

*Maritime Security in the Straits of Malacca – An Overview*

*By First Admiral Ahmad Kamarulzaman*

The global and regional security landscape has changed dramatically and uncertainty is now and will continue be part and parcel of this landscape. In the Straits of Malacca, the maritime security environment presents complex and sensitive challenges which need to be clearly understood and carefully managed. In understanding these challenges, one needs to identify the stakeholders and also look at the issues from various perspectives.

As one of the littoral states, Malaysia is also faced with many challenges including managing scarce resources and the need to balance between individual states national interests and the expectations from other stakeholders. Another big challenge is on managing perceptions with respect to the level and type of threat in the Straits and on the actions taken by the littoral states.

The reality is that much has been achieved and this is reflected in the drastic reduction of incidences. Managing perceptions of certain stakeholders will further help to facilitate the overall outcome – sense of security in the Straits. Malaysia is and will continue to be committed in addressing the threat through continuous engagement and effective monitoring, and intelligence sharing. However, other stakeholders will also need to play their role to contribute to the desired outcome.

Even though a lot have been achieved, more will need to be done. The challenge would be to establish a high level of trust between stakeholders in addressing the appropriate strategies and action plans. These strategies and action plans would require a collective and constructive approach and to avoid being disruptive, in short, we all need to be part of the solution.

In managing these challenges, we need to be optimistic and look at them as opportunities.

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- An Overview -***

***3<sup>rd</sup> ARF Security Policy Conference  
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by  
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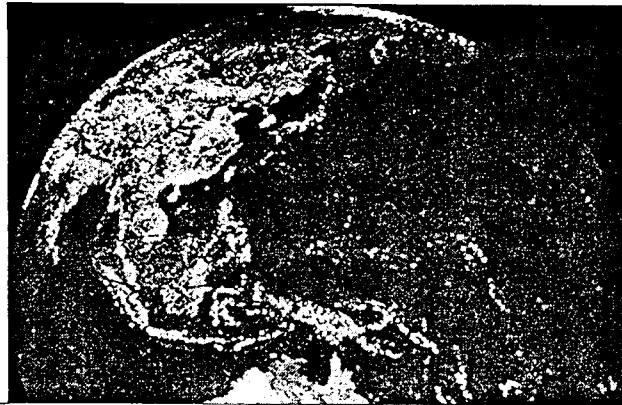
## Setting the Scene

- **SOM** - wide spectrum of issues – sea robbery, *piracy*, environmental, illegal immigration, potential maritime terrorism  
- *asymmetrical and transnational threats*
- **New security environment and emphasis on maritime domain**
- **Complexity and sensitivity in managing maritime security in SOM**
- **Impacts from negative perceptions –**  
*skewed statistics = sense of insecurity*
- **Stakeholders demand - do more with less**



