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Submitted by Canada



Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Conservation & Protection

Pêches et Océans Canada
Conservation et Protection



Summary of Collaborative High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) and Surveillance Activities Conducted by Canada During “Operation NORTH PACIFIC GUARD” in 2023

Technical and Compliance Committee - TCC20

Palikir, Federated States of Micronesia

Submitted by:

International Fisheries Enforcement Program

Directorate of Conservation and Protection

Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO) – Government of Canada

Overview of Canada’s High Seas Inspection and Surveillance Activities in the North Pacific

Canada’s Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is tasked with delivering inspection and enforcement activities of both domestic and high seas fisheries activities on behalf of the Government of Canada, with the aim of ensuring compliance with Canadian federal fisheries and oceans protection statutes for the long-term sustainability of our shared marine resources. Canada has participated in high seas fisheries surveillance activities within the North Pacific Ocean for over 30 years since the adoption of the UN ban on large-scale driftnets on the high seas when Canada first committed to combatting these destructive fishing practices alongside North Pacific partner nations in Operation DRIFTNET.

In recent years, Canada's contributions to safeguard the marine ecosystems and fisheries resources of the North Pacific have been delivered through our collaborative participation in Operation NORTH PACIFIC GUARD, an annual multi-national fisheries surveillance and inspection campaign delivered through the deployment of patrol and air surveillance assets by North Pacific partners, including Canada, United States, Korea and Japan. Between June and September 2023, Canada delivered both aerial fisheries surveillance and high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI) activities within the high seas waters of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Convention Area. Canada's surveillance and inspection capabilities were greatly increased during Op NORTH PACIFIC GUARD 2023 as a result of our deepening collaboration to combat illegal fishing with the Governments of the United States, who deployed experienced boarding officers alongside Canadian inspectors during these HSBI activities, and Japan.

Canada's contributions to these multilateral efforts, directed at combatting illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the North Pacific and verifying compliance amongst both North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) and WCPFC high seas fishing fleets, resulted in the boarding and inspection of **12** WCPFC vessels and **114** unique aerial inspections of WCPFC vessels.

Op NORTH PACIFIC GUARD Inspection and Surveillance Results

Canada's HSBI activities in 2023 delivered the following results:

- 7 of 12 WCPFC HSBI boarding events resulted in the detection of potential contraventions of a conservation and management measure (CMM).
- A total of 18 potential CMM contraventions were detected and raised to the flag-state from HSBI.
- The welfare and working conditions of 135 at-sea crew members were monitored for potential labour standards concerns.
- Over 10,000 nautical miles of high seas WCPFC Convention Area waters were monitored by DFO's fisheries patrol vessel.
- Approximately 243 hours of fisheries aerial surveillance operations were conducted within the Convention Area between June and September 2023.
- All vessels encountered were duly-authorized within the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels.

Potential WCPFC Contraventions Detected

Canada's HSBI and aerial inspection activities in 2023 resulted in detections of potential contraventions of various obligations associated with multiple CMMs. The following describes the WCPFC CMMs and obligations believed to be potentially contravened at the time of boarding and aerial observation during the Operation:

CMM 2022-04 – Sharks

DFO fisheries inspectors documented 8 separate instances of potential shark obligation contraventions associated to 7 suspected non-compliant vessels. Each contravention consisted of numerous sharks possessed contrary to the Commission's shark measure, which DFO officers estimated to total approximately 2400 shark fins (all fin types) not naturally attached to carcasses, possessed loosely and in contravention of the requirement of paragraphs 7 to 9. The significant scale of non-compliance with the fins naturally attached (FNA) exemption requirements specified in paragraph 9 posed considerable challenges to inspectors in confidently determining if finning practices were occurring. In fact, boarding

officers did make observations of significant excess fin counts, indicative of greater fin-to-carcass ratios and discard of shark carcasses. One (1) prohibited oceanic whitetip shark specimen was also discovered aboard a vessel.

Aerial surveillance operations also gathered explicit video evidence of at least 13 instances of blatant “finning” practices, whereby finned and not fully utilized carcasses were documented by video being discarded at sea. Several more visual observations of finning practices were also made. The aerial inspection efforts also gathered evidence of potential contraventions of paragraph 9, documenting the intermixing of numerous untagged and loose fins on working decks and raising considerable doubt on the ability of crew to match fins to the corresponding shark carcasses, as required through adopted exemption categories.

CMM 2004-03 – Specifications for the Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels

Aerial surveillance and HSBI activities led to the detection of 13 vessels potentially contravening the Commission’s vessel marking requirements. The most common infraction noted was the failure to display the deck or rooftop WIN number or to have it obstructed by fishing gear.

CMM 2018-06 – Authorization to Fish

During 1 HSBI event, Canadian officials encountered a vessel that was unable to provide any proof, through either a digital or physical copy of a valid authorization, as required under paragraph 4.

CMM 2017-04 – Marine Pollution

Evidence was collected during the course of 4 vessel HSBI events indicating potential contraventions of the marine pollution measure for the discard of any plastics. Aerial surveillance activities also detected 1 significant plastic discharge event and multiple minor discharge events during the course of aerial inspections.

CMM 2014-02 – VMS

Inspectors found 1 vessel whose VMS details were not being properly received through the Commission’s VMS infrastructure. This anomaly was raised to the flag-state to rectify the data gap.

Canada wishes to extend its sincerest appreciation to the Secretariat and to those members who have collaborated and engaged with our DFO inspection authorities during the delivery of OP NORTH PACIFIC GUARD 2023.