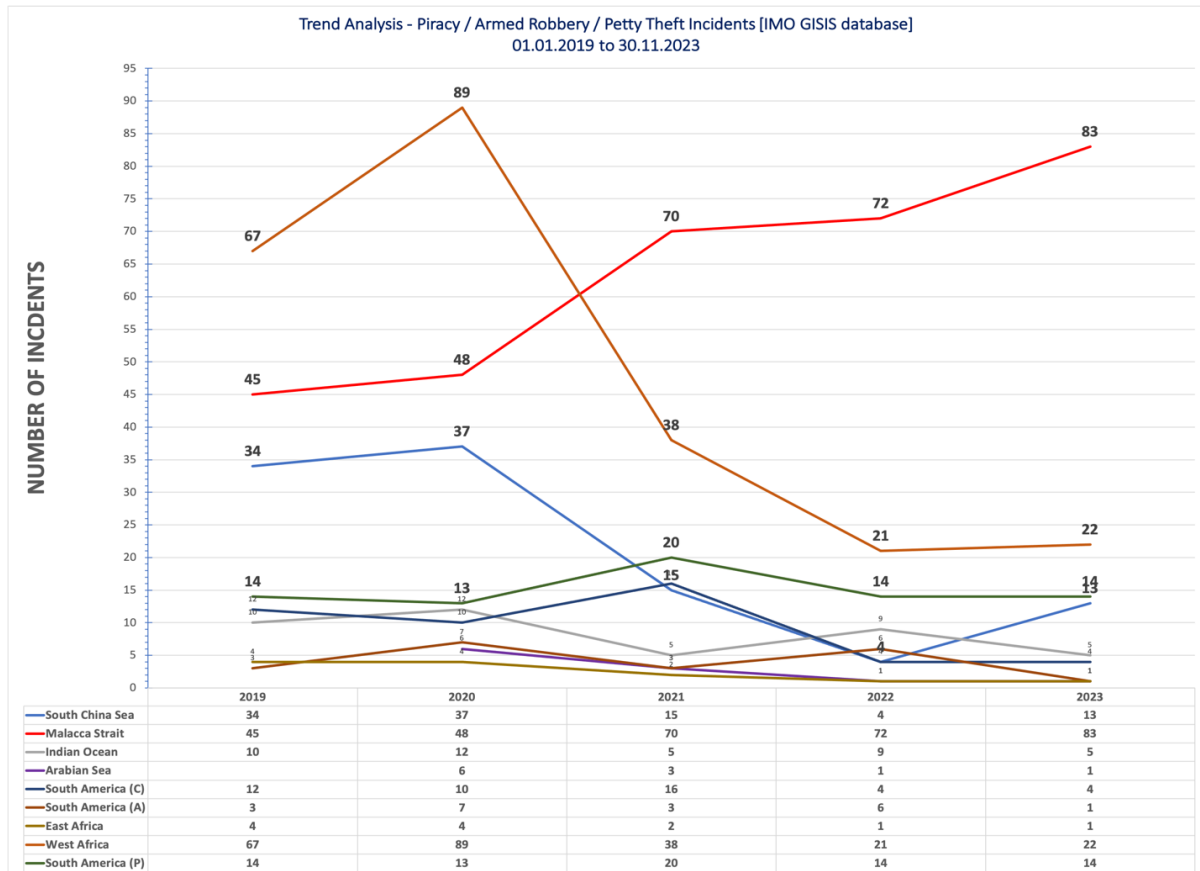


Figure 1: Details of Piracy / Armed Robbery Incidents - 01 Jan 2019 to 30 Nov 2023 (Source: IMO GISIS)

2. The graph tracks incidents reported to GISIS in the South China Sea, Malacca Strait, Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, South America (C), South America (A), East Africa, West Africa, and South America (P). It is to be noted that there may be underreporting of incidents in the GISIS database, and the numbers reflected above may be lower than actual. The region analysis of the chart (Figure 1) has been presented below.

3. **Gulf of Aden:** Armed men suspected to be Somali pirates boarded the tanker Central Park very recently on 26.11.2023 in the Gulf of Aden. The UKMTO was contacted by the vessel, and the crew took refuge in the citadel, following which the intervention of naval forces resulted in the capture of the pirates. This incident indicates that Piracy off the coast of Somalia is only suppressed and not completely eradicated. All vessels must be careful while transiting this region and follow the [Best Management Practices to deter Piracy and enhance maritime safety in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea](#) (BMP5).

4. **Indian Ocean:** Maintained a relatively low and consistent number of incidents throughout the years, with slight variations, and the current year reflects five incidents.

5. The [UKMTO](#) operates a Voluntary Reporting Scheme (VRS) for the Indian Ocean, specifically the Red Sea, Gulf Of Aden, and Arabian Sea (Under the Maritime Security Chart Q6099), administered by the Maritime Trade Information Centre (MTIC)/UKMTO (Dubai). UKMTO acts as the primary point of contact for merchant vessels and liaison with military forces in the region. All vessels are encouraged to report their positions (By email daily at 08.00 UTC) whilst operating in the area, which comprises the UKMTO Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA).

