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**Summary Report on Canada's High Seas Boarding and Inspection and Surveillance Activities
During Operation Op NPG 2025-2026**

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**Submitted by International Fisheries Enforcement Program Directorate of Conservation and
Protection Fisheries & Ocean Canada (DFO) – Government of Canada**



Summary Report on Canada's High Seas Boarding and Inspection and Surveillance Activities during Operation NORTH PACIFIC GUARD 2025–2026

Technical and Compliance Committee - TCC22

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 in 2025 and 2026

Operation NORTH PACIFIC GUARD is an annual multinational fisheries monitoring, surveillance and enforcement initiative through which participating countries undertake coordinated targeted surveillance and high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI) activities. The operation supports efforts to deter illegal fishing and monitor compliance by high seas fishing fleets with binding requirements adopted by the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Canada conducted the patrols in cooperation with officials from Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America, with inspections carried out by multinational boarding teams. High seas monitoring efforts were also supported by hundreds of hours of fisheries aerial surveillance and space-based remote sensing delivered through Canada's Dark Vessel Detection platform.

Canada has supported fisheries monitoring and compliance activities on the high seas of the North Pacific since the early 1990s, initially through aerial surveillance missions to enforce the United Nations moratorium on large-scale high-seas driftnet fishing. Since 2023, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has expanded these efforts through the deployment of a fisheries patrol vessel to supplement ongoing aerial surveillance efforts and to conduct HSBI in coordination with regional partners under Operation NORTH PACIFIC GUARD.

In 2025, a two-month patrol was conducted under Operation NORTH PACIFIC GUARD from June to July, covering approximately 9,600 nautical miles and boarding 16 WCPFC-registered fishing vessels. Seven of these boardings resulted in Canada referring 22 potential CMM contraventions to the relevant flag CCMs for investigation. In 2026, a two-month patrol from May to July was conducted, covering more than 12,400 nautical miles and boarding 14 WCPFC-registered fishing vessels. Canadian inspectors referred 46 potential CMM contraventions to the relevant flag CCMs for investigation.

This report summarizes observations recorded only during Canadian-led inspection and surveillance activities in 2025 and 2026. References to potential contraventions do not constitute final determinations regarding the compliance status of the vessels concerned.

2025 Operation NORTH PACIFIC GUARD Inspection and Surveillance Results

Canada's HSBI activities in 2025 delivered the following results:

- Twenty-two (22) potential contraventions of WCPFC conservation and management measures (CMMs) were raised with the relevant flag CCMs following 16 WCPFC HSBI events conducted between June and July 2025.
- A total of 129 WCPFC-registered vessels were inspected aurally. These inspections identified several potential compliance concerns relating to vessel markings and shark-fin removal and possession requirements, which were raised with CCMs, as appropriate.
- Inspectors noted the well-being and working conditions of more than 200 crew members aboard WCPFC-authorized vessels.
- All 16 vessels inspected were listed on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels.

2025 Potential WCPFC Contraventions Detected

Canada's HSBI activities in 2025 resulted in observations indicating potential contraventions of several WCPFC CMMs. The following section summarizes the measures and obligations that Canadian inspectors considered may have been contravened at the time of boarding and subsequently referred to the relevant flag CCMs for investigation.

CMM 2024-05 – Conservation and Management Measure for Sharks

Six inspected vessels were referred to flag CCMs for potential contraventions of paragraphs 8 and 9. Inspectors documented loose shark fins, carcasses without naturally attached fins, and storage arrangements that did not allow corresponding fins and carcasses to be readily matched under an authorized alternative. The quantity of fins or carcasses documented aboard an individual vessel was treated as evidence supporting one global CMM contravention for that vessel rather than as a separate contravention for each specimen.

Inspectors also noted significant challenges associated with the authorized alternatives to the fins-naturally-attached requirement. These alternatives hindered the ability of inspectors to verify species identification and ensure correspondence between fins and carcasses effectively and in a timely manner (within the 4 hour HSBI time allocation). Canada's inspectors noted that these challenges are significantly exacerbated during boardings of vessels targeting sharks because of the scale of carcass-fin verification required. Inspectors commonly encountered tens of metric tonnes of processed shark aboard a single vessel, often stored in crowded freezer holds with limited working space. These conditions make it particularly difficult to verify correspondence between individual carcasses and fins when the fins are not naturally attached.

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

Two potential contraventions were formally referred to flag CCMS following HSBI observations of rooftop or deck identification markings that were obscured by fishing gear or equipment. Aerial surveillance also identified additional instances of obstructed vessel markings. These obstructions limited the ability of aerial and vessel-based inspectors to identify vessels readily during patrols.

CMM 2017-04 – Conservation and Management Measure on Marine Pollution

Four potential contraventions were raised under paragraph 2. Evidence derived from inspector observations and crew admissions indicated the potential discard of plastic waste at sea. Inspection findings also indicated that plastic waste generated during voyages had not been retained or otherwise managed on board.

CMM 2014-02 – Conservation and Management Measure for the Commission Vessel Monitoring System

Inspectors referred three vessels to the flag CCM for verification of potential contraventions of the Commission's VMS transmission requirements.

CMM 2018-06 – Record of Fishing Vessels and Authorization to Fish

One (1) vessel could not produce an acceptable copy of the required authorization for inspection.

CMM 2018-03 – Seabird Mitigation

Two potential contraventions were raised under paragraph 6. Inspection findings and available activity information from vessel track analysis indicated that longline gear may have been set north of 23 degrees north without the required combination of seabird-mitigation measures, as detailed in Table 1.

