



INTERPOL

PROJECT SCALE GLOBAL FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT





Detained tuna longliner coming alongside for enforcement inspection in a Central American port

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides an overview of INTERPOL's work across the entire fisheries sector, including operational, tactical and analytical activities delivered all over the world in coordination with our member countries and strategic partners.

Transnational criminal networks exploit the fisheries sector across the globe, depleting fish stocks, affecting vulnerable communities, undermining national economies and threatening food security.

These criminals target weaknesses in national jurisdictions. This may be by use of corruption, taking advantage of legal loopholes, or evading weak control systems at sea, in port or at the borders where the fishery products are traded. The vessels used by the criminal networks have a number of points in common: they have multiple, counterfeit identities and flags, they are not registered by any state, they carry illegal transshipments, and the crews obstruct boarding by government vessels.

The damage goes far beyond the fisheries themselves. Fisheries crime is transnational in nature and has links to other crimes such as money laundering, document fraud, tax evasion, forced labour and human trafficking. While these crimes are directly connected to illegal fishing business operations, it is important for enforcement officers to be aware that fishing vessels are also used to smuggle unconnected commodities such as drugs, firearms and people, and are even used for piracy or terrorist attacks. Due to their highly nomadic navigation patterns and long periods at sea, fishing vessels are able to blend into the maritime background without suspicion.

INTERPOL is working to prevent and fight such crimes through enhanced cooperation and innovation on police and security matters.

The Organization's major initiative in this area is Project Scale, launched in 2013 to work across the entire fisheries supply chain with the aim of stimulating cooperation in transnational investigations and, ultimately, disrupting criminal networks.

The project assists member countries in raising awareness of abuses of regulations and enhances their investigative and analytical capabilities leading to decisive enforcement action. Of particular note has been cooperation and mentoring between developed and developing countries in identifying the *modus operandi* of organized criminal groups and encouraging the use of INTERPOL Notices and its secure communications systems. Specific outcomes include the detention of vessels, prosecutions, fines and even prison sentences for non-fisheries crimes which were intended to obstruct justice and secure the criminal profits from the illicit fishing activities.

Project Scale is supported by INTERPOL's Fisheries Crime Working Group (FCWG) which provides an international platform for cooperation between member countries. Guided by a board, the FCWG organizes annual meetings for operational-level representatives from fisheries and tax authorities, customs, national police, navies and coastguards to work on agreed programmes of activity throughout the year.

This cross-sector approach is strengthened by collaboration with intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, academia and the public and private sectors, who are encouraged to enter into dialogue with national enforcement authorities and combine their efforts to tackle transnational fisheries crime.

THE ISSUES

The definition

INTERPOL uses “fisheries crime” as an umbrella term to describe crime in the entire fisheries sector, from harvest to processing, through the supply chain, including food fraud at consumer levels. The terminology also refers to well established criminal offences which facilitate the activity, such as blackmail, conspiracy and bribery.

Connected crimes

Additionally, evidence emerges regularly of other criminal and administrative abuses of sovereign and secrecy jurisdictions, registries, customs regulations, and government documentation, as well as tax fraud, forced labour and food labelling fraud. All are exploited by criminals to maximize profits from the capture and global trade in fisheries products and increasingly, marine species protected by national or international law, such as sharks or abalone.



Complex crimes need an integrated response

Criminals exploit the lack of communication between law enforcement agencies both within and between countries. By taking advantage of gaps in the regulation of fishing activity and the trade in the products, criminals are able to avoid detection and sell into lucrative markets. As an example, the antarctic toothfish carried on the vessel Kunlun (subject of an INTERPOL Purple Notice to seek information on modus operandi) travelled more than 25,000 nautical miles in a highly complex supply chain before finally being seized in containers at its destination country. Such sophisticated crimes, the smuggling of marine species and the mixing of legal with illegal catches can only be countered by multi-agency international cooperation and full supply chain traceability.

The challenge of multiple jurisdictions

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing may be a criminal or administrative matter, or both. The fishing activity of the vessel itself is always subject to the jurisdiction of the flag state, and coastal state or port state, depending on where it is fishing or landing.

