Subject: GOI - Online Ship Reporting for the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin, and Arabian Sea Region for vessels under Indian Flag

1. Indian Administration vide DGS Circular 20 of 2024 has informed regarding maritime security concerns that persists in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin, and Arabian Sea Region due to the surge in attacks in June 2024, the use of unmanned surface vehicles (USVs), geographical expansion, and continued escalation.

2. The recent targeting of vessels with no direct association with Israel, the US, or the UK, coupled with the resurgence in Somali Piracy, further compounds the security challenges in this region.

3. Given the current scenario, Indian Administration has advised all CSOs, Vessels, and Masters to consider the heightened security risks while transiting in these regions.

4. All vessels transiting through these areas are required to submit their details daily via the online Ship Reporting Form, as per DGS Circular 08 of 2024. The form can be accessed at http://117.219.8.190/ifcior/

5. The daily reporting will facilitate easier tracking and coordination at the Centre if the Indian Navy is required to respond to the incident. Accordingly, there is no requirement to forward the position report specified in Annexure I of DGS Circular No. 27 of 2023 dated 29 December 2023 as the daily reporting using the online link will take care of the same.

6. In addition to the reporting through the online form as per DGS Circular No. 08 of 2024, Administration has advised adherence to the SOPs and advisories specified in DGS Circular 25 of 2023, DGS Circular 27 of 2023, and DGS Circular 08 of 2024, along with other existing Best Management Practices for vessels transiting through the region.

7. Vessel owners/operators and masters are advised to be guided by above and follow the guidelines set forth in the aforementioned DGS circulars.

Encl.:

- DGS Circular No. 20 of 2024

- DGS Circular No. 08 of 2024

- DGS Circular No. 25 of 2023

- DGS Circular No. 27 of 2023

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

F. No. File No: 28-11/3/2023-MSB   Date -19.07.2024

DGS Circular No. 20 of 2024

Sub.: Trend Analysis of Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin, and Arabian Sea Region (November 2023 to June 2024) - reg.

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

1.   The maritime security landscape in the Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin, and Arabian Sea Region has been significantly affected by the increasing frequency and geographical spread of attacks on merchant vessels from November 2023 to June 2024. Analysing the data and trends observed therein reveals that these attacks have evolved in nature and impact, disrupting global maritime trade and posing substantial security challenges.
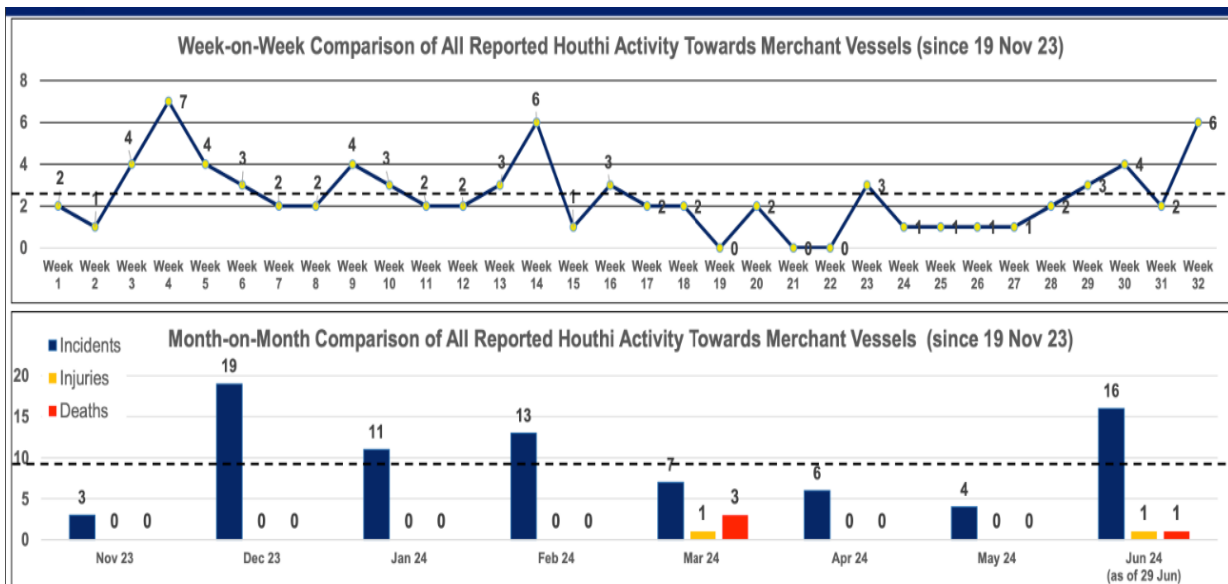
Figure 1: Week-on-Week Comparison of All Reported Houthi Activity Towards Merchant (Source: JMIC)

