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**The Privatisation of Maritime Security-  
Maritime Security in Southeast Asia:  
Between a rock and a hard place?**

**Working Paper No.141**

**February 2007**

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A revised version of this paper is published in Thomas Jäger and Gerhard Kümmel (eds)(2007) *Private Military and Security Companies*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag

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National Library of Australia.  
ISSN: 1037-4612



## **INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>**

In the past few years, an increasing number of Private Security Companies (PSCs – also sometimes referred to as Private Military Companies, PMCs<sup>2</sup>) has emerged and is offering and conducting maritime security services in Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> These companies offer services in addition to security provided by Southeast Asian states and their government agencies. This paper explores the role of private companies in securing vessels, ports, offshore energy installations and fishing grounds across Southeast Asia, and discusses whether or not PSCs are an alternative or viable supplement to government efforts to protect national waters, shipping lanes and other maritime assets.

Initially, the paper explains why the maritime environment is of such importance in Southeast Asia and gives an overview of possible threats to maritime security. It then reviews the current security arrangements in place in the region, looking at resources of government law enforcement agencies, the controversial nature of some of their operations, and outlines regional cooperation in place to combat crime and other maritime security threats. The paper then describes the emergence of private companies operating in the maritime sector in Southeast Asia, details the different types of services they offer and briefly discusses the factors which have led to the growth of PSCs offering maritime services in recent years. It then explores the role played by PSCs today and their impact within and beyond Southeast Asia and discusses problems and concerns about PSCs and the maritime services they offer. The paper concludes by comparing the benefits and shortcomings of the work conducted by PSCs with efforts made by governments in the region to secure the oceans, arguing that both private as well as government initiatives can be problematic and need improvement in order to offer the best possible answer to maritime security threats in Southeast Asia.

## **MARITIME SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THREATS TO SECURITY**

Southeast Asia is home to important sea-lanes and straits, including the Malacca Straits, one of the busiest waterways in the world. More than 50,000 vessels on international routes transit the Malacca Straits each year, which connects the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea. Tankers carrying oil from the Middle East to countries such as China and Japan, which rely on imported oil, are just some of the vessels passing through the straits each day. Some of the world's busiest ports are also located in Southeast Asia or rely on maritime traffic through the region's waters. Singapore harbour, for instance, has the largest container turnover rate in the world after Hong Kong, followed by the Chinese ports of Shanghai and Shenzhen. Many of

















































