

Non-Traditional Security Challenges: Coping with Ocean Low Intensity Conflicts (OLICs) and Pirate Attacks; A View from Japanese Experience

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Summary

Much has been said about the non-traditional security issues in East Asia, because of the rise in number of low intensity conflicts (LICs) and transnational crimes such as pirates, illegal immigrants, illicit trafficking of drugs and weapons.

The increase in number of Ocean LICs (OLICs) in Southeast Asia has been led by two reasons. First, the two superpowers, the United States and Soviet Russia have withdrawn their military bases from the region, and so, their restraining effect on ethnic and territorial conflicts in the region diminished.

Secondly, Muslim terrorist attacks towards non-muslims have increased and spread to Southeast Asia after the September 11 incident of 2001.

The OLICs have also increasingly occurred and increased in Northeast Asia. North Korea, isolated and confronted with South Korea, the United States of America and Japan, continues illegal and illicit behaviors such as drug trafficking and abductions of Japanese and South Korean citizens by heavily armed spy ships.

Further, the increase and escalation of transnational crimes have lately attracted considerable attention. The number of insolvents in Southeast Asia have increased because of the Asian Monetary Crisis in 1997. Some of these insolvents have become pirates, illegal immigrants, and illicit traffickers of drugs or amphetamine.

The Japanese pay serious attention to North Korean spy ships and pirates issues among these non-traditional security challenges mentioned above.

The present writer would like to focus on these two issues, and study the agenda for international cooperation to cope with non-traditional security issues by introducing outlines of the spy ship chase in the East China Sea by the Japan Coast Guard in December 2001, and the hijacking incident of the general cargo ship: Alondra Rainbow in October 1999.

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1. Introduction

Much has been said about the non-traditional security issues in East Asia, because of the rise in number of low intensity conflicts (LICs)¹⁾ and transnational crimes such as pirates, illegal immigrants, illicit trafficking of drugs and weapons.

The increase in number of Ocean LICs (OLICs) in Southeast Asia has been led by two reasons. First, the two superpowers, the United States and Soviet Russia have withdrawn their military bases from the region, and so, their restraining effect on ethnic and territorial conflicts in the region diminished.

Secondly, Muslim terrorist attacks towards non-muslims has increased and spread to Southeast Asia after the September 11 incident in 2001. The Bali's blast incident in 2002 is the typical illustration, though we should remind the fact that most of our muslim friends are peace-loving and amicable people.

The OLICs have also increasingly occurred and increased in Northeast Asia. North Korea, isolated, and confronted with South Korea, the United States of America and Japan, continues illegal and illicit behaviors such as drug trafficking and abductions of Japanese and South Korean citizens by heavily armed spy ships.

Further, the increase and escalation of transnational crimes have lately attracted considerable attention. It is said that there are two reasons which have promoted these transnational crimes.

First, the weapons of conflicting parties in the South and Southeast Asian countries such as Afghanistan, Cambodia and Myanmar, which were supplied by the major powers in the cold war days, have been smuggled out and transferred to pirate and other criminal organisations, making them more brutal.

Secondly, the number of insolvents in Southeast Asia have increased because of the Asian Monetary Crisis in 1997. Some of these insolvents have become the pirates, illegal immigrants and illicit traffickers of drugs or amphetamines.

We, the Japanese, pay serious attention to the North Korean spy

ships and pirate issues among these non-traditional security challenges.

The present writer would like to focus on these two issues, and study the agenda for international cooperation to cope with non-traditional security issues by introducing outlines of the spy ship chase in the East China Sea by the Japan Coast Guard in December 2001, and the hijacking incident of the general cargo ship: Alondra Rainbow in October 1999.

