



Singapore's Anti-Terror Maritime Methods

OE Watch Commentary: On 19 April Singapore's *The Straits Times*, in the accompanying excerpted article, profiled some of the methods of the country's anti-terror maritime forces. Their training is focused especially for close combat and they carry, among other items, a semi-automatic weapon, a pistol, a baton and pepper spray. They decide whether to board a ship based on a number factors, such as the ship's cargo, crew and its previous port of call. In addition, tankers carrying oil, chemicals and gas tend to be subject to closer scrutiny because of the sensitivity of their content. However, they also randomize their inspections of ships to prevent against them becoming too predictable.

Each inspection lasts from two to six hours. One of the largest barriers that the anti-terror maritime forces encounter is, in fact, fairly basic: language. Often the forces need to use what they call a form of sign language with the ship captains. As the size of the force is only 50 members, they can only conduct around 600 inspections per year, or about two per day.

According to the data in the article, there were 101 incidents in the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea in 2017, which was an uptick of 16 percent from the year before. The stakes are high, according to the article, as any incident can undermine confidence in maritime trade and have an impact on the country's and the region's economy. For a country like Singapore that has few natural resources, the uninterrupted flow of capital is crucial and the anti-terror maritime force plays an important role, notwithstanding that its force size is still relatively small. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“When we are on board ships, we have nowhere to run and we have to defend ourselves before reinforcements arrive.”

Source: “Singapore Navy’s 180 Squadron keeps maritime terror at bay,” *The Straits Times*, 19 April 2018. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/navys-180-squadron-keeps-maritime-terror-at-bay>

They are the foot soldiers of Singapore’s efforts to keep its waters safe, boarding ships in small teams to check that they have not been seized by pirates or terrorists, for example. In their full gear, the sea marshals of the Navy’s 180 Squadron are “armed to the teeth”, said the squadron’s commanding officer...When we are on board ships, we have nowhere to run and we have to defend ourselves before reinforcements arrive...

Last year, the squadron, which has a strength of about 50 people, conducted 585 checks on vessels that entered Singapore’s waters. The Maritime Security Taskforce, which coordinates security operations at sea, would first identify which vessels need to be checked. This is based on factors such as the vessel’s cargo, crew and its last port of call. For example, tankers carrying oil, chemicals and gas may be subject to closer scrutiny.

Data from a regional cooperation effort to fight piracy showed that there were 101 armed robbery and piracy incidents last year in the region, including the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea. It is a 16 per cent increase from 2016.



Strait of Malacca Singapur.Singapore Luftbild aerial.

Source: By dronepicr (Strait of Malacca) [CC BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Strait_of_Malacca_\(36759635615\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Strait_of_Malacca_(36759635615).jpg).



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