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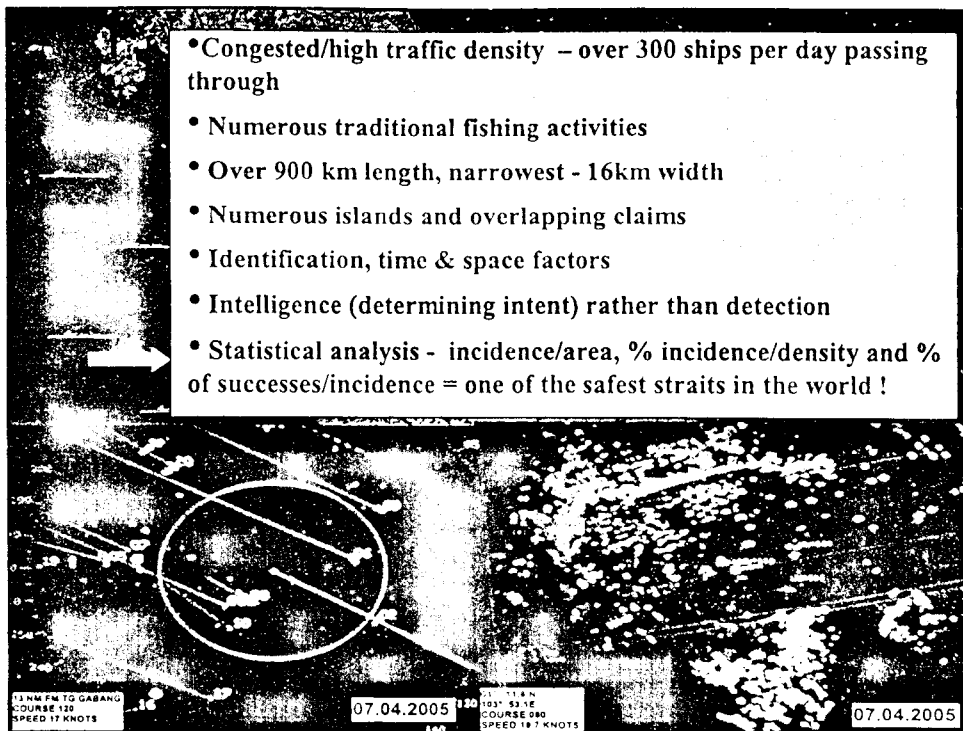
## Malaysia – A Maritime Nation



- 90% of the world's trade is by sea
- 50,000 merchant ships plying world's ocean
- Some 1,000,000 crew world-wide
- World Oil Consumption 3.6 billion ts and 2.2 billion ts transported by sea



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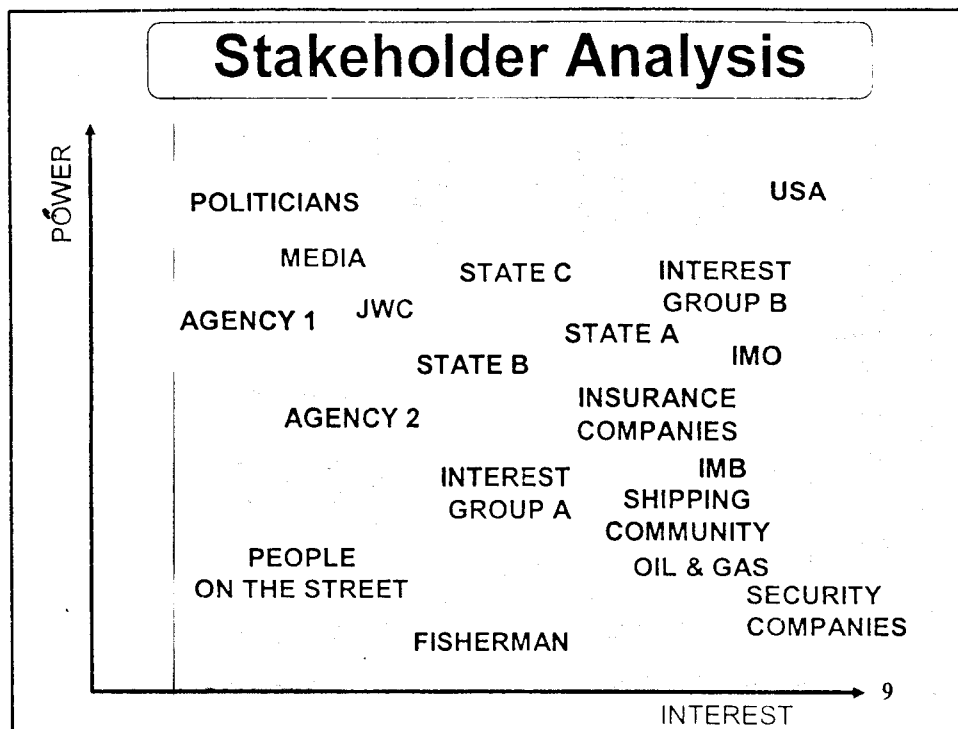


