

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD



ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING STRATEGIC OUTLOOK



SEPTEMBER 2020

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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THE UNITED STATES
COAST GUARD'S

VISION

TO COMBAT
IUU FISHING

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THE COMMANDANT

OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD



At-sea enforcement of the Nation's living marine resource laws is an enduring U.S. Coast Guard mission. Working with our partners in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, our enforcement efforts have upheld the biological and economic sustainability of our Nation's marine fisheries. The benefits of this mission abound: fishermen's livelihoods are protected, ports in which catch is distributed remain economically robust, and U.S. seafood consumers are able to support an industry dedicated to the long-term sustainability of U.S. fisheries.

Yet not all maritime nations have the capability to surveil their sovereign waters or the moral conscience to police their fleets; this lack of shared responsibility creates opportunities for exploitation in the form of **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing**. This exploitation erodes both regional and national security, undermines maritime rules-based order, jeopardizes food access and availability, and destroys legitimate economies.

IUU fishing has replaced piracy as the leading global maritime security threat. If IUU fishing continues unchecked, we can expect deterioration of fragile coastal States and increased tension among foreign-fishing Nations, threatening geo-political stability around the world.

The 2017 United States National Security Strategy outlines the impacts of these global threats, highlighting the importance of the rule of law, respect for sovereignty, and freedom of the seas to ensure the security of the United States and like-minded partners. This IUU Fishing Strategic Outlook announces the U.S. Coast Guard's commitment to leading a global effort to combat illegal exploitation of the ocean's fish stocks and protect our national interests. This Outlook establishes three lines of effort critical to achieving success: (1) Promote targeted, effective, intelligence-driven enforcement operations, (2) Counter predatory and irresponsible State behavior, and (3) Expand multilateral fisheries enforcement cooperation.

The U.S Coast Guard is prepared to take an enhanced leadership role in this effort, but we will not be successful alone. Playing to our strengths of working with intergovernmental and international partners, we seek to galvanize a coalition to confront coercive and antagonistic activity together and uphold our shared peaceful and humanitarian values. We know such international cooperation works: for 25 years, the six nations which contribute to the enforcement efforts of Operation North Pacific Guard have confronted illegal high seas driftnet fishing operations. Our collective efforts have been overwhelmingly successful in nearly eliminating illegal high seas driftnet fishing in the North Pacific Ocean.

Working collaboratively, we will expand a network of like-minded partners and bring light to the shadows where IUU fishing exists worldwide. Together, we will strengthen global maritime security, regional stability, and economic prosperity.

Semper Paratus.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karl L. Schultz".

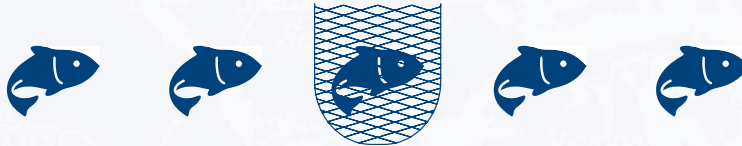
Admiral Karl L. Schultz

ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING STATISTICS

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is a pervasive, far-reaching security threat.

1 in 5 fish

Caught around the world is thought to have originated from IUU fishing.¹



GLOBAL IMPACTS OF IUU FISHING

3.3 billion

People, nearly half the world's population, rely on fish for 20% of their animal protein.² IUU fishing removes access to this valuable protein source, particularly to the most vulnerable coastal States.



\$401 billion

First sale value of global fish production in 2018.² IUU Fishing results in tens of billions of dollars of lost revenue to legal fishers every year.



93%

Of the world's major marine fish stocks are classified as fully exploited, overexploited, or significantly depleted.² IUU fishing undermines the sustainable management of these resources, pushing them to the limits of their capacity.



DOMESTIC IMPACTS OF IUU FISHING

80%

Of fish eaten in the U.S. are imported.¹ Without effective traceability and monitoring, illegally caught fish around the world can enter the U.S. market.



\$5.6 billion

Value of U.S. commercial fisheries in 2018. When IUU fish enter the marketplace, legal U.S. fishers are disadvantaged.³

- 1 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (2020). *Fishwatch: U.S. Seafood Facts*. Retrieved from www.fishwatch.gov/sustainable-seafood/the-global-picture
- 2 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2020). *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture*. Rome. doi:10.4060/ca9229en
- 3 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (2020, February 21). *Fisheries of the United States, 2018*. Retrieved from NOAA Fisheries: www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/fisheries-united-states-2018

I.

Executive Summary

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is a pervasive security threat to U.S. national interests. By undermining international agreements and fisheries conservation measures, IUU fishing jeopardizes global food security, with pronounced destabilizing effects on vulnerable coastal States. IUU fishing robs legal fishers of their livelihoods, endangering the economic security of all nations with a maritime boundary. Industrial scale fishing vessels deployed by irresponsible and aggressive flag States can increase geo-political tensions, undermining the rights of nations to exercise their sovereignty and benefit from their economic resources. A lack of accountability by these flag States to enforce responsible maritime behavior on their fleets further enables illegal fishing actors to violate international rules-based order and opens the door to transnational criminal organizations to use profits from IUU fishing to monetize a suite of other illegal activities.

It is the responsibility of all nations to deter IUU fishing activity within their capacity and capability, particularly vessels under their own flag. The U.S. Coast Guard has always sought to ensure safety, security, and stewardship at sea. Under this IUU Fishing Strategic Outlook, the U.S. Coast Guard will apply our broad authorities, capabilities, capacities, and partnerships to be a global leader in the fight against IUU fishing. Working with partners in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Department of State (DOS), and the Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Coast Guard will uphold a whole-of-government effort to advance national interests in the maritime domain and promote economic prosperity. Through enhanced engagement with like-minded nations and key maritime stakeholders, the U.S. Coast Guard is ready to spearhead the global fight against IUU fishing. We will do so by pursuing the following Lines of Effort:

Promote Targeted, Effective, Intelligence-Driven Enforcement Operations. The U.S. Coast Guard will lead global efforts to detect and deter IUU fishing on the high seas and in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of partner nations. Through the innovative use of intelligence, technology, data analysis, and information sharing, we will identify, target, and interdict illicit actors in the maritime domain in order to disrupt corrupt cycles of influence that enable illegal operations.

