

REPORT ON ARMED ROBBERY AND PIRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA 3RD QUARTER 2007



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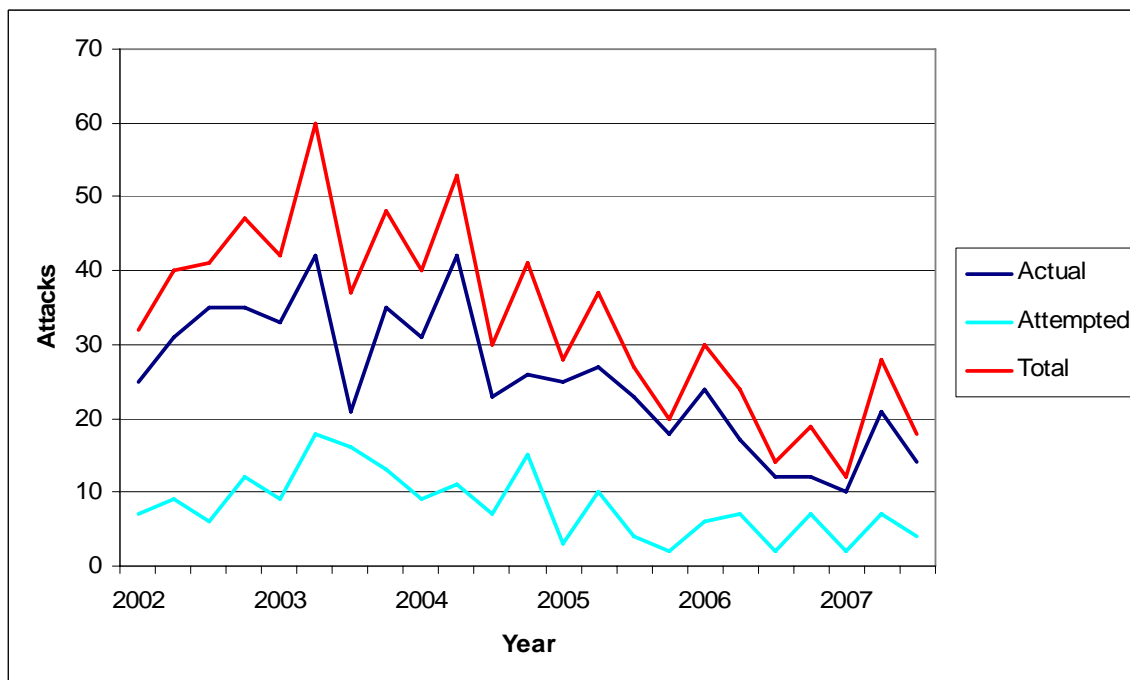
Regional Trend

By the end of third quarter 2007, the Southeast Asian region has recorded a total of 58 cases of piracy and armed robbery incidences for the year, one of the lowest recorded during the same period over the last five years. A total of 18 cases were reported during the third quarter of 2007. Of these, 14 were actual attacks while four were attempted incidences. The highest number of piracy and armed robbery incidences recorded in the last five years was in

2003, when 139 cases were reported by the third quarter of that year. By the third quarter of 2006, there were already 68 reported cases of such incidences (see Figure 1). Having said that, as the first quarter of 2007 has recorded the lowest quarterly figures in the last five years, it may be too optimistic to suggest a consistent downward trend in the number of attacks in the region at this juncture.

