



REPORT ON
ARMED ROBBERY AND PIRACY
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA 2007



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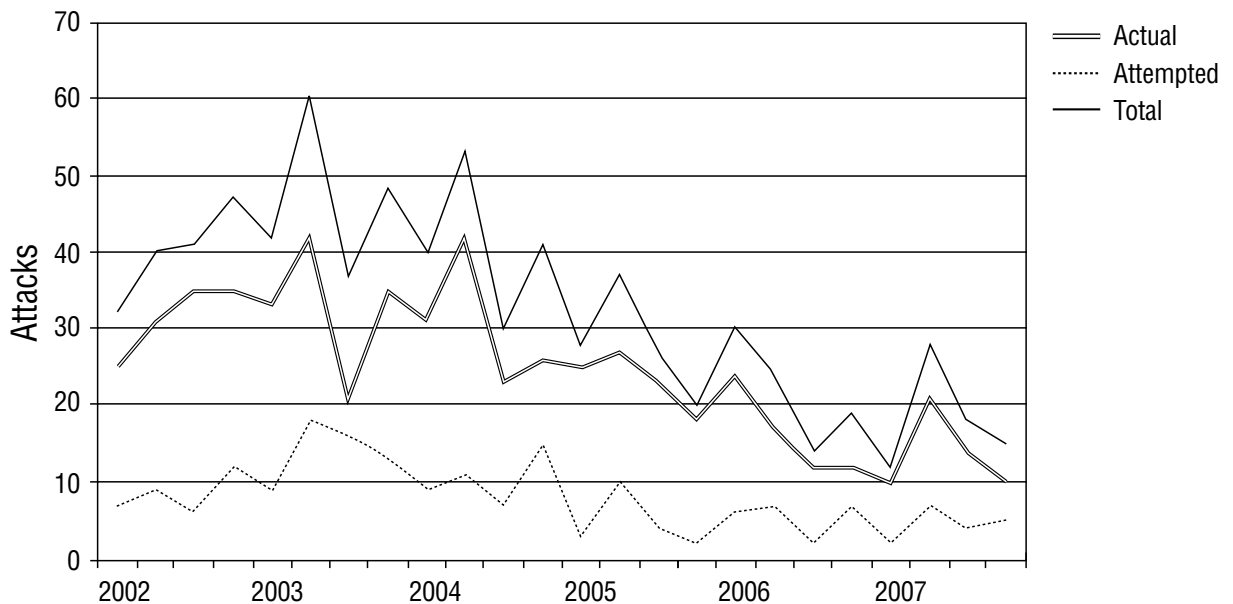
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REGIONAL TRENDS

In 2007, a total of 73 cases of piracy and armed robbery incidences were reported in Southeast Asia. It was one of the lowest annual figures in the last five years. Of these, 55 were actual attacks while 18 were attempted incidences. The highest number of piracy and armed robbery incidences in 2007 was recorded in the second quarter, where 21 actual and seven attempted attacks were reported. These figures reflected the general trend of high second quarterly figures in the last five years. The first quarter of 2007 recorded the

lowest number of piracy and armed robbery attacks in Southeast Asia in the last five years. Both the first and fourth quarters of 2007 recorded 10 cases of actual attacks, the lowest in the last five years. The year 2007 also recorded the lowest fourth quarterly figures in the last five years. Although regional figures seem to be trending downwards (see Figure 1), the occasional surge during the year seems to suggest that these waters are still prone to attacks should such an opportunity arise.