2. OLICs and Pirate incidence: Case Studies

(1)North Korean Spy Ship Chase by Japan Coast Guard

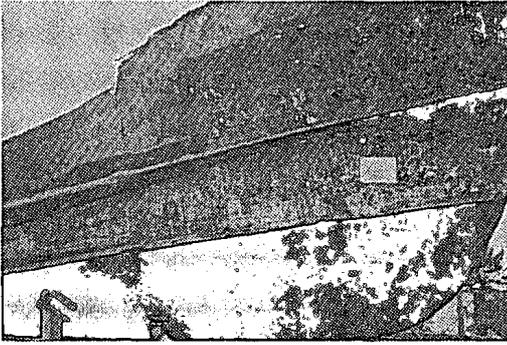
The North Korean Spy Ship incident occurred on 22 December 2001.²⁾ The Japan Defence Agency transferred information of the suspicious ship to the Japan Coast Guard at 1 o'clock in the morning. The Coast Guard dispatched patrol vessels and a patrol plane immediately.

The patrol plane found the ship 240 km northwest of Amamioshima island, and the chase started. The patrol vessel: Inasa reached the area around 1 o'clock noon, and other patrol vessels followed. Both the patrol plane and vessels ordered the suspicious ship to stop. The ship ignored the order, and began to zigzag on the sea to escape from the Coast Guard.

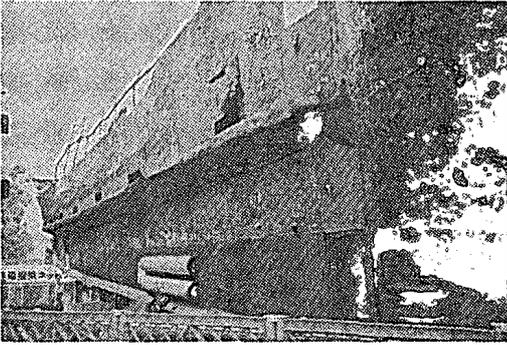
Inasa began to fire warning shots at the sea and sky, but the ship never stopped. A crew member of the suspicious ship suddenly began to wave a flag: assumed the Chinese national flag, repeatedly waving it.

The Coast Guard patrol vessels: Inasa and Mizuki began to fire warning shots at the suspicious ship at 4 o'clock. A fire broke out on the ship. The crew of the ship put out the fire at 6 o'clock, and the ship repeated a stop and escape from the patrol vessels.

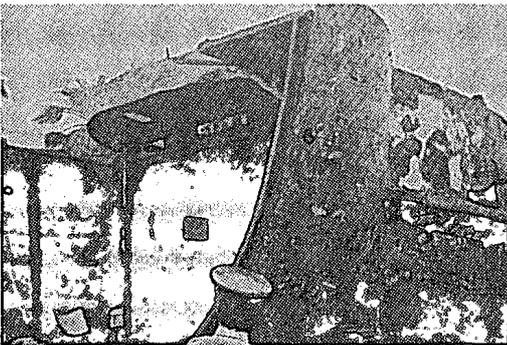
The Japan Coast Guard began to bring the patrol vessels: Kirishima and Amami alongside the ship on both flanks, trying to gain control of the ship. Then the ship crew began to attack the patrol vessels by the automatic rifles and a rocket launcher: assumed an RPG-7, an anti-tank rocket launcher.



