



15 Nov 2020

IFC SPOT COMMENTARY 2/20 – OBSERVATIONS OF SEA THEFT AND ATTEMPTED ACTIONS INCIDENTS IN EASTBOUND LANE OF SINGAPORE STRAIT

OVERVIEW

1. IFC observed a spike of incidents (sea theft and attempted actions) along the eastbound lane of the Traffic Separation Scheme in the Singapore Strait from 01 Oct to 09 Nov 2020 with nine incidents (three sea thefts and six attempted actions). This spot commentary aims to provide awareness of this area of concern including the analytical insights into the incidents and the observed modus operandi of the perpetrators.

SUMMARY OF FACTS

2. Area of Concern. The spate of incidents occurred at the north of Batam and Bintan (See **Diagram 1**) in the east bound lane of the Singapore Strait. The incidents occurred during period of darkness (PoD) where there was no/minimal illumination from the moon (See **Diagram 2**), and mostly between 2300hrs to 0500hrs (88.9%). No attacks have been observed from the mornings – 0500hrs to early afternoons/evenings – 2100hrs (See **Diagram 3**). The majority of incidents (77.8%) took place in the PoD from Sundays to Mondays, whereby only two incidents (22.2%) took place under the week (Tuesday to Wednesday), with a bi-weekly reoccurrence since Oct 2020. The incidents involved between one to five perpetrators, where the majority (66.7%) involved three or more perpetrators onboard the vessels (cannot discount possibility of more perpetrators not being detected or reported). Eight of the nine incidents happened in series of two to three vessels being attacked in succession, within one PoD.

Diagram 1: Locations of incidents from 01 Oct to 09 Nov 2020

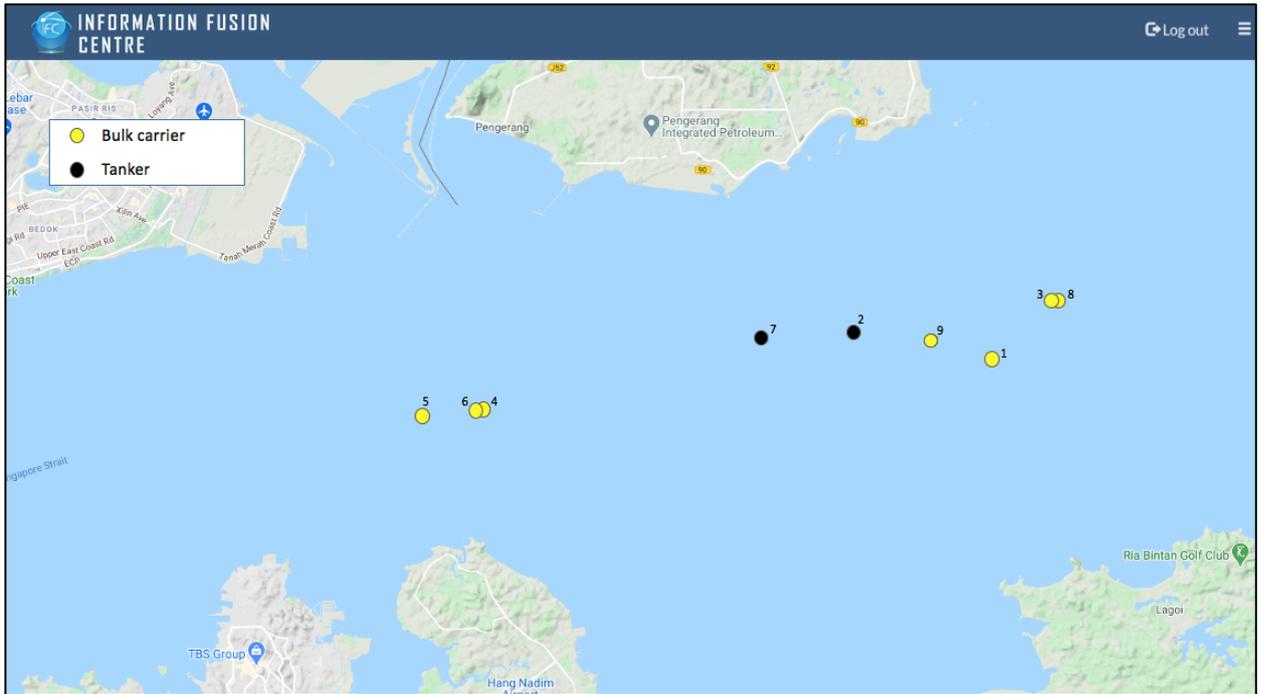


Diagram 2: Moonphase for Oct – Nov 20 (Incident nights highlighted by Red Borders)