**What are the issues?**



## Why Complex & Sensitive?

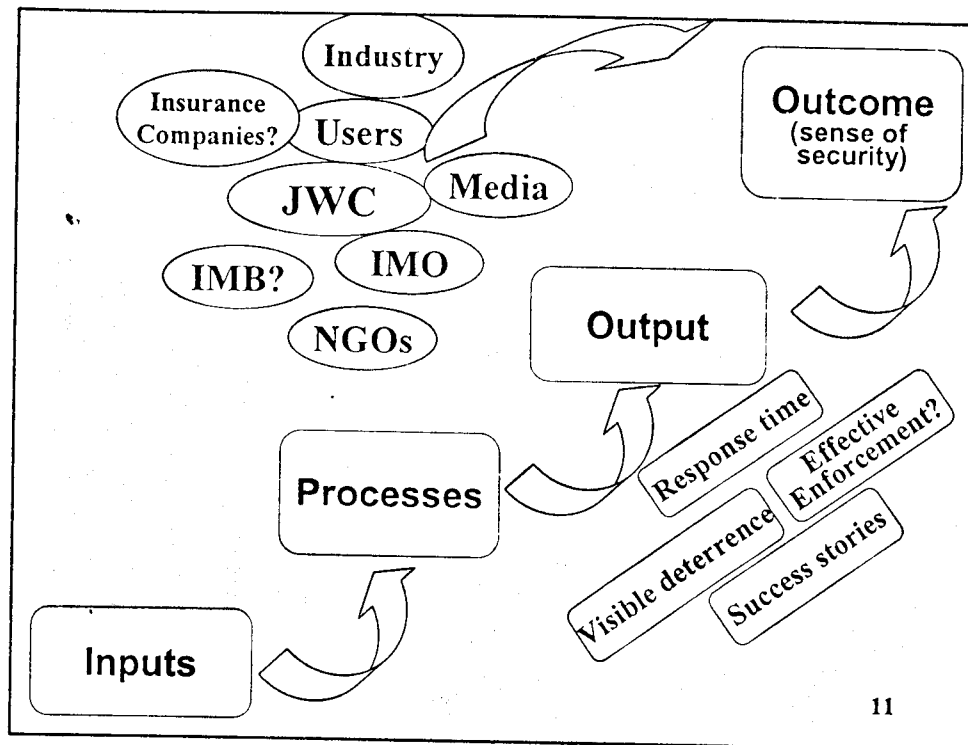
- **Multiple Stakeholders**
  - *Stakeholder analysis*
  - *Different priorities and expectations*
  - *Increased expectations*
  - *Different threat perceptions*
  - *Balancing between domestic and foreign policies*
- **Level of trust and managing perceptions**
- **Collective security = collective insecurity?**
- **Not addressing root causes of problems**
- **Implicate on national interests**



## Current status

- Littoral states have own system to address maritime security – but how effective?
- Malaysia's contribution to SOM security eqn
  - Piracy Reporting Center
  - Network of Sea Surveillance System, VTS, STRAITSREP
  - MMEA and restructuring of other maritime agencies
  - Tripartite Technical Expert Group
  - 24/7 patrol in the straits by RMN and other agencies
  - Coordinated maritime patrol (MALINDO, MALSINDO and MIST - expanded from bilateral to trilateral)
  - "Eyes in the Sky" - a recent initiative
  - Exploring new initiatives in effective responses – operational and tactical
- Input output analysis – a reflection

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## Reality vs Perception

### • Reality

- Attacks do sometime becomes violent & attackers motivated by financial gain NOT political
- JWC listing the region as "war & terrorist risk" - implications
- Root cause of the problem – ashore not at sea
- Commitment by Malaysia and other littoral states – increased cooperation proves to be effective
- Security companies - concept of supply and demand

### • Perception

- Level and type of threat
- Seriousness in addressing the threats
- Not enough being done and that littoral states can't handle the situation – due to lack of visibility in efforts/initiatives?