2.   From November 2023 to June 2024, a marked increase in Houthi attacks was observed, particularly between December 2023 and February 2024, with a resurgence in June 2024. The Red Sea experienced the highest number of attacks, peaking at 18 in December 2023, while the Gulf of Aden saw a notable spike of 14 attacks in February 2024. These attacks have led to a significant reduction in vessel arrivals in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden regions, with the

Suez Canal experiencing a 60% decrease in traffic, the Red Sea a 54% decrease, and Bab-el-Mandeb facing the most significant decline at 62%.
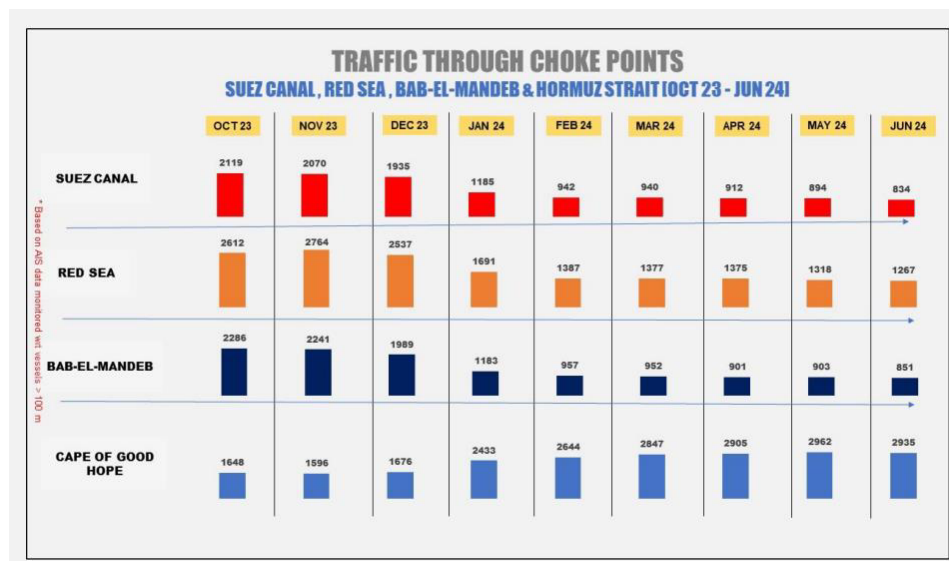

Figure 2: Trend of number of vessels transiting choke points of SLOC (Source: IFC-IOR)

3.   The impact on tanker arrivals is observed to be substantial, with a 47% decrease by June 2024. LPG tankers were the most affected, experiencing an 81% decrease, followed by chemicals tankers (48% decrease), oil product tankers (47% decrease), and crude oil tankers (37% decrease).

4.   From April 2024, the geographical scope of the Houthi attacks expanded beyond the Red Sea and Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean, indicating a strategic shift in operational tactics. Notable incidents during this period included the attacks on the Johannes MAERSK and Waler in the Mediterranean, marking the furthest extent of Houthi operations from Yemen.

5.   In several incidents, the deployment of Uncrewed Submersible Vehicles (USVs) and Crewed Surface Vehicles (CSVs) has introduced a new dimension to the maritime security landscape. On 12 June 2024, an incident occurred in the southern Red Sea, where the MV Tutor, a Liberia-flagged bulk carrier, was subject to an attack. The vessel was targeted by both an unmanned surface vehicle (USV) and an anti-ship missile, tragically resulting in the loss of one crew member. The ship sustained severe damage, leading to its abandonment by the crew and subsequent sinking six days after the incident.