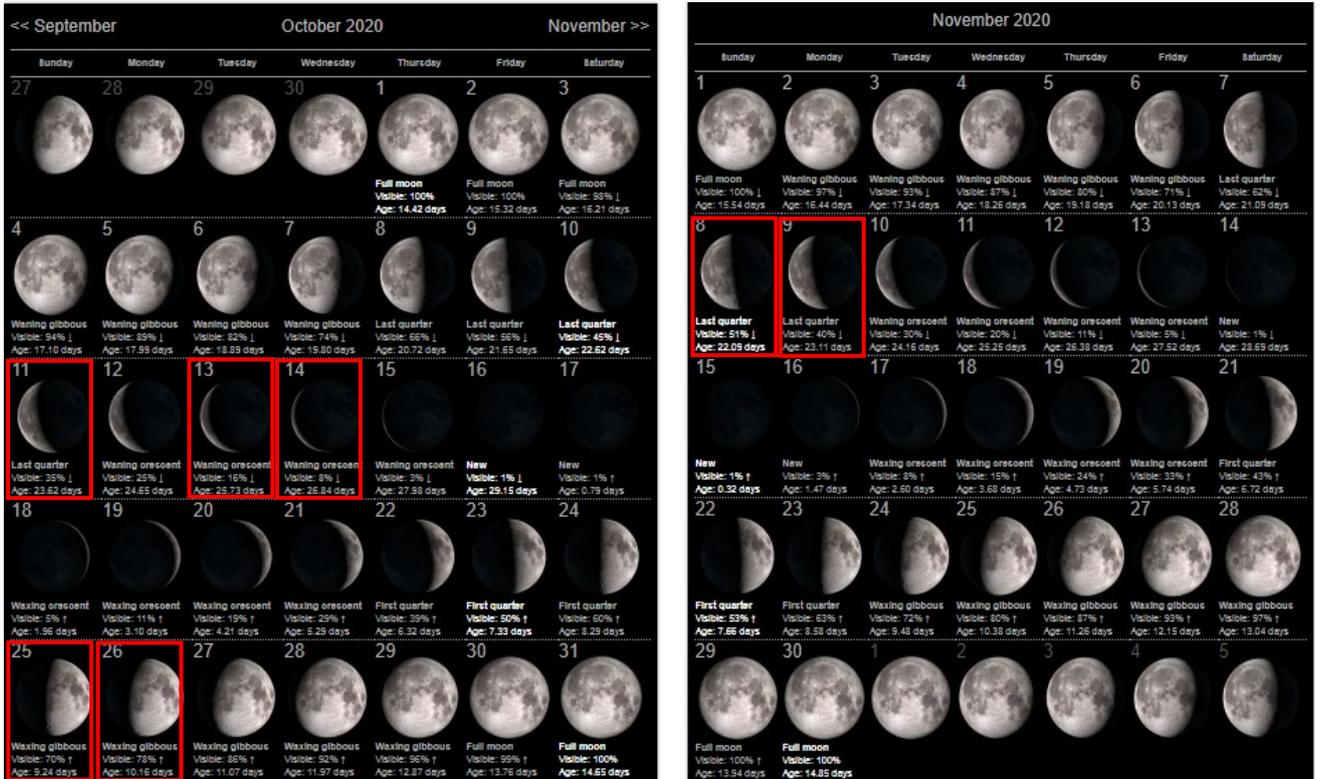
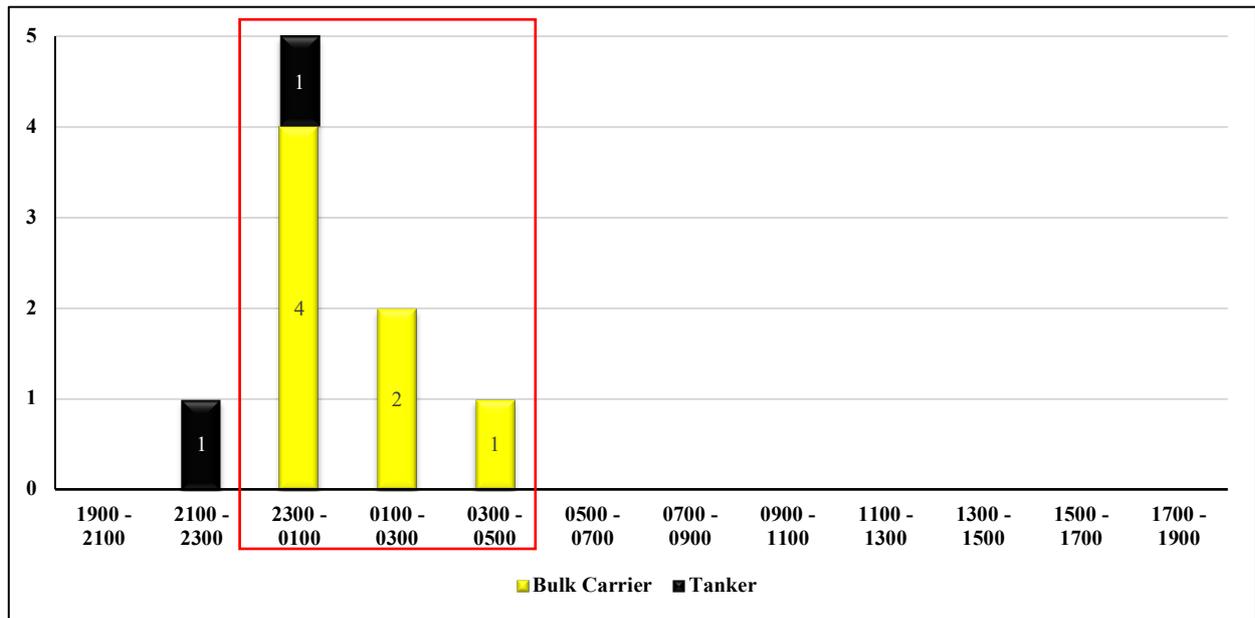