Counter Predatory and Irresponsible State Behavior. The U.S. Coast Guard will prioritize operations and engagement in areas where our efforts are most critical to demonstrate U.S. commitment and model responsible behavior. The U.S. Coast Guard will shine a light on the activities of those who violate international rules-based order, exposing and holding accountable the most egregious predatory actors.

Expand Multilateral Fisheries Enforcement Cooperation. The U.S. Coast Guard will build and maintain lasting cooperation with key partners to empower regional resource conservation and management. Working with U.S. and international partners, the U.S. Coast Guard will assist at-risk coastal States and like-minded nations to develop and maintain their own robust counter-IUU fishing capacity, bolstering their governance and enforcement systems and affirming the United States as a preferred partner. Through targeted, persistent, and collaborative efforts, we will sustain and strengthen connections with partner nations supporting international oceans governance.

IUU FISHING, EXPLAINED

IUU fishing is a collection of dishonest fishing practices, both on the high seas and in areas within national jurisdiction.

IUU fishing includes fishing that is:

- Illegal - in contravention of existing laws and regulations;
- Unreported - not reported or misreported; and/or
- Unregulated - executed by vessels without nationality and/or conducted in areas where the flag State is not a party to international agreements or in areas where fishery management measures do not exist.



II.

Today's Realities

Healthy fish stocks underpin the food security of coastal communities, maritime regions, and entire nation-states. The sustainable harvest of these resources is directly linked to economic security – both for the United States and for nations around the globe, many of whom rely on revenue from fish for substantial portions of their gross domestic product. However, today the world's fish stocks are under stress not only from growing consumption demand and changing ecosystems, but also from deliberate efforts to exploit gaps in existing governance structures. Illegal transshipment operations, heavily-subsidized distant water fishing fleets, and nations who choose to systematically engage in IUU fishing amplify these stressors and catalyze additional criminal activity which further undermines maritime rules-based order. This cycle of destabilization has global reach, threatening the national security of countries worldwide.

With today's interconnected fisheries and seafood markets, combating IUU fishing requires coordinated global action. The United States, as both a major consumer and a major producer of seafood products, must continue to lead efforts to neutralize the IUU fishing threat.



IUU Fishing – A Pervasive Security, Economic, and Environmental Threat

The opaque nature of IUU fishing makes it difficult to quantify its full economic impact. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), between 11 and 26 million metric tons of fish are caught illegally each year. By avoiding the operational costs associated with sustainable fishing practices, fishers, companies, and nations that engage in IUU fishing receive economic benefit over legitimate actors by exceeding harvesting limits and disregarding other conservation and management measures. As a result, law-abiding U.S. fishers and seafood



industries are disadvantaged when illegally caught products enter the marketplace.⁴ Globally, economic losses from IUU fishing are difficult to quantify, but there is little disagreement that it is in the billions, or even tens of billions, of U.S. dollars each year, disproportionately impacting some of the poorest countries in the world.

IUU fishing practices not only undermine the economic prosperity of lawful fishers today; they also rob future

4 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (2015). *Action Plan for Implementing the Task Force Recommendations*. Presidential Task Force on Combatting IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud. Retrieved from www.iuufishing.noaa.gov/Portals/33/noaa_taskforce_report_final.pdf





generations of fishers of their livelihood by putting fish stocks at greater risk of collapse. IUU fishing erodes the validity of rules and arrangements made through Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and other international forums that seek to sustainably and equitably manage fish harvests among member nations. Undocumented harvests from IUU fishing weaken these legitimate agreements and place undue strain on important fish stocks. Illegal fishing methods and gear used by IUU fishing perpetrators can also destroy habitats and result in excessive and wasteful bycatch. These practices destroy not only the resource today, but also its ability to be sustainably harvested for years and decades to come. Left without alternatives, these conditions entice more and more fishers to seek alternative sources of income such as piracy, drug trafficking, and human trafficking, creating a dangerous downward cycle furthering regional instability.



Today, the fight against IUU fishing is not just an economic or conservation mission, but one of strategic national importance. IUU fishing fundamentally erodes port and maritime security and exacerbates existing gaps in maritime governance. Criminal elements frequently use similar trade routes, landing sites, and vessels for trafficking arms, migrants, drugs, and other contraband.⁵ Maritime disorder created by IUU fishing also has global reach, as rival states are increasingly using resource extraction as an instrument of national power.

Systemic disregard of IUU fishing normalizes illegal behavior and erodes governance structures that foster peace and stability. In these ways, IUU fishing is a destabilizing threat to our collective global security and prosperity.

⁵ Department of State. (2019). *Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing*. Office of Marine Conservation. Retrieved from www.state.gov/key-topics-of-fice-of-marine-conservation/illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing/

“Systemic disregard of IUU fishing normalizes illegal behavior and erodes governance structures that foster peace and stability.”

Illegal and Unreported Transshipment

Transshipment involves the transfer of catch from a fishing vessel to a refrigerated cargo vessel, or reefer, far from port. Legal transshipment provides important benefits to the fishing industry by consolidating fuel costs, moving product into the global market more efficiently, and providing a mechanism for resupplying fishing vessels at sea. Illegal and unreported at-sea transshipment enables a significant portion of IUU fishing activity worldwide by obscuring the actual source of fish catches and providing a pathway for illegally caught fish to enter the global seafood market. Illegal and unreported transshipments not only amplify existing challenges with traceability and transparency in this complex industry, they have also been linked to human trafficking and can allow vessel captains to keep their crews at-sea nearly indefinitely, in some cases resulting in de facto slavery. Globally, transshipment management rules vary widely with uneven levels of both oversight and enforcement. Publicly available documentation from authorities can also be difficult to access. Of the 17 RFMOs with convention waters covering the high seas, only one has a full ban on transshipment activity while five have implemented partial bans. Likewise, only 13 RFMOs have mandated some form of vessel tracking and just 10 have carriage requirements for an onboard observer.