FIGURE 1
Regional Trends by Quarters, 2002-2007

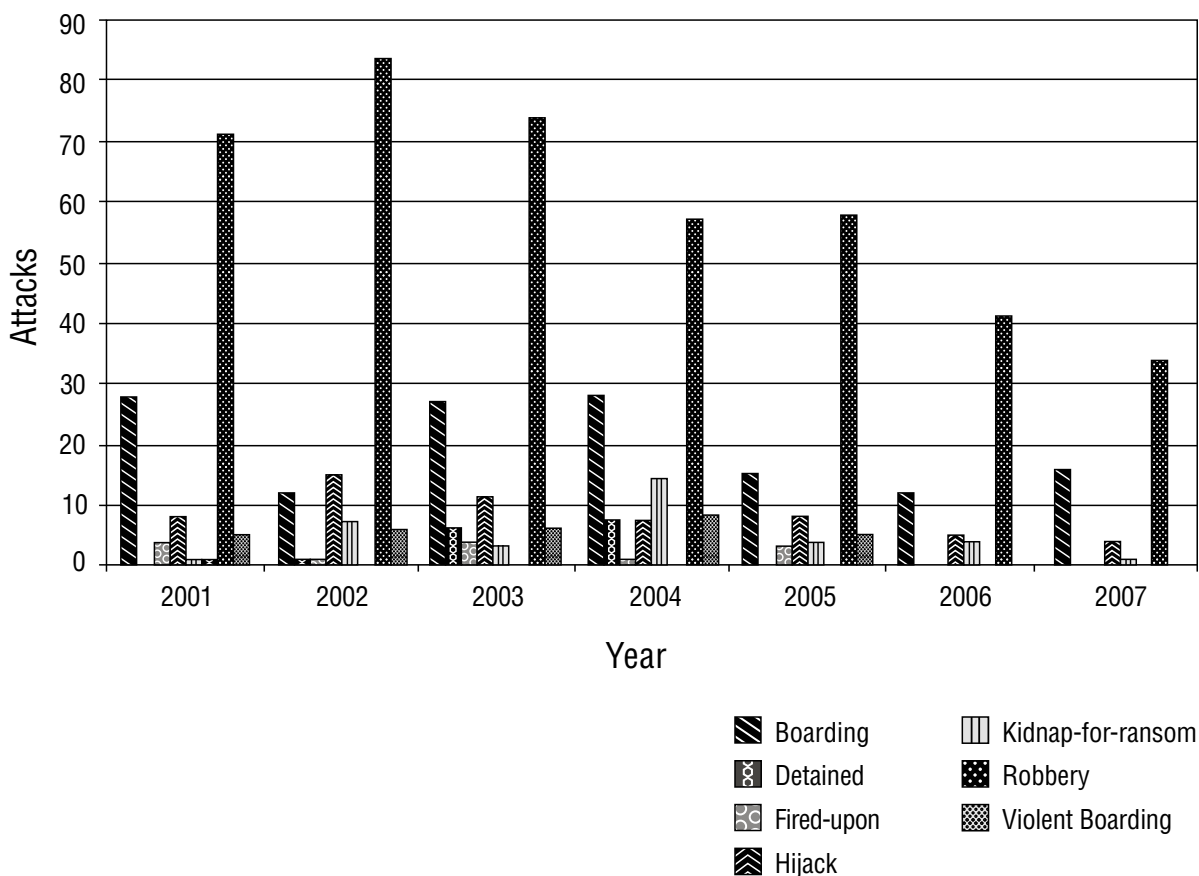


TYPES OF ATTACKS

Theft and robbery still make up the main types of attacks in 2007 (see Figure 2), contributing to about 60 per cent of actual attacks. A further 30 per cent of actual attacks saw perpetrators already onboard the vessels. Apart from common theft and robbery, 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 each year, and 2007 reflects that trend. Although the authorities had some successes in tracking down and apprehending the perpetrators, such incidences serve as a reminder of the severity

of piratical attacks that they do not only involve the loss of valuables onboard. 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 in the third quarter of 2007—and no injuries were sustained in the attack—it highlights the potential damage and severe consequences such attacks can cause. Although the annual figure recorded in 2007 was the lowest in Southeast Asia in the last five years, it has consistently reflected similar trends on the type of attacks year after year, which may be of some cause for concern.

