



GREENPEACE

Defending Our Pacific 2008



Summary of findings of Greenpeace “Defending Our Pacific” Expedition

6 April – 10 June 2008

1. BACKGROUND

Greenpeace proposes that three pockets¹ of international waters between Pacific island countries – the Pacific Commons – be closed to all fishing activities and designated as marine reserves. These areas of international waters appear relatively small in comparison to the huge areas falling within the Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZ's) of some of the Pacific states; even so, they have great biological and ecological importance. Currently, foreign fishing vessels use them as an escape route to launder fish out of the region and are used as a safe haven for pirate fishers because of the lack of regulation and enforcement in these areas.

An essential step for the Pacific to safeguard its tuna fisheries and its future food security is to designate these areas as marine reserves.

Greenpeace ship Esperanza focussed the nine weeks of the “Defending Our Pacific 2008” expedition in two key areas of international waters. The boundary of the first area is north of Papua New Guinea and shares its boundaries with the Federated States of Micronesia, Indonesia and Palau. The boundary of the larger second area is bordered by Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands, including the southern area bounded by Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The work included documentation of vessels in the areas outlined, boarding vessels from distant water fishing nations with the permission of the ship's Captain and undertaking peaceful protest against overfishing by these vessels from the distant water fishing nations (DWFNs), Korea, Taiwan, China, the Philippines, the United States and Spain.

Other activities included:

- the confiscation of a fish aggregation device (FAD) used by purse seiners to attract tuna which intensifies the level of overfishing.
- the documentation of an illegal tuna purse seine vessel from the Philippines. It was discovered at a site of the transfer of catch between two other Philippine-flagged and registered vessels.

- the discovery of an illegal unidentified pole and line vessel.
- the documentation of longline vessel's catch showing large quantities of shark fins and tails on board.

The fishing pressure on stocks in the Pacific Commons observed by Greenpeace demonstrates the highly unregulated nature of these areas and the continued pillage of the region's already troubled tuna and other highly migratory fish stocks away from the watchful eyes of authorities.

The limited Monitoring, Controlling and Surveillance (MCS) of vessels accessing the Pacific Commons is a major loophole that allows the unseen and unreported plunder of the region's tuna stocks. Tuna vessels also exploit the unregulated nature of transshipment at sea, both legal and illegal. This is likely to account for enormous amounts of tuna leaving the region.

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC or Tuna Commission), set up in 2004 to manage and protect the region's tuna stocks, have failed in their key objectives. At the 2007 Tuna Commission meeting in Guam, key DWFNs Taiwan, Korea, Japan and China all blocked consensus for the adoption of sustainable management measures that would have given a chance to the recovery of the region's bigeye and yellowfin stocks that are currently threatened with overfishing.

The 2008 Greenpeace Expedition highlighted the vulnerability of the Pacific Commons to overfishing and pirate fishing by exposing the unsustainable plunder by DWFNs who are responsible for more than 80% of the fishing in this region.

Over the nine weeks a total of eighteen fishing vessels were contacted, with some being the target of Greenpeace protest action, solely in the Pacific Commons. An exception was the protest action undertaken in the EEZ of Kiribati against the Albatun Tres, the world's largest tuna fishing vessel. A number of fishing vessels were also observed inside the EEZs of certain Pacific states and details were provided to the respective authorities. In addition, a number of fishing vessels were also observed but could not be identified and documented properly.

1. http://www.greenpeace.org/pacific_marine_reserves_map

2. KEY FINDINGS

The expedition revealed that the Pacific Commons are a major fishing area that is highly unregulated with little or no control at all. The fishing industry exploits these areas of international waters with legal and illegal vessels operating side by side.

Five key findings:

- 1 The exemption granted to Philippines for transshipment at sea is being exploited and used to accommodate illegal pirate vessels. Pirate vessels operate closely with legal vessels, in the case documented, from the same operating fleet or owners. This is probably common among many fleets.
- 2 Illegal or pirate vessels operate in the region and use the Pacific Commons to avoid monitoring and enforcement. It is likely that pirate vessels operate side by side with legally registered vessels that provide services allowing fish laundering for their pirate activities.
- 3 The lack of proper and effective MCS mechanisms for vessels predominantly fishing in the Pacific Commons is adding to the overfishing of key regional tuna stocks. Despite management regulations and requirements set by both the WCPFC for the Pacific Commons and Pacific island countries inside their zones, vessels have no incentive for compliance. They also have no incentive to limit or control the amount or species they harvest or to go into port for inspections and correctly report catch details.
- 4 Taiwanese longliners predominately target tuna stocks in the Pacific Commons. Four out of the six longliners² Greenpeace encountered did not hold licences in any of the Pacific island countries. Large amounts of shark fins and tails were observed on board. With limited MCS and few observers on vessels fishing in the Pacific Commons, the total high seas catch reported by flag states should be noted with extreme caution.
- 5 There was a case where discrepancies were identified between vessel registration details retained by the two regulatory bodies - FFA and WCPFC.

