

# REPORT ON ARMED ROBBERY AND PIRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

## 2ND QUARTER 2007



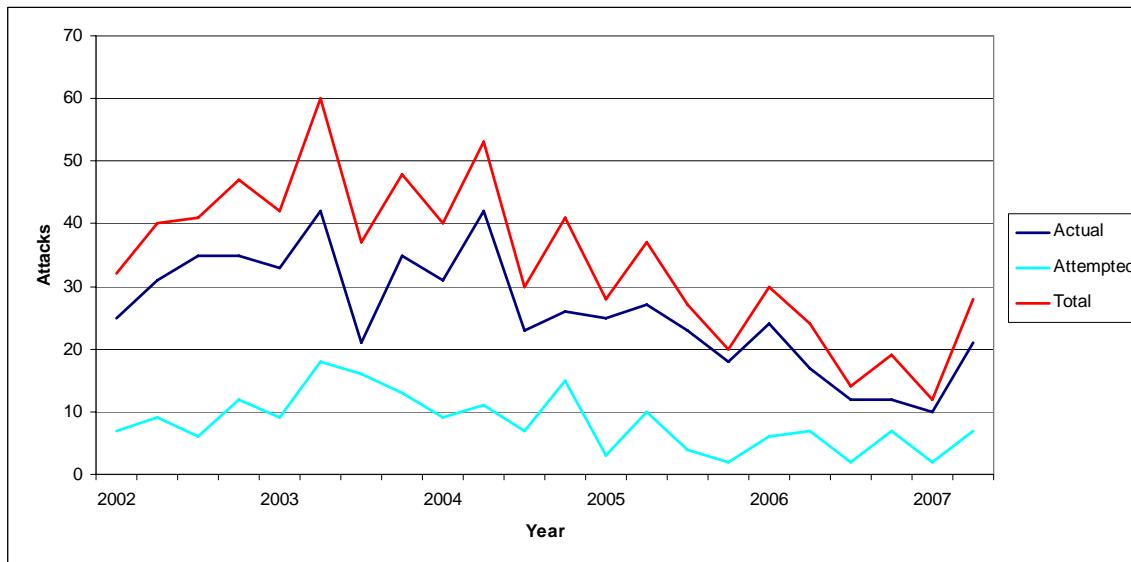
Jane Chan and Joshua Ho\*

### Regional Trend

As many as 28 cases of armed robbery and piracy were reported in Southeast Asia during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007. Of these, 21 were actual attacks while seven others were attempted incidents. It was the first increase in the number of armed robbery and piracy attacks since the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2006, which was the beginning of a downward trend (refer to Figure 1). Figures for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of

2007 surpass those recorded during the same period in 2006 and are in the same range as those recorded during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2006 (which was the highest in that year), where a total of 24 actual attacks and six attempted attacks were reported. Figures for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007 also reflect the general trend of a 2<sup>nd</sup> quarterly hike in the last few years.

Figure 1  
Regional Trends by Quarters, 2002–2007





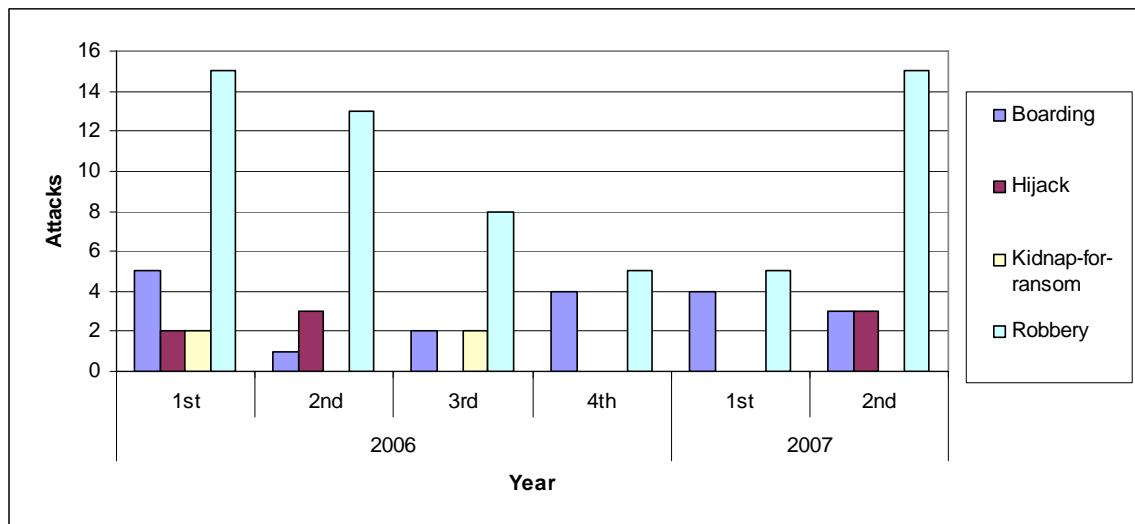
## Types of Attacks

Theft and/or robbery make up the main type of attacks in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007. 15 of the 21 actual attacks reported were theft and/or robbery cases, the highest number of such attacks reported since the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2006. It should be noted that there were also 3 cases of hijack reported during the same period. Although an attempted hijack was reported during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2007,

the last time such an attack was reported was during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2006 (refer to Figure 2). It should also be noted that hijacking cases have been consistently reported over the last 5 years in considerable numbers, averaging over 10 per cent of the total number of reported actual attacks during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter each year.