Distant Water Fishing Fleets

Distant Water Fishing (DWF) fleets, which conduct fishing activities on an industrial scale in waters far from their home countries, have been closely associated with IUU fishing. These vessels, owned both by individuals and corporate entities, are often subject to weak, negligent, or intentionally complicit management by their flag States. Many DWF fleets are heavily subsidized by their home governments, which can diminish true fishing costs and incentivize unsustainable fishing practices. Predator states can also use DWF fleets to exploit gaps between governance structures and operate in areas where there is little or no effective enforcement presence, deliberately undermining maritime rules-based order.

Some governments have demonstrated a lack of political will to fully acknowledge and address IUU fishing problems in their DWF fleets, selfishly placing their own steady supply of fish above preserving the marine ecosystems, food supplies, and economic stability of other nations. A 2019 Stimson Center research study found that in the past several decades, the practice of DWF has expanded in size and reach across the ocean and around the world. DWF is heavily dominated by just five fleets, which make up 90% of global effort. China and Taiwan represented nearly 60% of all global distant water fishing effort in other countries' waters from 2015 to 2017. Japan, South Korea, and Spain's DWF fleets each represented 10%. (The U.S. DWF fleet was the sixth largest and amounted to 1.4% of the global effort.⁶) The international community, DWF states, coastal nations, and the fishing industry must collectively improve transparency and accountability for DWF fleets while taking necessary steps to safeguard global fisheries for future generations.⁷

CONCERNS WITH CHINA'S FISHING PRACTICES

The People's Republic of China has the largest distant water fishing fleet in the world. NOAA's 2019 biennial IUU Fishing Report to Congress⁸ identified a troubling expanse of alleged violations by Chinese-flagged fishing vessels, describing multiple instances where they have been found illegally fishing in the EEZs of coastal states around the globe, from the Western and Central Pacific to the coasts of Africa and South America. The 2019 Report also raised concerns over the number of stateless fishing vessels in the Northern Pacific displaying characteristics of Chinese registration. Additionally, the People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia, estimated to include more than 3,000 vessels, actively carries out aggressive behavior on the high seas and in sovereign waters of other nations to coerce and intimidate legitimate fishers in support of the Chinese Communist Party's long term maritime strategic goals.

China must exercise more responsible flag state control over its vessels, including its DWF, and demonstrate that it is taking the necessary steps to ensure compliance with international norms and governance structures. Sovereign nations must be allowed to benefit from their own economic resources. Disregard for this sovereignty and territorial integrity by Chinese and other IUU fishing perpetrators not only threatens the stability of nations who rely on marine resources for food security and economic development, it is a direct violation of international rules-based order.

- 6 Stimson Center. (2019). *The Implications of Distant Water Fishing Fleets*. Retrieved from www.stimson.org/2019/implications-distant-water-fishing-fleets/
- 7 Stimson Center. (2018). *Castig a Wider Net: The Security Implications of Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fishing*. Retrieved from www.stimson.org/2018/casting-wider-net-security-implications-illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing
- 8 NOAA Fisheries. (2019). *Improving International Fisheries Management*. Retrieved from www.fisheries.noaa.gov/foreign/international-affairs/identification-iuu-fishing-activities

Flags of Convenience

For decades, corrupt vessel owners have used Flags of Convenience to circumvent laws, taxes, and maritime safety standards. Instead of flying the flag of the vessel owner's home state, owners who use Flags of Convenience frequently register their ships in a country with an 'open registry'. Many countries with open registries have substandard policies for equipment safety, fair labor, taxation, safe navigation, environmental protection, and law enforcement. In this way, Flags of Convenience provide substantial loopholes for dishonest operators, and economic advantage to owners seeking to avoid the cost of regulatory compliance in their home country. Transnational criminal organizations also use Flags of Convenience to avoid international fisheries laws and agreements, frequently fishing over and above official quotas assigned to their registry nation.

IUU Fishing & Associated Criminal Activity

The impact of IUU fishing on an industrial scale can result in poor socio-economic conditions of fishers and fishing communities, making them increasingly vulnerable to transnational organized crime and other forms of criminal activity. The vulnerabilities result from a general lack of governance and rules-based order; including a lack of at-sea surveillance, a lack of transparency of beneficial vessel ownership and international records, and a lack of ability and/or willingness of certain flag States to enforce their criminal jurisdiction. Fishers are often recruited by organized criminal groups due to their skills and knowledge of the sea, and fishing vessels have been used for the purpose of smuggling migrants, conveying illegal drugs (or providing support to drug-laden vessels), illicit trafficking in weapons, and acts of terrorism.

“The vulnerabilities result from a general lack of governance and rules-based order; including a lack of at-sea surveillance...”





Status of Global Fish Stocks

Today, fish stocks are under severe pressure. The 2020 FAO State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture estimated that 96 million metric tons of fish were harvested in 2018. While this volume of global capture fisheries production has remained relatively consistent for the past 30 years, the worldwide fraction of fish stocks being harvested within sustainable levels has decreased significantly. Today, 93% of the world's major marine fish stocks are classified as either fully exploited, overexploited, or significantly depleted.

Stress on fish stocks is partially caused by a rise in demand. Since 1961, the average annual increase in global food fish consumption (3.1%) has outpaced population growth (1.6%). In 2018, fish consumption was second only to poultry in global meat consumption—exceeding the consumption of meat from all other terrestrial animals combined. World fish consumption is expected to continue to increase, reaching a total volume of 201 million tons of fish by 2030. As the



While this volume of global capture fisheries production has remained relatively consistent for the past 30 years, the worldwide fraction of fish stocks being harvested within sustainable levels has decreased significantly.

population continues to grow and food demand increases, fishing pressure on high seas, migratory, and transboundary fish stocks in particular will continue to intensify.

Changes in global ocean conditions are also expected to affect total fish catch potential over the next decade. Projections of the degree of impact vary geographically. In the Arctic Region, changing ice conditions are enabling expanded economic activity, including commercial fisheries, in areas where they had not previously been possible. Fish stocks are expected to continue to shift northward, creating potential enforcement challenges to the current international prohibition on Arctic fishing. In tropical regions - where many countries are highly fisheries-dependent - more negative impacts to fish stock distributions are predicted over the coming decades. Countries vary widely in their national capacity to adapt to changes in where and how they collect their catch. Without the ability of industry to alter fishing practices and locations, and the ability of governments to support this transition, nations will be further challenged in their quest to secure food and livelihood for their citizens.

