

Crew Assaulted as Robberies Continue in Singapore Strait



Crewmember aboard a tanker transiting the Singapore Strait was stabbed overnight by robbers (file photo)

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Vessels have been repeatedly warned of the dangers while transiting the Singapore Strait but the latest report includes a rare instance of violence against the crew. Ambrey is reporting that a crewmember was stabbed and taken ashore to a hospital overnight on Wednesday, December 11.

Most of the incidents in the Singapore Strait are attempted robberies of spare parts or other equipment from vessels most often underway. Usually, they are small groups of people at most armed with knives and when spotted or confronted the boarders flee.

However, according to last night's report, two boarders were seen aboard a tanker underway transiting eastbound through the Phillip Channel. Ambrey in an update said that the robbers had knives and one crewmember was stabbed repeatedly before the boarders left the vessel. The incident has not yet been confirmed by the regional authorities.

ReCAAP (Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia) set up 20 years ago to promote and enhance cooperation to suppress piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia has highlighted an increased number of attacks. The reports show more violent incidents than in the past.

So far in 2024, it has already received reports of 86 incidents and 10 attempts this year. That compares with 100 reports in all of 2023. This year it tracked 17 cases where the crew was threatened, held hostage temporarily, or rarely injured versus nine reports of this level in 2023.

Last week, ReCAAP tracked three instances where vessels were boarded either in the Singapore or Malacca Strait. One report indicated that the perpetrators were armed with knives but no one was reported injured. In two of the reports, it indicates that equipment was stolen. Also in December, a bulk carrier was boarded in the Malacca Strait. In that report, it says a crewmember was tied up by the perpetrators who stole engine spare parts.

More than half the incidents reported since January 2024 (55 total) were in the Singapore Strait. ReCAAP continues to advise ships to exercise enhanced vigilance when transiting in the area. It also calls on the littoral states to increase patrols and enforcement in these areas.