MEDIA RELEASE **London, 15 October 2026**

Maritime piracy incidents remain at historic lows despite Somali piracy concerns

The ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has reported the lowest level (51) of piracy and armed robbery incidents since 1992 in the first nine months of 2026. However, a recent resurgence of Somali piracy incidents highlights the continued risks facing seafarers, with IMB urging vigilance, timely reporting and strict adherence to Best Management Practices (BMP).

The IMB Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) reported 51 incidents for the period of January-September 2026, down from 116 in the same period last year, the lowest reported nine-month figures since 1992.

The report reveals that 36 vessels were boarded, eight hijacked, four fired upon and three attempted boardings. In 86% of incidents, perpetrators successfully gained access to the vessel while either at anchor or steaming with most boarding incidents occurring at night.

The threat of violence against crew remains a concern, with 105 crew directly affected, compared to 72 in the same period in 2025. Weapons were identified in 53% of reported incidents in the first nine months of 2026.

IMB Director Michael Howlett said:

"While incident levels are at their lowest in more than three decades, the recent uptick in Somali piracy activity is a reminder that the threat remains. Incidents this year have also shown that strict adherence to BMP recommendations remains one of the most effective ways to deter hijacking attempts and protect crews. Continued vigilance is essential to safeguarding seafarers and the vital trade routes on which the global economy depends."

Somali piracy risks heighten

While overall piracy incidents remain at historic lows, IMB recorded a rise in Somali piracy activity from January to September 2026, with Somali pirates responsible for eight vessel hijackings and 94% of all crew taken hostage globally. Most hijacked vessels have been released with the crew reported safe.

IMB notes that vessels implementing the latest BMP have continued to successfully deter hijacking attempts, even in cases where pirates have managed to board a vessel.

However, Puntland authorities reported in late September that five crew members were killed and five injured prior to the release of the Palau-flagged product tanker Honour 25, hijacked on 21 April 2026.

While these incidents highlight the continued capability of Somali pirates to target vessels in the region, they are not comparable in scale or reach to the deep-sea piracy operations that characterised the 2008-2013 Somali piracy era.

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Declining incidents in the Gulf of Guinea and the Singapore Straits

Two incidents were reported from January to September 2026 in the Gulf of Guinea waters with none in the last quarter. The IMB commends the littoral states of the Gulf of Guinea for their continued efforts in ensuring incidents of piracy and armed robbery remain at these low levels.

Similarly, there has been a welcome reduction in reported incidents in the Singapore Straits, with 13 in the first nine months of 2026 compared to 73 during the same period in 2025.

Two crew were taken hostage and a further two were threatened and one was injured in 2026 in the Singapore Straits. In over 69% of incidents perpetrators were armed with either guns or knives and managed to successfully board all targeted vessels indicating the continued risk to shipping in these waters.

IMB commends the actions of the authorities which have contributed to the reduction in reported incidents in the Singapore Straits.

Reduced levels of reported incidents in the Indonesian Archipelagic continues. Six incidents were reported in the first nine months of 2026 compared to nine during the same period in 2025. Weapons were reported in one incident in which one crew was also taken hostage.

Nine anchored vessels were boarded in the Philippines, with six incidents reported in Manila and three in Batangas, compared to no reported incidents in 2025. Two crew members were taken hostage during the incidents, while weapons were reported in five cases.

“The drop in reported incidents in the Gulf of Guinea and Singapore Straits is encouraging and reflects the positive impact of sustained efforts by the authorities. It is important to maintain this momentum through continued vigilance and timely reporting of all incidents,” said Mr Howlett.

Request a copy of the January to June 2026 Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships report here.

About IMB Piracy Reporting Centre

Since its founding in 1991, IMB’s Piracy Reporting Centre serves as a crucial, 24-hour point of contact to report crimes of piracy and lend support to ships under threat. Quick reactions and a focus on coordinating with response agencies, sending out warning broadcasts and email alerts to ships have all helped bolster security on the high seas. The data gathered by the Centre also provides key insights on the nature and state of modern piracy.

IMB encourages all shipmasters and owners to report all actual, attempted and suspected global piracy and armed robbery incidents to the Piracy Reporting Centre as a vital first step to ensuring adequate resources are allocated by authorities to tackle maritime piracy.

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