PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS

Progress Report of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia – Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP-ISC)

Submitted by ReCAAP-ISC

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document provides an update on the activities carried out by the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia – Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP-ISC) since MSC 100 in December 2018.

Strategic direction, if applicable: 5

Output: 5.3

Action to be taken: Paragraph 15

Related document: MSC 100/INF.4

Lowest number of incidents reported in Asia since 2007

ReCAAP-ISC reported the lowest number of incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia in 2018 during the past 12-year period of 2007-2018. A total of 76 incidents comprised of 62 actual incidents¹ and 14 attempted incidents² were reported in 2018. This accounts for a 25% decrease in the number of incidents reported in 2018 compared to the same period in 2017. A total of 102 incidents comprising 90 actual and 12 attempted incidents were reported in 2017. Both the total number of incidents and number of actual incidents in 2018 are the lowest during the 12-year period of 2007-2018. The number of actual incidents had decreased by 31% in 2018 compared to those in 2017. See Chart 1.

¹ Actual incidents are incidents where pirates/robbers boarded the ship; and regardless of whether they stole any items from the crew, or took away any secured or unsecured items found on board the ship.

² Attempted incidents are incidents where pirates/robbers tried but failed to board the ship.
There was improvement at some ports and anchorages in 2018 compared to 2017, with the most apparent improvement occurring at Manila anchorage in the Philippines. Successful arrests of perpetrators were reported in 2018 in Bangladesh (Chittagong), India (off Alang, Gujarat), Philippines (Manila), Indonesia (Pulau Batam), Malaysia (off Pulau Tinggi, at Tg Kidurong, Sarawak and off Tambisan, Sabah). However, there were more than 10 incidents reported at ports/anchorages in Chittagong, Bangladesh and in Samarinda, Indonesia.

Significance level of incidents

ReCAAP-ISC adopts a classification methodology to evaluate the significance level of actual incidents based on the violence inflicted by the perpetrators, and economic losses which include hijack of the ship. This methodology provides better evaluation of incidents for seafarers in making risk assessment and mitigation of risk when planning their voyages. CAT 1 incidents are very severe in nature and CAT 4 are petty theft cases. CAT 2 and CAT 3 incidents are moderately severe and less severe incidents respectively. Of the 62 actual incidents reported in 2018, 2 were CAT 1, 8 were CAT 2, 14 were CAT 3 and 38 were CAT 4. The number of CAT 1 and CAT 2 incidents reported in 2018 were the lowest during 2007-2018. The majority of the incidents in 2018 were CAT 4 (petty theft) and occurred mostly at ports/anchorages. See Chart 2.

The significance level of an incident is determined based on the level of violence associated with the incident and type of economic losses incurred. The most severe incident is categorized as CAT 1 (very significant), medium severe as CAT 2 (moderately significant), not as severe as CAT 3 (less significant) and petty theft as CAT 4 (least significant).
Decrease in abduction incidents

4 There was a decrease in the number of abduction incidents of crew for ransom in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and waters off Eastern Sabah in 2018 compared to 2017 and 2016. In 2018, 2 actual incidents of abduction of crew and 1 attempted incident were reported, compared to 2017 when 3 actual incidents and 4 attempted incidents were reported, and compared to 2016 when 12 actual incidents and 6 attempted incidents were reported. See maps below.
5 Of the 66 crew members who were abducted between March 2016 and December 2018, 34 have been released, 16 have been rescued, 7 were killed and 9 are still in captivity. The Philippine authorities continue to conduct pursuit operations and intensify its military operations to rescue the abducted crew members and neutralize the militant group. The authorities are constructing a Coast Guard base in Sibutu Island and installing radars in the area of the Sulu-Celebes Seas to intensify patrols and monitor the area.

6 As the threat of abduction of crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas still remains, ReCAAP-ISC maintains its advisory issued via ReCAAP-ISC Incident Alert dated 21 November 2016 to all ships to reroute from the area, where possible. Otherwise, ship masters and crew are strongly urged to carry out risk assessment, mitigation of risk, exercise extra vigilance and report to the monitoring centres.