Diagram 3: Timing of Attacks – Majority of Incidents occurred between 2300hrs to 0500hrs



3. Observed Vessel Type and Direction. All incidents involved bulk carriers (77.8%) and tankers (22.2%) with low freeboards (between 4.5 to 6.5 meters) and slow speeds (between 7 to 12 knots). All targeted vessels were eastbound.

4. Observed Modus Operandi. Perpetrators are observed to **target bulk carriers and tankers during PoD (2130hrs to 0500hrs during hours of darkness/minimal illumination)**. Incidents typically involved **three to five perpetrators that may be armed with long knives**. In most cases, the perpetrators were **sighted in the engine rooms**, and have been observed to **target ship stores**. However, in six of the nine cases, the ships reported that nothing had been stolen. Perpetrators were **observed to be non-confrontational**, evading soon after detection by crew. Trending of incidents suggest the same group of perpetrators might likely target a few vessels in the same night to maximise their gains in the future (see **Annex A** and **Annex B** for details).

5. Year-on-Year Comparison Over Similar Window (Oct – Nov). The nine incidents recorded from 01 Oct to 09 Nov 2020, involving sea robbery/theft or attempted action onboard merchant vessels in the eastbound lane of the Singapore Strait, is higher than the total of seven incidents recorded in the same area over the period of Oct to Nov 2019. Of note, in 2019, the areas where the incidents occurred were primarily in the vicinity of North West Batam and Phillip Channel; in 2020, however, majority of the incidents took place near North Bintan.

IFC ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. IFC will continue to info-share the details of the incidents as soon as practicable with relevant regional OPCENS. IFC will also continue to engage the shipping community to underscore the importance of maintaining a proper and vigilant lookout, adhering to ship security standard operating procedures, and the timely reporting of incidents to local authorities (See **Annex C** for details). IFC will remind ships’ masters to (a) adopt ship protection measures, (b) contact the **local authorities and the IFC** immediately (**Table 1**), when they sight suspicious activities (including suspicious small boats approaching), and (c) not to confront the perpetrator(s).

Table 1: Contact Details of Local Authorities

Country	Contact Details	
Malaysia	MMS Radio Channels	88 (VTS Johor), 16
	Phone Number	+60 7 219 9401/9407
Indonesia	MMS Radio Channel	16
	Phone Number	+62 812 7754 8766
Singapore (VTIS)	MMS Radio Channels	10, 14, 73
	Phone Number	+65 6325 2493
IFC	Phone Numbers	+65 9626 8965
		+65 6594 5728
	Email	IFC_DO@defence.gov.sg

7. Masters and operators are encouraged to participate in the IFC’s Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) program as this allows vessels to receive timely information from the IFC on reports of incidents in the IFC’s Area of Interest (AOI).