Figure 1

Regional Trends by Quarters, 2002–2007





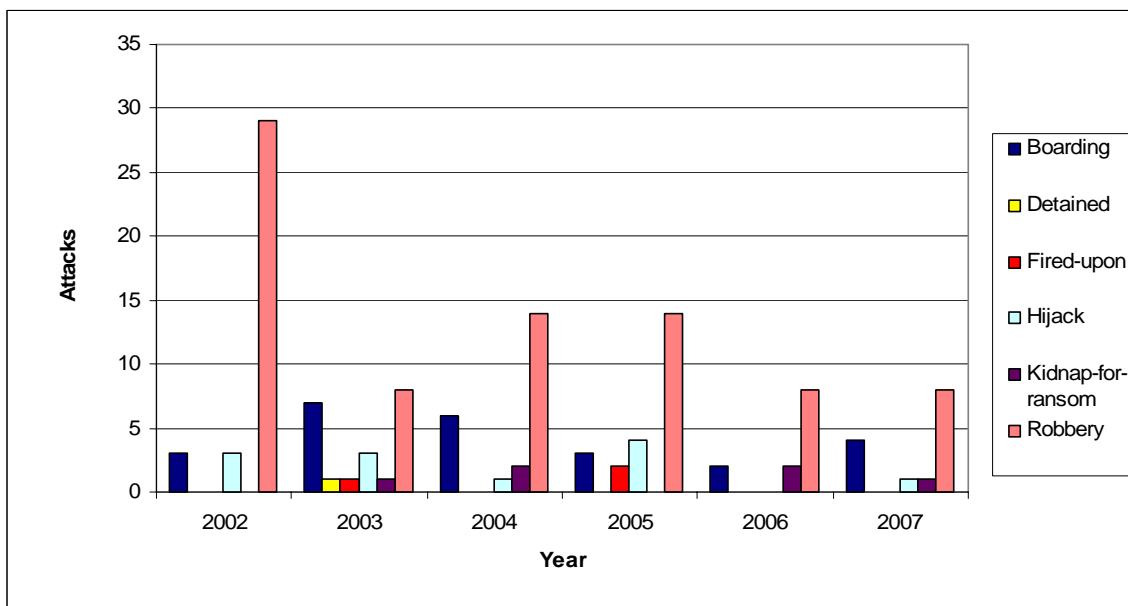
Types of Attacks

Apart from common theft and robbery, the third quarter of 2007 saw two serious incidences reported: a kidnap-for-ransom incident that took place in August and the hijacking of a product tanker in September. Although the authorities managed to track down the hijacked vessel and successfully apprehend the perpetrators, these two incidences serve as a reminder of the severity of piratical attacks that do not only involve the lost of valuables on board. Theft and/or robbery still make up the main type of attacks in the third quarter of 2007. Eight of the 14 actual attacks reported were theft and/or robbery cases, while there were four other incidences where the perpetrators had already boarded the vessels.

Noticeably, some vessels had been fired upon in the waters of the region often with no known purpose. Although there was only one such reported incident during the third quarter of 2007, and no injuries were sustained in the attack, it highlighted the potential damages and severe consequences such attacks could cause. A third quarterly comparison over the last five years saw a consistent pattern of the types of attacks being perpetrated in the region (see Figure 2). It should also be noted that hijacking and kidnap-for-ransom cases have been consistently reported over the last five years in considerable numbers, averaging over 10 per cent of the total number of reported actual attacks during the third quarter of each year.

