



Office of
Deputy Commissioner
of Maritime Affairs

THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

LIBERIA MARITIME AUTHORITY

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October 19, 2023

MARINE SECURITY ADVISORY – 06/2023

Subject: Advisory for Liberian flagged vessels transiting waters from the Indian Ocean to North Asia to North Australia

Dear Owners/Operators/Company Security Officers/Masters:

The purpose of this Marine Advisory is to encourage participation in International Fusion Centre (IFC) initiatives, most notably in its Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) reporting scheme, to mitigate ship security risks in the region spanning from the Indian Ocean to North Asia to North Australia.

Background

The IFC is a regional Maritime Security (MARSEC) center situated at the Changi Command and Control Centre (CC2C) and hosted by the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) to facilitate information sharing and collaboration between partners. The IFC collects and analyzes relevant commercial shipping and maritime information in its Area of Interest (Indian Ocean to North Asia to North Australia) which it shares with its partner maritime agencies to cue responses to MARSEC threats and incidents.

IFC Voluntary Community Report (VCR)

The IFC maintains a Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) scheme for MARSEC incidents or anomalous behavior at sea, including any RF, GPS, radar interference and cyberattack incidents.

Ships transiting the VCR Area are encouraged to transmit an **initial** report to the IFC upon entering and a **daily report** henceforth while they remain in the VCR Area. Any anomalous behavior observed at sea should also be reported to the IFC.

Reports should be submitted according to the BMP 5 reporting form to information_fusion_centre@defence.gov.sg. For easier identification of the email, the IFC requests that the subject header of the email includes one of the following: “initial report”, “daily report” or “final report”, as appropriate.

IFC Ship Security Drills

Ships may also participate in security drills with the IFC to practice information sharing processes.

IFC Shared Awareness Meetings (SAMs)

The IFC periodically conducts SAMs with members of the shipping community to promote the exchange of information between the shipping community and enforcement agencies concerning best practices and current MARSEC challenges.

24/7 Emergency IFC Hotline

If you require urgent assistance, you may contact the IFC's duty officer:

Tel: +65 9626 8965 (Hotline)
+65 6594 5728 (Office)

IFC MARSEC Information

Owners and Operators may sign up for the latest MARSEC information in the IFC region via the following platforms:

WhatsApp	https://bit.ly/WhatsApp_IFC
Telegram	http://bit.ly/Information_Fusion_Centre
Twitter	https://twitter.com/Info_Fusion_Ctr
Website	https://www.ifc.org.sg/ifc2web/app_pages/User/commonv2/pubsProducts.cshtml

For more information, please contact the Security Department at telephone + 1 703 790 3434, email security@liscr.com

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Guidelines for Shipping Companies on Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR)

Q1: What is the Information Fusion Centre (IFC)?

A1: Established on 27 April 2009, the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) is a regional Maritime Security (MARSEC) centre situated at the Changi Command and Control Centre (CC2C) and hosted by the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN). The IFC aims to facilitate information sharing and collaboration between its partners to enhance MARSEC. The IFC has been at the forefront of providing actionable information to cue responses by regional and international navies, coast guards and other maritime agencies to deal with the full range of MARSEC threats and incidents. This includes piracy, sea robbery, maritime terrorism, contraband smuggling, illegal fishing and irregular human migration.

Q2: What are some of the IFC's notable contributions?

A2: The IFC has facilitated strong collaboration amongst regional and extra-regional stakeholders to arrest MARSEC incidents in the region. Through the IFC's contributions to MARSEC in the region, and its efforts in fostering close cooperation between countries, piracy and sea robbery incidents have declined significantly.

Q3: How can the shipping industry contribute to regional MARSEC?

A3: The Shared Awareness Meetings (SAMs) that the IFC conducts periodically are an important platform for the IFC to reach out, explain, and gather feedback on key MARSEC issues and challenges faced by the shipping community. The IFC also works with industry players to promote the exchange of best practices, such as Self-Protection Measures for the physical hardening of ships to hamper boarding efforts by pirates or sea robbers. Panel discussions are held for the shipping community to raise questions or challenges they face, and for enforcement agencies to address them.

Q4: What is the VCR?

A4: The Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) scheme was established in 2010 by the IFC for the shipping community to report MARSEC incidents or anomalous behaviours out at sea. Merchant vessels sailing under any flag which are operating in the VCR Area are strongly encouraged by the IFC to report MARSEC incidents or anomalous behaviour. Anomalous behavior is behavior outside the normal expectations of shipping, commercial trade, or marine practice. This includes any interference that is observed on RF, GPS, radars and cyber attack incidents. They may be indicative of a MARSEC threat. As a voluntary-reporting scheme, the VCR does not seek to overwrite the respective coastal state's regulatory framework.

