

USCG Releases New Plan to Combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing



A boarding team from the USCGC Sequoia (WLB 215) approaches a Taiwanese fishing vessel in the Pacific Ocean, March 13, 2020. The crew undertook a fisheries patrol as part of joint efforts for Operation Rai Balang under the Forum Fisheries Agency. U.S. Coast Guard / USCGC Sequoia

WASHINGTON – The Coast Guard has released a new strategy to enhance global safety, security, and stewardship of the maritime domain by combatting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, Coast Guard Headquarters said in a Sept. 17 release.

IUU fishing is a collection of dishonest fishing practices, both on the high seas and in areas within national jurisdiction, that threatens global geo-political security and prosperity and weakens rules-based order; especially as the worldwide demand for fish as a protein source continues to grow.

It's a huge problem. According to the strategy, one in five fish caught around the world are from IUU, resulting in tens of billions of lost revenue for legal fishers each year.

This IUU Fishing Strategic Outlook announces the Coast Guard's commitment to leading an international effort to combat illegal exploitation of the ocean's fish stocks and protect our national interests.

"The Coast Guard's IUU Fishing Strategic Outlook outlines the service's efforts to combat the scourge of IUU fishing over the next decade. We are committed to working with our allies and like-minded partners to strengthen the international

fisheries enforcement regime and counter this pervasive threat,” said Adm. Karl L. Schultz, Commandant of the Coast Guard.

“As a recognized world leader in maritime safety, security and environmental stewardship, the Coast Guard has a responsibility to help build a coalition of partners willing to identify and address IUU fishing bad actors and model responsible global maritime behavior.”

The Coast Guard has been the lead agency for at-sea enforcement of living marine resource laws for more than 150 years. The service will continue to lead global efforts to build a multilateral coalition to detect and deter IUU fishing on the high seas and in the exclusive economic zones of partner nations in order to disrupt the corrupt cycle of influence that enables illegal operations.

Working with partners in the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, the Department of State, and the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard will advance a whole-of-government effort to promote economic prosperity and drive stability, legitimacy, and order in the maritime domain.

Schultz and officials from the Department of Defense, NOAA and the State Department appeared at a prerecorded panel discussion on Sept. 17 about IUU, hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“It [IUU] really has replaced the focus on counter narcotics, it has replaced the focus on piracy,” he said.

With that said, he noted the Coast Guard is usually stretched thin, so “this isn’t about the Coast Guard being the fish cops across the globe. This is about synchronizing efforts” with other agencies and allies.

Adm. Craig S. Faller, commander of U.S. Southern Command, said he speaks with defense ministers from the Caribbean, South

America, Ecuador, Chile and others and “this is in their top three, if not the top. ... This is economics, and it’s threatening their livelihoods.”

Technology can help monitor illegal fishing, along with more information sharing, the officials said. Schultz said a Southcom ship recently helped Ecuador locate a 300-ship Chinese fleet operating just outside of Ecuador’s waters, and which was probably engaging in illegal fishing.

Boats from China and Taiwan make up about 60% of all IUU fishing, said Dr. Whitley Saumweber, who moderated the event.

“It’s right to focus on China because of their dominance, but we should not forget they are not the only actors in this space,” he said.

Additional information on the Coast Guard’s IUU Fishing Strategic outlook can be found at – <https://www.uscg.mil/IUUFishing>