In a global industry such as the fisheries sector, the business models used by criminal groups are subject to multiple jurisdictions in the same way as any other internationally traded commodity. That includes states of import and export, the states of nationals, operators and companies and the states of the business and corporate services they use. IUU may be a standalone risk factor but it can also be a risk indicator of organized transnational crimes, and those risks may be apparent in any combination of the above jurisdictions.

The Port State Measures Agreement of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations came into force in 2016. It is in the port state that the vessel can be thoroughly inspected for compliance with fisheries related laws and nationally or internationally determined IUU risk factors. In the highest risk cases, a vessel can be inspected in a coordinated way for compliance with other laws, which may include criminal jurisdictions.

One of the biggest challenges at the international level is connecting flag states, coastal states, port states, market states and countries of beneficial owners and crew members to exchange and collate intelligence. This is necessary, in order to narrow down investigations to the national level and encourage multi-agency cooperation between competent authorities to effectively investigate and prosecute.



Project Scale acts as a bridge between countries

Where member countries are limited by national borders, jurisdictional boundaries or access to intelligence, Project Scale plays a critical role in coordinating international cooperation in the fisheries field.



PROJECT APPROACH

The project is composed of criminal intelligence officers with backgrounds in fisheries enforcement, multi-disciplinary analysts and other specialists with appropriate expertise and skills. Members of the project work with specialized officers in other crime areas based at the INTERPOL General Secretariat, in order to identify connections between crimes, routes and trends.

Project Scale is supported by the Fisheries Crime Working Group (FCWG) which has developed broad capacity building and intelligence initiatives. Together, these initiatives address enforcement training and operational planning, the development of information collection techniques, identification of priority threat areas, inspection procedures for high-risk vessels, generation of alerts, and the risk assessment of associated criminal activity. The common goal is to disrupt or prosecute all illegal activities whether for fisheries offences or related crime.

“ Project Scale works to identify and dismantle criminal networks associated with the fisheries industry. To tackle entire networks, not just individual poachers! ”

INTERPOL acts as a neutral platform for the global exchange of law enforcement information and provides guidance, coordination and assistance to all its member countries.

Project Scale is externally funded with governmental and non-governmental support.

A GLOBAL FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE

Project Scale enables member countries to identify, deter and disrupt transnational fisheries crime and associated crimes



Using INTERPOL's broad and versatile networks to enhance international cooperation

Promoting INTERPOL's tools and services and mentoring member countries in investigative and analytical matters



Enhancing intelligence exchange through the I-24/7 secure system and alerting member countries about modus operandi of high-risk vessels and companies



Assisting member countries with regional and international operations and investigations



Enhancing awareness at the strategic, operational and tactical levels



PROJECT SCALE: THE KEY FACTS



Covers the entire fisheries sector and supply chain



Operates on a global level



Identifies and tracks highest risk vessels



Disrupts the trade in marine species protected by national or international law



Support cooperation between port states, flag states, coastal states, market states and the states of nationals including the jurisdictions where their companies are based

CRIMES CONNECTED TO ILLEGAL FISHING



Human trafficking



Financial crime and tax evasion



False documents



Food security and resource theft

STRATEGIC AND INVESTIGATIVE SUPPORT

Project Scale has a proven track record of providing investigative and strategic support to member countries.

Investigative Support Teams (IST)

