



NEWS RELEASE

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Fact Sheet: Safeguarding Singapore's Maritime Trade and Industry

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Singapore is a Global Maritime Transshipment Hub

Singapore is strategically located at the convergence of key shipping routes around the world. Up to 70% of the world's global maritime economy transits through the Singapore Strait. It is the world's busiest transshipment hub, and sees 1,350 times more cargo movement by sea than air annually. An average container ship calling at Singapore carries 800 times the amount of cargo carried by a Boeing 747 plane, equivalent to three days of aircraft landings at Changi Airport. Seaborne trade is the lifeblood of Singapore's economy, with the maritime industry contributing up to 7% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product.

Vulnerability to Threats from the Sea

As an island state with a porous coastline, Singapore is exceptionally vulnerable to threats from the sea. Threats ranging from sea robberies and piracy to terrorist attacks from the sea have the potential to inflict significant damage and shake confidence in our maritime security. Taking reference from the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the danger posed to us by our maritime porosity is compounded by the fact that our waters are 8 to 10 times more congested than that of Mumbai, and many key installations lie along our coast. Attacks can undermine shipping and erode confidence in Singapore as a transshipment hub, negatively impacting our

economy. Hence, maritime security is of vital importance. Our sea lines of communication must remain open and secure for Singapore's maritime trade and industry to prosper.

Singapore's Maritime Security Efforts

The Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) stands at the frontline of safeguarding the nation's waters, leading a Whole-of-Government approach to plan and coordinate responses across national agencies. The RSN's Maritime Security Task Force (MSTF), which comprises Patrol Vessels, Littoral Mission Vessels, Mine-countermeasure Vessels and Accompanying Sea Security Teams (ASSeTs), was set up to respond to maritime security threats.

These maritime security threats are multifaceted, ranging from sea robberies and human trafficking to explosive-laden small boats and hijacked merchant vessels rigged as "floating bombs". With close to a thousand ships in the Singapore port at any one time, and shipping volume expected to increase 29% by 2025, it is increasingly challenging to differentiate potential threats to Singapore from legitimate shipping. To mitigate this challenge of congested waters and maritime porosity, the RSN employs a layered defence system to enable timely and effective responses against maritime threats.

Through the Singapore Maritime Crisis Centre (SMCC), the RSN works closely with national agencies such as the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, Singapore Civil Defence Force, Singapore Customs and Singapore Police Force to safeguard Singapore's waters 24/7. Information shared by these government agencies as well as stakeholders in the shipping industry are fused together to detect and sense-make threats as early and as far away as possible. Responses are cued when necessary to deter and respond to these threats. This is enforced through a full spectrum of capabilities including maritime air surveillance, security patrols, escort and boarding operations, deterrence exercises and maritime interdiction operations.

180 SQN – Accompanying Sea Security Teams

Formed in 2004 under the ambit of MSTF, 180 SQN and its ASSeTs serve as Sea Marshals, ensuring safe and secure sea passage for merchant vessels transiting through the Singapore Strait. The squadron's ASSeTs are on standby 24/7 and conduct regular compliant boarding operations on selected vessels to ensure they are free of hostile elements. During compliant boarding, merchant vessels acknowledge and comply with the ASSeTs' request to conduct security checks on board. Working closely alongside personnel from the Police Coast Guard (PCG), ASSeTs help to detect, deter and prevent acts of maritime terrorism.

More than 550 boarding operations are conducted every year. These operations are cued by pre-determined indicators and sense-making through the SMCC. Examples of these indicators include vessel voyage information, crew manifest and security records.

During operations, ASSeTs conduct security checks for contraband or suspicious activities on board. They aid in ensuring that the vessel does not deviate from its designated route to its destination. Their presence also deters terrorists from hijacking the vessel and performing acts of terrorism on board, providing security to the ship crew as they transit through our waters.

In 180 SQN, 50% of the operators are Full-Time National Servicemen, and the other 50% are Regulars. In addition, Operationally Ready National Servicemen (NSmen) who return for their In-Camp Training are also entrusted with the task of executing boarding operations. Comprehensive refresher training is conducted for these NSmen before they are deployed for operations. All operators have to attain the MARSEC Boarding Skills Badge, which entails undergoing a strenuous four-week course aimed at equipping trainees with the essential skills and knowledge to perform their boarding operations. Through the course of training, operators acquire the skill to board ships, master the use of lethal and non-lethal weapons, learn the art of self-defence, and accustom themselves to operating in sea conditions.

News Release:

- ACCORD Witnesses the Navy's Maritime Security Operations to Keep Singapore Safe and Secure (MINDEF_20180419002.pdf)