III.

U.S. Coast Guard's Enduring Role in Combatting IUU Fishing



The U.S. Coast Guard has been the lead agency in the United States for at-sea enforcement of living marine resource laws for more than 150 years. As the only agency with the infrastructure and authority to project a law enforcement presence throughout the 3.36 million square mile U.S. EEZ and in key areas of the high seas, the U.S. Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to combat IUU fishing and uphold the rule of law at sea.



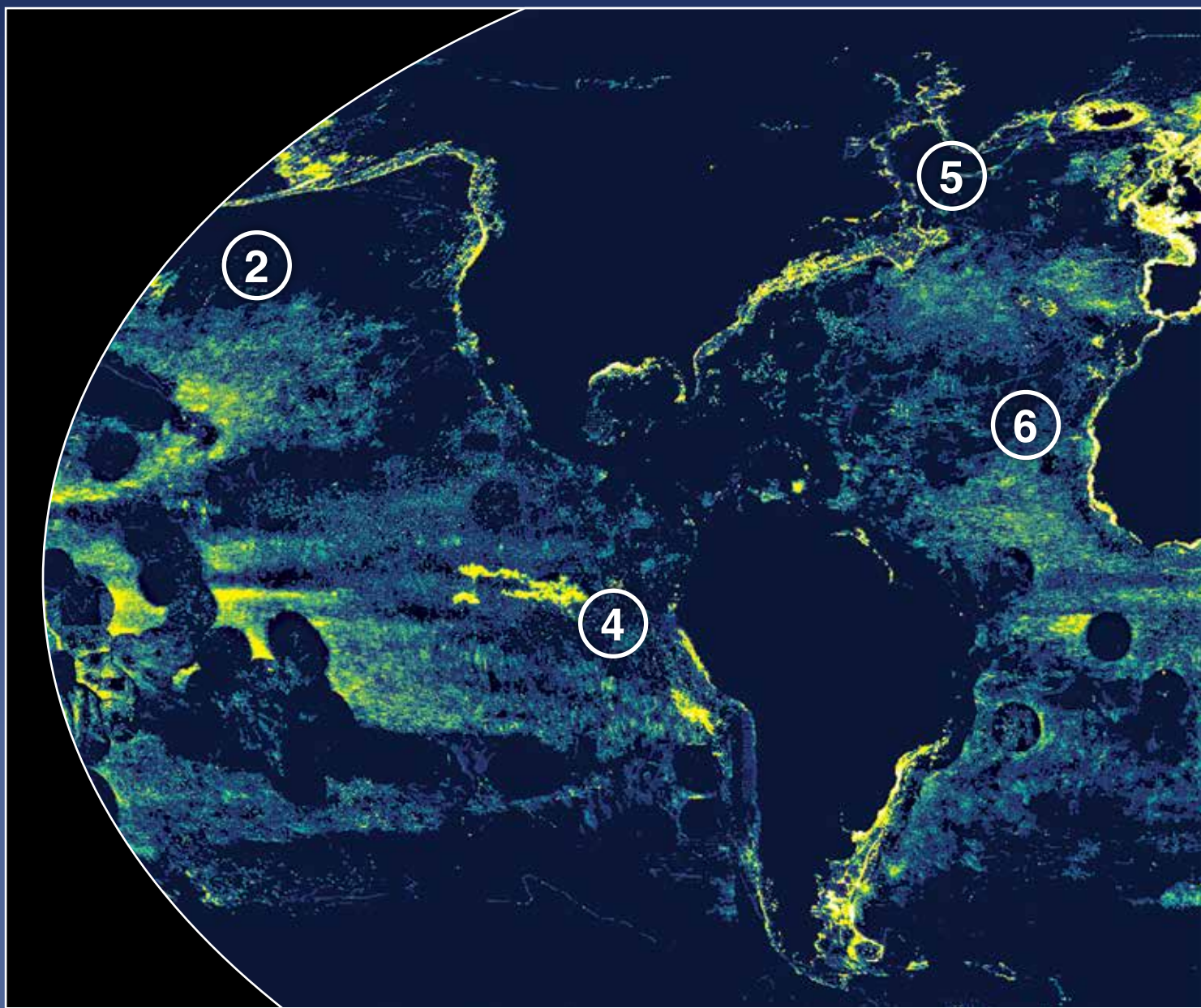
Ocean Guardian, the U.S. Coast Guard's Fisheries Enforcement Strategic Plan, has guided effective and professional at-sea enforcement for decades to advance national goals for the conservation and management of living marine resources and their environment. *Ocean Guardian* focuses the U.S. Coast Guard's efforts on three strategic priorities: protect the U.S. EEZ from foreign encroachment, enforce domestic living marine resource laws, and ensure compliance with international agreements. This Strategic Outlook complements *Ocean Guardian* by articulating the global reach of the IUU fishing problem, its threat to national security, and the U.S. Coast Guard's role in combatting it. It provides a holistic U.S. Coast Guard approach to combatting IUU fishing, incorporating not only at-sea enforcement, but also vital operations ashore to include intelligence targeting and information sharing, legal support, and policy development necessary to inform operations and advance United States priorities that uphold rules-based order in the maritime domain.



Today, the world's oceans require a global approach to preserve territorial integrity and international norms, maintain an unimpeded flow of commerce, and uphold freedom of use and access to shared resources. U.S. Coast Guard efforts to counter IUU fishing contribute directly to broader efforts in the National Security and National Defense Strategies to ensure rules-based order is upheld in the maritime domain. These same efforts also uphold free and open systems of governance that enable legal access to fisheries. In the face of increasing challenges to global food security and the growing demand for marine resources, the U.S. Coast Guard will advance global efforts to confront IUU fishing to preserve the long-term strategic and economic viability of global fish stocks.