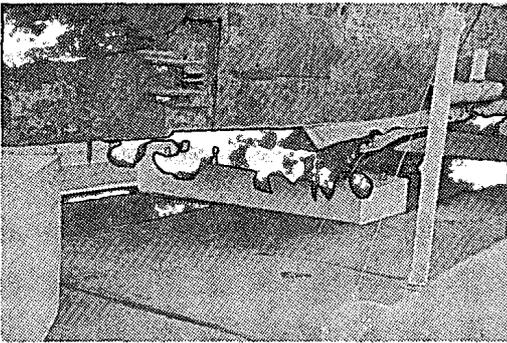
Picture 1: Bow of Spy Ship



Picture 2: Hull of Spy Ship



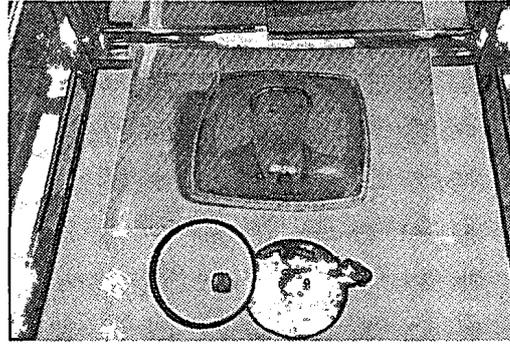
Picture 3: Stern Door of Spy Ship



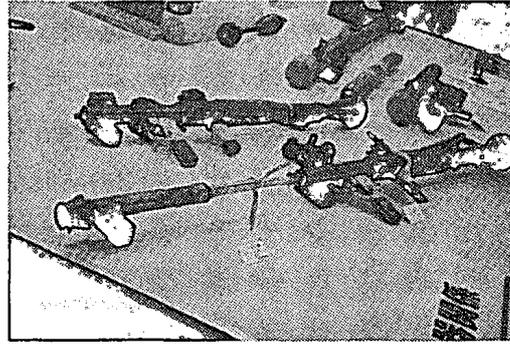
Picture 4: Screws of the four engines



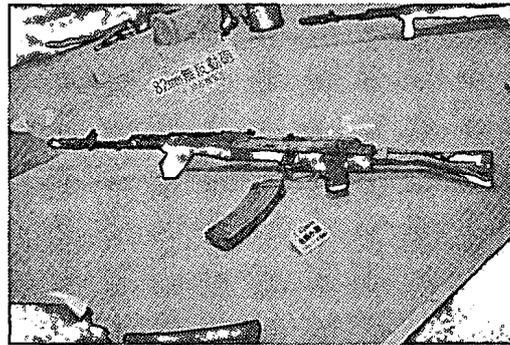
Picture 5: 14.5mm Machine Gun



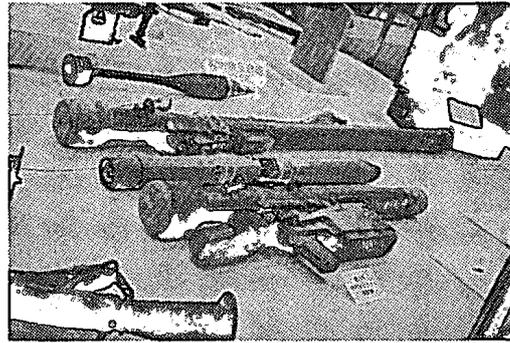
Picture 6: Kim Il-Song Badge



Picture 7: Rocket Launchers



Picture 8: 5.45mm Automatic Rifle



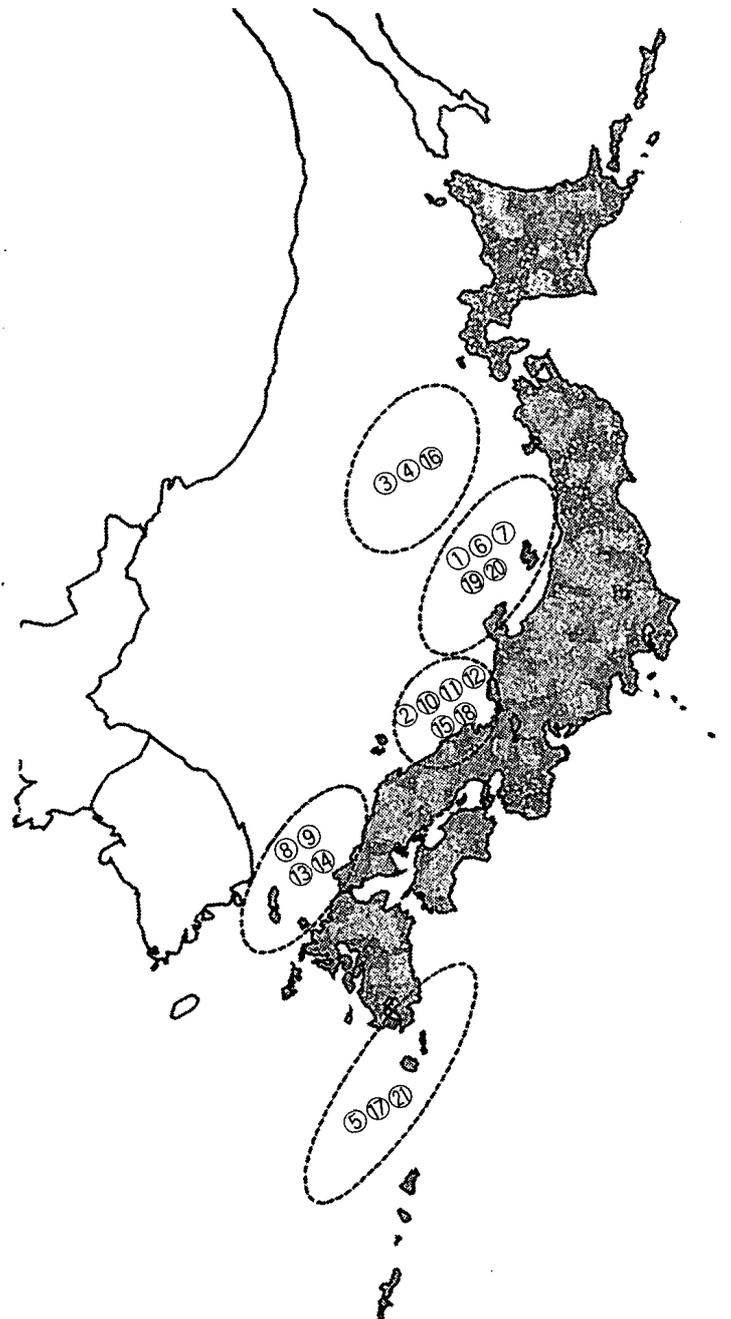
Picture 9: Surface to Air Missile(SAM)



Picture 10: Underwater Scooter

Table 1: Suspicious Ships Identified by the Japan Coast Guard (1963-2001)

Year	No	Location
1963	1	①
1970	1	②
1971	3	③ ④ ⑤
1972	1	⑥
1975	1	⑦
1977	2	⑧ ⑨
1980	6	⑩ ⑪ ⑫ ⑬ ⑭ ⑮
1981	1	⑯
1985	1	⑰
1990	1	⑱
1999	2	⑲ ⑳
2001	1	㉑
Toatal	21	



Source: The Japan Coast Guard (Dec. 6, 2002)

Three Coast Guard members were slightly injured because of this attack, though the vessels luckily escaped from the rocket attacks. Amami and Inasa began to fire at the ship in selfdefence at 10 o'clock.

Suddenly the crew of the suspicious ship sent a ciphered telegram to their mother ship in the Yellow Sea. The Japan Defense Agency picked up the telegram, and the public security officers deciphered it.³⁾ They understood that the crew would blow up their own ship.

The Defense Agency staff informed this to the patrol vessels without delay, and the Coast Guard vessels evacuated from the ship. The ship then blew up, and sank. The Coast Guard tried to find and rescue the crew, and they found three bodies although they could collect only two of them.

The Japan Coast Guard decided to salvage this suspicious ship, and found the shipwreck site by the sandscannig sonar and submarine cammera. The site location was on the seabed at the depth of 90 meters, and it was within the Chinses Exclusive Economic Zone.

The Japanese government negotiated with their Chinese counterpart, and got their approval for salvage in exchange for some fishery compensation.

The salvage was done on 11 September 2002, and the whole picture of the suspicios ship became clear. First, the name of the ship is Changyue 3705: 長漁 3705. It seemed that the ship disguised itself as a Chinese fishery vessel.

With a length of 30 meters, width of 5 meters, and powerd by four engines (estimated maximum speed of more than 30 knots: 55 km/h). The Ship stored many things within the hold; a 11.1 meters long small fishery boat, an underwater scooter, some rocket launchers, various automatic rifles, a Gustavus Adolphus (recoilless rifle), a potable surface to air missile launcher, hand grenades and so on (See picture 1-10).

Many of them were made in Russia or North Korea. Also found were a so called Kim Il-Song badge (lapel pin), clothes, cigarettes, canned foods, all made in North Korea, and a Japanese mobile phone. From this evidence, the Japan Coast Guard identified the suspicious

ship as a North Korean spy ship.

