



MERCHANT SHIPPING NOTICE

Issued by the Merchant Shipping Division, Sri Lanka

Addendum to MSN 01/2010

NOTICE TO MASTERS

A special incident report subsequent to MSN 01/2010 is attached herewith for information and appropriate action.

23rd February 2010

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To the Officers-in-Charge at the ReCAAP Focal Points

The ReCAAP ISC circulates a Special Report on the Hijacking of the 'Asta'. This is following the Incident Alert issued earlier for the incident that occurred on 6 February 2010 at about 0130 hours (local time) involving a Singapore-registered tug boat, 'Asta'. While 'Asta' was towing barge 'Callista' at the area off Pulau Tioman, Malaysia, the Ship Agent lost communications with the tug boat.

This Special Report is enclosed herewith, which details the important updates on the Incident, as well as Sharing of Best Practices – the cooperation and good information exchange among the various maritime enforcement agencies.

Thank you.

CC: ReCAAP ISC Governors
ReCAAP ISC Governors' Officers

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Special Report on The Hijacking of the *Asta*

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Hijacking of tug boat, *Asta* and barge, *Callista* on 6 February 2010

Name of ship : *Asta*
Type of ship : Tug boat
Flag of ship : Singapore
IMO number : 0095229
GT : 296

Name of barge : *Callista*
Type of ship : Flat top barge
Flag of ship : Singapore
GT : 5299



Photograph courtesy of IFC

Background

1. A Singapore-registered tug boat, *Asta* towing barge *Callista* departed Singapore for Cambodia on 5 February 2010. At about 0130 hrs (local time) on 6 February 2010, the ship agent reported lost communications with the tug boat at position 02° 59.40' N, 104° 00.60' E, off Pulau Tioman, Malaysia. The tug boat had reportedly deviated from its planned course and was tracked to be heading northeasterly in the South China Sea.

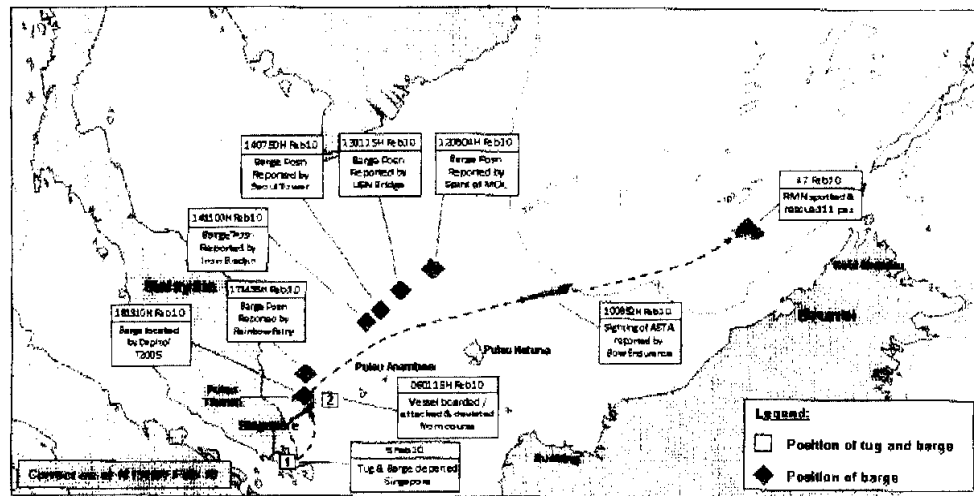
2. There were 12 crew onboard *Asta* at the time of the incident, and there was no cargo onboard the barge. The *Asta* was scheduled to arrive at Cambodia on 9 February 2010. The ship owner suspected that *Asta* had been hijacked and reported the incident to the Singapore Port Operations Control Centre (POCC) who had issued a broadcast to all vessels to report sightings of *Asta* and *Callista* to POCC. It had also notified the MRCCs of Indonesia (BASARNAS), Malaysia (Putra Jaya), Vietnam, Thailand (Bangkok) and the Philippines.

Update on the Incident

3. The maritime authorities in the region and all ReCAAP Focal Points were immediately alerted to the missing vessels. In particular, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and the Philippines maritime authorities and the shipping community were alerted to be on the lookout for the tug boat and barge which are likely to be repainted and renamed.

4. Five sightings of the barge, *Callista* were subsequently received from passing ships from 10 to 14 February 2010. Through information exchange among the ReCAAP ISC, the Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) and the ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore), the *Callista* was located on 17 February 2010 at 1310 hrs (local time), and recovery was in progress at the time of this report. It was assessed that the tug boat, *Asta* was heading north-easterly towards the Natunas Island. The *Asta* is still missing at this juncture.

6. Further analysis of the incident will be carried out pending investigation after interviewing the rescued crew. Please see map below on the chronological of events of the incident.



Observation by the ReCAAP ISC

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Sharing of Best Practices

8. The cooperation and good information exchange among the ReCAAP ISC, the MMEA, the IFC, the ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore) and the maritime community had enabled the maritime enforcement agencies to narrow down their search area for the missing barge, *Callista*, and its eventual recovery.

9. Worth commending is the support from the maritime community in reporting visual sightings of *Callista* to Singapore's Port Operation Control Centre (POCC) who is also the ReCAAP Focal Point (Singapore). The sharing of information with all the agencies had enabled the charting of probable scenario of the missing vessels, and provided updates of the possible whereabouts of the missing barge.

10. This incident demonstrated the value and benefits of information sharing and cooperation among governmental agencies, the commercial maritime entity, the ReCAAP ISC and the enforcement agencies which lead to the recovery of the *Callista* and rescue of the crew.

Recommendation

11. Ongoing efforts by the regional maritime authorities are underway to locate the missing tug boat, *Asta*. The maritime community are requested to report sighting of the missing tug boat to the nearest coastal states and port authorities.