

ReCAAP Ensures the Safety of Asian Waters



In cooperation with ReCAAP and as part of its counter-piracy measures, the Japanese government dispatches Coast Guard patrol vessels and aircraft to coastal nations mainly in Southeast Asia, exchanges perspectives and information with relevant agencies, and conducts anti-piracy training and coordinated maritime exercises. The photo shows law enforcement training exercises using a high-speed rubber raft being conducted for Philippine Coast Guard personnel (a patrol vessel provided to the Philippine Coast Guard by Japan is visible in the background).

Just as crime on land will never go away, piracy and armed robbery against ships at sea are still serious problems in the modern era. Asian waters used to have an estimated 100 to 150 incidents per year, but in 1999 that number reached 211 and surged to 353 cases in 2000, turning into a grave threat not only in terms of safety, but also economically. Japanese sailors were being put in mortal danger and ships of other nations were frequently victimized as well. In order to change this situation, Japan worked with other Asian nations to make a new legal framework, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). An Information Sharing Centre (ISC) was set up in Singapore and began operating in 2006.

ReCAAP ISC is mainly active in three areas, as explained by Executive Director Masafumi Kuroki: “The first is the timely and accurate sharing of information among countries that are ReCAAP contracting parties whenever an incident occurs. The second is the improvement of contracting parties’ maritime law enforcement capabilities. The third is the engagement with other international organizations and shipping associations to share mutually

beneficial expertise and experiences.”

The activity which Kuroki considers to be of the utmost importance is the sharing of information. In this process, the locations of piracy incidents are quantified per country, port and maritime area, and the incidents are categorized from 1 to 4 according to severity. The information is shared among contracting parties and shipping companies through various measures such as alerts on an ad hoc basis and periodical reports. “There are different levels of piracy and armed robbery against ships, including serious organized crime like abductions of crew as well as offenses like theft from anchored vessels. In order to develop countermeasures, it is crucial to grasp trends such as incidents of what level are common in which

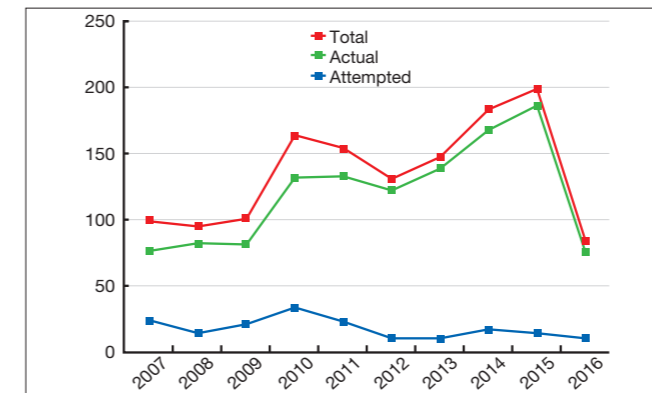


Masafumi Kuroki
Executive Director, ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre

areas,” Kuroki explains.

Piracy and armed robbery against ships were particularly common in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore in the past, but it has been a problem not only for Southeast Asia, but for the entire world. Roughly 90% of the transport of goods in international trade is sea-based. Ensuring the safety of navigation encourages free trade and protects the crews of ships. The ReCAAP framework has been praised and endorsed by the United States, Australia, and European nations in addition to Asian countries including China and South Korea. It is recognized as an effective anti-piracy regional model and inspired the establishment of the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC), which seeks to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. The rest of the world has high expectations for Japan’s further contributions to advancing ReCAAP.

Changes in the number of incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia



“Attempted” denotes unsuccessful incidents, whereas “Actual” denotes incidents during which a vessel was actually boarded. Although the total number of incidents fluctuates, there has been significant improvement since 2016, thanks to the efforts of stakeholders and ReCAAP.



As one of the activities designed to improve maritime law enforcement capabilities, officials from ASEAN member states including ReCAAP contracting parties were invited to Singapore and underwent training there between September and October 2017.

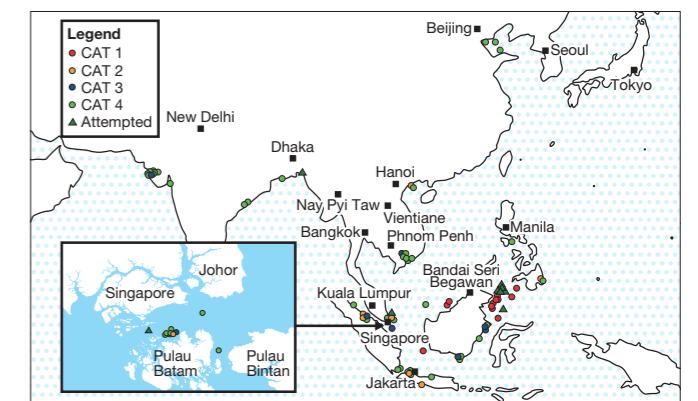
“The Japan Coast Guard was founded in 1948, making its history one of the longest among Asian nations,” says Kuroki. “Sharing its accumulated expertise in ensuring maritime safety with other Asian countries is an important way of supporting ReCAAP’s activities. Japan strives to help other nations improve their capabilities by providing patrol vessels under bilateral agreements and dispatching experts. As those countries’ maritime law enforcement capabilities rise, activities performed by ReCAAP ISC will likewise increase in effectiveness.”

Regarding global efforts to fight piracy and armed robbery against ships, Kuroki warns, “It is necessary to be consistently vigilant in protecting and guarding the safety of the seas. That is why raising awareness of the importance and results of ReCAAP is also imperative. We will continue our efforts to increase the number of contracting and cooperating countries.”



As measures against crimes at sea, protection measures such as shielding the vessel with barbed wire making it harder to board can prove effective. Providing such advice is one of the activities performed by ReCAAP ISC. © Perspectives / Getty Images

Locations of incidents in Asian waters



Locations of incidents reported in 2016. While the maritime areas covered by ReCAAP’s activities are in Asia, the agreement has grown to include 20 contracting parties: Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Denmark, India, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam.