



Piracy: A persistent threat to seafarers

While the number of global piracy and armed robbery incidents has been relatively stable over the past three years, the large number of incidents in Southeast Asian waters continue to cause concern, as do the perpetrators' aggressive behaviour towards vessel crews.

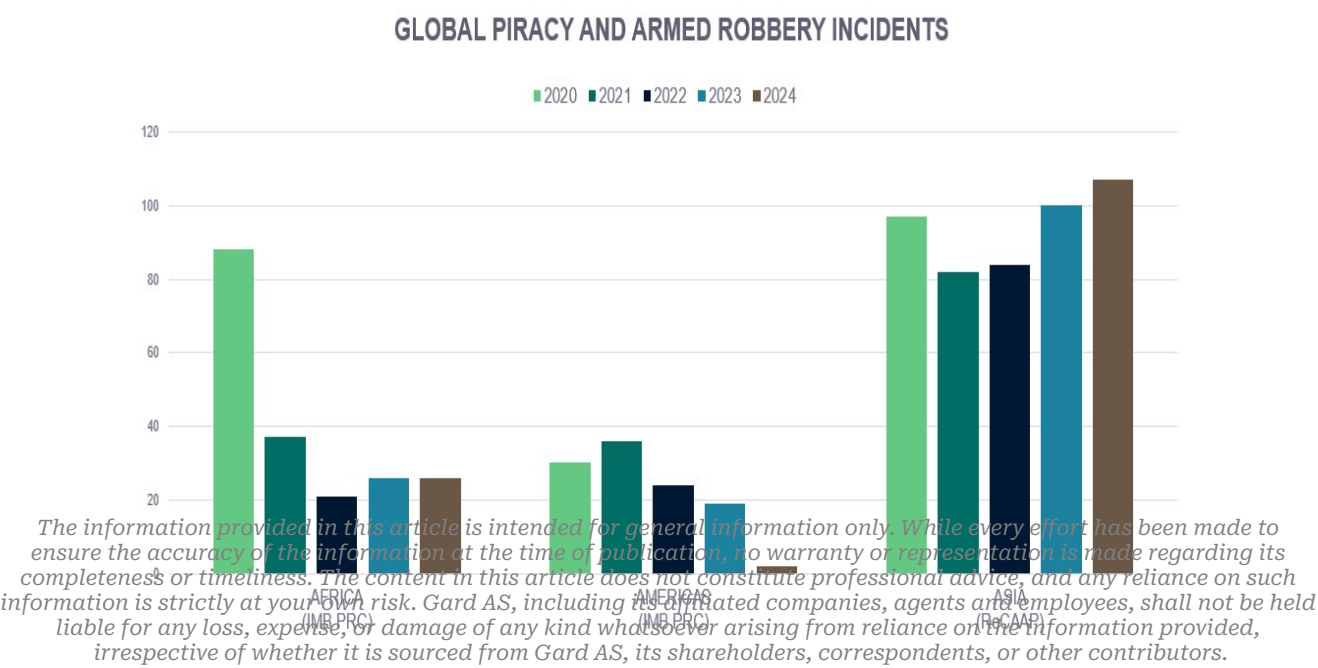
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Positive and negative trends in global piracy

Global piracy and armed robbery incidents decreased by 3% in 2024 compared to 2023, according to the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre ([IMB PRC](#)). On an overall basis, this is good news, but a closer look at the figures does show some worrying trends:

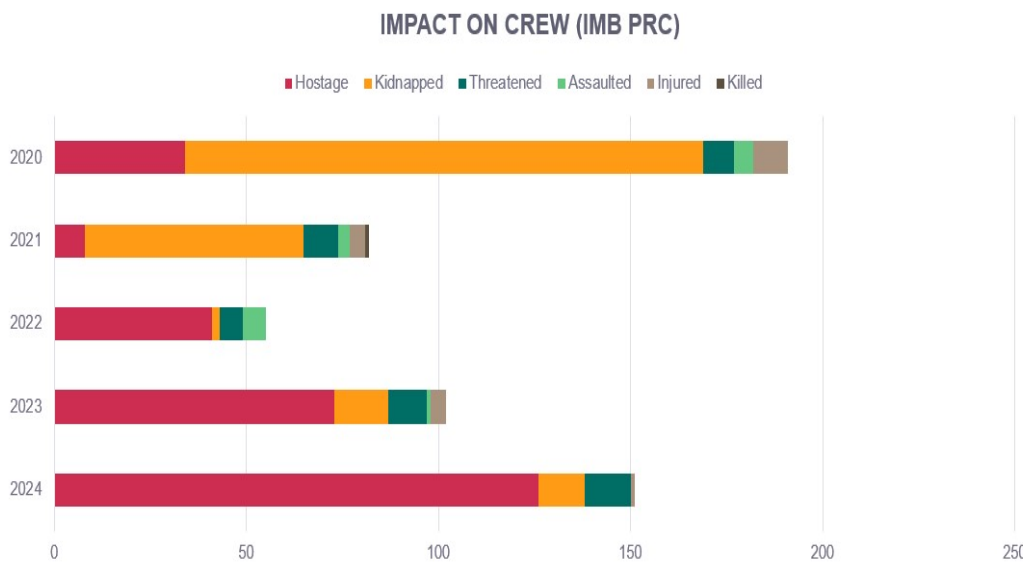
- Reports of Somali pirate activity, for the first time since 2017, raised considerable concern at the beginning of 2024. Nine incidents linked to Somali pirates, including four hijackings, were reported in the Western Indian Ocean/Gulf of Aden between December 2023 and May 2024. Several of these incidents occurred at significant distances from the Somali coastline, demonstrating the continued capabilities of these criminals. However, no additional incidents have been reported since May 2024.
- Incidents in Gulf of Guinea waters remain at historically low levels also in 2024. However, crew continue to be at risk in this region as it was responsible for all crew kidnappings in 2024.
- In 2024, only two incidents were reported from the Americas, and none of them occurred at Peru's infamous Callao Anchorage.
- The persistent threat of piracy and armed robbery in Southeast Asian waters, and the increasing number of incidents in the Singapore Strait, continue to be a major concern. The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia Information Sharing Centre ([ReCAAP ISC](#)) shares a similar worry, identifying the Strait waters off Pulau Cula, Indonesia in the Philip Channel as a particularly risky location in 2024. This worrying trend also continues into 2025 as 12 incidents have been recorded in the Singapore Strait between 1 January and 10 February.



Increasing violence against crew

Another worrying trend is the increasing use of violence against and threats to vessels’ crew. The IMB PRC reports that the total number of crew impacted by piracy and armed robbery has doubled for the second year in a row, from 55 in 2022 to 102 in 2023 and 151 in 2024. The agency has also observed a further rise in the use of weapons. In 2024, guns or knives were reported in 65 incidents, compared to 55 in 2023.

The year-on-year increase of impacted crew in 2024 is mainly driven by the large number of crew being taken hostage by Somali pirates during the first half of 2024. However, it also reflects an increase in the severity of incidents in Southeast Asian waters, which is also confirmed by ReCAAP ISC’s 2024 figures on severity.