FIGURE 2
Types of Actual Attacks, 2002-2007

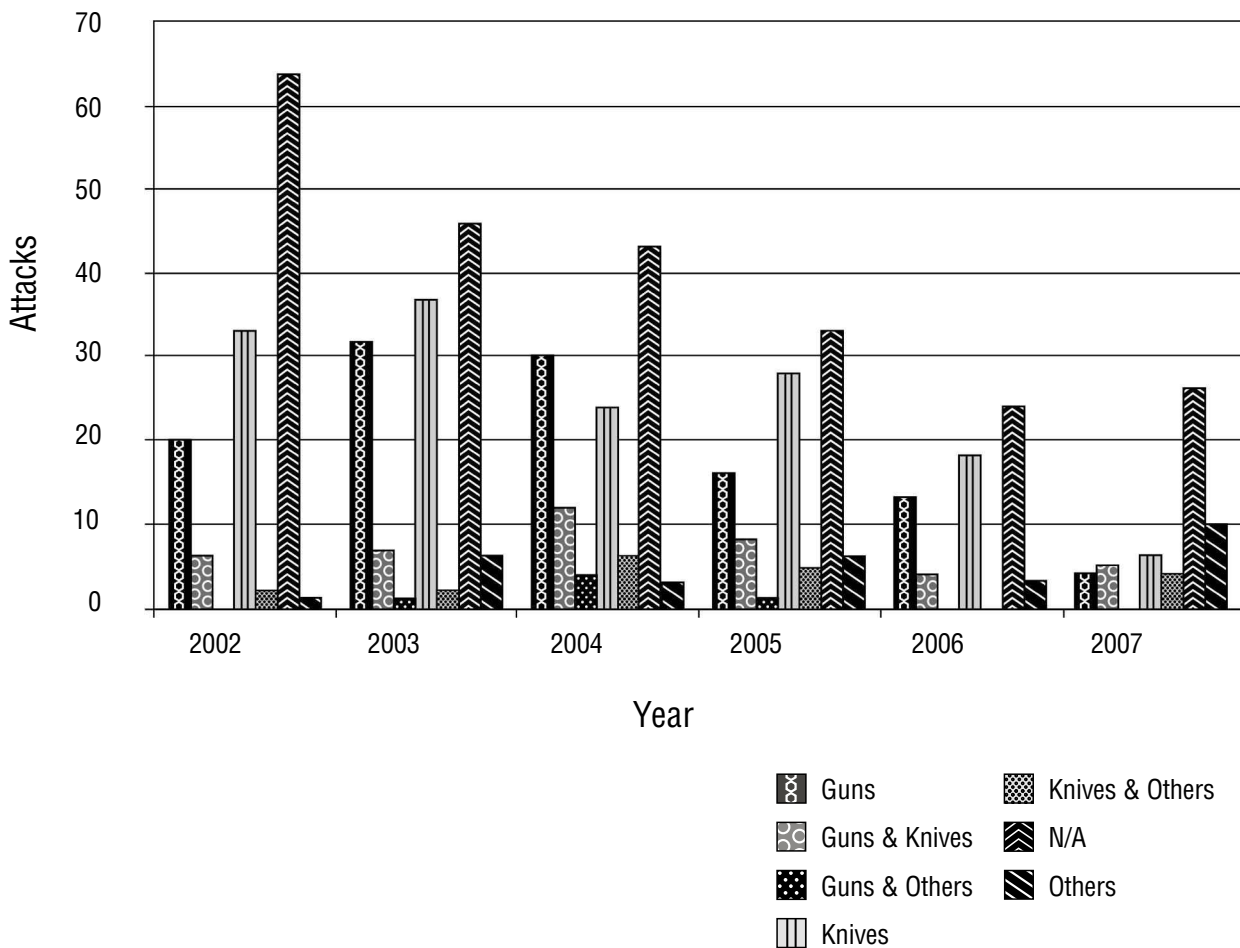


TYPES OF WEAPONS

Although the use of firearms has been greatly reduced since the fourth quarter of 2006, about one in five of actual attacks in 2007 still saw perpetrators armed with guns (see Figure 3). Fortunately, no firearms-related injuries were sustained during those attacks. On average, knives were used in more than one-third of the reported incidences, which was also reflected in 2007. 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. Although many have argued that judging from the common weapons being used, for example, knives and rods, piracy and armed robbery are still very much crimes of opportunity. However, the consistent use of firearms, coupled with sophisticated modus operandi, seems to suggest some form of premeditated operation.