USCG COUNTER-IUU FISHING



1 Pacific Quadrilateral Defense Coordination Group:

The U.S. Coast Guard serves as the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command representative to the Quadrilateral Defense Coordination Group (QUAD), a collaborative effort by defense and security agencies from Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States to develop multilateral approaches to enhance maritime security in the South Pacific. Cooperation through the QUAD has been critical to the advancement of rules-based order in Oceania.

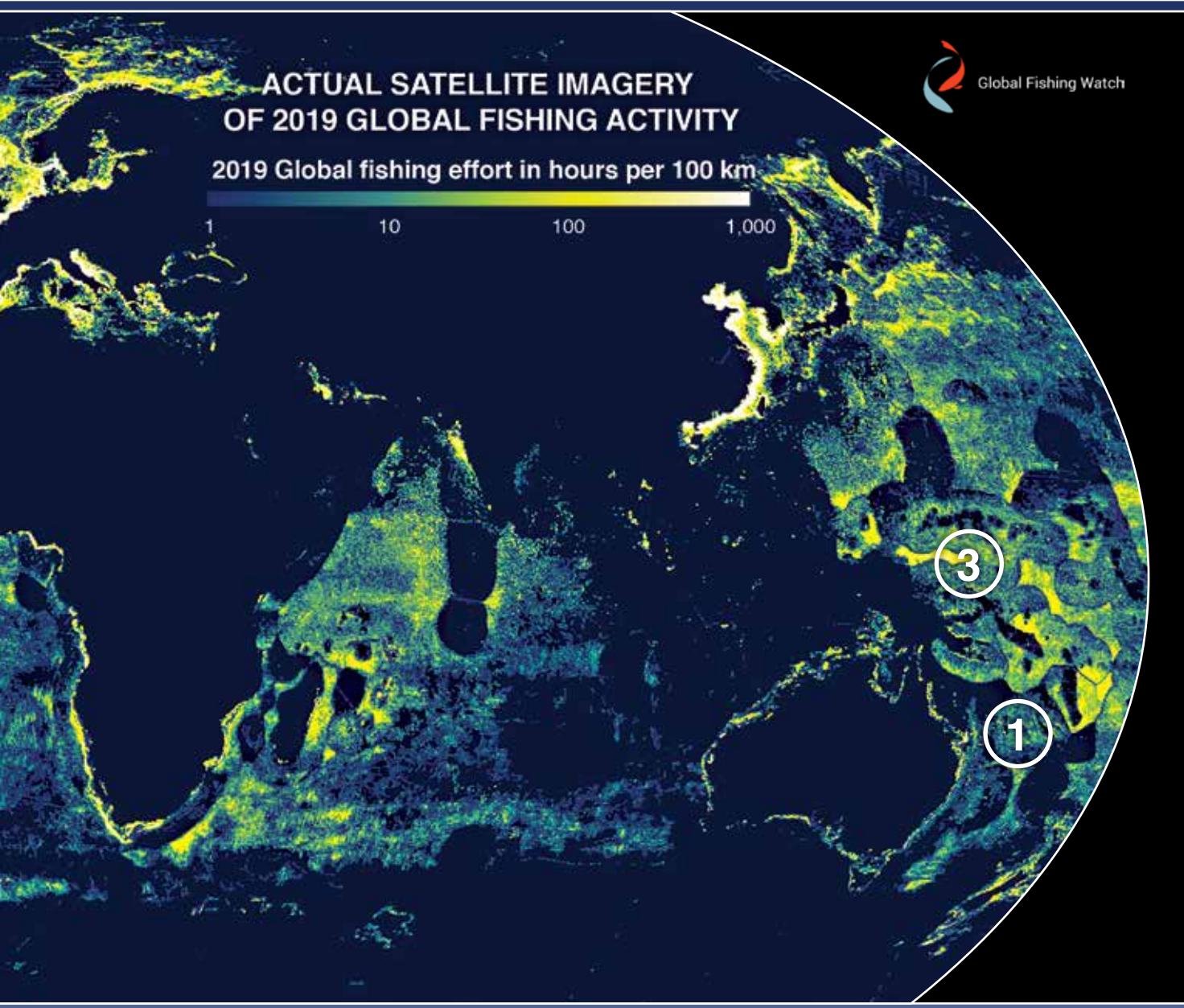
2 Operation North Pacific Guard:

For over 25 years, the U.S. Coast Guard has been at the forefront of combating IUU fishing through Operation North Pacific Guard, a multinational enforcement operation in partnership with Canada, Japan, South Korea, Russia and China. Originally executed to detect and interdict vessels deploying illegal high seas driftnets, the operation has evolved to tackle all IUU fishing threats in the North Pacific Ocean.

3 Pacific Island Bilateral Enforcement Agreements:

The U.S. Coast Guard partners with Pacific Island Nations through bilateral enforcement agreements, also known as shiprider agreements. These agreements allow partner nations to enforce their own domestic laws alongside a U.S. Coast Guard vessel or boarding team and, in doing so, support the development of partner nation capabilities in combating IUU fishing and sovereignty protection.

OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS



4 Enduring Partners Meeting New Threats:

The U.S. Coast Guard has long partnered with the U.S. Southern Command and Joint Interagency Task Force South to combat illegal drug smuggling in the Eastern Pacific region. As the IUU fishing threat expands the U.S. Coast Guard and DOD continue to cooperate with regional partners like the Republic of Ecuador to fight against illegal fishing and foster stability in the region.

5 U.S. / Canada Bilateral Cooperation:

The United States has a long, steadfast partnership with Canada to sustainably manage transboundary fisheries like salmon and tuna. Canada continues to be a leading partner in fisheries enforcement and is committed to increasing their resource investments in intelligence-driven enforcement operations (like Operation North Pacific Guard) and joint U.S./Canadian enforcement patrols in support of the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization.

6 Africa Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership:

The U.S. Coast Guard, in cooperation with U.S. Africa Command, conducts training, exercises, and combined law enforcement operations as a part of the Africa Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership. These engagements promote regional stability, self-governance, and economic development in the territorial seas and exclusive economic zones of African partner nations.

IV.