The Coast Guard traced the communication data of the mobile phone by its product number and the phone company's record. The communication data told that the spy ship crew had some relations with the Japanese mobsters, and some coast guard members pointed out that the ship bore a close resemblance to the suspected drug-smuggling ship of recent cases.

Further, the ship crew had thrown some oil drums into the sea during the ship chase. Therefore the Coast Guard strongly suspects that the spy ship was engaged in drug-smuggling from North Korea to Japan.

It is believed that some of the spy ships were also engaged in the abductions of Japanese citizens.⁴⁾ Drug smuggling is used to obtain foreign currencies, and the human abduction is to get Japanese teachers in the North Korean spy schools, and utilize their passport for illegal entrance to South Korea for their espionage activities.

The statistics of Japan Coast Guard (Table 1) shows the number of the suspicious ships and spy ships in the sea off Japan from 1963 to 2001. Eighteen of twenty one ships appeared in the Sea of Japan, and the Coast Guard is alert to their illegal activities.⁵⁾

(2)The Hijacking Incident of the Alondra Rainbow

Pirates hijacked the Alondra Rainbow on 22 October 1999.⁶⁾ The Alondra Rainbow flew the Panamanian flag, and was loaded with 7000 tons aluminium ingots (US \$ 20 million). The ship left Kuala Tanjung North Sumatra for Miike in Japan.

The ship was hijacked by pirates armed with guns and swords in the Strait of Malacca, and disappeared. The Piracy Reporting Centre of ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) in Kuala Lumpur, sent information concerning the Alondra Rainbow to coastal countries immediately, asking for cooperation in the search.

The crew of Alondra Rainbow, two Japanese officers and 15 Filipino crew, were forced to transfer to a raft with little food and water, and put adrift for 10 days in the Andaman Sea, were rescued by Thai fishermen,

Table 2: Locations of Pirate Attacks (1991-2000)

Sea Area	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Sea Area Total
S.E.Asia	88	63	16	38	71	124	92	89	163	248	992
Far East	14	7	69	32	47	17	19	10	4	14	233
India		5	3	3	24	26	40	23	45	93	262
Americas			5	11	21	31	36	35	28	39	206
Africa			7	6	21	25	46	42	55	68	270
others	5	31	3		4	5	14	3	5	7	77
Annual Total	107	106	103	90	188	228	247	202	300	469	2040

Source : ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Annual Report (1 January-31 December 2000)*, January 2001, p.1.

though the ship was still missing.

On 14 November, a vessel reported to the IMB that they had found a ship with similar appearance to the Alondra Rainbow off India. The Piracy Reporting Centre sent a picture of Alondra Rainbow to the Indian Coast Guard, and requested cooperation for search.

The Indian Coast Guard dispatched a patrol plane, and found the ship similar to the Alondra Rainbow, though the name of the ship was Mega Rama, and flew the Belizean flag. The IMB staff confirmed that Mega Rama of Belize was not registered in the world ship record, and informed this to the Indian Coast Guard.

The Indian patrol plane tried to communicate with Mega Rama by radio, but ship ignored it. A Coast Guard patrol vessel approached. She tried to stop the ship and fired warning shots 70 nautical miles west of Ponnani, off India, though they could not stop Mega Rama.

Finally, the Indian Navy dispatched a corvette⁷⁾ and captured the Alondra Rainbow, disguised as Mega Rama, in a shoot-out, arresting 15 pirates 170 nautical miles west of Goa, off India. When the Indian Navy and Coast Guard members boarded, the holds were flooded, and the

Fig 1: Piracy Attacks in Southeast Asia (2000)



Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy and Armed robbery against Ships Annual Report 1 January-31 December 2000*, ICC International Maritime Bureau, January 2001, p.76.

Reference: SCS means the South China Sea, and the figure is not included in the total number of piracy attacks of Southeast Asia.

cabins were burnt out, because the pirates had had opened the sea valve, and tried to sink the ship.