FIGURE 3
Actual Attacks by Types of Weapons, 2002–2007

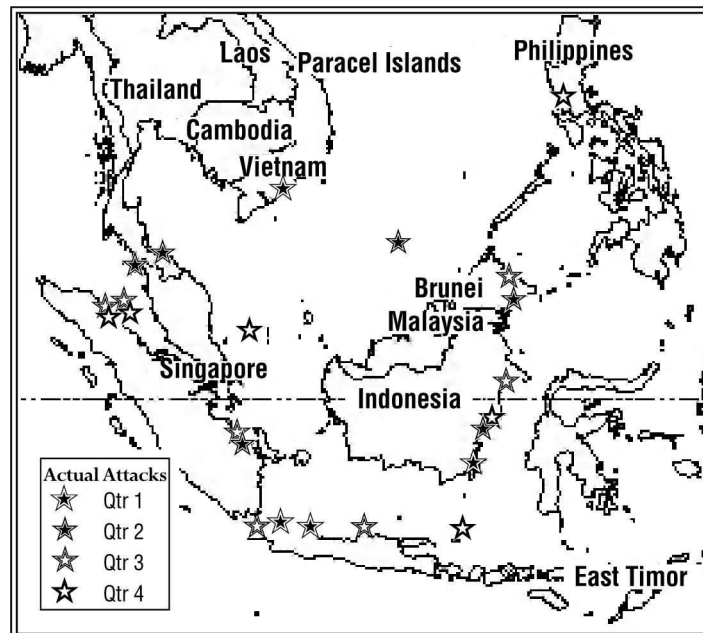


LOCATION OF ATTACKS

Ports and anchorages were the most commonly targeted areas of attacks in Southeast Asia (see Figure 4) in 2007. More than two-thirds of the attacks took place while vessels were at anchor or at berth. Despite the fact that assistance was nearer for vessels in distress within the port vicinity, it has not acted as a deterrent. It should also be noted that Southeast Asia experienced considerably harsh weather in the second quarter of 2007 (compared to the same period in previous years). However, such harsh weather conditions and rough seas seemingly did not deter perpetrators, though such activities were very

much restricted to within the vicinity of ports and anchorages. Be that as it may, the more serious attacks almost always took place further offshore, targeting steaming vessels on local voyages. Contrary to previous trends, the waters of Indonesia and the Straits of Malacca contributed to only about half of all reported piracy and armed robbery cases in the fourth quarter 2007, and there was no reported case in the Sunda Strait in the same period. More significantly, the other half of the reported cases were recorded in the vicinity of the South China Sea.

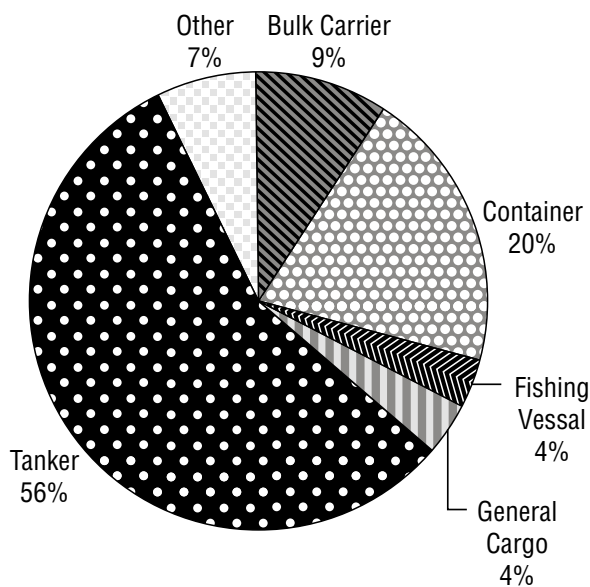
FIGURE 4
Location of Actual Attacks in Southeast Asia 2007



TYPES OF VESSELS

Contrary to the consolidated annual trend over the last five years, which shows that bulk carriers were the most common targets in the Southeast Asian region, tankers have been the primary targets in Southeast Asia since the first quarter of 2007. Fifty-six per cent of actual attacks were targeted at tankers of sorts (see Figure 5). Such cases largely involved small tankers plying through local waters, vital to the movement of commodities within the region, which reflect the nature of business of the ports and anchorages where most of these attacks took place. Most of the attempted attacks were unsuccessful, largely due to the alertness of the potential target in spotting the potential threat.