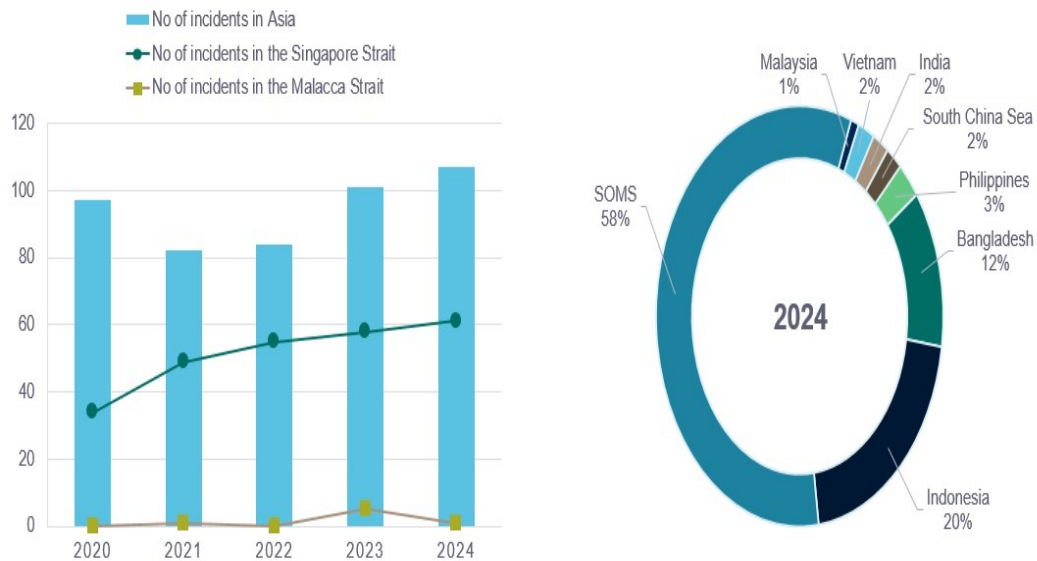
Regional trends

ASIA

According to ReCAAP ISC, 107 incidents were recorded in Asian waters in 2024, up from 101 in 2023. 98% were classified as armed robbery/petty theft and the **Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS)** remains Asia's major area of concern. However, the agency has also observed a year-on-year increase in reported incidents in **Indonesia** and the highest number of incidents in a decade was reported at anchorages in **Bangladesh** . In January 2025, the agency reported of yet another brutal robbery at an anchorage in Bangladesh.

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INCIDENTS REPORTED FROM ASIA (Source: ReCAAP ISC)



Incidents in the **Singapore Strait** continued to rise with 61 in 2024 compared to 58 in 2023 and 55 in 2022. The majority of the incidents occurred at night in the Straits' eastbound lanes, with bulk carriers being the most frequently targeted vessel type. Whilst the incidents were predominantly reported as low-level opportunistic thefts, with little physical injuries to crews, it is not uncommon for the perpetrators to be armed with knives and other weapon-like objects used to threaten the crew. Furthermore, ReCAAP ISC identifies Strait waters off **Pulau Cula, Indonesia in the Philip Channel** as an area of particular concern and, following another surge in incidents at this site during the first weeks of 2025, it issued an [incident alert](#) on 3 February 2025. The agency advises vessels to intensify vigilance and maintain sharp look-out while transiting the areas of concern, particularly during hours of darkness.