3. CASE STUDIES

Fong Kuo 166 – 14 April 2008 – Taiwanese Longliner

Greenpeace activists delivered a letter to the Captain of the Fong Kuo 166 outlining the state of the regional tuna stocks with Greenpeace demands for the closure of the Pacific Commons to fishing. The vessel was requested to leave the international waters. Information was given to Greenpeace regarding a possible transshipment between the Fong Kuo 166 and the MV Maru a Japanese owned Panama-flagged mothership.

Olympus – 16 April 2008 – Korean Purse Seiner

The Olympus is owned by Oyang Corporation, a subsidiary of one of the world's largest tuna companies, DongWon Industries Co. Ltd. The vessel agreed to leave the Pacific Commons that Greenpeace was defending as a no-take marine reserve. Activists demonstrated against the vessel by holding "Marine Reserves Now!" banners.

Fish Aggregation Device (FAD) - 16 April 2008 – owner unknown

Greenpeace activists confiscated an unknown and unmarked FAD.

Cape Finisterre – 20 April 2008 – American Purse Seiner

The Cape Finisterre was documented in the final stages of hauling in its nets. Activists painted the side of the vessel with "Tuna Overkill" and held a banner reading "Marine Reserves Now!" Greenpeace communicated its concerns with the Captain of the vessel regarding the overfishing of the region's tuna stocks. The vessel was asked to leave the Pacific Commons immediately.

Nian Sheng 3 – 21 April 2008 – Taiwanese Longliner

Greenpeace activists boarded the Nian Sheng 3 with the permission of the Captain. As well as tuna, the activists discovered a dozen sacks containing hundreds of frozen shark fins and tails. The Esperanza peacefully escorted the vessel out of the Pacific Commons and into the Solomon Islands EEZ. The Captain of the vessel noted that he would be meeting up with another longliner from the same fleet to transfer food, water and other things over following days. He explicitly stated that two vessels coming together was not allowed in the EEZ of the Solomon Islands and is one of the reasons he was out in the Pacific Commons.

Ho Tsai Fa 18 – 3 May 2008 – Taiwanese Longliner

The Ho Tsai Fa 18 was hauling tens of kilometres of fishing line when activists arrived. The Captain was asked to release all marine life hooked on the lines. When he refused, the activists freed tens of tuna, sharks, marlin and an endangered Olive Ridley turtle from the longline hooks. The vessel was painted with "Pirate?" to highlight that the vessel had a previous documented catch of 60,000 kgs of shark fins in Costa Rica during 2003 and that the legal status of her fishing activity is questionable. The Esperanza also started to haul in the other end of the line. The line was kept on board and will be returned to the owner, Tsay Jyh-Gwo in Taiwan.

2. Ho Tsai Fa 18; Yu Jaan Shyang; Ming Maan Shyang 36; Chin Yu Chun

Hozan Maru – 7 May 2008 – Panamanian Reefer

The Hozan Maru, a Panamanian mothership, was not legally authorised to be in this region at the time of sighting by Greenpeace. She was previously observed in Papeete in October 2006. However, the vessel was able to get an authorisation on the Temporary Vessel register. It is unacceptable that vessels are able to get an authorisation in a short time without any proper assessment by the Tuna Commission. The Hozan Maru seemed to be heading directly towards six purse seiners that were observed operating inside FSM EEZ close to the Pacific Common's border. Panama is not a member of the Tuna Commission but most of their support vessels have been granted special permission to operate in the Pacific region.

Unidentified Pole and Line – 9 May 2008 – unknown nationality

An unidentified pole and line vessel was documented by Greenpeace and information passed onto the relevant authorities. There were no visible markings anywhere on the vessel as required under international law. All vessels must have their names and international radio call sign (IRCS) displayed at all times. This in itself would make this vessel illegal. The only visible marking that Greenpeace and authorities were able to identify is a small logo reading "TSP" at the back of the vessel.

Queen Evelyn 889 – 9 May 2008 – Filipino Purse Seiner

The Queen Evelyn 889 was documented by Greenpeace transferring fish at sea with the Philippine mothership, Kenken 888. Both vessels are legally authorised to be in the region and their transshipment activity is legal under their special exemption granted by the Tuna Commission. However the Queen Evelyn 168, an illegal vessel, was observed in close contact. The Philippine company TSP Marine Industries owns the Queen Evelyn 889.