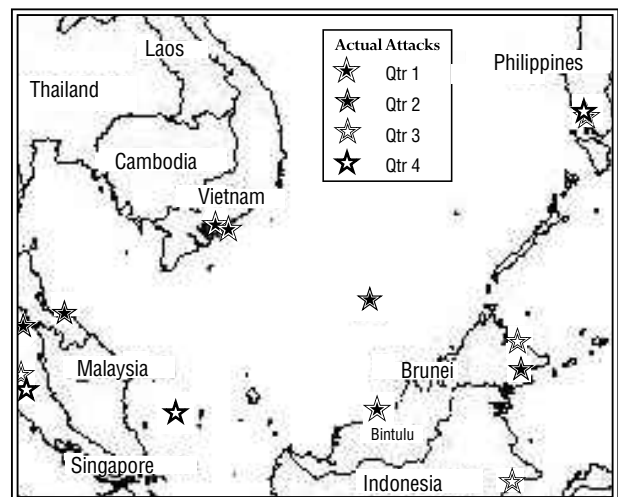
FIGURE 5
Actual Attacks by Types of Vessels 2007



SOUTH CHINA SEA

Figure 6 shows the location of the actual attacks at or within the vicinity of the South China Sea. Of the seven reported incidences, five were actual attacks. There has been no reported actual piracy and armed robbery attack in the South China Sea in the fourth quarter since 2002. As most of the cases that took place in 2007 were in fact perpetrated within the vicinity of ports 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 6
Location of Actual Attacks in the South China Sea 2007



MALACCA AND SINGAPORE STRAITS

Although the fourth quarter of 2007 recorded one of the lowest numbers of piracy and armed robbery attacks in Southeast Asia, the Malacca and Singapore Straits remain a high-risk area of water in this region. In fact, it has on record one of the highest annual figures since 2004 (see Figure 7). The second quarter of 2007 recorded the highest number of actual attacks since the fourth quarter of 2004. Although most of these reports were not furnished with information about the types of weapons being used, attention was drawn to cases where the attacks involved actual confrontation with crew members.

There were a total of 26 reported cases of piracy and armed robbery attacks in the Malacca and Singapore Straits in 2007, 21 of which were actual attacks (see Figure 8 for the locations). About half of these attacks were targeted at tankers of sorts. Arguably, this has to do with the location where the attacks took place. The ports and anchorages at both Belawan and Dumai contributed to the bulk of tankers being targeted. Most of these attacks were theft or armed robbery incidences. Indonesia has been reminded of the need to improve security at all its ports and anchorages. A kidnap-for-ransom incident in August also reminded many of the vulnerability of vessels in these waters.

FIGURE 7
Annual Trend in the Malacca and Singapore Straits, 2002-2007

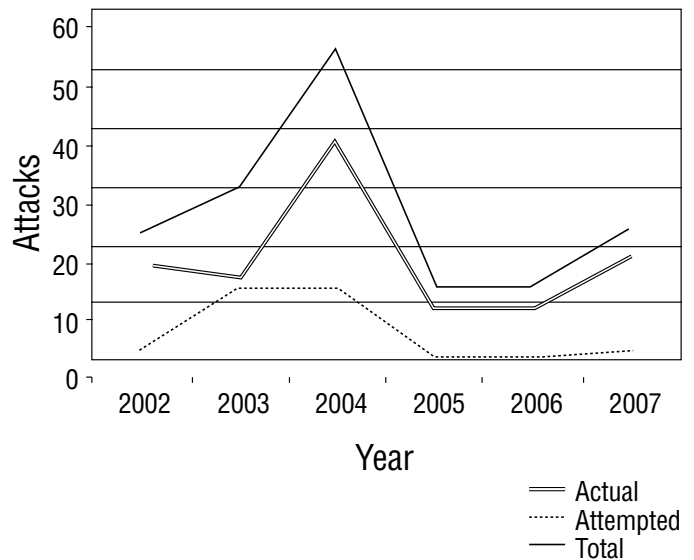
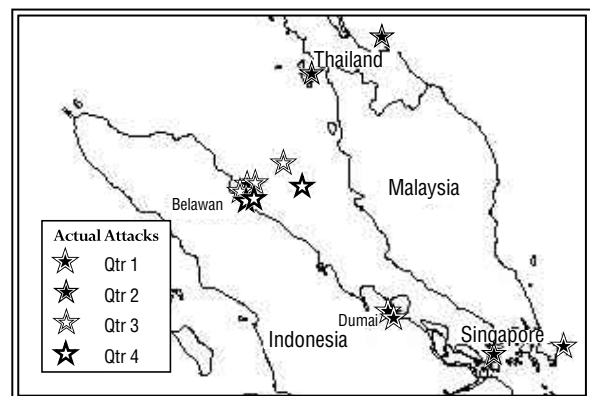