## Challenges

- Establishing a high level of trust between stakeholders – visibility & transparency
- Regional interest over individual or group interest in addressing strategies & action plans
- Managing change and scarce resources
- Balance between national interests and expectations from other stakeholders
- Continue momentum & sustenance
- Policies, legal and jurisdictional issues
- Perception management – issues and actions

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## So what should WE do?

- Not to hype up issues, but focus on the desired outcome – analogy of “finger pointing”
- Understand issues holistically – and its realities
- The need to address root causes of problems rather than focusing on its *symptoms*
- Have patience – incremental change
- No one stakeholder / country to dominate issue
- All have a role to play - users, NGOs, media management – “push” & “WOW” concept
- Building on existing framework & partnership
- More effective *marketing*, continue to remain engaged – and be part of the solution

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## What should "users" do?

- **User states**
  - Enforce regulations
  - Contribution to littoral states (resources & technical advise)
  - Holistic understanding of the issues
- **Ship owners or related industries**
  - Employ qualified and experienced crew/captain
  - Responsibility and accountability
  - Invest in security measures – security plans, audits, onboard security systems etc.
  - Keep updated of issues, conduct proper security risks assessments using data from credible and reliable sources
- **Ship captains**
  - Be vigilant in "hot spots" and avoid short cuts
  - Responsibility to report ASAP
  - Don't be complacent – its all about being "street wise"<sup>15</sup>

## Summary

- A complex maritime security environment
- Need for a holistic, collective and constructive approach towards capacity building
- Importance of managing perception – proper use of statistics and engagement with media
- JWC should consult more widely and review decision on basis of facts/situation
- A lot have been achieved but more to be done - cooperative & sustainable engagement and that ALL have roles to play
- Many more challenges ahead but look at them as opportunities for all

“ a pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

*A great leader in the 12<sup>th</sup> century*

“Like him, I believe in the optimistic exploitation of the opportunity that every challenge presents.”