Figure 2

### Types of Actual Attacks, 2006–2007





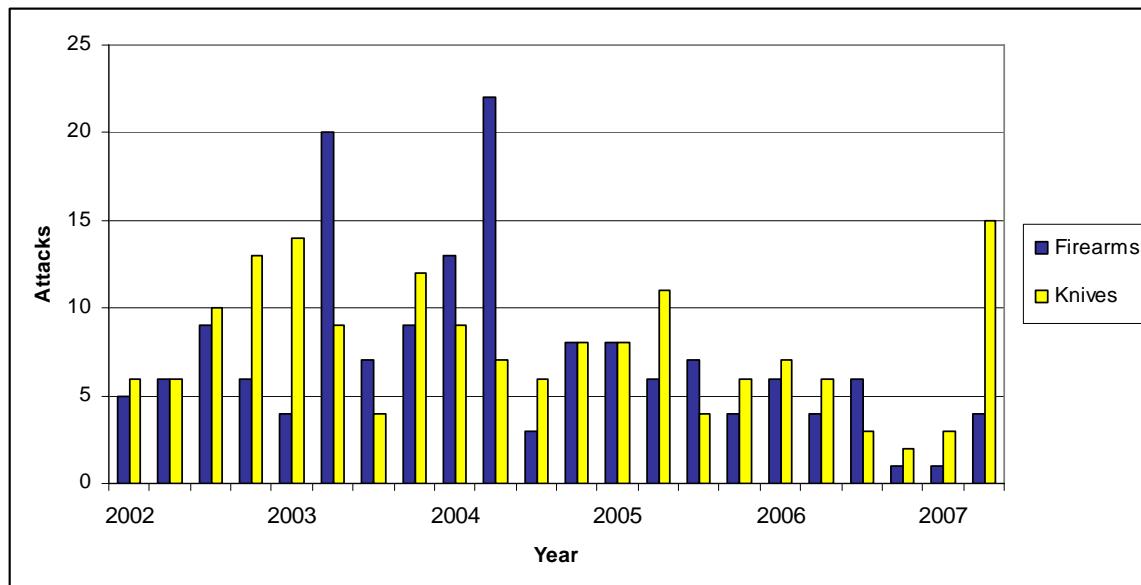
## Types of Weapons

About half of the reported cases in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2007 have either omitted or provided insufficient information with regards to the types of weapons used during an attack. Although knives remain the weapon of choice, about 20 per cent of the actual attacks involved the use of firearms. Even as the number of firearms being used during an attack in the last 2 quarters (i.e. the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter

of 2006 and the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2007) has reduced greatly, whereby only 2 of the total number of reported cases during these two quarters involved the use of guns (refer to Figure 3), reports of an increase in the use of firearms during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007 serve as a reminder of the higher risk and potential violence when confronted with pirates and/or robbers carrying firearms.

Figure 3

Actual Attacks by Types of Weapons, 2002–2007





## Location of Attacks

Ports and anchorages are the most commonly targeted areas of attacks in Southeast Asia (refer to Figure 4). More than two-thirds of the attacks took place while vessels were at anchor and/or at berth. It should be noted that Southeast Asia experienced considerably harsh weather during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007 (compared to the same period in previous years), especially in the month of May, which saw fishing activities restricted closer to shore. Although harsh weather conditions and rough seas seemingly did not deter acts of piracy and armed robbery, such activities were very much restricted to within the vicinity of ports and anchorages.

Figure 4

### Location of Actual Attacks in Southeast Asia, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2007

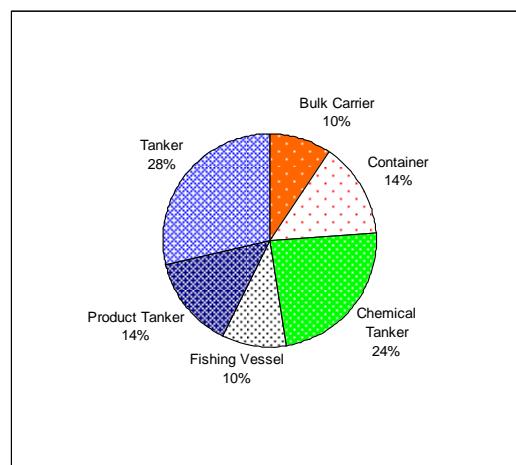


## Types of Vessels

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007, more than 60 per cent of actual attacks were targeted at tankers of sorts (refer to Figure 5). Although the general trend over the last five years shows that bulk carriers have been the most common targets in the region, tankers have been the primary targets in Southeast Asia since the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2007. It should also be noted that about 70 per cent of the ships attacked, as indicated by gross register tons (GRT), were medium (more than 10,000 GRT) or large (more than 20,000 GRT) in size, mostly tankers of sorts.