The Coast Guard members found that 3000 tons of aluminium ingots (US \$ 4.5 million) had been sold out (some of them have been found in a storehouse in Manila, the Philippines, though it is said that the storehouse owner wouldn't return the ingots to the shipper). Also found were many credit cards, a large quantity of US dollars, and the currencies of various other countries.

Further, two of the hijackers were identified as suspects in another hijack incident. The above facts show the pirates are heavily armed, and they are multinationally syndicated.

The IMB statistics (Table 2) show the number of pirate attacks in the world from 1991 to 2000 totaled 2040, and the number in Southeast

Asia increased suddenly in the later half of the 1990's (The IMB statistics classified Vietnam in East Asia, so the present writer has amended the data).

The number of pirate attacks in the world in 2001 is 335, and 48% (161) occurred in Southeast Asia, the number in the world 2002 is 370, the number in Southeast Asia is 165 (44.6%). The sea area most frequently infested with pirates is the Indonesian waters, of which the annual total of pirate attacks was 119 in 2000 (Fig 1), 91 in 2001, and 103 in 2002.

Many Japanese and foreign ships owned by Japanese companies were among the victims, and some of their damages were serious as same as the *Alondora Rainbow's*. The spy ships of North Korea and pirate attacks become the major of attention of the Japan Coast Guard. The Japanese government is also putting a great deal of effort into the cooperation of pirate investigations with fellow ASEAN countries.⁸⁾

3. Agenda for International Cooperation to Prevent OLICs and Pirate Attacks

The present writer has introduced the spy ship incidents and pirate attacks as illustrations of non-traditional security issues. None can cope effectively with these security issues without international cooperation for the control and prevention. Information exchanges and coordinated investigations are also required. The present writer's five proposals are as follows.

First, we should study the equipments and control methods of foreign Coast Guards because recent incidents shows that the weapons of spy ship and pirates are equivalent to the military equipment, and in some cases, the patrol vessels without armour are in great peril.

One option is to develop armoured patrol vessels for the coast guard. It is said that the Japan Coast Guard is not so enthusiastic to develop armoured vessel because the Coast Guard is not the Navy.⁹⁾ Another option is to work in cooperation with the Navy (in Japan's case, Maritime Self-Defense Force: MSDF) to cope with non-traditional security issues.

According to the annual report in 2003, Japan Coast Guard patrol vessels and missile craft of the MSDF conducted joint exercises in July 2002.¹⁰⁾

In case of the United States of America, the Coast Guard and Navy work together, operating against drug-smuggling in the Caribbean Sea.¹¹⁾ The Coast Guard members board the armoured naval gunboats for the investigation, because the drug-smuggling mafia ships are equipped with heavy arms. Drug-investigation is a dangerous job, so they refer to it as the 'Caribbean Drug-War'.

Usually, two naval gunboats attack the suspicious ship from both flanks, and let the ship stop. Then the Coast Guard members board the suspicious ship for drug-investigation, while the two naval gunboats aim all guns at the ship from both sides. If the crew resists or tries to escape, the Navy gunboats would attack and sink the ship without delay.

This is one of the ideal cooperation between the Navy and Coast Guard, because the Coast Guard has no armoured gunboats to defend its own members, and the Navy has no experience and know-how for drug-investigation. The smuggler's tricks to conceal the drugs seems to be growing more shrewd year by year.

It is really difficult to spot the smugglers' disguise¹²⁾ so experienced investigators are also very important for the operation. Therefore studying foreign cases is quite significant for the Japanese government's future prevention against the escalation of drug-smuggling.

Secondly, the range of activities taken by spy ships and pirates are not limited to Japanese territorial waters or the high seas. Many of them tried to escape from the Japan Coast Guard, running neighboring countries' exclusive economic zones, or territorial waters.

International law of the sea stipulates that the Japan Coast Guard can chase the spy ships and hijacked Japanese vessels only in the high seas, so if the suspicious vessels were in Northeast Asian waters or Southeast Asian waters, our coast guard can do little for search and rescue. How do we cope with these issues?