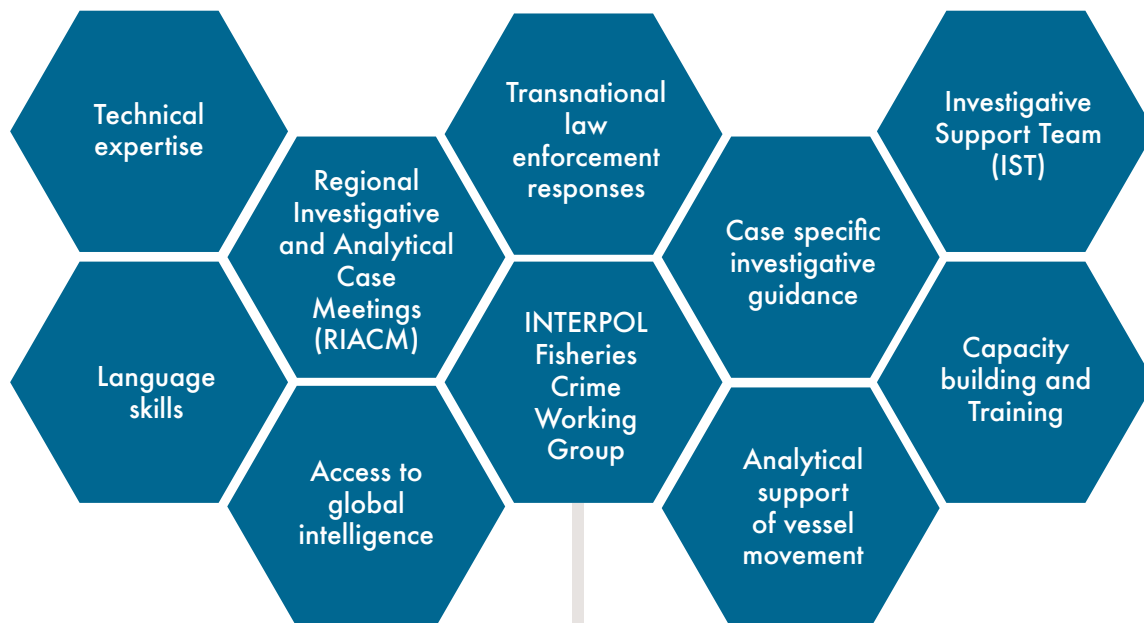
At the request of a member country, an IST can be deployed to support law enforcement authorities in transnational investigations. Among the skills on offer are inspection procedures for high-risk vessels, digital forensics, language and technical support in interviewing suspects, database queries, follow-up criminal intelligence analysis and identification of transnational crime components and advice on how to issue an INTERPOL Notice.

Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meetings (RIACM)

Once intelligence and analysis has led to the establishment of investigation teams and case files, Project Scale can facilitate RIACMs to allow investigators from member countries to meet face-to-face. These meetings help to identify criminal networks or their company structures and lead to opportunities for further exchange of police information and evidence under international crime cooperation procedures. RIACMs can be arranged at the request of member countries and may be supported by INTERPOL experts in other crime areas such as human trafficking.

National Environmental Security Task Forces (NEST)

A NEST is a firmly established multi-disciplinary team of experts from multiple national agencies including police, customs, environmental ministries and other specialized agencies, and the prosecutor's office who work together to maintain national environmental security. NESTs can be derived from or contributed to by other task forces which already exist in the country. INTERPOL has developed a guide to assist member countries in setting up a NEST.



Since 2013, the FCWG has supported Project Scale. It initiates and leads initiatives to detect and address organized crime in the fisheries sector both on shore and at sea.

ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES ALONG THE FISHERIES SUPPLY CHAIN

THE CRIMES

Money laundering
 Tax and food fraud
 Customs fraud
 Document fraud
 Crimes against national fisheries legislation

THE CRIMINALS

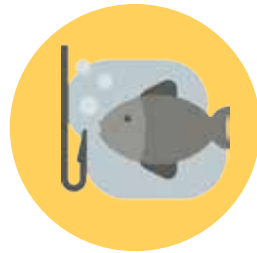
Businesses, executives and corporate services
 Lawyers
 Accountants
 Fishing captains and vessel owners
 Public officials

THE PREPARATION building the crime



- Create shell companies in tax havens or offshore financial centres
- Change flags regularly
- Falsify documents
- Establish corrupt relationships with officials
- Set up finances with trusted criminal customers
- Create smuggling networks and techniques

THE CATCH illicit harvests



- Use forced labour
- Transport the crew, officers, illegal gear, and ship supplies to a vessel in a “friendly port”
- Employ “fixers” to facilitate vessel landings or containerized trade
- Use multiple fraudulent identities
- Obstruct boardings
- Dispose of navigational and other computing devices and paper records on board
- Exploit weak port state control
- Carry out unregulated transshipments at sea