6.   Despite the presence of privately contracted armed security personnel on board, video footage of the attack suggests a lack of response as the USV approached the vessel. This raises important questions about the efficacy and training standards of some private maritime security providers.

7.   The incident underscores the need for a comprehensive review of security protocols and onboard armed security personnel qualifications to ensure they are commensurate with the evolving nature of maritime threats in high-risk areas.

8.   Reports also highlight that the trend of attacks has shifted towards vessels with no direct association with Israel, the US, or the UK, targeting vessels that may have indirect or outdated linkages, broadening the scope of the threat.
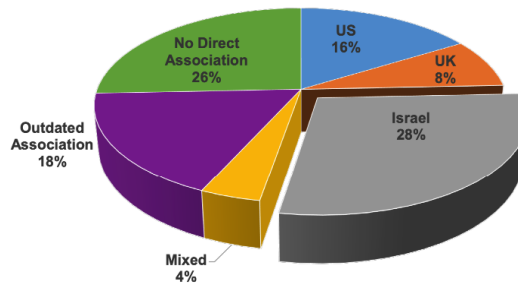
Figure 3: Houthi-Related Incidents by Assessed Associations (Source: JMIC)

9.   Concurrently, Somali piracy activities have seen a resurgence, with eight incidents reported in the first half of 2024, marking the first successful hijacking by Somali pirates since 2017. The Indian Navy has played a crucial role in rescuing merchant vessels from pirate attacks, demonstrating the persistent threat in the region.
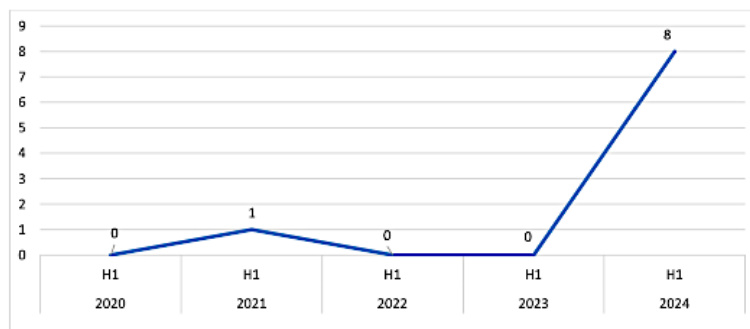

Figure 4: Somali Piracy Incident Trend (Source: IMB-PRC)

10.   All stakeholders should note that maritime security concerns persist in the region due to the surge in attacks in June 2024, the use of USVs, geographical expansion, and continued escalation. The recent targeting of vessels with no direct association with Israel, the US, or the UK, coupled with the resurgence in Somali Piracy, further compounds the security challenges in this region.

11.   Given the current scenario, all CSOs, Vessels, and Masters must consider the heightened security risks. In addition to the reporting through the online form as per DGS Circular No. 08 of 2024, the SOPs/advisories specified in DGS Circular No. 25 of 2023 dated 05.12.2023, DGS Circular No. 27 of 2023 dated 29.12.2023, and DGS Circular No. 08 of 2024 dated 10.04.2024, must be adhered to along with other existing Best Management Practices therein, by the vessels transiting through the region.

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

(Capt. Anish Joseph)
Deputy Nautical Adviser - cum -
Sr. Dy. Director General [Tech / Maritime Security]
anish-dgs@gov.in

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

F. No. File No: 28-11/3/2023-MSB   Date -10.04.2024

DGS Circular No. 08 of 2024

Sub.: Introduction of Online Ship Reporting for the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin, and Arabian Sea Region - 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.   This advisory is issued in continuation to the DGS Circular No. 27 of 2023 dated 29.12.2023, and subsequent observations on maritime security in sensitive regions, including the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin, and Arabian Sea region. There was a need to further simplify and enhance the mechanism for reporting and tracking maritime activities to safeguard the interests of merchant ships, their crew, and maritime trade flows.