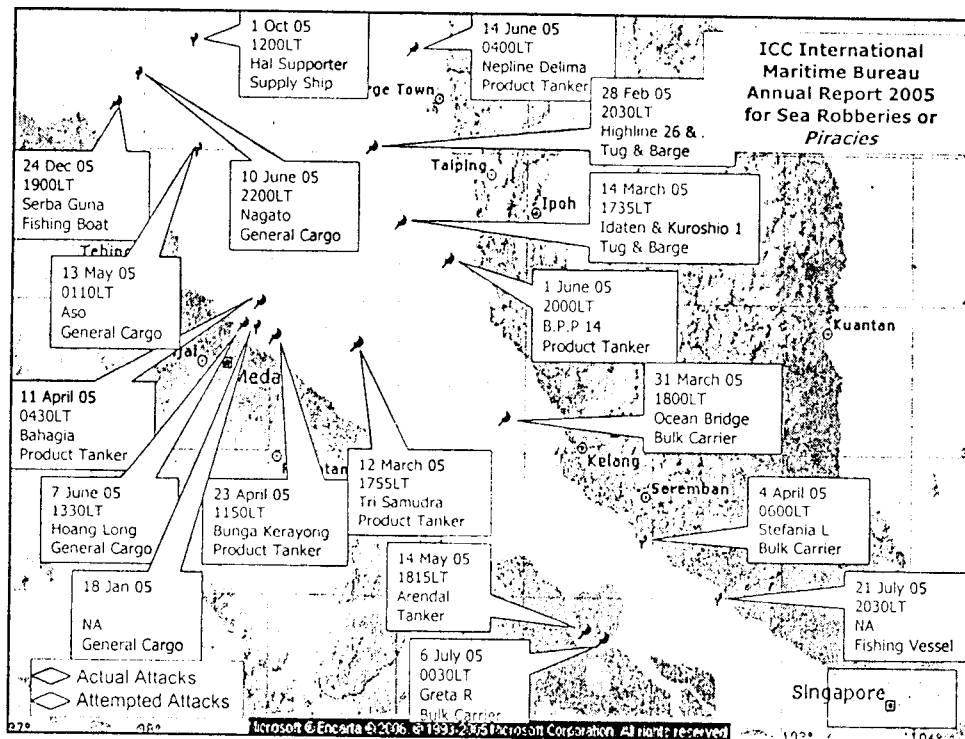
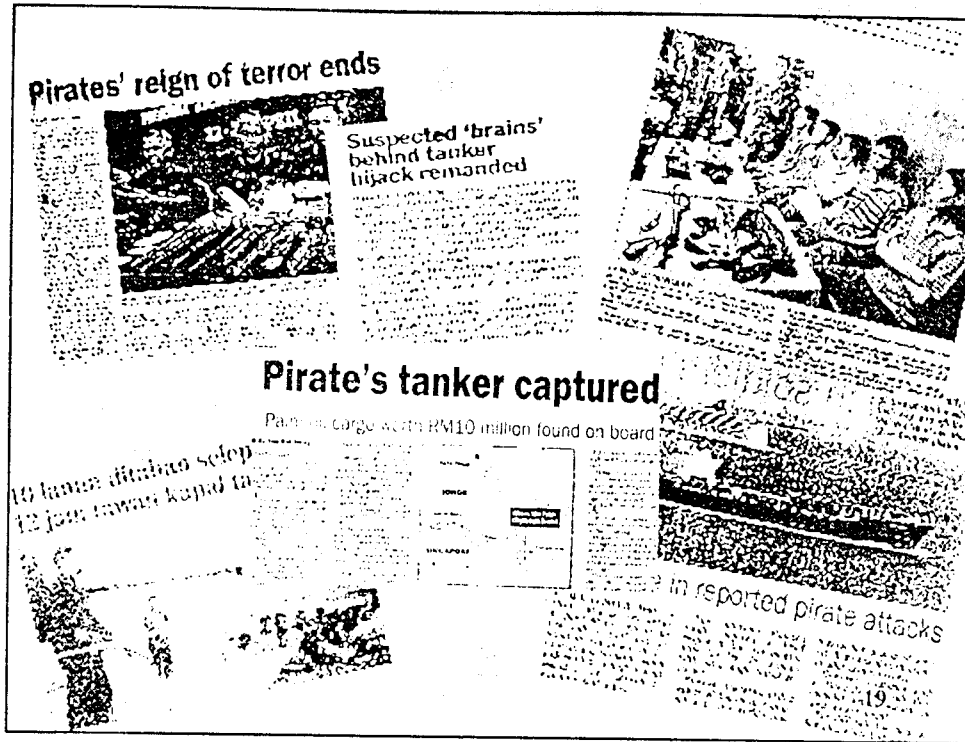
*Admiral Roughead – Sea Power Conference 2006*

