

MARINE PIRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN WATERS

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Abstract

Marine piracy has a very long history, and is nowadays mostly associated with swashbuckling fiction in books or films. It is believed by many to be extinct, even the word piracy having been bestowed instead on intellectual theft. But the reality is that modern piracy is flourishing, using modern technology, the latest automatic weapons and criminal business syndicates. Its methods are as audacious as ever and usually involve much brutality, including death, injury, and the taking of hostages.

Southeast Asian waters are consistently the world's worst for pirate attacks, year after year. The number of incidents continues to increase in the Malacca Straits and the Indonesian archipelago.

Governments and the United Nations agree to Conventions which will control this menace to seafarers, sea traders and insurers. But little action results from this as marine piracy seldom attracts public attention, and governments have other priorities. The problem is also complicated by confusion over definitions and the extent of law. The main agency of hope is the Piracy Reporting Centre set up in 1992 by the International Chamber of Commerce, which provides radio and internet information and warnings, and helps to trace and recover captured seamen, ships and cargoes, and to bring pirates to justice.

Introduction

These days, the word 'piracy' usually means the illegal production of counterfeit goods. But for many centuries it meant aggravated robbery, theft at sea, when waterborne robbers stole cargoes or ships. Most people today probably believe that this old-fashioned piracy is extinct, and regard it in a romantic light. However, the reality is that it is flourishing,

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