

MEDIA RELEASE

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Piracy and armed robbery incidents at lowest level in decades, but IMB cautions against complacency

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London and Kuala Lumpur

The ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has reported the lowest number of reported piracy and armed robbery incidents for the first nine months of any year since 1994.

IMB's latest global piracy report recorded 97 incidents of piracy and armed robbery for the first nine months of 2021 – the lowest level of reported incidents since 1994. In 2021, IMB's Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) reported 85 vessels boarded, nine attempted attacks, two vessels fired upon and one vessel hijacked.

Reported incidents are down to their lowest level in decades, but violence against seafarers has continued with 51 crew kidnapped, eight taken hostage, five threatened, three injured, two assaulted and one killed, according to the latest IMB statistics.

While the reduction of reported incidents is a welcome, IMB PRC warns that seafarers must remain vigilant as violence against crew remains high in many areas of the world.

Decrease in Gulf of Guinea

The Gulf of Guinea region recorded 28 incidents of piracy and armed robbery in the first nine months of 2021, in comparison to 46 for the same period in 2020. Most notably, Nigeria only reported four incidents in the first nine months of 2021, in comparison to 17 in 2020 and 41 in 2018. Crew kidnappings in the region have dropped with only one crew member kidnapped in Q3 2021, compared to 31 crew members taken in five separate incidents during Q3 2020. All Q3 incidents in 2021 were also against vessels at port anchorages whilst the average successful kidnapping location in Q3 2020 was approximately 100NM from land.

The overall reduction of piracy and armed robbery incidents in the region is a testament to enhanced maritime security and response coordination measures adopted by regional and national authorities, according to IMB. Despite these gains, IMB warns that the risk to crew remains high in the region and that such efforts must therefore be sustained.

“The decrease in reported incidents in Q3 2021 is welcomed and the on-going efforts of the Coastal States and the international community commended, said IMB Director Michael Howlett. “These endeavours, however, need to be sustained to ensure a continued and long-term reduction of this criminal act and safeguard the safety of the seafarers, trade and transport.”

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Worrying signs in Singapore Straits

The Singapore Straits reported 20 incidents of armed robbery – the highest number recorded since 1991. Reported incidents in the Singapore Straits are up from 15 in 2020 and just one incident in 2019. These attacks are low-level and opportunistic in nature, but IMB warns that the perpetrators pose a direct threat to seafarers and vessels underway. In four incidents, crew were either threatened, assaulted, or injured.

Concern off the coast of Peru

The Callao Anchorage in Peru is another area that has witnessed an increase of piracy activity with 15 reported incidents in 2021 – the highest number since 1991. As with the Singapore Straits, these incidents are low-level thefts with knives being reported in 60% of the incidents. Attackers in the region possess the capacity to carry out violent attacks with three crew taken hostage and a further one each assaulted or threatened during the first nine months of 2021.

Improvements in Indonesia

The IMB PRC reported a noticeable reduction in the number of reported incidents in Indonesian waters with only six low-level incidents reported in the first nine months of 2021, compared to 23 incidents during the same period in 2020. This is the lowest total of reported piracy and armed robbery incidents in Indonesian waters since 1993. The report commends the policies and proactive response measures implemented by the Indonesian Marine Police informed IMB PRC reporting.

IMB Piracy Reporting Centre

Since its founding in 1991, IMB PRC remains a single point of contact to report all crimes of maritime piracy and armed robbery, 24 hours a day. Their prompt forwarding of reports, and liaison with response agencies, broadcasts to shipping via GMDSS Safety Net Services, and email alerts to CSOs, all provided free of cost, help the response against piracy and armed robbery and the security of seafarers, globally.

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