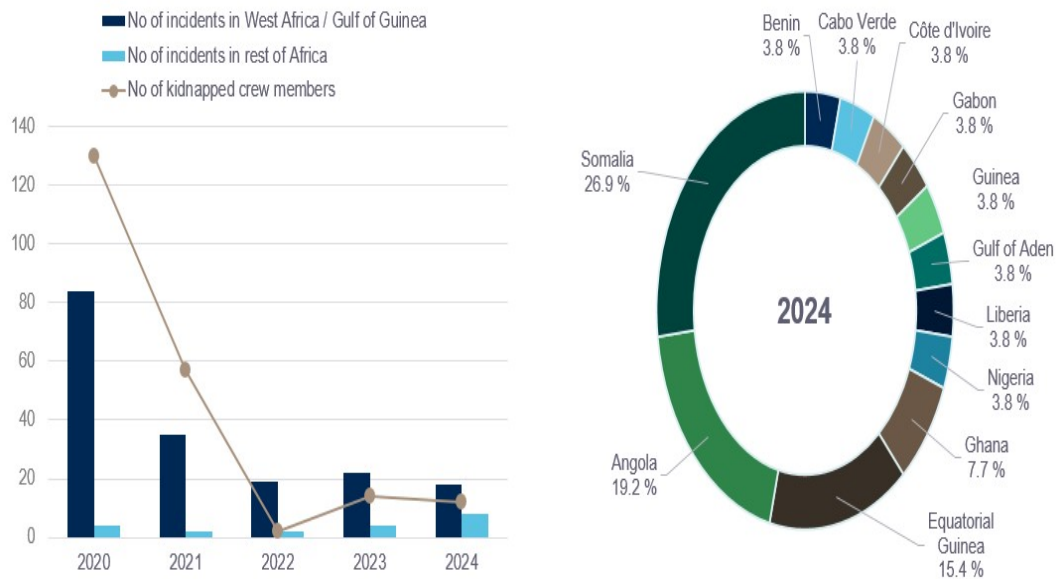
On the positive side, no abductions of crew for ransom have been reported from the **Sulu-Celebes Seas and Eastern Sabah region** since January 2020 and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) continues to assess the related threat level in the area as 'MODERATE LOW'. With the current level, it means that "*Incidents are unlikely to occur due to perpetrators' perceived lack of capability to orchestrate any attacks. Nevertheless, minimal damages can be expected to the ship and crew in the event of any potential attacks*". However, masters and crew that do transit the area are strongly encouraged to exercise extra vigilance and report all incidents immediately to the Operation Centres of the Philippines and Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM).

AFRICA

According to the IMB PRC, 26 incidents were recorded in African waters in 2024, the same as in 2023. And despite the recent return of Somali pirates, West African waters still account for 70% of all incidents reported from African waters.

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INCIDENTS REPORTED FROM AFRICA (Source: IMB PRC)



Since 2020, increased naval presence and cooperation between coastal authorities in the **Gulf of Guinea** have had a positive impact on the piratical activity in the region, resulting in a considerable reduction in incidents. The region is still restrained compared to previous years, with 18 incidents reported in 2024 compared to 22 in 2023, 19 in 2022, 35 in 2021 and 81 in 2020.

Crew, however, continue to be at risk in West African waters as the region was responsible for 23% of all crew taken hostage and all crew kidnappings in 2024. However, with 12 crew members kidnapped in three incidents in 2024 against 130 taken in 22 incidents in 2020, the five-year trend is somewhat encouraging.

As in 2023, **Angola** tops the list of West African countries reporting piracy incidents in 2024, but is this year also joined by **Equatorial Guinea**. It is also worth noting that one of the reported incidents occurred as far west as **Cabo Verde**. In 2024, two thirds of the incidents in West African waters occurred while vessels were anchored or berthed.