Figure 5

### Actual Attacks by Types of Vessels, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2007



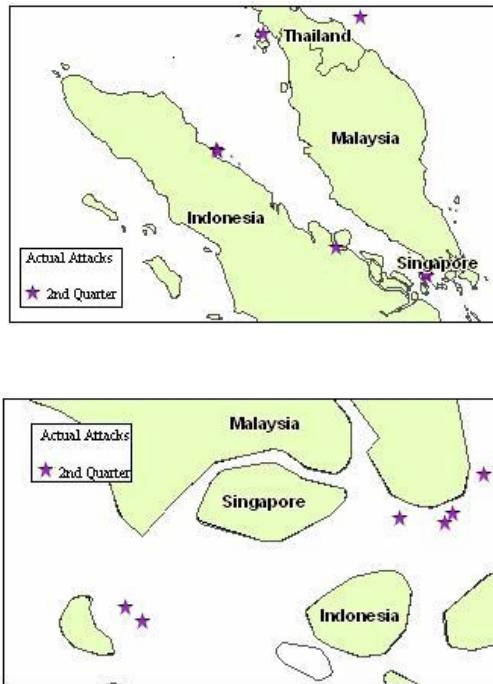


## Malacca and Singapore Straits

There were a total of 11 reported cases of piracy and armed robbery attacks along the Malacca and Singapore Straits during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007, 10 of which were actual attacks (refer to Figure 6). Attention should be drawn to the 4 cases of armed robbery that took place within Malaysian waters at the southern tip of the country's western peninsula. As all of the attacks led to actual confrontation with crew members, 2 of the attacks involved the use of firearms.

Figure 6

### Location of Actual Attacks in the Malacca and Singapore Straits, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2007



## South China Sea

Figure 7 shows the location of actual attacks at or within the vicinity of the South China Sea. It was the first actual attack reported since the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2006. The attack took place at the Spratly Islands and presumably the vessel was hijacked as well, since it and its crew members have yet to be found. Vietnam is still being plagued by occasional piracy and armed robbery attacks. A container and a tanker were attacked while at anchor in Vietnamese waters.

Figure 7

### Location of Actual Attacks in the South China Sea, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2007





## Indonesia

This is one of the rare times when fewer than half of the total number of actual attacks in the Southeast Asian region has taken place within Indonesian waters. The 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007 recorded 9 of 21 reported actual attacks being committed within Indonesia's jurisdiction. Although Indonesian ports and anchorages remain the regional hotspots for armed robbery and piracy activities, such activities seemed to be increasingly prevalent in other parts of the region.

## Sunda and Makassar Straits

2 cases of piracy and armed robbery incidents were reported in the vicinity of the Sunda Strait during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007. Figure 8 shows the location of the actual attacks. A chemical tanker and a container, both at anchor, were robbed at the Jakarta Anchorage.

Figure 9 shows the locations of the 4 actual attacks that took place in the Makassar Strait, all of which involved large vessels at anchor. Apart from that, there were 4 attempted attacks reported in those waters. These figures are 4 times higher than those recorded during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2006.

Figure 8

### Location of Actual Attacks in Sunda Strait, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2007



Figure 9

### Location of Actual Attacks in Makassar Strait, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2007





## Conclusion

After experiencing a downward trend in the number of piracy and armed robbery activities within the Southeast Asian region since the end of 2004, this sudden increase in the number of attacks within these waters serves as a reminder to the coastal states as well as to the shipping community that one cannot afford to be complacent in dealing with this long-term security problem.

Although smaller ships have generally been the preferred targets in recent years, the number of medium-sized to large vessels falling victim to piracy and armed robbery attacks during this period should be highlighted. On top of that, as many of such attacks involved confrontations with the perpetrators armed with knives and firearms, ship owners should perhaps start to consider

the need to increase the level of security onboard.

There is no doubt that littoral states with the support of some user states have dedicated much effort and resources in trying to overcome the issue. However, a better understanding of the problem at hand is vital in finding the right solution. Very often, as so much focus is put into the important task of securing the sea-lanes, many lose sight of the severe lack of security in regional ports and anchorages. As more than two-thirds of the attacks were perpetrated at a port and/or anchorage during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007, it is more than a subtle hint that there is a real need to take the issue of port security seriously, if one intends to curb the problem of piracy and armed robbery within the region for good.

### Sources:

- IMB Weekly Piracy Report. [Online] Available at [www.icc-ccs.org](http://www.icc-ccs.org)
- IMO Reports on Acts of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships. [Online] Available at [www.imo.org](http://www.imo.org)
- ONI Worldwide Threat to Shipping Report. [Online] Available at [www.nga.mil/portal/site/maritime](http://www.nga.mil/portal/site/maritime).
- Maritime Security Council's News Alerts

---

\* Jane Chan is an Associate Research Fellow and Joshua Ho is a Senior Fellow of the Maritime Security Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, a Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.