Figure 2

Types of Actual Attacks, Third Quarterly Comparison, 2002–2007





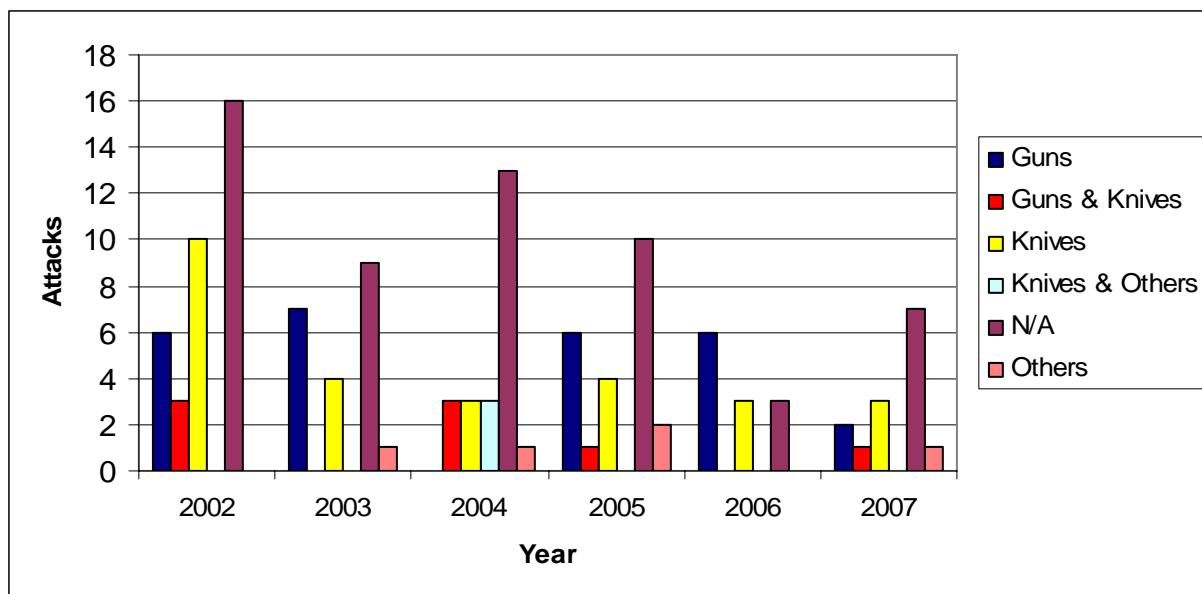
Types of Weapons

Of the 14 reported actual attacks, three saw the perpetrators armed with firearms. Fortunately, no firearm-related injuries were sustained during those attacks. Knives were used in more than one-third of the reported incidences during the third quarter of 2007. Third quarterly comparison over the last five years saw a similar gun-knife ratio being used during those quarters (see Figure 3)

More reports during those selected quarters provide information of the types of weapons being used as opposed to the annual figures where more than half of the reported incidences do not furnish such information. Information on the types of weapons used during attacks is an important gauge of the trend and potential violence that may take place in regional waters.

Figure 3

Actual Attacks by Types of Weapons, Third Quarterly Comparison, 2002–2007





Location of Attacks

Consistent to previous quarterly trends, the waters of the Malacca and Singapore Straits and the Sunda Strait have recorded the most number of reported attacks in the Southeast Asian region (see Figure 4). Six actual attacks were reported in the vicinity of the Malacca and Singapore Straits while four were reported in the vicinity of the Sunda Strait. There were two actual and two attempted attacks reported in the vicinity of the South China Sea, highest since the second quarter of 2004. Contrary to the South China Sea situation, the Makassar Strait saw a sharp dip in reported attacks. Ports and anchorages were the most commonly targeted areas of attacks in Southeast Asia (see Figure 5). More than two-thirds of the attacks took place while vessels were at anchor and/or at berth. Be that as it may, the more serious attacks almost always took place further offshore, targeting steaming vessels. The two serious attacks reported in the third quarter of 2007, as mentioned earlier, took place at the Malacca Strait and the Sunda Strait respectively, both targeting steaming vessels on local voyages.

