

Singapore warns of attack threat on Malacca ships

UPDATED

SINGAPORE, March 4 — The Singapore Navy has received indications a terror group is planning attacks on oil tankers in the Strait of Malacca, a key shipping lane for world trade, a Singapore shipping body warned today.

The Singapore Navy recommends ships using the strait between Indonesia and Malaysia strengthen onboard security measures, the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA) said in an advisory to shipowner members. "This does not preclude possible attacks on other large vessels with dangerous cargo," the SSA said in the advisory seen by Reuters.

Singapore is the world's top container shipping port and biggest ship refuelling hub. An attack that closed the Strait of Malacca or the port even temporarily could have a disproportionate impact on global trade.

Neither Singapore's Ministry of Defence nor navy could comment immediately. The SSA's executive director Daniel Tan declined to give further details.

Up to 80 per cent of China's oil imports and 30 per cent of its iron ore imports pass through the Strait of Malacca — a narrow, congested waterway between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

"The threat should be taken seriously as it comes from the Singapore Navy and has been shared with the shipping community," said Rohan Gunaratna, a Singapore-based expert on radical groups who has written a book on al Qaeda. — Reuters



A Police Coast Guard vessel patrols the shipping lanes near freight ships off the coast of Singapore. - Reuters pic

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