FIGURE 8
Location of Actual Attacks in the Malacca and Singapore Straits 2007



INDONESIA

The annual trend in the last five years seems to suggest that a large majority of the total number of actual attacks in the Southeast Asian region took place within Indonesian waters. This is only true to a certain extent, as there is a closing gap between reported attacks within Indonesian jurisdiction and other regional waters. In fact, both the second and fourth quarters of 2007 saw slightly less than half of the total number of actual attacks being committed within Indonesia's jurisdiction.

SUNDA STRAIT

No incidents of piracy and armed robbery attacks were reported in the vicinity of the Sunda Strait in the fourth quarter of 2007, and the annual figures seem to be trending downwards since 2004 (Figure 9). 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, three-quarters of 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.

FIGURE 9
Annual Trend in the Sunda Strait, 2002-2007

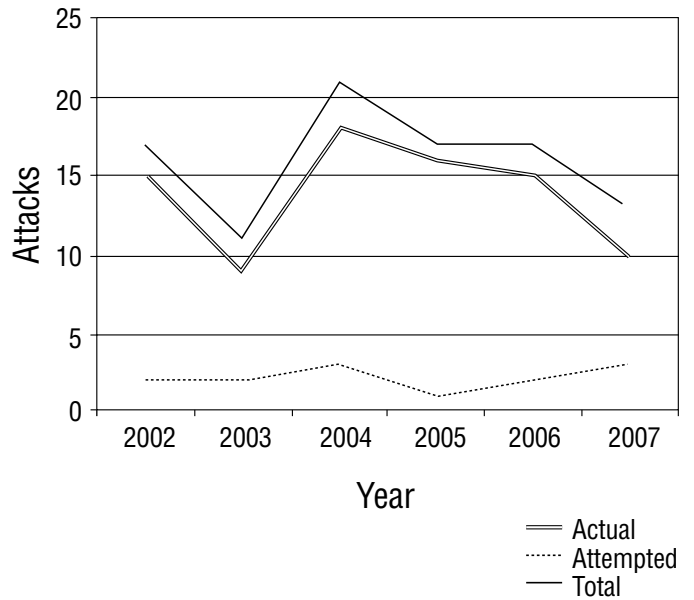
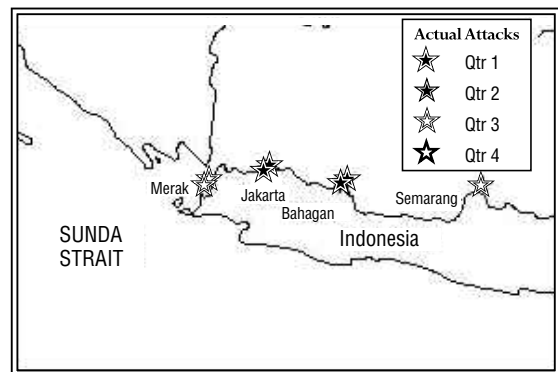


FIGURE 10
Location of Actual Attacks in Sunda Strait 2007



MAKASSAR STRAIT

Figure 11 shows the locations of the actual attacks that took place in the Makassar Strait. There were a total of twelve reported cases of piracy and armed robbery in 2007, 7 of which were actual attacks. Contrary to the high numbers recorded in the second quarter, both the third and fourth quarters of 2007 reflect similar low figures to those of the same period in 2006. Only one actual attack was reported in both quarters (see Figure 12). Although regional trend seems to suggest that tankers of sorts were the main target within regional waters in 2007, bulk carriers remained the primary targets in the Makassar Strait. The most common type of attacks were theft and robbery, and there was only one incident where the perpetrators were armed with fire-arms.