Q5: What is the Real-time Information-sharing System (IRIS)?

A5: Launched officially on 14 May 2019, the IRIS is an upgraded web-based information sharing system designed to enable rapid collaboration for MARSEC through an internet-facing portal. The IRIS builds on the IFC's decade of experience and expertise as a regional information sharing hub, and integrates the various portals that the IFC has developed over the years to fuse and sense-make information more effectively. Features include a fused recognised maritime picture, enhanced real-time collaboration, improved accessibility and improved user experience.

REPORTING FORMAT

A vessel participating in the VCR scheme is encouraged to transmit an **initial report** upon entering the VCR Area, and a **daily report** henceforth whilst it remains in the VCR Area to the IFC. Upon exiting the VCR Area, the IFC requests for a final report.

All reports are to be sent to the following email address: information_fusion_centre@defence.gov.sg

In addition, any vessel that observes anomalous behaviour at sea is also requested to send an additional **suspicious activity report** to the IFC. Details of this are provided below.

The IFC recognises that many ships are to send position reports to a variety of stakeholders. As such, the IFC requests that vessels simply add the IFC email address as provided above into their distribution list for ease of dissemination. For easier identification of the email, the IFC requests for the subject header of the email to include either one of the following: "initial report", "daily report" or "final report", as appropriate.

To coincide with the launch of the IFC's new web portal and interest site (<https://www.ifc.org.sg>), the IFC has now adopted procedures in accordance with BMP 5.

Our aim is to fuse and exchange actionable MARSEC information to reduce burden on the ships at sea, and to increase collaboration with the regional IFCs to assist information-sharing, especially for ships that pass through various regional areas. The IFC works with established partners such as the UKMTO to improve the ease of inter-regional reporting. As such, feedback on the new formats would be greatly appreciated.

The IFC has adopted the BMP 5 reporting formats to minimise variation in formats and burden on the ships. The old VCR reporting formats, however, will be accepted as well as we transit into using the new reporting formats.

CONTACT

If you have any concerns about any incident at sea, including suspicious approaches near your or another vessel or observe anomalous activity at sea, please email the IFC at information_fusion_centre@defence.gov.sg

The IFC operates a 24/7 Hotline, if you require **urgent** assistance, please call the IFC's duty officer immediately.

Tel : **+65 9626 8965 (Hotline)**
+65 6954 5728 (Office)

IFC Initial Report

The IFC requests for a vessel to send an initial report each time it enters the IFC's VCR Area. For efficient identification and classification of the report, it is requested that the email subject header should be provided as "Initial Report/Company/Vessel Name/Date and Time", and that the report contains the following details:

01	Ship Name
02	Flag
03	IMO Number
04	INMARSAT Telephone Number
05	Time and Position
06	Course
07	Passage Speed
08	Freeboard
09	Cargo
10	Destination and Estimated Time of Arrival
11	Name and contact details of Company Security Officer
12	Nationality of Master and Crew
13	Armed/unarmed security team embarked

IFC Daily/Transit Position Report

A vessel is encouraged by the IFC to increase the frequency of their reporting when transiting an area of concern.

For efficient identification and classification of the report, it is requested that the email subject header should be provided as "Daily Position Report/Company/Ship Name/Date and Time", and that the report contains the following details:

01	Ship Name
02	Ship's Call Sign and IMO Number
03	Time of Report in UTC
04	Ship's Position
05	Ship's Course and Speed
06	Any other important information*

**Other important information could be change of destination or ETA, number of UK crew on board, etc.*

IFC Final Report

It is requested that a vessel sends its final report each time it exits the IFC's VCR Area. For efficient identification and classification of the report, it is requested that the email subject header should be provided as "Final Report/Company/Ship Name/Date and Time", and that the report contains the following details:

01	Ship's name
02	Ship's Call Sign and IMO Number
03	Time of Report in UTC
04	Port or position when leaving the VCR Area

Suspicious/Irregular Activity Report

In addition to the regular reporting process, the IFC requests that the crew of any vessel that observes any anomalous behaviour whilst participating in the VCR sends an additional **suspicious activity report** by email to the IFC. Examples of the types of behaviours which can be considered as 'anomalous' include, but are not limited to the following:

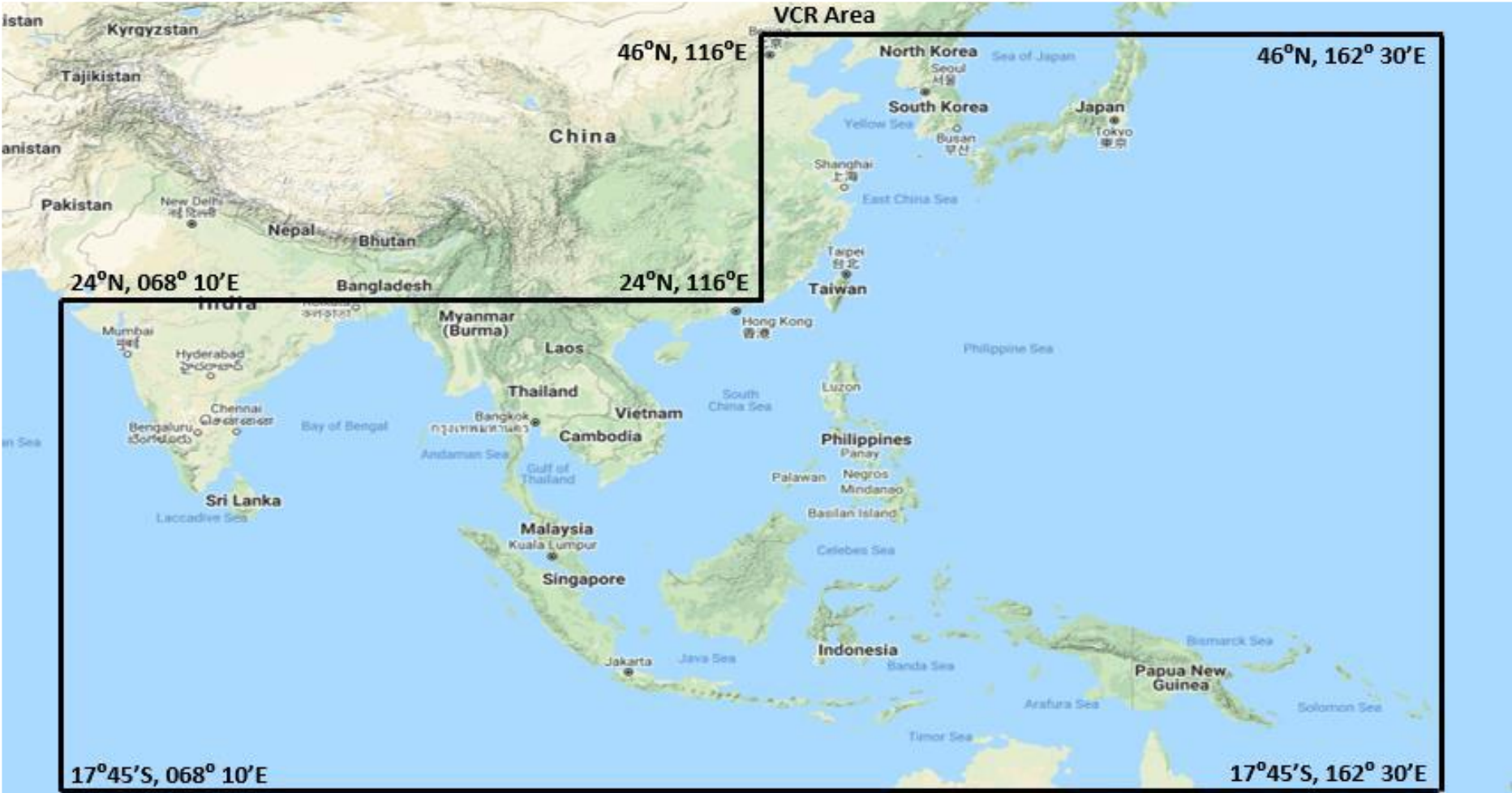
- Unusual rendezvous (RVs) of ships at sea including transfers of cargo or people
- Darkened ships/not illuminating nav lights
- Ships anchored in unusual locations
- Ships not flying a flag/displaying a name
- Ships navigating contrary to the ordinary practice of seamen
- Ships outside of normal patterns/sea lanes
- Fishing boat without appropriate equipment
- Overcrowded/unseaworthy/overloaded ships
- Non-ocean-going ships in the high seas
- Abandoned ships
- Unwarranted/unsolicited approaches by ships to your own ship or other ships in your vicinity
- Non-military/government ships carrying arms
- Ships carrying boarding equipment
- Suspicious/unusual voice communications
- Ships underway / making way without AIS transmission

For efficient identification and classification of the report, it is requested that the email subject header should be provided as "Suspicious Activity Report/Company/Ship Name/Date and Time", and that the report contains the following details:

01	Ship's name
02	Ship's Call Sign and IMO Number
03	Time of Report in UTC
04	Ship's Position
05	Ship's Course and Speed
06	Sighting of suspicious activity. Time, position, brief description of craft and activity witnessed

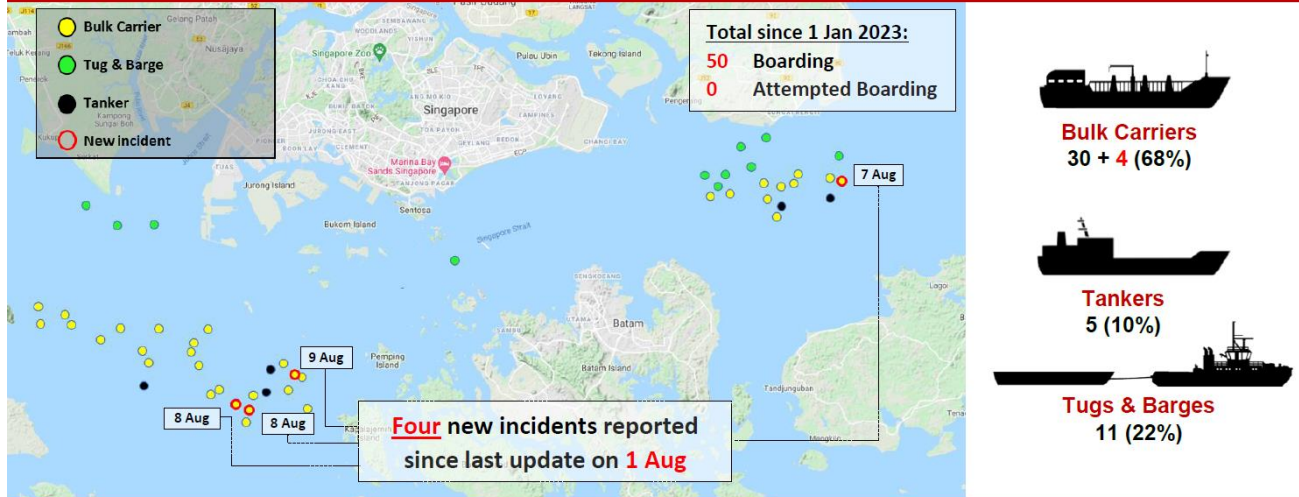
**Note: Where possible include any imagery to aid military appreciation.*

The Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) Area



Summary of Boarding and Attempted Boarding Incidents in the Singapore Strait (correct as at 1 Sep 2023)

Number of Incidents & Vessel Types



Key Observations and Assessments

- Of the four new incidents, three occurred in Phillip Channel and one occurred in Eastbound Lane of Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS). Of note, all the incidents involved Bulk Carriers, and this is consistent with past trending that Bulk Carrier is the most boarded vessel type.
- In majority of the incidents, perpetrators were reportedly unarmed (only one incident on 8 Aug reported perpetrators armed with knives). Of note, no injury was reported in all of the incidents.
- All the incidents occurred in hours of darkness. Of note, IFC assesses that the three incidents in Phillip Channel between 2150H (8 Aug) and 0335H (9 Aug) likely involved the same group of perpetrators based on incident locations (within 5nm apart), time interval (within 5.5 hours), and number of perpetrators (3 to 4 pax).

Modus Operandi: Remains Largely Consistent With Petty Crime

- Based on incident reports this year, perpetrators mostly avoided confrontation, and fled immediately upon being sighted by crew.
- Perpetrators are usually unarmed, operating in group(s) of up to 4 pax using small boats to target slow-moving vessels (7-12 knots) with low freeboard (up to 6m).
- Bulk Carriers and Tankers – Perpetrators may be armed (i.e. knives, and steel bars) and confrontation (*out of 50 incidents since Jan 2023, 17 reported armed, and 4 reported with confrontation*), and they usually target ships' engine parts and stores. Same group of perpetrators may target few vessels in succession, in same night.
- Tugs and Barges – Perpetrators are usually unarmed, and target scrap metal. The vessel type could be targeted in both daylight and hours of darkness.