No hijacking of ships for theft of oil cargo

7 No incident of hijacking of ship for theft of oil cargo was reported in 2018 compared to three incidents (two successful and one unsuccessful) in 2017 and three incidents (two successful and one unsuccessful) in 2016. The last successful hijacking of ships for theft of oil cargo occurred to tug boat Ever Prospect when 3,700 tonnes of Crude Palm Kernel Oil (CPKO) was siphoned from barge Ever Omega on 22 November 2017.

Data analytics

8 In 2018, ReCAAP-ISC utilized data analytics to provide deep analysis of incidents based on the accumulated data of the past 12 years (2007-2018). The analysis was featured in ReCAAP-ISC Annual Report of 2018 which highlights the trend and analysis of incidents of the past 12 years (2007-2018) in Asia and in six locations of Asia.

Capacity-building activities carried out by ReCAAP-ISC

Visit to ReCAAP focal points

9 ReCAAP-ISC visited two ReCAAP focal points in 2018. The visit to the focal point of Bangladesh coincided with ReCAAP-ISC’s attendance at HACGAM's 14th High Level Meeting. The visit to the focal point of Sri Lanka coincided with ReCAAP-ISC’s attendance at the 9th Galle Dialogue.
respectively, enabled ReCAAP-ISC to understand better the challenges faced by the focal points and their efforts in combating piracy and armed robbery against ships. The visits brought together various local stakeholders such as government agencies and the shipping community, to appreciate existing issues and discuss possible measures to overcome the challenges.

**Focal Point Senior Officers' Meeting (FPSOM), Seoul, Republic of Korea**

10 ReCAAP-ISC together with the ReCAAP focal point of the Republic of Korea, organized the Focal Point Senior Officers’ Meeting (FPSOM) 2018 held in Seoul, Republic of Korea from 12 to 15 November 2018. The meeting provided an important platform for ReCAAP focal points/contact point to be updated on the latest situation of piracy and sea robbery, and share best practices and challenges. A total of 33 participants from focal points and other agencies attended the meeting. The participants shared best practices on two main topics: "efficient and effective information sharing" and "legislation on piracy and armed robbery". On the topic of anti-piracy legislation, a representative of UNODC shared its experience in Africa.

**Focal point Training Programme (FPTP), Singapore**

11 ReCAAP-ISC conducted the third FPTP on 14 and 15 January 2019 at the ReCAAP-ISC. It was attended by newly posted officers to the focal point of Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam. The main objectives of the programme were to explain the role and function of the focal point and to train the focal point officers in incident reporting via IFN System through a scenario-based exercise. As part of the programme, the participants also attended the Nautical Forum 2019 to be better apprised of the situation of piracy and armed robbery in Asia, and visited the Port Operations Control Centre (POCC) of Singapore.

**Nautical Forum 2019**

12 ReCAAP-ISC, together with the Maritime Port Authority of Singapore and the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA), organized the Nautical Forum 2019 on 15 January 2019 to release ReCAAP-ISC's Annual Report on the incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia for 2018. The forum provided a platform to engage the shipping industry, regional authorities, government agencies, ReCAAP-ISC focal points and the maritime community in sharing views, gathering feedback and making recommendations towards collectively combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia for 2019. The speakers of the forum addressed issues of concern on the abduction of crew incidents in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and waters off Eastern Sabah, sea robbery situation in Indonesia and in the Gulf of Guinea. A total of 145 participants attended the Forum.

**Conclusion**

13 The situation of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia in 2018 has improved significantly compared to 2017. The improvement can be attributed to collective efforts of the shipping industry and coastal States. The shipping industry has enhanced vigilance and made immediate reporting of incidents to the coastal States which, in turn, have quickly responded to the incidents and arrested the perpetrators. ReCAAP-ISC will continue to work closely with the coastal States and the shipping industry in providing timely warnings, alerts and accurate updates of the situation.

14 ReCAAP-ISC advises ships transiting or anchoring at areas of concern to exercise enhanced vigilance, maintain all round lookout for suspicious boats, implement preventive
measures and report all incidents to the nearest coastal State and flag State immediately in accordance with MSC.1/Circ.1333/Rev.1 and MSC.1/Circ.1334.

**Action requested of the Committee**

15 The Committee is invited to note the information provided in this document.