Prepared by: IFC TRAPs Cluster

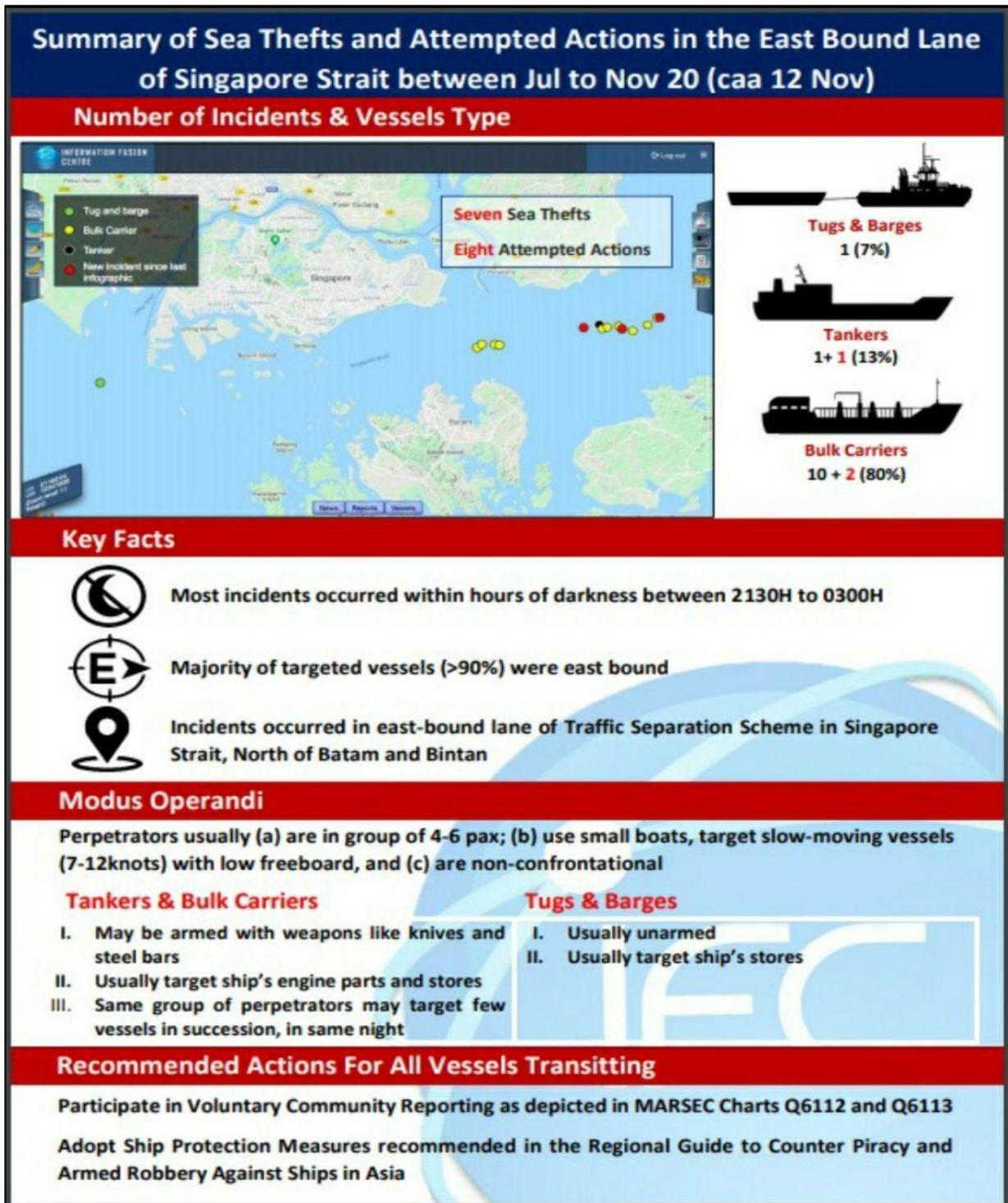
Incidents in Eastbound Lane of the Singapore Strait

#	Incident Classification	DTG	Location of incident / vessel movement	Vessel Type/Flag	Vessel Freeboard/ size	No of Perpetrators/ Position of initial sighting/ Arms carried	Items Stolen	Remarks
1	Attempted Actions	090308H (UTC+8) Nov 20	Lat 1° 16.73' N Long 104° 18.02' E/ Underway – East bound	Bulk Carrier/ Panama Flagged	Freeboard – 3.78m / Vessel size – 169.5m x 27.2m	One perpetrator/ Steering gear flat/ Armed with knife	Nothing stolen	Alarm raised; Perpetrator not sighted after search; No one injured
2	Sea Theft	090220H (UTC+8) Nov 20	Lat 1° 17.71' N Long 104° 20.02' E/ Underway – East bound	Bulk Carrier/ Liberia Flagged	Freeboard – 4.5m / Vessel size – 180m x 27m	Two perpetrators/ engine room/ Not reported	One lifebuoy	Alarm raised; Perpetrator not sighted after search; No one injured
3	Sea Theft	082125H (UTC+8) Nov 20	Lat 1° 16.47' N Long 104° 22.41' E/ Underway – East bound	Tanker/ Liberia Flagged	Freeboard – 6.5m / Vessel size – 269m x 45m	Three perpetrators/ engine room/ Not reported	Sounding Rod Oil Sampling Rod Breathing Apparatus Spray Painter Instruments for measuring ullage	Alarm raised; Perpetrator not sighted after search; No one injured
4	Attempted Actions	260130H (UTC+8) Oct 20	Lat 1° 14.6' N, Long 104° 7.58' E Underway – East bound	Bulk Carrier/ Cyprus Flagged	Freeboard – 5.2m / Vessel size – 200m x 32.3m	Three perpetrators/ engine room/ Not reported	Nothing stolen	Security search conducted by Indonesian Navy with no sighting of perpetrators onboard

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#	Incident Classification	DTG	Location of incident / vessel movement	Vessel Type/Flag	Vessel Freeboard/ size	No of Perpetrators/ Position of initial sighting/ Arms carried	Items Stolen	Remarks
5	Attempted Actions	260046H (UTC+8) Oct 20	Lat 1° 14.55' N, Long 104° 4.43' E Underway – East bound	Bulk Carrier/ Liberia Flagged	Freeboard – 3.8m / Vessel size – 169m x 26m	Five perpetrators/ Not reported/ Not reported	Nothing stolen	Alarm raised; Perpetrator not sighted after search; No one injured
6	Attempted Actions	252309H (UTC+8) Oct 20	Lat 1° 15.3' N, Long 104° 6.15' E Underway – East bound	Bulk Carrier/ Marshall Islands Flagged	Freeboard – 5.6m / Vessel size – 229m x 32.2m	One perpetrator/ engine room/ Not reported	Nothing stolen	Alarm raised; Perpetrator not sighted after search; No one injured
7	Sea Theft	140040H (UTC+8) Oct 20	Lat 1° 17.4' N, Long 104° 20' E Underway – East bound	Bulk Carrier/ Liberia Flagged	Freeboard – 6.5m / Vessel size – 292m x 45m	Three perpetrators/ engine room/ Not reported	One lifebuoy Welding rods	Alarm raised; Perpetrator not sighted after search; No one injured
8	Attempted Actions	132330H (UTC+8) Oct 20	Lat 1° 16.55' N, Long 104° 15.06' E Underway – East bound	Chemical Tanker/ Singapore Flagged	Freeboard – 2.7m / Vessel size – 145m x 23.7m	Three perpetrators/ engine room/ Not reported	Nothing stolen	Alarm raised; Perpetrator not sighted after search; No one injured
9	Attempted Actions	110026H (UTC+8) Oct 20	Lat 1° 16.42' N, Long 104° 13.92' E Underway – East bound	Bulk Carrier/ Iran Flagged	Freeboard – 5.2m / Vessel size – 225m x 32.3m	Three perpetrators/ Stern of the ship/ Not reported	Nothing stolen	Perpetrators were fled after alarm was raised; No one injured

IFC Infographic - Summary of Sea Thefts and Attempted Actions in Eastbound Lane of the Singapore Strait between Jul to Nov as of 12 Nov 20



IFC Recommendations

1. The IFC recommends the following measures to be implemented while transiting or anchored.
 - a. Activate the ship's Automatic Identification System (AIS) at all times.
 - b. Timely reporting to the local authorities.
 - c. Increase vigilance in watch-keeping and deploy additional lookouts. Be wary of suspicious small boats approaching. Take photo of the suspicious boat and send to IFC.
 - d. Participate in the IFC Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) System and provide status update, while in transit, as much as possible.
 - e. Use CCTV cameras for coverage of vulnerable areas (if available).
 - f. Keep ship's whistle, search lights and foghorn ready for immediate use.
 - g. Secure or lift external ladders to prevent their use and to restrict external access to the bridge.
 - h. Deploy Self-Protection Measures (SPM) e.g. Rig the water spray hoses and foam monitors in a fixed position. Evasive manoeuvres have also been proven to deter perpetrators in the areas of concern.
 - i. Secure all doors and hatches preventing access to the accommodation and machinery spaces.
 - j. Rig safety precautionary measures on the anchor cable hawse pipe while anchored.
2. Ships should apply the appropriate security measures that are mentioned in the Tugs and Barge Guide, Guide for Tankers Operating in Asia, and/or Regional Guide to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia.
3. Ship masters should also be aware and refer to the Maritime Security Charts Q6112 and Q6113, both published by the UK Hydrographic Office.