THE SALE turning fish into money



- Mix illegally caught fish with legally caught fish
- Falsify customs, health and other regulatory documents
- Bribe officials
- Conspire with accountants to launder money
- Mislabel products

THE CONSEQUENCES

Depletion of scarce renewable natural resources
 Reduced food security in developing countries
 Institutional corruption
 Environmental degradation
 Weakened economies and abuse of national maritime sovereignty
 Heightened security risks
 Human rights abuses

REGIONAL THREATS

The map below shows a broad sample of regional threats identified by INTERPOL member countries during Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meetings, Investigation Support Missions and National Environmental Security Seminars. It is not an exhaustive list but captures the global and interconnected nature of fisheries crime, demonstrating why an international multi-agency response is necessary.



West Africa and Central Tropical Atlantic: Uncontrolled transshipments and unlicensed fishing are a significant problem. Encroachment by industrial trawlers on inshore areas designed to protect artisanal fisheries threatens food security. The economic benefits of marine resources to coastal states are eroded by fisheries crime. The tuna species caught, landed and processed in this region are destined for markets in the developed world, and the fisheries are vulnerable to Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) activity.

South and Central America: Incursions into exclusive economic zones (EEZs) by unlicensed vessels leads to use of force and risks to life and property. Enforcement cooperation between the coastal state and a flag state two oceans away is essential. Increasingly, countries in Latin America are using INTERPOL for Purple Notices related to the smuggling of species protected by national or international law. The markets are in Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia: Multiple vessels use the same identity. Enforcement authorities sink the vessels of foreign poachers. Forced labour exists in the fisheries sector and supply chains are contaminated with many crime types such as customs fraud and document fraud. This region contains major market states for protected marine species originating in Latin America and toothfish from the Southern Ocean.

Southern Ocean: For over 15 years, toothfish operators fished the high seas in the Southern Ocean on vessels with multiple false identities or flying flags of states with no control over the vessels' activities. In many cases the vessels are stateless. Despite a lack of compliance with international trade regulations, these vessels routinely laundered their catches into markets with unquestioned false documentation presented to customs, food health sanitation authorities, port and fisheries authorities.

CASE ONE

DISRUPTION OF ILLEGAL FISHING ACTIVITIES

in the area defined by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)



15 countries initiated investigations, conducted operations or contributed intelligence



SOME RESULTS

9 PEOPLE ARRESTED

- 12 people under investigation for:
- Organised crime
 - Money laundering
 - Document falsification
 - Crimes against the environment

Tracking and restitution of 180 tonnes of illegally caught fish

Investigative support:

- DNA identification assistance to member countries
- Transfer of evidence

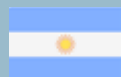
8 YEARS OF PRISON

for 1 captain and 2 engineers of 1 illegal fishing vessel

CASE TWO

VIRTUAL PURSUIT

>50 days of virtual pursuit from the Americas to Asia



Argentina issued an **INTERPOL purple notice** on a vessel operating illegally in their waters.

Investigative support with non-political approach.

Alerted member countries and encouraged the **international cooperation** of:



Helped **track the vessel** across the Atlantic and Indian oceans and provided **analytical** assistance