CMM 2006-08 – Boarding and Inspection Procedures

Two potential contraventions were raised under paragraph 25(d) after inspectors documented actions intended to interfere with or obstruct inspection activities through the attempted destruction or discard of catch evidence. One event involved evidence relating to suspected possession of a prohibited species.

CMM 2022-06 – Daily Catch and Effort Reporting

One potential contravention was raised after inspectors determined that discarded shark carcasses had not been recorded in the vessel's daily catch-and-effort records.

CMM 2024-07 – Cetaceans

Evidence was collected regarding the possession of cetacean meat on two WCPFC-authorized vessels boarded by inspectors, believed to be for use as bait for longline gear.

2026 Operation NORTH PACIFIC GUARD Inspection and Surveillance Results

Canada's HSBI activities in 2026 delivered the following results:

- Forty-six (46) potential contraventions of WCPFC CMMs were raised with the relevant flag CCMs following 14 HSBI events conducted between May and July 2026.
- A combined total of 344 NPFC- and WCPFC-registered vessels were inspected aurally. These inspections identified potential compliance concerns relating to vessel markings and shark-fin removal and possession requirements for WCPFC-authorized vessels.
- Inspectors noted the well-being and working conditions of 155 crew members aboard WCPFC-authorized vessels.
- All 14 vessels inspected were listed on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels.

2026 Potential WCPFC Contraventions Detected

Canada's HSBI activities in 2026 resulted in observations indicating potential contraventions of several WCPFC CMMs. The following section summarizes the measures and obligations that Canadian inspectors considered may have been contravened at the time of boarding and subsequently referred to the relevant flag CCMs for investigation.

The totals represent distinct potential contraventions formally identified under an applicable CMM. Multiple specimens, documents or related observations supporting the same finding aboard a vessel were treated as evidence of one global contravention rather than counted separately.

CMM 2025-06 – Conservation and Management Measure for Sharks

Fifteen (15) potential contraventions were raised under the Commission's shark measure. Inspectors documented shark products, consisting primarily of CITES-listed species, for which fins were not naturally attached to the corresponding carcasses and for which the requirements of an authorized alternative measure, as outlined in paragraph 9, were not fully met.

Findings included loose fins, fins stored in plastic bags, fins connected to carcasses using monofilament rather than rope or wire, and fins that could not be readily matched with corresponding carcasses. Additional findings concerned the retention of a prohibited silky shark, potential failures to fully utilize retained sharks, and sharks that may not have been released as soon as possible or handled in accordance with prescribed safe-release practices.

These inspections continued to demonstrate the practical difficulties associated with verifying species identification and carcass-fin correspondence, even when authorized alternative measures to the fins-naturally-attached requirement are used, including causing significant delays to the inspection process and the reducing the ability for inspectors to conduct meaningful inspections within the 4 hour timeframe.

As noted within the 2025 outcomes, these challenges are significantly exacerbated during boardings of vessels targeting sharks because of the scale of carcass-fin verification required. Inspectors commonly encounter tens of metric tonnes of processed shark aboard a single vessel, often stored in crowded freezer holds with limited working space. These conditions make it particularly difficult to verify correspondence between individual carcasses and their fins when the fins are not naturally attached.

CMM 2018-06 – Record of Fishing Vessels and Authorization to Fish

Thirteen (13) potential contraventions were raised under the Commission’s requirements concerning vessel authorization and the Record of Fishing Vessels. Most potential contraventions related to the requirement to carry the original authorization to fish, or a certified copy, together with other required licences, permits and vessel-registration documents. Inspectors repeatedly encountered vessels carrying only uncertified photocopies or electronic images of the required documents.

CMM 2022-06 – Daily Catch and Effort Reporting

Eleven (11) potential contraventions were raised concerning incomplete or inaccurate catch-and-effort records. Inspectors documented missing daily activity entries and failures to record retained catch, discards and interactions with non-target species. Unrecorded catch and interactions included Pacific bluefin tuna, shark species, sea turtles, and species retained for bait or crew consumption.

CMM 2014-02 – Conservation and Management Measure for the Commission Vessel Monitoring System

Three potential contraventions were raised under the Commission’s VMS requirements. Findings included delayed or absent position transmissions to the WCPFC Secretariat and automatic location communicator or mobile transmitting unit installations that did not have visible tamper-proof or tamper-evident safeguards.

CMM 2025-05 – Conservation and Management Measure to Mitigate the Impact of Fishing on Seabirds

Two potential contraventions were raised concerning required seabird-mitigation measures aboard longline vessels operating north of 23 degrees north. Inspectors documented required tori lines or other mitigation devices that were unavailable, not deployed or not configured in accordance with the applicable technical specifications.

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

One potential contravention was raised after inspectors documented vessel-identification markings that were obscured by fishing gear or equipment or otherwise did not meet the applicable placement and visibility requirements. Obstructed markings on multiple vessels monitored aurally limited the ability of aerial inspectors to identify the vessel readily.

CMM 2025-07 – WCPFC Boarding and Inspection Procedures

One potential contravention was raised concerning a failure to facilitate prompt and safe boarding by authorized inspectors. The vessel failed to respond to repeated hails and did not initially provide safe boarding arrangements.

Crew Labour Conditions

Although CMM 2024-04, the Conservation and Management Measure for Crew Labour Standards, does not take effect until 1 January 2028, inspectors documented concerns regarding substandard crew working and living conditions. These concerns included restrictive sleeping quarters, excessive working hours, insufficient rest and the retention of crew passports. These observations are not included among the 46 potential CMM contraventions reported for 2026 and are presented separately for the Committee's consideration.

Canada extends its sincere appreciation to the WCPFC Secretariat and to the CCMs that cooperated with and facilitated Canada's inspection activities during Operations NORTH PACIFIC GUARD 2025 and 2026.