Figure 4

Location of Actual Attacks in the Southeast Asia, Third Quarter, 2007

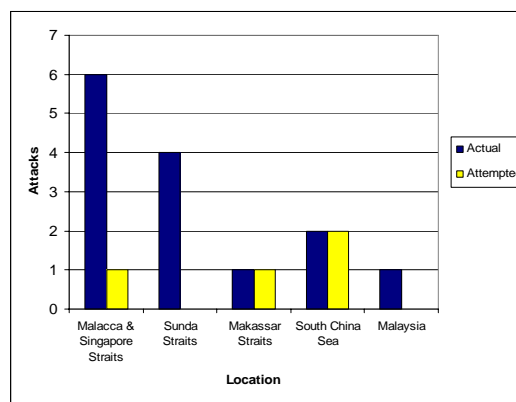


Figure 5

Location of Actual Attacks in Southeast Asia, Third Quarter, 2007



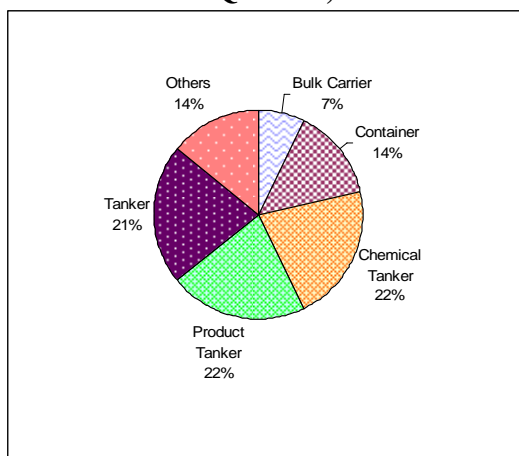


Types of Vessels

As with the second quarter of 2007, the third quarter of 2007 saw 60 per cent of actual attacks being targeted at tankers of sorts (see Figure 6). Tankers have been the primary targets in Southeast Asia since the first quarter of 2007. Such cases largely involve small tankers ploughing through local waters, vital to the movement of commodities within the region. A yacht was targeted in an attempted attack in the vicinity of the South China Sea. Most of the attempted attacks were unsuccessful largely due to the alertness of the potential target in spotting the potential threat.

Figure 6

Actual Attacks by Types of Vessels, Third Quarter, 2007



South China Sea

Figure 7 shows the location of actual attacks at or within the vicinity of the South China Sea. Of the four reported incidences, two were actual attacks. There has been no reported piracy and arm robbery attack in the South China Sea during the third quarter in the last five years. As most of the cases that took place during the third quarter of 2007 were in fact perpetrated within the vicinity of ports and/or anchorages, it shall be highlighted that there were two attempted attacks that took place at the southern tip of the South China Sea, in the vicinity of the Anambas Islands, one of which targeted a yacht while a fishing vessel was fired upon in the same vicinity.

Figure 7

Location of Actual Attacks in the South China Sea, Third Quarter, 2007





Malacca and Singapore Straits

Although the third quarter of 2007 recorded one of the lowest numbers of piracy and arm robbery attacks in Southeast Asia, the Malacca and Singapore Straits remain one of the high-risk areas of water in this region. There were a total of seven reported cases of piracy and armed robbery attacks in the Malacca and Singapore Straits in the third quarter of 2007, six of which were actual attacks (see Figure 8). Although the figures show a slight fall in the numbers of reported attacks when compared to the previous quarter, it is still considerably higher than those recorded since the second quarter of 2005 (see Figure 9). Figure 9 also shows that there was generally a third quarterly

dip in the number of reported attacks in the Southeast Asian region.