6. The Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) also publishes [Monthly Maritime Security Update \(MMSU\)](#) and other regular updates on safety and security related matters, which are available on their [website](#).

7. **Straits of Malacca & Singapore:** On 27th October 2023, a significant incident involving a Marshall Islands-flagged bulker occurred in the Strait of Malacca Strait. Pirates boarding in this region are not uncommon, often resulting in petty theft. However, in this instance, the vessel's master was injured during an armed robbery while the ship was enroute eastbound to Singapore for bunkering and stores. The attack happened outside Singapore's territorial seas, and the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) was alerted at approximately 0430 hours.

8. Despite the intruders' departure from the vessel without stealing anything, the master sustained injuries and later received medical treatment in Singapore. The preliminary investigation suggests that a lack of situational awareness and risk perception are significant contributing factors to this incident. Despite being aware of the security situation within the area, the vessel and its management did not implement the appropriate security measures for the transit as per its Ship Security Plan, nor did it carry out a risk assessment as specified in its SMS.

9. This event is part of a larger pattern of maritime security concerns in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, which as per GISIS, has exhibited a sharp increase in incidents from 45 in 2019 to a peak of 83 in 2023. In the same week of the stated stabbing incident, two other incidents involving armed robbery against bulkers were reported, with one resulting in theft.

10. What is significant from the GISIS data analysis of SOMS is that 63 incidents occurred while steaming in Territorial waters, while about 20 occurred in port limits for vessels at anchor. The attacks primarily target slow-moving vessels (mostly bulk carriers) in the eastbound lane, closer to Indonesia, and usually occur at night. The hotspots for these incidents include Pulau Karimun, Pulau Cula, and Tanjung Tondong (Figure 2).

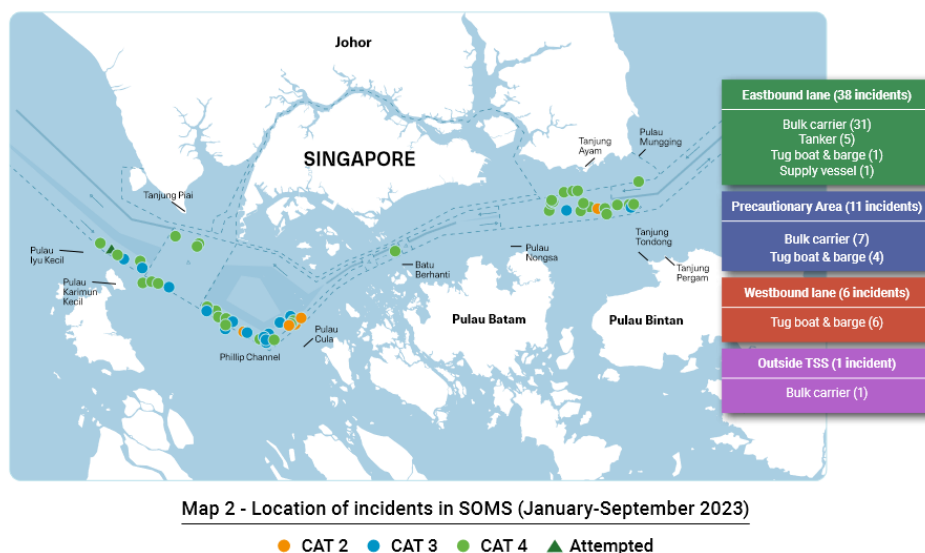


Figure 2: Location of incidents in Straits of Malacca & Singapore (Source: RECAAP)

11. The littoral States of SOMS have stepped up enforcement efforts on land and at sea. Through initiatives such as the Malacca Strait Patrol and the Indonesia-Singapore Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT INDOSIN), they have strengthened operations coordination and patrolling efforts in areas of concern during vulnerable time windows.

12. The authorities, together with ReCAAP ISC, have also stepped up engagements of industry stakeholders to encourage the adoption of appropriate shipboard security measures and timely reporting of incidents. They also continue to cooperate in sharing information about incidents, sightings of small boats' concentration and suspicious activities to enable prompt enforcement actions.

13. The [Information Fusion Centre \(IFC\)](#), a MARSEC centre operated by the Republic of Singapore Navy, is one such initiative, and they have published [an IFC bridge card](#) which serves as a concise reference tool for ship masters and crew, offering essential contact information for the IFC and suggested protocols for vessels navigating through the SOMS. It is advised that the IFC bridge card is readily available on the ship's bridge for easy access, and the reporting requirements are duly complied with when transiting this region.

14. Singapore's ReCAAP Focal Point has issued advisories to ships transiting the strait to remind shipmasters to be vigilant and adopt recommended shipboard security measures. '[Regional Guide To Counter Piracy And Armed Robbery Against Ships In Asia](#)' is to be referred to by vessels transiting this region and risk mitigation measures applied.