2.   Due to the increasing number of vessels reporting to the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) and DG Comm Centre in pursuance to the aforesaid DGS Circular, a dedicated online Ship Reporting Form has been established. This form aims to streamline the reporting process and ensure a robust database for efficient monitoring and swift response to any maritime security threat.

3.   Accordingly, in the event of any incidents or security escalation due to incidents in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin, and Arabian Sea region, the **reporting and communication protocol** to be maintained is as follows:

3.1. Reporting Protocol

  3.1.1.   All vessels transiting through the aforementioned areas are requested to submit their details daily via the online Ship Reporting Form, which can be accessed at http://117.219.8.190/ifcior/.

3.1.2. This measure is critical for maintaining a comprehensive and up-to-date vessel database, which will facilitate easier tracking and coordination at the Centre if the Indian Navy is required to respond to the incident.

3.1.3. Accordingly, there is no requirement to forward the position report specified in Annexure I of DGS Circular No. 27 of 2023 dated 29 December 2023, as the daily reporting using the online link will take care of the same.

3.2. Communication Protocol

In the **event of a maritime security incident**, the following procedure is advised:-

3.2.1. Contact the nearest Indian Navy vessel and coalition warship using VHF Channel 16, provide the current location, describe the situation, communicate the intended course of action, and seek further guidance.

3.2.2. Inform the CSO of the vessel, who can convey the information immediately by phone/WhatsApp, preferably to the following centres, which are **manned 24x7** :

➢ DGComm Centre (dgcommcentre-dgs@nic.in) **Whatsapp, i.e., +91 8657549760.** (Alternative numbers: +91 22 22613606 / +91 8657549760 / +91 8657549752).

➢ IFC_IOR (ifc-ior.gurugram@navy.gov.in) **Whatsapp, i.e., +91 7428963733.** (Alternative number: Landline: +91-124-2208385)

3.2.3. Inform the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) and other applicable agencies/organisations relevant to the region and type of occurrence (such as MRCC, etc).

3.2.4. As soon as the situation allows, a first information report should be transmitted to the DGComm Centre.

4. Furthermore, all CSOs, Vessels and masters must consider the heightened security risks given the current scenario. In addition to the daily reporting through the online form, the practices and precautionary measures specified in DGS Circular No. 25 of 2023 dated 05.12.2023, DGS Circular No. 27 of 2023 dated 29.12.2023 and the SOPs/advisories/Best Management Practices therein are to be adhered with.

5. Weekly Maritime Security Updates, as available on the IFC-IOR website, must also be referred to obtain the weekly list of security incidents occurring worldwide.

6.	In light of the prevailing security concerns, it is advised to conduct comprehensive ship shore security drills encompassing all pertinent security scenarios, including but not limited to piracy and loitering munitions threats. Additionally, Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) testing may be undertaken before transiting through the regions above. These proactive measures are essential for ensuring the preparedness of the crew and the operational readiness of security systems on board.

7.	All stakeholders are advised to maintain a proactive stance towards security, constantly enhancing their preparedness to face evolving maritime security challenges through regular reviews and training. Accordingly, collective vigilance and adherence to the security SOPs/advisories are crucial for mitigating these varied and significant threats.

8.	Any incident of a suspicious nature not affecting the vessel may also be, therefore, reported to the DGComm Centre (dgcommcentre-dgs@nic.in) with a copy to IFC-IOR (ifc-ior.gurugram@navy.gov.in).