To break the deadlock, the present writer believes that we should

borrow the wisdom from the security cooperation among the ASEAN countries. Every ASEAN country has territorial and ethnic conflicts with its neighbours, and their relationship has been long strained.

However, the ASEAN countries have avoided a war among themselves for thirty five years, because their border guards and Army officers have accumulated confidence building measures (CBMs) through border committee activities.

For example, Indonesia and Malaysia have disputed about the land border of Borneo. To make disputes complex, there have been communist guerrilla camps at the border area. If Malaysian border guard attacked and chased communist guerrillas, it was possible that they could step across the border with Indonesia.

In some cases, the misunderstanding would bring about the military clash between Malaysia and Indonesia, so the border committee dialogues between Malaysia and Indonesia concluded that both countries gave the approval each other for cross-border attacks on communist guerrillas by 5 miles.¹³⁾

This is the wisdom of ASEAN countries for not only avoiding the military clash but also coping with common threats in flexible way. Japan should study this way of threat control, and it is an important mission for the Japan Coast Guard and our Maritime Self-Defense Force to accumulate the experience of practical exchanges with the Chinese, South Korean, and ASEAN colleagues for the CBMs.

The present writer considers it the difficult mission for Japan, because our neighbours have wartime memory of the Japanese Imperial Army. However, the Japanese government should make every effort to strengthen the ties with them¹⁴⁾, otherwise the spy ships and pirates will continue to enjoy 'the freedom of the Seas'.

If we could open an emergency radio communication channel with our neighbours, or set up the rules for coordinated chase of suspicious ships, the numbers of drug-smugglers and pirate victims would sharply reduce.

Thirdly, cooperation for providing investigations infrastructure is necessary to the joint investigation among nations. The range of North

Korean spy ship activities is spread from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea and East China Sea, and the Alondra Rainbow's incident shows that pirates are internationally syndicated.

The distribution of a list of contact agencies for coast guards, and the enhancement of information exchanges among nations are indispensable.¹⁵⁾ The adoption of a common database and statistical procedure are also required.

Because the voluntary based narrations of IMB pirate reports are inaccurate in some cases, and it seems difficult to make the accurate statistics of damages and details of pirate attacks; the extent of damages, number of pirates, type of weapons, time zones of attacks, sea areas, the positions that attacks occurred such as the harbor inside, anchorage off the coast, or in passage.

For example, the number of pirate attacks against Japanese vessels in 1998 which was questioned by Nippon Foundation to the Japanese ship owners on condition of secrecy of the ship names, is nearly ten times of IMB statistics.¹⁶⁾

Fourthly, the international campaign for the development and diffusion of the ship tracking system through a satellite network such as ShipLoc and warning devices against pirates attacks are required.¹⁷⁾ The publicity work for the installation of these security devices through international cooperation is an urgent task.

Finally, we should make every effort to tighten gun-controls to fight the piracy, and to assist the developing countries with the eradication of poverty through international economic and financial cooperation¹⁸⁾, because weapon-smuggling and poverty in developing countries are the main causes of these maritime crimes.

Notes

- 1) The low intensity conflicts: the conflicts with small destructive arms, or the unsymmetrical conflicts between the state government and non state belligerent party such as the separatists movement of some ethnic group. Akira Kato, *Modern Warfare*, Chuoh Koron publisher, 1993, pp.20-44.
- 2) Japan Coast Guard, *Kaiho Journal extra issue* (December 24, 2002), pp.2-15.