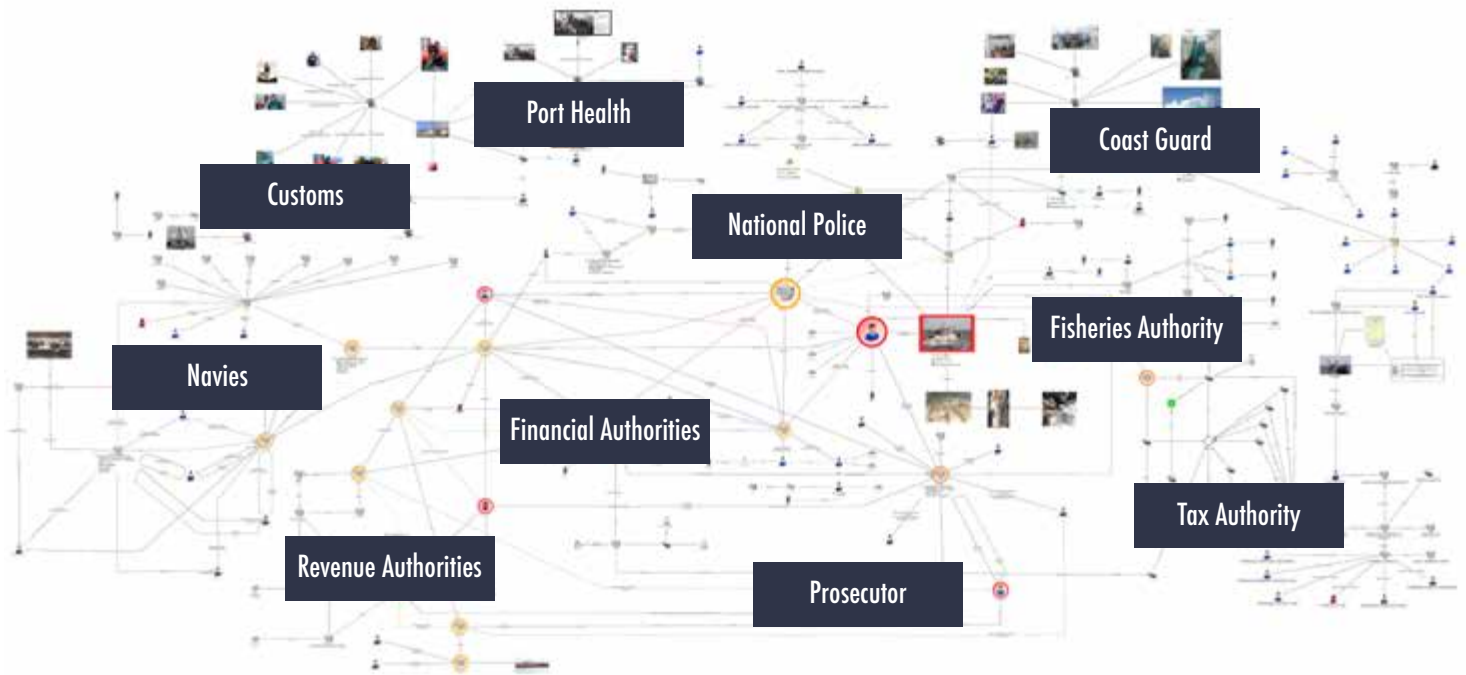
RESULTS

A fine of ARS 7,500,000 imposed on the company

MULTI-AGENCY COOPERATION

The law enforcement community

Due to the nature of organized fisheries crime, Project Scale promotes an inclusive and collaborative approach to law enforcement cooperation.



Effective enforcement requires a global multi-agency approach

THE INTERPOL NETWORK



Project Scale is facilitated through INTERPOL's Regional Bureaus in the Americas, Africa and Asia, as well as the National Central Bureaus of member countries, which are usually located in national police premises.

The INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation (IGCI), based in Singapore, hosts the Digital Forensics Lab which provides support in the fisheries field. Additionally, INTERPOL has established liaison officers at the World Customs Organization, the United Nations, and the European Commission.

CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERS

Project Scale also works closely with international and regional organizations, the private sector, academia and civil society for an effective and holistic.

International

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- European Commission
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- World Customs Organization (WCO)

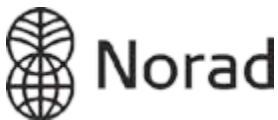
Regional

- Regional fisheries management organisations (RFMO)
- Regional police bodies

Private sector partners

- Institutionalized private partnerships

Supporting partners



The Government of Norway



The Government of the
United States of America



The Pew Charitable Trusts

For more information, visit **Environmental Crime on the INTERPOL website** or follow us on **Twitter**



<http://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Environmental-crime/Environmental-crime>



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Cover photos:

Left: Use of UV light to detect fraudulent documents - Indonesia

Top: Unloading fish from a freezer cargo vessel - Grimsby port, UK

Middle: Collecting shark finning evidence - Ecuador

Bottom: Swordfish on Vigo fishmarket - Spain

Copyright photos:

Governments of Ecuador and Indonesia