

## Philippines - Attacks on Vessels in the Sulu Sea

28th February 2017

The number of attacks on vessels in the Sulu and Celebes Sea have surged recently with a corresponding increase in the severity of the attacks. In a recent incident six crew members were abducted with one crewman being shot dead. The [International Fusion Centre \(IFC\)](#) has now reported a total of 37 incidents in this area, of which 17 have included abduction of crew, since January 2016.

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia ([ReCAAP](#)) details known incidents and has published the [Regional Guide to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia](#).

Littoral states are also considering the establishment of a high security corridor along the Sulu Sea however this has not yet been agreed.

Members are recommended to follow IMO's Guidance to ship owners and ship operators, shipmasters and crews on preventing and suppressing acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships [MSC.1/Circ.1334](#). The following specific precautionary measures are recommended:

- If a viable option consider alternate routing to avoid transiting the area.
- Prior to entering the area conduct a risk assessment, brief crew and conduct a drill, prepare and test an emergency communication plan.
- Proceed at maximum sustainable speed whilst in the area.
- Maintain good communications via VHF Channels 08 and 16 with littoral law enforcement agencies and the IFC. A map and contact details of the relevant local authorities is attached at [Annex A](#) of the IMO Guidance referenced above.
- Activate the ship's Automatic Identification System (AIS). This should be restricted to ship's identity, position, course, speed, navigational status and safety related information.
- Increase vigilance in watch-keeping and deploy additional lookouts.
- Use CCTV cameras for coverage of vulnerable areas (if available).
- Keep ship's whistle and fog horn ready for immediate use.
- Secure or lift external ladders to prevent their use and to restrict external access to the bridge.
- Deploy appropriate Ship Protection Measures with reference to the ReCAAP guide. There is a high incidence of kidnap for ransom cases and vessels can considerably reduce the chances of crew being kidnapped by having an effective citadel and practiced citadel drills
- Evasive manoeuvres have also been proven to deter perpetrators in the reported incidents in this specific area.

- Consider restricting personnel access to upper decks and bridge wings during Sibutu Passage transits, so as to not present a target for potential small-arms fire. All non-essential personnel should be located in a secure part of the ship where practicable.

Members requiring further information should contact the [Loss Prevention department](#).

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