15. **Gulf of Guinea:** Showed a rise from 67 incidents in 2019 to 89 incidents in 2020, with a significant reduction to 22 in 2023. As per earlier trends, the attacks in the Gulf of Guinea spike during the dry season, which begins around October. Kind attention is therefore invited to the [Joint advisory dated 21.10.2020](#) issued by the round table of international shipping associations BIMCO, ICS, INTERCARGO, INTERTANKO and OCIMF, for vessels operating in the Gulf of Guinea requiring them to pay particular attention to maritime security risks in their voyage planning.

16. Particular attention is invited to directions as per [DGS NT Wing Piracy Circular 03 of 2019 dated 05.05.2019](#), wherein all RPSL agents have been instructed not to engage any Indian seafarers on coastal vessels trading solely within the ports in the Gulf of Guinea. It is reiterated that this requirement is **still in force** and that strict action will be undertaken against violation of the said circular by any RPS agency, which may include suspension of their license as has been done in past cases.

17. [Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea \(MDAT-GoG\)](#) is a cooperation centre between the Royal Navy (UKMTO) and the French Navy (MICA-Center) in support of the Yaoundé Process. This centre has been in operation since the 20th June 2016

and the primary output from the MDAT-GoG is to contribute by maintaining coherent maritime situational awareness in the central and western African Maritime areas, with the ability to inform and support industry. Details of the centre can be found on UKHO Chart Q6114. Additionally, vessels transiting the Gulf of Guinea are also advised to apply procedures as listed in the [Best Management Practices to deter Piracy and enhance maritime security off the coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea \(BMP-WA\)](#).

18. **South China Sea:** Has shown a marked reduction in GISIS from 34 incidents in 2019 to about 13 incidents in 2023.

19. **Arabian Sea, South America (C), South America (A), East Africa, South America (P):** These regions showed a relatively stable and low number of incidents over the years in the GISIS database. However, Callao Anchorage in Peru is a regional hotspot accounting for 90% of incidents in the region, and this trend has continued for the last few years.

20. Global political instability continues to escalate, posing significant threats to maritime activities, especially shipping, commerce, and supply chains. This heightened risk stems from various factors, including conflicts, territorial disagreements, cyber-attacks, the imposition of sanctions, Piracy, and potential acts of sabotage. Concurrently, the rising number of sea-borne migrants, drug smuggling using merchant vessels and a surge in stowaway incidents are creating severe security challenges worldwide.

21. Furthermore, since 2021, there has been an increase in attacks from loitering munitions (LM), also called suicide drones, on both civilian and military targets, with merchant ships becoming notable targets. These incidents, predominantly occurring in **North Africa, the Arabian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea**, are believed to be orchestrated by state actors using LMs.

22. The widespread distribution of these advanced autonomous technologies to state and private entities presents an emerging and escalating security risk to commercial shipping, a trend expected to persist in the near future.

23. OCIMF has released an information paper addressing the growing threat of loitering munitions (LM) to merchant shipping. [Loitering Munitions – The Threat to Merchant Ships](#), first edition, outlines the risks posed by specific LMs like the Shahed-136, their operational and technical characteristics, and offers best practice guidance for mitigating these new security risks.

24. Maritime Security Charts (MSCs) published by agencies such as NHO, UKHO, etc., contain vital details towards the safety and security of navigation, including details of Piracy, terrorism, embargoes, mine warfare, exclusion zones, blockades and illegal fishing. Such details can assist the navigating officer in the planning of safe passages through such piracy high-risk areas. A non-exhaustive list of such charts covering specific areas is available in Table 1.

Chart	Region
5010	Indian Maritime Safety and Security Chart
Q6099	Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea; Gulf of Aden to Red Sea Transit Corridor
Q6110	Mediterranean Sea; Strait of Gibraltar
Q6111	Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea; Strait of Hormuz
Q6112	Karachi to Hong Kong
Q6113	Singapore to Papua New Guinea; Sulu Sea and Celebes Sea Transit Corridors
Q6114	West Africa, Including the Gulf of Guinea

Table 1 - List of Maritime security Charts (Source: NHO, India & UKHO)

These MSCs, when used alongside official navigational charts, can help improve the safety and security of ships, crew, and cargo. Furthermore, the [Best Management Practices to deter Piracy and enhance maritime safety in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea \(BMP5\)](#); [BMP-WA](#); [‘Global Counter Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers’](#); [‘Regional Guide To Counter Piracy And Armed Robbery Against Ships In Asia’](#); [‘Guide for Tankers Operating in Asia Against Piracy and Armed Robbery Involving Oil Cargo Theft’](#); etc., is a non-exhaustive list of region-specific guidelines detailing procedures to ensure effective piracy related risk reduction and mitigation.

25. All CSOs and Masters of vessels are advised to be extra cautious, follow the practices and take necessary precautionary measures as specified in the Directorates circular and the guidelines/publications mentioned above.

This is issued with the approval of the Director General of Shipping.



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Note - The underlined blue content in the circular indicates hyperlinks to the relevant online content available on their respective website.