Line of Effort 1: Promote Targeted, Effective, Intelligence-Driven Enforcement Operations

U.S. Coast Guard at-sea enforcement operations enhance maritime governance by detecting and deterring IUU fishing on the high seas. By documenting and reporting IUU fishing activity, U.S. Coast Guard efforts enliven the process for RFMOs and the international community to hold flag States accountable to address IUU fishing by their vessels. The U.S. Coast Guard will coordinate across the U.S. Government to target areas susceptible to IUU fishing and otherwise increase our law enforcement presence on the high seas and in the EEZs of partner nations



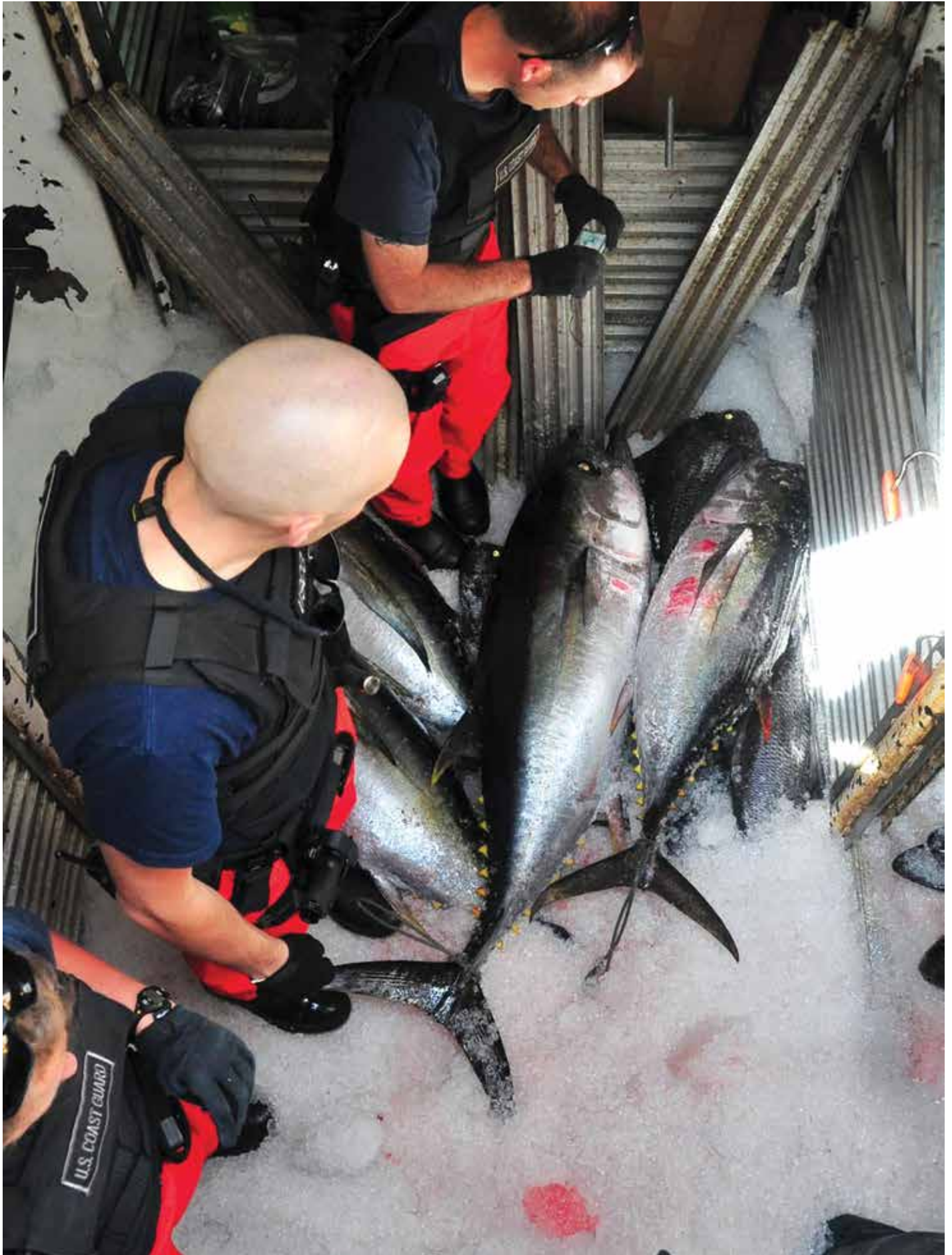


IUU fishing activities can be adaptable, highly mobile, and increasingly sophisticated as illicit actors attempt to find and exploit gaps and seams in international fisheries governance and enforcement systems. Vast ocean spaces and insufficient Maritime Domain Awareness create shadows where illicit actors thrive.

Effective counter-IUU fishing operations must also be supported by robust intelligence information in order to most effectively identify, target, and interdict illicit actors in the maritime domain. As a member of the Intelligence Community, the U.S. Coast Guard will enable, support, and inform counter-IUU fishing operations through the innovative use of intelligence, technology, data analysis, and information sharing. The U.S. Coast Guard will enhance our law enforcement presence and advance intelligence- and data-driven operations to target areas susceptible to IUU fishing by:

- Deploying tailored force packages that meet regional mission requirements;
- Leveraging Intelligence Community capabilities and innovative technology to analyze, consolidate, and share enforcement data to target illicit operators and flag States complicit in condoning illegal fishing activity;
- Streamlining processes for information sharing related to maritime enforcement and port security within the U.S. inter-agency and with foreign partners;
- Pushing intelligence information to the widest audience, prioritizing unclassified information in order to uncover vessel beneficial ownership, criminal organizations, and flag States that are actively undermining global fisheries management; and
- Training, developing, and maintaining robust counter-IUU fishing expertise throughout the U.S. Coast Guard workforce, including increasing the number of multi-mission personnel able to conduct counter IUU fishing enforcement as part of their assignment, to enable our own mission execution and support the building of partner nation capacity.







V.

Line of Effort 2: Counter Predatory and Irresponsible State Behavior



Predatory State behavior is the intentional and aggressive violation of the sovereignty of other nations in pursuit of national objectives. Irresponsible State behavior is the willingness to defy maritime governance, and the failure to require vessels flying the State's flag to comply with international norms. Predatory and irresponsible nations that turn a blind eye to IUU fishing distort markets with aggressive economic policies, undermine free and open democracies, challenge security and prosperity, and destabilize at-risk nations around the globe. Predatory nations seek to expand the reaches of their own state-driven economic models and grow their power at the expense of the sovereignty of others.