- 3) *Sankei Shinbun* (June 19, 2003), p.1. The Japanese police force had got the table of random numbers of North Korea from the other Spy ship, which was washed up on the Japanese coast in October 1990, and had already made it out.
- 4) North Korean leader Kim Jong Il admitted 13 cases of Japanese abduction at the Japan North Korean Summit on September 17 2002. *The Japan Times* (Sept.18, 2002), *Asahi Shinbun* (September 18, 2002).
- 5) Japan Coast Guard, *Kaiho Journal extra issue* (December 24, 2002), pp.14-15. The Japanese government operates the Kashiwazaki Nuclear Power Station in Niigata Prefecture. The location of the power station is in the coastal area of the Sea of Japan, and the Japanese government is alert to the possible damages of sabotage. Further, Kashiwazaki was known as the spot of abduction incidents caused by North Korean Spy Ships. *Asahi Shinbun* (September 18, 2002).
- 6) ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Annual Report (1 January-31 December 1999)*, pp.12-13, *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Mar. 9, 2000), pp.28-29, *Monthly Southeast Asia*, April 2000, p.169, *The Commentary on Pirates Report of the first half of 2000*, [http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/\(Mar.2, 2001\)](http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/(Mar.2, 2001)).
- 7) The corvette: An armoured gunship with a displacement of 1000 tons or less. Many of them are equipped with surface to surface missiles.
- 8) *Asia Anti-Piracy Challenges 2000*, Regional Conference on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships, April 27-April 28, 2000, Tokyo (<http://www.jsanet.or.jp/e2-3/pi2-2-3.html>, March 2, 2001).
- 9) Kazuhisa OGAWA, *Japan can defend the territorial waters?*, Seishun Shuppansha publisher, 2002, pp.136-151.
- 10) Japan Coast Guard, *Japan Coast Guard Annual Report 2003*, Government Printer, 2003, p.154.
- 11) Author's interview with an officer of Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (Oct. 26, 2002).
- 12) In Japan's case, some smugglers fastened drugs packets to an anchor with a rope, some smugglers concealed drugs in bowling balls and fire extinguishers, and other smugglers disguised themselves as fishermen, and concealed drugs packets among loaded shellfishes.
- 13) Kazunori TAMAKI, The Security Cooperation among ASEAN Countries, *International Affairs*, February 1988, p.62.
- 14) The Japan Defense Academy accepted the first foreign students from Southeast Asian Countries in 1958. *Defense White Paper*, 1994, Japan Defence Agency, p.186. It is said that the Japan Coast Guard staff college has also started to accept ASEAN colleagues. The military and coast guard staff exchanges are also done by ASEAN Regional Forum, and the International Conference on Pirates Prevention in 2000, and other annual dialogues with the coast guards of Asia Pacific countries. <http://www.aseansec.org/> (June 19, 2003), [http://jsanet.or.jp/\(Mar. 2, 2001\)](http://jsanet.or.jp/(Mar. 2, 2001)), <http://kaiho.mlit.go.jp/>. The Maritime Self-Defense Force presided over the joint submarine search & rescue exercise: Pacific Reach with U.S.Navy and our neighbours in April 2002, and our Coast Guard practices many joint training exercises with ASEAN partners. *Monthly Southeast Asia*, May 2002, p.154, *Straits Times* (Oct. 31, 2000), *Straits Times* (Nov. 2, 2001).
- 15) We should study the proposals for prevention of terrorism by ASEAN Regional Forum for our reference. *Co-Chair's Report*, ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on Prevention

of Terrorism, Bangkok 17-19, April 2002, <http://www.aseansec.org/>(May 29, 2003). The ARF Chairman also suggested broad-based regional cooperative efforts to combat transnational organized crime, including cooperation among naval units, coastal patrol and law enforcement agencies, shipping companies and so on. *ARF Statement on Cooperation Against Piracy and Other Threats to Maritime Security*, Phnom Penh, 18 June 2003, <http://www.aseansec.org/>(June 28, 2003).

- 16) *The pirates damage report (April 15, 1999)*, <http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/> (Mar.2,2001). This gap was caused by two reasons. First, the number of Japanese ships by their owners include their ships of foreign registry. Secondly, in some cases the captains of the ships didn't report the damage to the coast guard in foreign country though they reported it to the owners because the inspection of the ships by the foreign coast guard or police force is time consuming, and the consignors hate the delayed arrival of goods to the destination.
- 17) Collect Locations Satellites, *ShipLoc Technical Overview & User Mannual*, May 1999, Revision 1.1.
- 18) Not only the ODA and financial cooperation of the governments of developed countries but also the employment and trade of the private enterprises of those countries are quite important.

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