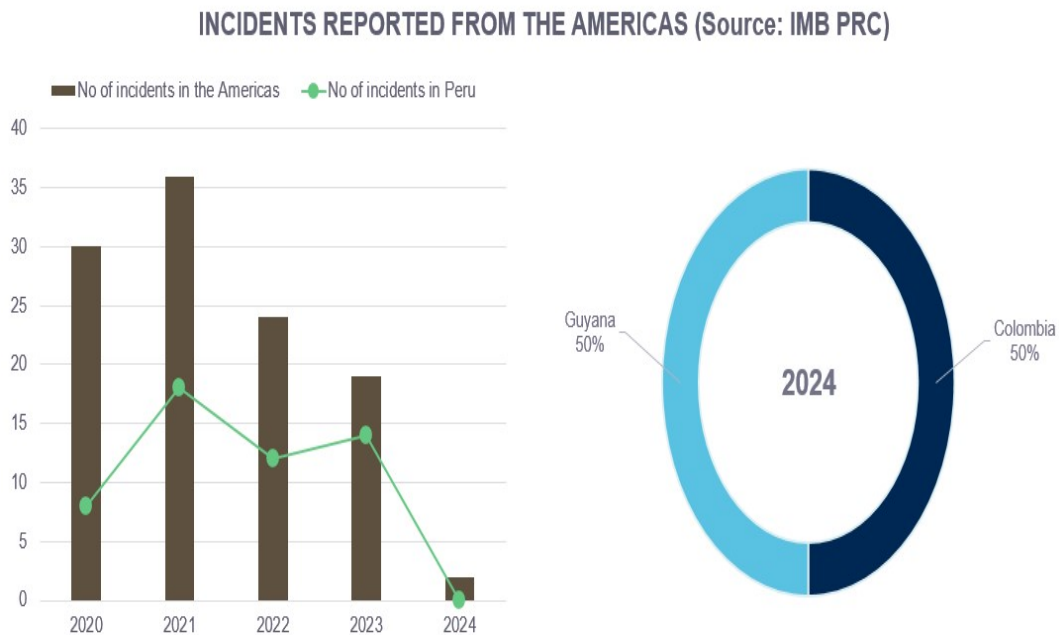
The Indian Ocean High Risk Area (HRA) was removed in January 2023 after several years without any Somali pirate attacks. However, the IMB PRC has continually warned that Somali pirates retain the capability and capacity to carry out attacks in the **Gulf of Aden/Indian Ocean** region and has urged masters to remain vigilant. The recent resurgence of Somali pirate activity has unfortunately proved the agency right.

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It started with the hijacking of a bulk carrier around 700 nm east of Bosaso in Somalia in December 2023. During the first five months of 2024, eight additional incidents were reported from the Western Indian Ocean, including three hijackings. All eight incidents were attributed to Somali pirates and six of them occurred between 400 and 1,000 nm from the Somali coastline. While there has been no additional Somali pirate activity reported since May 2024, the IMB PRC emphasises the importance of conducting thorough threat and risk assessments, as well as adhering to all relevant recommendations provided by the industry Best Management Practices (BMP), when transiting these waters. The Indian Ocean Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) managed by the United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations (UKMTO) remains in effect, and vessels entering the VRA are encouraged to report to the UKMTO and register with the Maritime Security Centre for the Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) in accordance with the BMP.

THE AMERICAS

With only two robbery incidents recorded in the South and Central American and the Caribbean waters in 2024, the IMB PRC’s five-year incident statistics show yet another year of welcome improvement for this region. A container vessel was boarded by three robbers armed with knives during berthing manoeuvres in **Georgetown Port, Guyana** , and an LPG Tanker reported that robbers had attempted to get access via its hawser pipe while at anchor at **Cartagena, Colombia**



For the first time since 2016, the IMB PRC recorded zero incidents for **Peru** , specifically due to no incidents reported from vessels anchored at Callao anchorage. However, even if incidents have dropped in the region, the agency warns vessels to stay vigilant when operating in past hot spots, such as Brazil (Macapa), Ecuador (Guayaquil) and Venezuela (Puerto La Cruz / Puerto Jose / Guanta).

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Stay alert!

The level of threat from piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as the opportunity for and modus operandi of the perpetrators, differs between regions and may also change quickly.

Prior to entering any piracy prone area, it is important to

- obtain updated information from local sources and security experts,
- review the ship security plan in light of the information received,
- conduct a voyage specific risk assessment,
- brief and train the crew and prepare, and
- test the vessel's emergency communication plans.

Relevant preventive measures must be adopted, following available industry guidance and best management practices (BMP). The potential consequences of not following industry best practices may be severe when transiting areas prone to piracy.

As vessels may be particularly vulnerable when at anchor, masters and crew should exercise extra vigilance when staying at high-risk ports/anchorages. Remember that a proper lookout is considered one of the most effective methods of vessel protection. It can help identify a suspicious approach or attack at an early stage, allowing defences to be deployed.

Please refer to Gard's website “ [Piracy and armed robbery at sea](#) ” for further advice.

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