The U.S. Coast Guard will confront the actions of predatory and irresponsible State actors by promoting partnerships with at-risk coastal States and like-minded nations. This will affirm the United States as a preferred partner while shining a light on the activities of those who violate international rules and norms. Deterring IUU fishing and disrupting corrupt cycles of influence that enable these illegal operations requires long-term commitment, persistent presence, and influence by legitimate authorities. The U.S. Coast Guard excels in bringing human-to-human partnerships to confront complex maritime challenges and is uniquely positioned to advance U.S. strategic objectives and combat the destabilizing forces of IUU fishing nations by:

- Targeting our operations and engagement in priority regions and countries;
- Confronting the actions of predatory and irresponsible nations and raising international community awareness of destabilizing influences that threaten vulnerable States;
- Leveraging existing resources, enforcement tools, and legal authorities to coordinate efforts alongside partner nations to combat IUU fishing and associated illegal trade, including weapons, drugs, and human trafficking; and
- Building partnerships with the private sector-including with universities; non-governmental organizations; nonprofit research organizations; the seafood industry; and the technology, transportation, and logistics sectors-to leverage new and existing technologies and data analytics to identify and address major IUU fishing trends and threats.

VI.

Line of Effort 3: Expand Multilateral Fisheries Enforcement Cooperation

The United States is party to multiple international agreements for the management of transboundary and highly migratory fish stocks. As the primary U.S. agency responsible for monitoring at-sea compliance with these agreements, the U.S. Coast Guard must continue to work with international partners to collectively improve and uphold these agreements, including through joint operations with partners who possess robust, capable enforcement forces.



Gaps in U.S. and partner nation presence, combined with limited enforcement capacity and governance structures in at-risk coastal nations, create opportunities for predators to amplify their influence and undermine regional stability. Through targeted and persistent engagement, the U.S. Coast Guard will strengthen and build multi-lateral, multi-national coalitions of like-minded partners to combat IUU fishing.

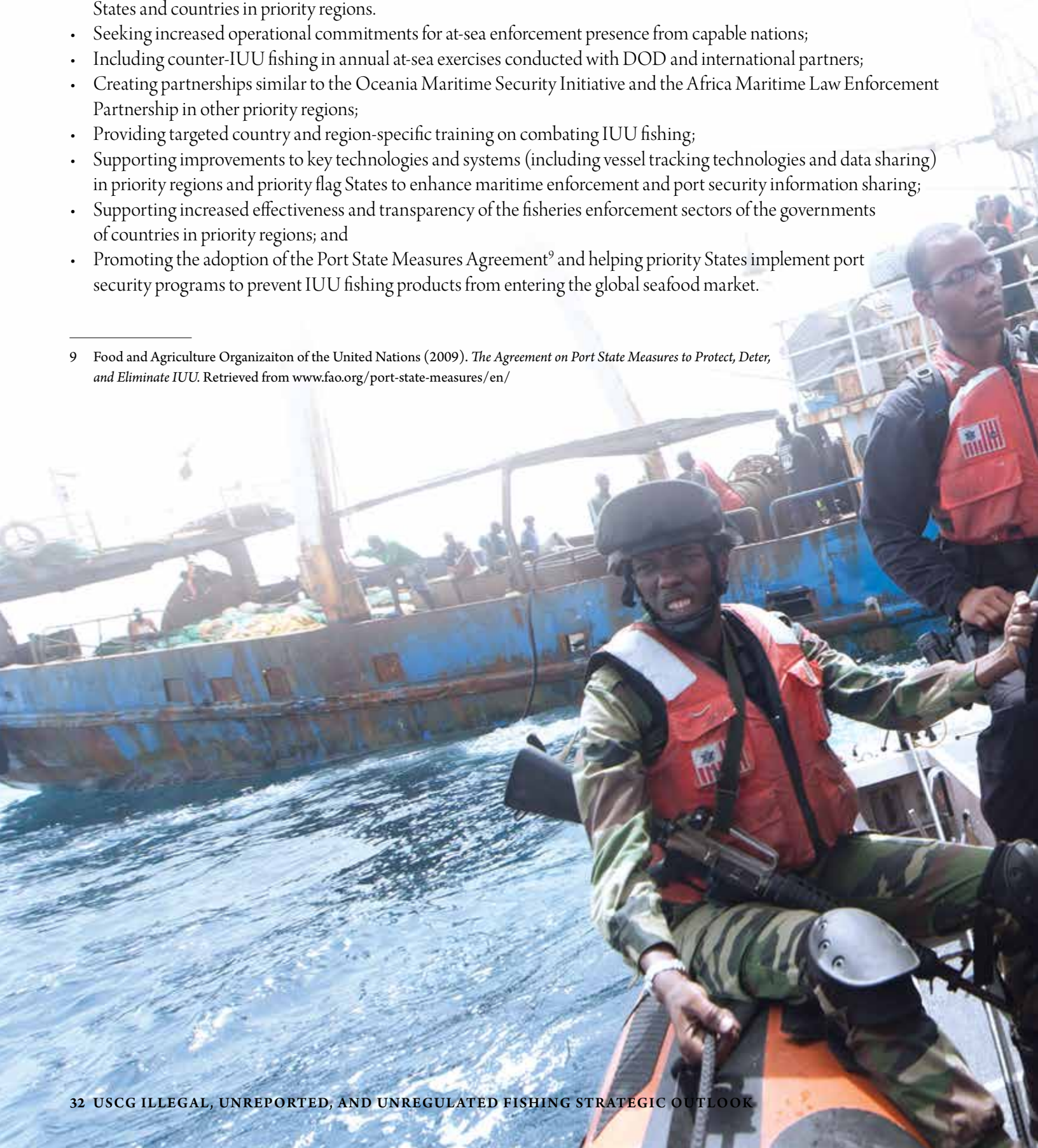
Every flag and coastal State has a responsibility to help eradicate IUU fishing; however, not all States are equal in their capacity and capability. The U.S. Coast Guard is skilled at developing and implementing enforcement mechanisms and transferring that knowledge to willing partner nations. Working alongside like-minded, capable Nations, we will synchronize our collective efforts to train and bolster the counter-IUU fishing capacity and capability of willing partners to create a united front to combat IUU fishing in every ocean.