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

(Capt. Anish Joseph)
Deputy Nautical Adviser - cum -
Sr. Dy. Director General [Tech / Maritime Security]
anish-dgs@gov.in

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

F. No. File No. 28-11/3/2023-MSB   Date: 05.12.2023

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.**

Trend Analysis - Piracy / Armed Robbery / Petty Theft Incidents [IMO GISIS database]
01.01.2019 to 30.11.2023

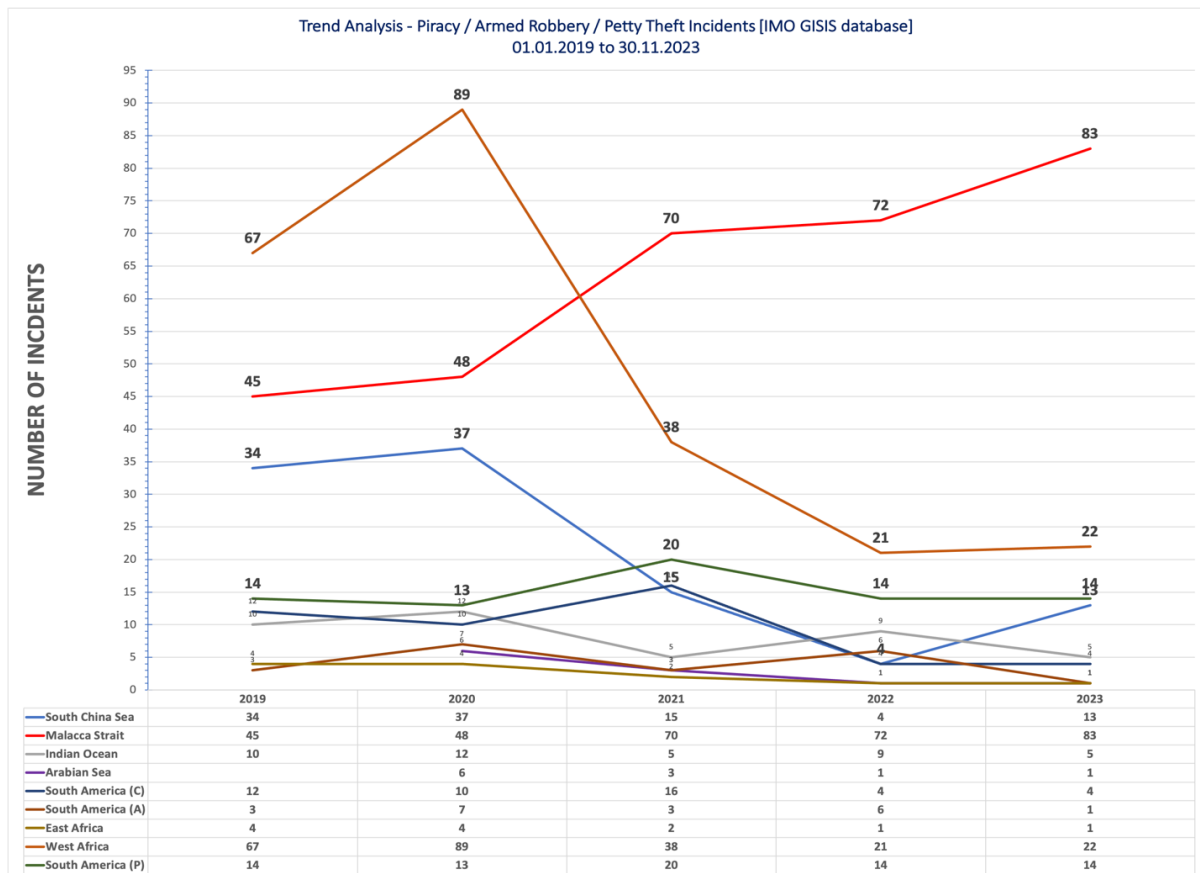|	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
South China Sea	34	37	15	4	13
Malacca Strait	45	48	70	72	83
Indian Ocean	10	12	5	9	5
Arabian Sea		6	3	1	1
South America (C)	12	10	16	4	4
South America (A)	3	7	3	6	1
East Africa	4	4	2	1	1
West Africa	67	89	38	21	22
South America (P)	14	13	20	14	14

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 <u>may be lower than actual</u>. 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 Tanjun Tondong (Figure 2).

