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Comprehensive Maritime Security: Creating an Environment for Growth.

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Comprehensive Maritime Security - Creating an Environment for Growth

By

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The free use of the sea in peace allows a nation to derive economic benefits from the sea, either though the exploitation of the sea's resources or through vital sea-borne trade[2].

Objectives

The main objective of this paper is the need to evaluate the role of Malaysia's maritime security agencies from the non-military threat dimension in the national waters especially in the Malaysia Territorial Water zone. In order for us to redefine and give a new perspective of our maritime security agencies' roles, we need to understand existing and common problems among agencies. Basically, there are four main issues at the moment that require full attention from maritime enforcement and surveillance agencies. They are;

i. Fisheries,
ii. Marine pollution,
iii. Criminal activities, and
iv. Sea-borne immigrants.

At the same time, judging from all the problems 'polluting' our waters, we need to evaluate the existing approaches by all enforcement and surveillance agencies and what are the options; especially regarding the single agency and whether to have a multi mission-jurisdiction role. In reality, small scale agencies play a limited role and their task often overlaps with other agencies. Should we reduce the number of agencies available or to continue with the current approach? The main goal is to reduce the cost and at the same time to enhance the effectiveness of all relevant agencies.

This paper will argue that the present approach to enforcement adopted by these agencies is inadequate. Some agencies have very specific departmental mandates with limited enforcement scope. For example, the role of the Royal Customs and Excise Department is only limited to customs enforcement. It cannot tackle on marine pollution.

- Fisheries

In 1995, the total production from the fisheries sector amounted to 1,245 million tonnes valued at RM 3.15 billion which constituted about 1.47% of the national GDP, while in 1994, the total production from this sector amounted to 1,181 million tonnes valued at RM 2.99 billion and constituted about 1.61% of the national GDP[3]. It is estimated that total fish production will increase to 1.58 million tonnes in the year 2000 and 1.93 million tonnes in 2010. The demand for fish, which is the main source of protein in Malaysia will constantly increase. The Malaysian Economic Exclusive Zone is estimated to support 2 million metric tons of harvestable fish a year. The present landing volume is far less than that amount and thus making the area extremely attractive to foreign fishermen[4]. It has been estimated that RM 296.25 millions are lost annually through illegal foreign fishing. According to the Minister of Agriculture, Malaysia imported RM 916 million worth of fish last year with Thailand as a prime source[5].

Although we can claim that our ocean is rich with a variety of fish but surveillance and enforcement activities still fail to effectively curb illegal fishing activity either by local or foreign fishermen. Protecting our living resources more effectively requires full support from the various enforcement and surveillance agencies. Concentrating on one agency (Fisheries Department) in order to protect living resources is no longer relevant because this department has its own weaknesses. For instance, it is not practical any more for the Fisheries Department to conduct full-scale enforcement operation in the Economic Exclusive Zone continuously because of the lack of suitable assets. Very few of the Fisheries Department vessels are designed for extended patrol duties away from coastal waters especially during the monsoon season (see Table 6). Under the present arrangement, the Royal Malaysian Navy has been delegated from the Fisheries Department to under take fisheries enforcement especially to arrest illegal fishermen. However, the Royal Malaysian Navy is not trained substantively for such a task and this constabulary function is not their primary role.

Thus, a 'dilemma' is created in enforcing against fisheries violations in the Malaysia Economic Exclusive Zone. Who is responsible for what? This dilemma has created a loophole on the enforcement side because the Fisheries Department cannot maintain their presence continuously in the Economic Exclusive Zone to curb illegal fishing. While the Royal Malaysian Navy will not be able to put full concentration on fisheries issues since they are trained as a war-fighting navy and not as a welfare navy as the Mexican Navy.

Table 1:
Number of Arrest of Foreign Fishermen by Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agencies 1989-1995

Agency/Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Fisheries	5	7	6	11	4	62	37
RMN	64	110	119	38	39	40	71
Marine Police	63	33	33	47	64	46	18
Total	**132**	**150**	**158**	**96**	**107**	**148**	**126**

Source: *Laporan Aktiviti Cawangan Marin, 1995*
Ibu Pejabat Perikanan

Between 1984 to 1995 the number of foreign trawlers sighted in Malaysia's Economic Exclusive Zone was 14,835[6]. Basically, out of every 10 illegal foreign trawlers that have been sighted in the Malaysian waters only 1 is detained by the Malaysian maritime enforcement agencies[7]. Since the Malaysian government is promoting deep sea fishing in the Economic Exclusive Zone, it is a duty for enforcement agencies to protect, monitor and ensure the safety of our fishermen from being harmed by illegal competitors at sea. Thai trawlers have always been detected around the Malaysia-Thailand sea border and their activities have been conducted regularly in the past and still continue today. Competition for fisheries resources in the same area has a potential to escalate into major incidents since all coastal states are known to be operating as far as the Economic Exclusive Zone or in disputed fishing grounds. The depletion of maritime resources is a direct threat to a coastal nation's economic security[8]. It is inevitable that such fisheries enforcement task will move further out onto the high seas. That prospect will bring additional responsibilities to related agencies, which are able to protect a nation's jurisdiction in the fisheries without necessarily involving security measures.