Together, we can disrupt and remove the economic drivers that promote IUU fishing and eradicate this threat to our collective prosperity. In turn, we will level the playing field for legal fishermen and operators worldwide by:

- Promoting the adoption of high seas boarding authorities in RFMOs that do not currently have them;
- Adding counter-IUU fishing to existing U.S. bilateral enforcement agreements and pursuing new agreements with flag States and countries in priority regions.
- Seeking increased operational commitments for at-sea enforcement presence from capable nations;
- Including counter-IUU fishing in annual at-sea exercises conducted with DOD and international partners;
- Creating partnerships similar to the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative and the Africa Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership in other priority regions;
- Providing targeted country and region-specific training on combating IUU fishing;
- Supporting improvements to key technologies and systems (including vessel tracking technologies and data sharing) in priority regions and priority flag States to enhance maritime enforcement and port security information sharing;
- Supporting increased effectiveness and transparency of the fisheries enforcement sectors of the governments of countries in priority regions; and
- Promoting the adoption of the Port State Measures Agreement⁹ and helping priority States implement port security programs to prevent IUU fishing products from entering the global seafood market.

⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2009). *The Agreement on Port State Measures to Protect, Deter, and Eliminate IUU*. Retrieved from www.fao.org/port-state-measures/en/





VII.

Ensuring Long-Term Success

In addition to the specific counter-IUU fishing strategic objectives, there are several enabling concepts that are critical for the U.S. Coast Guard to ensure long-term success:

Unity of Effort: The U.S. Coast Guard relies on close working relationships with Federal agencies, primarily NOAA and DOS, to bring a balanced, whole-of-government approach to promote economic prosperity and advance U.S. strategic objectives in the maritime domain. Additionally, as a military Service, the U.S. Coast Guard will strengthen interoperability with DOD and complement the capabilities of the other military services to support the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy. Together with our interagency partners, the U.S. Coast Guard will collaborate with like-minded nations to uphold sovereignty and international law. This unity of effort will ensure U.S. Coast Guard priorities remain aligned with national goals and international governance systems that foster peace, access, and stability.



Partnership: The U.S. Coast Guard will actively support and enhance our engagement in multilateral organizations focused on maritime governance, such as RFMOs, as well as play a leadership role in the operationally-focused Regional Coast Guard Forums. The U.S. Coast Guard will continue to dedicate resources to cooperate with allies and partners, conducting combined operations and exercises to protect sovereign interests and advance national priorities. Our unique and valuable relationship with nations with which we have bilateral agreements builds mutual trust and improves mission capacity and readiness. We will continue to incorporate lessons-learned from engagements with our partners, as well as industry, academia, NGOs, and other stakeholders, in the development and implementation of our policy and strategy.

Investment in the Future: The U.S. Coast Guard will build a mission ready workforce of law enforcement professionals, mission managers, and legal and policy experts to guide counter-IUU fishing operations. This investment includes updating training and education programs to develop necessary skills and knowledge for mission needs within our workforce.

Innovation: The U.S. Coast Guard will strive to stay abreast of advancements in new technology to combat IUU fishing. We will continue to recapitalize aging assets, including cutters, boats, aircraft, and facilities. We will also invest in digital tools and information technology infrastructure to meet the challenges of maintaining maritime domain awareness and information sharing.





VIII.

Conclusion

IUU fishing is a national security threat with destabilizing effects on vulnerable coastal States and world markets. To counter IUU fishing, we must work together to disrupt and remove the economic drivers that promote it. As the principal federal at-sea law enforcement agency for more than 150 years, the U.S. Coast Guard will leverage our broad authorities and capabilities to promote and advance a whole-of-government effort to protect sovereignty, support cooperative enforcement of international laws, and advance stability, security, and order in the maritime domain.

This document provides a framework that outlines the U.S. Coast Guard's efforts over the next decade to combat the scourge of IUU fishing. It emphasizes three Lines of Effort:

Promote Targeted, Effective, Intelligence-Driven Enforcement Operations

The U.S. Coast Guard will enable, support, and inform counter-IUU fishing operations, including through the innovative use of intelligence, technology, data analysis, and information sharing in order to eliminate the shadows where illicit actors thrive. Through long-term commitment as well as effective presence and influence, the U.S. Coast Guard will enhance maritime governance, detect and deter IUU fishing, and disrupt the corrupt cycle of influence that enables illegal fishing operations.

Counter Predatory and Irresponsible State Behavior

The U.S. Coast Guard will prioritize operations and engagement that solidify U.S. commitment and model responsible behavior, confront the deleterious actions of near-peer competitors, and shine a light on the activities of those who violate the international rules-based order in the maritime domain.

Expand Multilateral Fisheries Enforcement Cooperation

The U.S. Coast Guard will sustain and strengthen bilateral and multilateral partnerships with like-minded, capable nations to maximize the impact of collective counter-IUU enforcement efforts and promote the rule of law. We will assist partner nations to develop and maintain their own robust counter-IUU fishing capacity and capability. Through cooperative enforcement and engagement, the U.S. Coast Guard will reinforce international fisheries governance and enforcement regimes, allow partner nations to protect their sovereignty, and reinforce the U.S. as a preferred partner.

Way Ahead

The peace and prosperity of the United States requires a capable, innovative, and effective U.S. Coast Guard to combat the destabilizing effects of IUU fishing. Ensuring the safety, security, and stewardship of the maritime domain is an enduring U.S. Coast Guard mission. The U.S. Coast Guard will continue to advance the rules-based order on the world's oceans by exercising our broad authorities and capabilities to combat IUU fishing. By promoting a unified effort with federal partners, like-minded nations, and international stakeholders; sparking innovation; and building a mission-ready workforce; the U.S. Coast Guard will lead global efforts to strengthen and invigorate international fisheries enforcement regimes and stop IUU fishing's threats to the marine environment and maritime rules-based order.



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