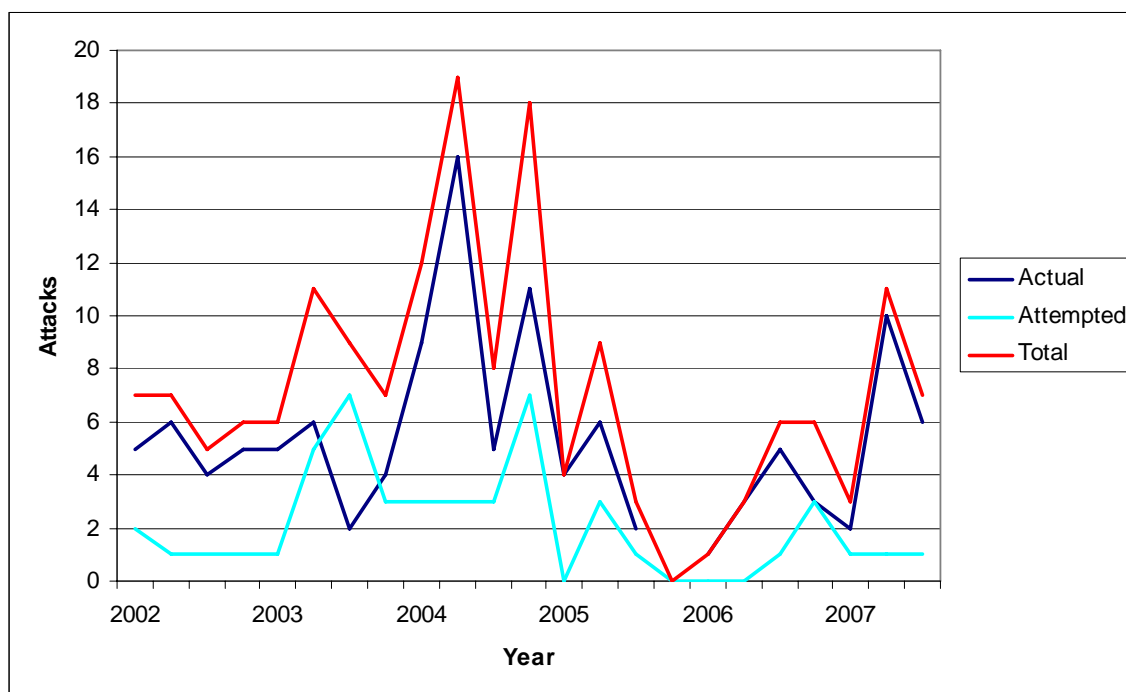
Figure 8

Location of Actual Attacks in the Malacca and Singapore Straits, Third Quarter, 2007



Figure 9

Quarterly Trend in the Malacca and Singapore Straits, 2002–2007





Indonesia

A large majority of the total number of actual attacks in the Southeast Asian region took place within Indonesian waters. The third quarter of 2007 recorded 11 of 14 reported actual attacks being committed within Indonesia's jurisdiction. These figures of the third quarter once again highlight that Indonesian ports and anchorages remain the regional hotspots for armed robbery and piracy activities.

Sunda and Makassar Straits

A total of six cases of piracy and armed robbery incidents were reported in the vicinity of the Sunda Strait during the third quarter of 2007. Figure 10 shows the location of the actual attacks. As previously mentioned where a large majority of the vessels targeted in the region were tankers of sorts, all four reported cases in the Sunda Strait reflect that trend. Noticeably, a tanker was hijacked in September and although it was foiled, with crew rescued and vessel recovered, the incident highlighted the vulnerability and susceptibility of vessels with low security standards being victimized in these waters.

Contrary to the high numbers recorded during the previous quarter, Figure 11 shows the locations of the only actual attacks that took place in the Makassar Strait. A bulk carrier anchored at the Bontang Anchorage was attacked by perpetrators armed with a variety of weapons of convenience on top of the guns they had. A separate bulk carrier

was also targeted but the attempt was foiled by a vigilant duty officer onboard.

Figure 10

Location of Actual Attacks in Sunda Strait, Third Quarter, 2007



Figure 11

Location of Actual Attacks in Makassar Strait, Third Quarter, 2007





Conclusion

Two major incidences highlighted the third quarter of 2007. The first case saw the kidnap-for-ransom of a crew at the Malacca Strait. Ransom was paid in exchange for the freedom of the crew. As reflected in Figure 2, the last reported kidnap-for-ransom incident took place during in third quarter of 2006. The second case highlighted involved the hijacking of a product tanker at the northwestern region off the Sunda Strait. The crew and vessel were recovered by authorities in Malaysia soon after.

This report highlights once again that, apart from the common theft and robbery incidences, which have been a problem in regional waters, hijacking and kidnap-for-ransom cases have also been consistently featured in annual regional figures. Although firearms were reportedly used in these attacks, it is fortunate that no injuries were sustained during the confrontations.

Sources

- IMB Weekly Piracy Report (online), available at www.icc-ccs.org
- IMO Reports on Acts of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships (online), available at www.imo.org
- Lloyd's List Bulletin (online), available at <http://www.lloydslist.com/viewbulletin>
- ONI Worldwide Threat to Shipping Report (online), available at www.nga.mil/portal/site/maritime
- Maritime Security Council's News Alerts

Indonesia may once again be forced to confront the harsh figures, which suggest that it may be the weakest link in the efforts to protect and secure regional waters. Having said that, even with the help of Malaysia and Singapore, which are in the best position in terms of naval capabilities, the burden to secure the Straits of Malacca may be too onerous for these littoral states alone.

Although the number of actual attacks in the region has often been speculated to be under-reported, it is vital to recognize that limited capacity of the littoral states to even deal with the existing number of cases. As we acknowledge the successful launch of the "Cooperative Mechanism" to enhance the safety of navigation in the Malacca Straits, one should be hopeful that a similar concept could officially be put in place for the security of regional waters.

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