

Amateurs behind Malaysian tanker hijack, says report
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The pirates holding the MT Orkim Harmony appeared to be amateurs, who have no more interest in the cargo but are more concerned with their escape, The Star reports.

Quoting navy chief Admiral Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Jaafar, the report today said the eight pirates who took control of the tanker were "practically begging" for the Malaysian authorities to let them go.

"We asked for their demands and all they want is for us to give them a boat, water and food, and to let them leave. But we can't do that," he was quoted as saying.

The pirates, dubbed the "part-timers on a maiden voyage" by the navy chief, were armed with pistols and parangs. They said they would not harm the 22-member crew if their demands were met.

The English-language daily said the pirates were no longer interested in the ship or the RM21 million worth of RON95 petrol (6,000 metric tonnes).

Royal Malaysia Navy vessel KD Terengganu which is shadowing the tanker in Vietnamese waters are in contact via radio with the pirates.

Some 15 assets were used in the search and rescue effort involving authorities from Malaysia and Australia to find the tanker, which was reported missing at 8.57pm last Thursday while en route to Kuantan from Malacca.

The tanker was spotted at 3.45pm on Wednesday by Australian's anti-submarine and maritime surveillance aircraft P-3C Orion at the 210nm off Pulau Redang near the Gulf of Thailand.

There are sixteen Malaysian crew members on board.

The hijacking incident last Thursday is the fifth incident reported this year in Malaysian waters.

Naval Region 1 Commander Rear Admiral Datuk Azhari Abdul Rashid in a statement earlier said the vessel had been repainted and its name changed from Orkim Harmony to Kim Harmon to avoid detection.

Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) director-general (operations) Datuk Ahmad Puzi Abdul Kahar (pic, right) yesterday said attempts were being made to negotiate with the pirates holding the ship to ensure the safety and release of its crew.

Today, navy chief Aziz was reported as saying that the National Security Council

would be taking over negotiations with the pirates. – June 19, 2015.

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