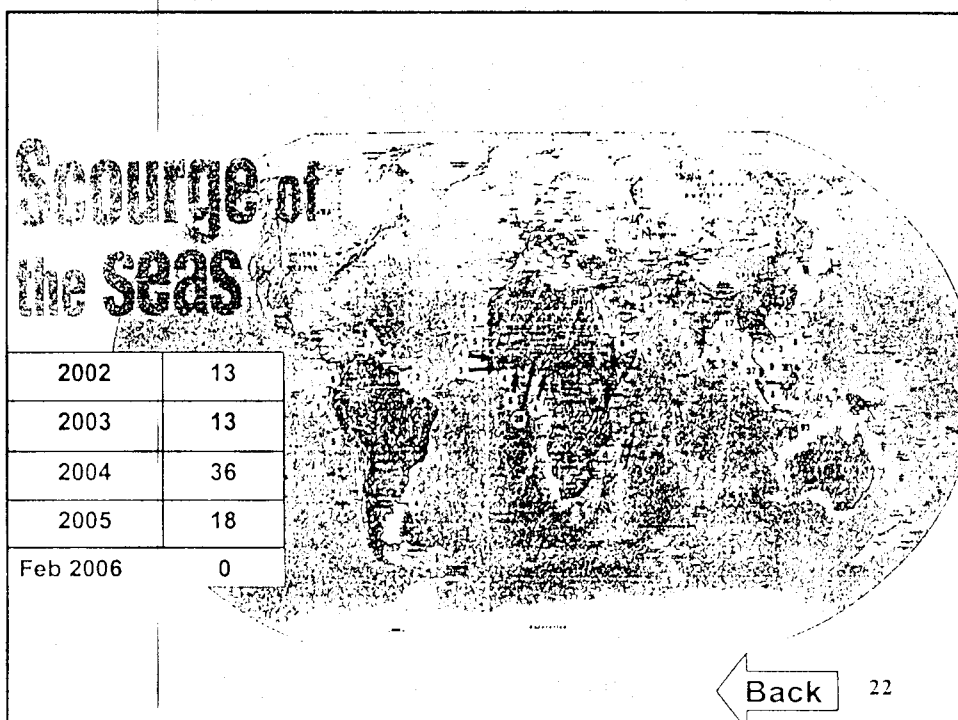
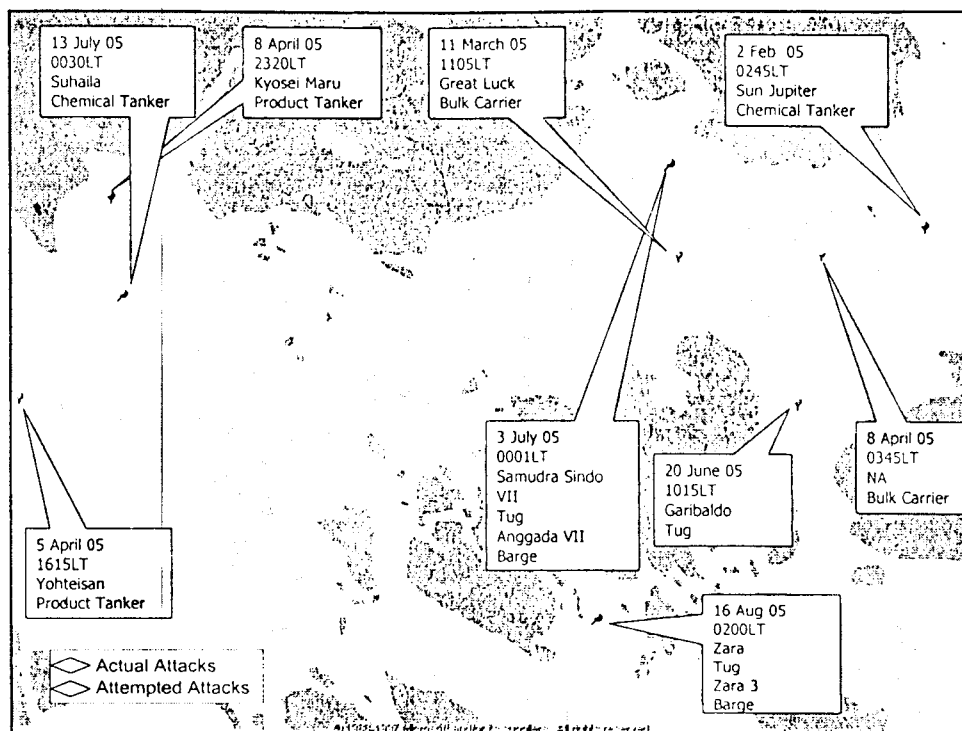
.....however, exploitation of opportunities must adopt a balanced and constructive approach in achieving the desired outcome.

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**THANK YOU**

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


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