Map 2 - Location of incidents in SOMS (January-September 2023)

● CAT 2   ● CAT 3   ● CAT 4   ▲ Attempted

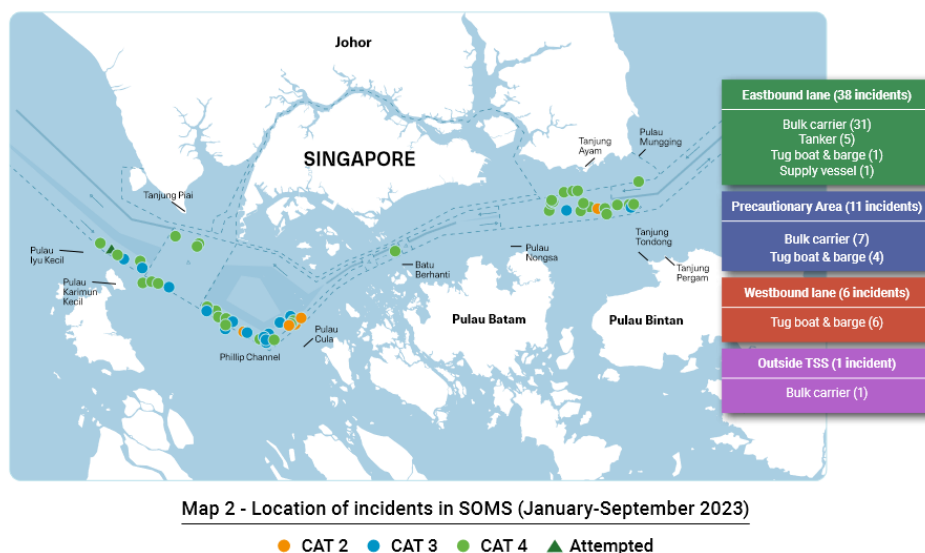*Figure 2: Location of incidents in Straits of Malacca & Singapore (Source: RECAAP)*

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 **<u>still in force</u>** 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.

(Capt. Anish Joseph)
Deputy Nautical Adviser - cum -
Sr. Dy. Director General [Tech / Maritime Security]
anish-dgs@gov.in

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

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पत्तन,पोत परिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
नौवहन महानिदेशालय, मुंबई
**DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SHIPPING,
MUMBAI**

F. No. File No: 28-11/3/2023-MSB   Date -29.12.2023

DGS Circular No. 27 of 2023

Sub.: Maritime Security Advisory on the security situation in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin and Arabian Sea region - 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.   This advisory is issued given further developments due to the escalation in the number of security-related incidents in the Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin and Arabian Sea region. The Indian government consistently monitors the maritime security environment to ensure the safe and secure passage of vessels, maintain uninterrupted trade flows, and safeguard Indian ships, crew, and maritime interests.

2.   In the event of any incidents or security escalation due to incidents stated in this advisory, the **communication protocol** to be followed generally is as follows:

   2.1. Contact the nearest coalition warship and Indian Navy vessel using VHF Channel 16, provide the current location, describe the situation, communicate the intended course of action, and seek further guidance.

   2.2. Inform the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), the vessel's Company Security Officer, DGComm Centre (dgcommcentre-dgs@nic.in) with a copy to IFC-IOR (ifc-ior.gurugram@navy.gov.in).

   2.3. Inform other applicable agencies/organisations as relevant based on the region and type of occurrence (such as MRCC, etc).

3.   **Gulf of Aden:** In the event any vessel receives a VHF communication from entities claiming to be the "Yemeni Navy" directing them to change course towards Al Hudaydah or another location on the northwest coast of Yemen, the following steps should be taken.

Firstly, if it is safe to proceed, the vessel should consider ignoring the VHF call and maintaining its course. After that, communication protocol, as stated in para 2, must be followed, and the incident must be reported to receive appropriate support and advice for navigating the situation safely.

4.   **Loitering Munitions (LM) such as drones, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and projectile attacks pose a significant risk in these waters,** as evident from the recent incidents indicating a rise in such hostile activities. Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF) has published an informational paper titled "Loitering Munitions – The Threat to Merchant Ships," detailing the escalating risk of loitering munitions (LM), such as the Shahed-136, to commercial vessels. This document highlights the operational and technical traits of LMs and provides best practice recommendations to counter these emerging security challenges.