Recommended Actions for All Transiting Vessels

- Always remain vigilant, particularly when transiting known areas of concern in the Phillip Channel, and off Bintan and Batam.
- Adopt Ship Protection Measures recommended in the Regional Guide 2 to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia, e.g., (1) turn on weather deck lighting around the accommodation block and rear facing lighting on the poop deck, (2) maintain an all-round lookout at an elevated position with focus on suspicious small craft(s) approaching or in proximity to the ship's aft, and (3) sound ship's alarm when suspicious small craft(s) sighted.
- To guard against successive boarding attempts by perpetrators, transiting vessels are encouraged to stay informed by participating in Voluntary Community Reporting as depicted in 4th Edition MARSEC Charts Q6112 and Q6113. Upon sighting of suspicious activities or perpetrators onboard, immediately report to local authorities and inform the IFC; do not confront perpetrators.

Contact IFC at +65 6594 5705 / 9626 8965 or email us at information_fusion_centre@defence.gov.sg



INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE

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6 Jul 2023

IFC Shipping Advisory 1/23 – Photographic Evidence of Sea Theft Incident along Westbound Lane TSS, Singapore Strait

The IFC received photographic evidence of a sea theft incident while transiting the Westbound Lane of Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS), Singapore Strait. Please advise your ship masters to watch out for similar types of wooden boats that are operating in the area, which typically feature a flat-bottomed hull with a narrow open deck. The photo below shows the boat used by the perpetrators in the incident.



The IFC recommends vessels transiting along the Singapore Strait to adopt ship protection measures such as (1) turn on weather deck lighting around the accommodation block and rear facing lighting on the poop deck, (2) maintain an all-round lookout at an elevated position with focus on suspicious small craft(s) approaching or in proximity to the ship's aft, and (3) sound ship's alarm when suspicious small craft(s) sighted. The IFC also encourages ships to provide photographic or video evidence to educate the industry the modus operandi of the perpetrators and help the authorities with their investigation.

Releasable to Shipping Industry Only

IFC Recommendations

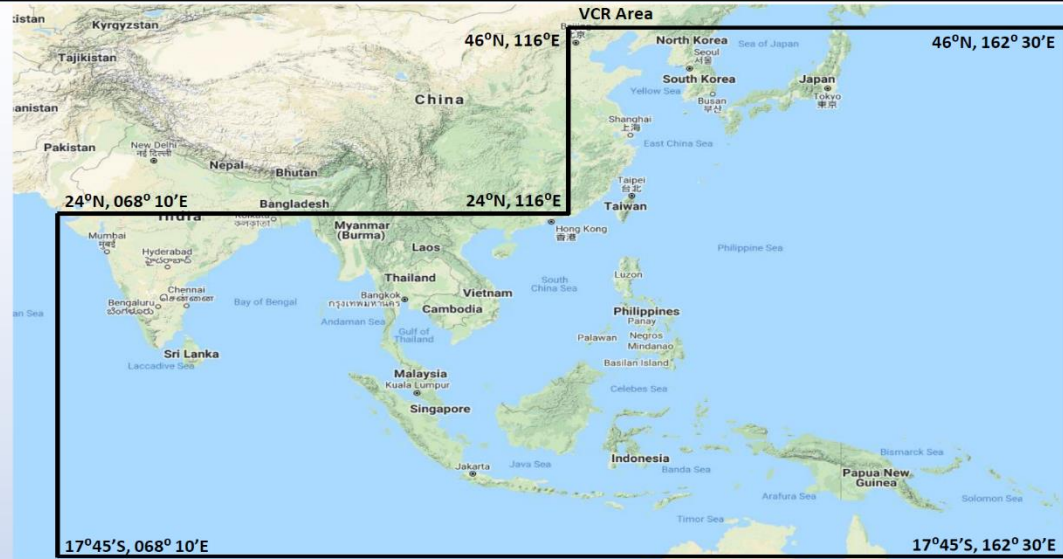
1. Remain vigilant and adopt ship protection measures when transiting areas of concern.

2. Participate in Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR).

3. Report to local authorities and IFC during an actual or attempted attack.

4. Submit photos & CCTV footage where available for investigation.

Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) Area



Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) Reporting Format

**Join the IFC VCR scheme to receive MARSEC advisories and updates.
Timely reporting allows IFC to inform the right authorities to cue operational responses.**

Ships with own reporting format can add IFC to their email address list to simplify reporting. Otherwise, the IFC's recommended format is aligned to that of **UKMTO**.

A vessel is encouraged to submit:

- 1) **Initial report** upon entering the VCR Area
- 2) **Daily report** while within the VCR Area
- 3) **Final Report** upon exiting the VCR Area
- 4) **Suspicious activity report** upon observing anomalous behaviour within the VCR Area



The reporting of events to IFC does not absolve mariners of your obligations towards coastal / port / flag authorities.

IFC (Reporting)



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Office: +65 6594 5728



information_fusion_centre@defence.gov.sg