FIGURE 11
Location of Actual Attacks in Makassar Strait 2007

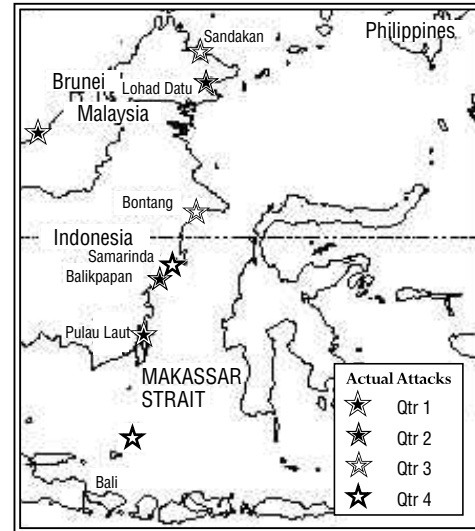
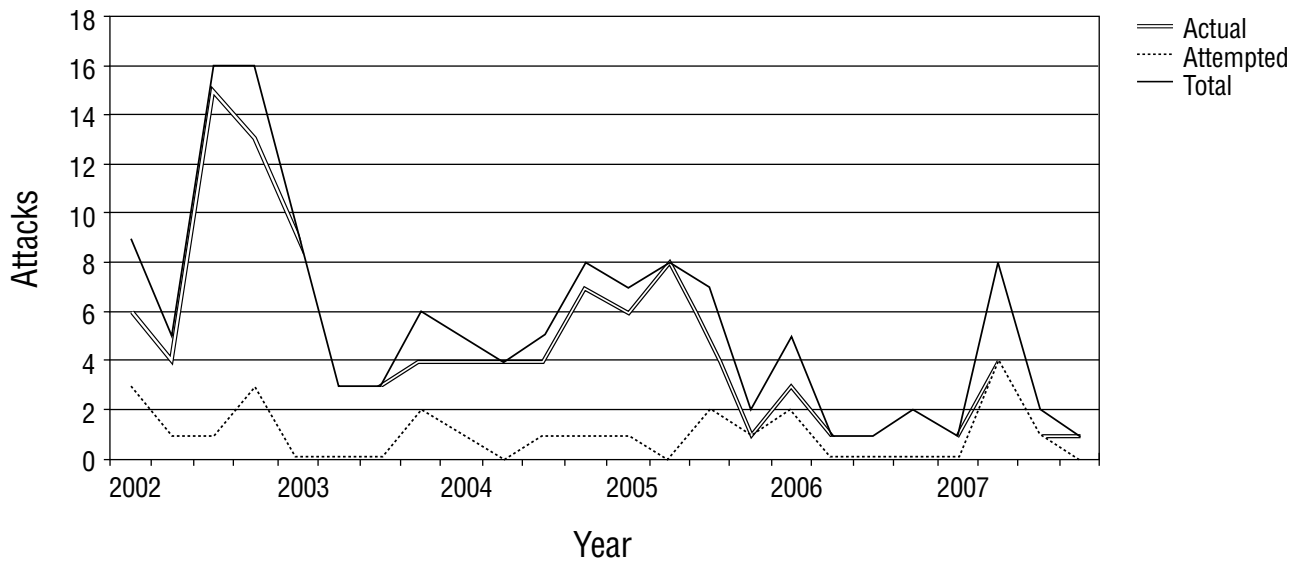


FIGURE 12
Annual Trends in Makassar Strait, 2002-2007



C O N C L U S I O N

Although 2007 recorded the lowest number of piracy and armed robbery attacks in Southeast Asia in the last five years, two major incidences drew much attention to the waters of this region. The first case saw the kidnap-for-ransom of crew members from a tug in the Malacca Strait. The second involved the hijacking of a product tanker at the north western region of the Sunda Strait. 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.

A surge in the second quarter serves as a reminder to the coastal states as well as the shipping community that one cannot afford to be complacent in dealing with this long-term security problem. It was, however, encouraging to note that more attempted attacks were successfully evaded, especially with steaming vessels, which naturally maintain a higher level of vigilance.

Indonesia may once again be forced to confront the harsh figures, which suggest that it may be the weakest link in efforts to protect and secure the 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. Both the United States and Japan have continuously lent their support in the efforts of the littoral states and have contributed patrol boats to Indonesia. The US had also contributed radar stations to be installed along the Malacca Straits as well as the Makassar Strait.

Although the number of actual attacks in the region has often been speculated to be under-reported, it is vital to recognize the 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 and environmental pollution 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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