5.   The vessel MT Mercer Street incident drone attack indicates LM targeting used AIS transponder data. However, the vessel MV Pacific Zircon was still attacked despite AIS being switched off. It is possible that historic AIS voyage data was used to estimate a likely position; this enables the LM to use other sensors for accurate location. Limiting the information in AIS data fields or switching off AIS could make a ship harder to locate but may be unlikely to prevent an attack ultimately.

6.   Voyage threat and risk assessment should consider the danger from LM. Simultaneously switching off AIS and altering the ship safely away from its original course may provide limited mitigation capabilities to avoid being attacked. Changes in voyage routing should be considered to make it harder to estimate a position. Not including the next port of call in the AIS data fields should also be considered.

7.   Attacks have been conducted very far out in the high seas, as evident from the Chem Pluto attack on 23.12.2023 in the Arabian Sea and the Shahed-136 attack drone attack on 24.11.2023 on the 15,000-TEU CMA CGM Symi in the Indian Ocean. These drones have a range of up to 600 nautical miles or 1,100 kilometres offshore, which can extend further by ship-launched LM.

8.   Eyewitness accounts indicate LM can be detected acoustically, albeit at a limited range before being seen. An all-around good lookout is essential, but response times may be limited. Vessels encountering or suspecting loitering munition activity (even when not attacked) should immediately report as per the aforesaid communication protocol.

9.   From learnings from earlier incidents, where an effective drone reporting system mitigates issues associated with its low detection signatures, all reports increase maritime awareness and help reduce this threat.

7 Countermeasures

Commercially available solutions for countering LM are being developed and rely on either destroying the LM in flight or disrupting the controlling radio frequencies by jamming or spoofing. The solutions' aim is to disrupt the GPS receivers by broadcasting a strong signal on the relevant bandwidth, flood it and thwart the device from receiving satellite signals. While this is the scope of state/military grade systems, there are some regulated-civil applications, such as those used in airports and on critical infrastructures such as oil platforms and maritime terminals. Some countries have already deployed counter-drone systems on oil and gas sea platforms.

Practical countermeasures for merchant ships are generally actions to either prevent the LM detecting a ship or to limit the damage on impact. In the Middle East region, it will not be known if a detected UAV/LM is friend or foe. Unless otherwise informed, all detections or warnings of detections should be treated as a threat.

To prevent detection in areas of increased threat:

- Threat assessment should identify areas of increased LM threat.
- Monitor and understand regional advisories and notifications.
- Consider changes to voyage routing to become less predictable.
- Review AIS policy.
  - To reduce detection, consider minimising information in the data fields. For voyage related data, SOLAS requires Ship's draught – Hazardous cargo (type – as required by the competent authority) – Destination and ETA (at Master's discretion) – Optional – Route plan (waypoints).
- Close radar watch. Commercial radars can detect a fast-moving contact, however:
  - Research suggests LM detection by radar can vary from 2-5km.
  - The radar cross section of LM can be small, comparable to some birds. Most commercial radar are configured to ignore the response to avoid clutter. Some radar manufacturers offer software upgrades designed to detect small airborne targets.
  - LM construction and design can have a significant impact on a radar's detection ability, as can the LM orientation to the radar.
  - The operating frequency of commercial radar for small target detection is limited, but may detect small, fast, airborne targets.
- All round audible and visual lookout.

Limiting damage on impact:

- Crew briefed and emergency drills practiced.
- On detecting an LM, consider safe manoeuvring such as displacing the ship as quickly as possible from its original track.
- If time and safety conditions permit, consider manoeuvring the ship to reduce any impact on the accommodation block or area where crew may be mustered.

Table 1: Countermeasures for LM (Source: Loitering Munitions – The Threat to Merchant Ships, OCIMF)

10. A safe muster point/citadel inside the ship and above the waterline should be identified and could provide safety to the crew. If a ship detects a drone, the Master should consider alerting the crew with the ship's alarm and ordering them to the designated safety space. This mitigation requires quick reaction times after detecting the threat and should be practised. At a minimum, the crew should be inside the structure with closed doors and windows. Firefighting equipment should be rigged and quickly operational.

11.   Many of these drone attacks are carried out on vessels having an Israeli connection, such as vessel owner/charterer. Such vessels must have a heightened threat perception while conducting a risk analysis.

12.   The threat of **limpet mines**, capable of being attached to hulls and explosive boats, potentially leading to severe damage and risks, particularly in the **Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and the Gulf of Oman, as well as the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden**, demands constant vigilance. Crew members should closely monitor for suspicious activity and promptly report any suspicions or incidents.

13.   **Illegal boarding, detention, seizure, and hijacking have become a pressing concern for ships navigating through this region**. Notable incidents have included capturing vessels under various international flags utilising small boats, military/navy vessels, and helicopters, after which vessels are coerced to move into territorial waters.

14.   Additionally, the persistent issue of **piracy and armed robbery** at sea, especially prevalent in the **Gulf of Aden, Western Indian Ocean / Arabian Sea, and Somali Basin,** continues to threaten maritime safety. Furthermore, an example of the increased capabilities and boldness of Somali pirates was evident during the Hijacking of MV Ruen on 15.12.2023, where the pirates utilised a hijacked dhow as mother ship during this incident.

15.   The UKMTO have received a report of a Mechanised Sailing Vessel (MSV) being Hijacked by heavily armed personnel in an undefined area around Eyl, Somalia, on 22.12.2023. Accordingly, the pirates can utilise this MSV as a mother vessel, extending their operational capabilities. All Indian MSVs (Dhows) are invited to be extra vigil and comply with the DGS Order 11 of 2018 dated 07.12.2018 on ['Standard Operating Procedure for operation of Indian sailing vessel in international voyages'](#).

16.   All merchant vessels are advised to take note of this information and avoid such dhows by maintaining high CPA from such vessels, when transiting these regions. All stakeholders are advised to adhere to 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).

17.   Additionally, **navigation and communication disruptions, including GPS interference and spoofing,** present complex challenges, and potential risks. Vessels encountering such issues should promptly report as per the communication protocol while taking necessary precautions to ensure the vessel's and its crew's safety and security.

18.   As the **conflict in Yemen poses further risks, particularly in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden**, Indian flagged vessels are advised to avoid the country's ports and exercise increased caution in adjacent waters [(MS Notice 12 of 2022 dated 02.12.2022)](#).

19. All vessels transiting Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab al Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, Somali Basin and Arabian Sea region are advised to share by email the details of the vessel, date/time of transit and Satcom email and telephone details to DGComm Centre (dgcommcentre-dgs@nic.in) with a copy to IFC-IOR (ifc-ior.gurugram@navy.gov.in) in the appended format (Annexure I).

20. Furthermore, all CSOs, Vessels and Master must consider the heightened security risks given the current scenario. They must adhere to the practices and precautionary measures specified in DGS Circular No. 25 of 2023 dated 05.12.2023 and the SOPs/advisories/Best Management Practices therein. Weekly Maritime Security Updates, as available on the IFC-IOR website, must also be referred to obtain the weekly list of security incidents occurring worldwide.

21. It is advised to carry out a **ship shore security drill** for all the applicable security scenarios (e.g. Piracy, Loitering Munitions, etc) before the vessel transits this region.

22. Regular reviews and training should be conducted to ensure understanding and implementation of the non-exhaustive lists of security measures stated in the DGS Circular. Collective vigilance and adherence to the security SOPs/advisories are crucial for mitigating these varied and significant threats.

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

(Capt. Anish Joseph)
Deputy Nautical Adviser - cum -
Sr. Dy. Director General [Tech / Maritime Security]
anish-dgs@gov.in

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

Vessel Name	IMO No.	MMSI	Call Sign	Email	Sat phone	Last Port / Next Port	Key Transit points and Eta
							(eg. Entering Red Sea eastbound on 01.01.2024/1500 hrs lt, Total Transit Time xx hours; ETA Strait of Bab al-Mandab on XX.01.2024/1500 hrs lt; ……)