Queen Evelyn 168 – 9 May 2008 – Illegal Filipino Purse Seiner

The Queen Evelyn 168 is an illegal vessel not authorised or registered to undertake any fishing activities in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). TSP Marine Industries also own it. The vessel was at the transshipment site of her sister vessel, the Queen Evelyn 889, and the mothership, Kenken 888. It is likely that a transfer of fish at sea involving this illegal vessel was about to occur, but the arrival of Greenpeace prevented it from taking place. This vessel fled immediately.

Kenken 888 – 9 May 2008 – Filipino Purse Seiner

The refrigerated mothership, Kenken 888 was first observed by Greenpeace at a transshipment site with Queen Evelyn 889. Close by was the illegal Queen Evelyn 168. It is likely that a transfer of fish at sea involving an illegal vessel was about to occur.

Greenpeace activists were later able to board the mothership with the permission of the ship's Captain. The hold predominantly contained juvenile yellowfin and skipjack tuna. Activists obtained information from the Captain about six other transshipments he had done over the last month in the Pacific Commons.

These transfers added up to 675 tonnes of tuna onboard and were mainly from boats flagged to the Philippines belonging to the same company, TSP Marine Industries. Kenken 888 is owned by TSP Marine Industries Ltd.

Ho Tsai Fa 18 – 10 May 2008 – Taiwanese Longliner

Ho Tsai Fa 18 is the same vessel Greenpeace activists released sharks, tuna, marlin and an endangered turtle from her hooks on 3 May 2008. The Esperanza prevented the vessel from fishing for three days. The Captain claimed that between 10-12 May 2008 his vessel would refuel at sea to an unknown bunker vessel arranged by the company. This would have allowed him to stay at sea longer and continue fishing. The vessel had a licence to fish in Vanuatu waters but the licence had expired on 22 March 2008.

Yu Jaan Shyang – 10 May 2008 – Taiwanese Longliner

Greenpeace activists, with the permission of the Captain, boarded the Yu Jaan Shyang and documented catch of tuna, marlin and sharks fins and tails. The Captain claimed that he had just come from the port of Guam and that he had no licence with any Pacific island countries to fish. He said he was waiting for authorisation and a licence from the FSM Government. Communication with FSM authorities revealed that they had not received any application for a licence from the vessel or its owner. The vessel agreed to leave the Pacific Commons and return to Taiwan.

Ming Maan Shyang – 10 May 2008 – Taiwanese Longliner

Greenpeace activists, with the permission of the Captain, boarded the Ming Maan Shyang. The Captain claimed to have just come from the port of Guam and that he was awaiting authorisation for a licence from the FSM Government. Communication with the FSM authorities revealed that an application for a licence had not been received. The vessel agreed to leave the Pacific Commons and return to Taiwan.

Hung Jie Wei – 11 May 2008 – Taiwanese Longliner

Greenpeace documented the vessel and had a discussion with the Captain. The vessel agreed to leave the Pacific Commons and return to Taiwan. There were major discrepancies in the vessels operational details. The vessel bears the international call sign BJ 2058. The FFA register of vessels showed that the call sign belonged to Hung Jie Wei with a total capacity hold of 89.56m³ and the vessel total overall length of 23.9 meters. However, on the WCPFC register of vessels, the same call sign belongs to Hong Chien Wei with an overall length of 27.88 meters and a capacity of 89.46m³. Greenpeace reported the matter to the FFA and WCPFC.

Ming Maan Shyang 36 – 12 May 2008 – Taiwanese Longliner

Greenpeace activists had a discussion with the Captain. He agreed to leave the Pacific Commons and return to Taiwan as the Captain claimed the vessel did not hold any valid licence with any of the Pacific island countries.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chin Yu Chun – 12 May 2008 – Taiwanese Longliner

The Chin Yu Chun was asked by Greenpeace activists to stop fishing and release marine life from its hooks. The Captain agreed to stop fishing after activists confiscated two of its longline beacons. The Captain agreed to leave the Pacific Commons and return to Taiwan. The Esperanza peacefully escorted the vessel out of the Pacific Commons, then returned the beacons.

Albatun Tres – 27 May 2008 – Spanish Super Super Seiner

The Albatun Tres is the biggest and most devastatingly efficient tuna catching vessel in the world with a capability of taking in over 3,000 tonnes of tuna in one fishing trip.

The vessel arrived to the Pacific Ocean from the Indian Ocean earlier this year. The Albatun Tres is owned by Albacora, a large Spanish tuna company that is part of Organizacion de Productores Asociados de Grandes Atuneros Congeladores (OPAGAC), a powerful association of Spanish tuna boat owners, processors and traders.

The Esperanza followed the vessel for five days across over 1,000 nautical miles before demonstrating peacefully as the vessel was hauling in its nets in Phoenix Island, Kiribati. Activists laid a 25 metre floating banner reading 'No Fish, No Future' into the net. Unfortunately activists didn't get to the net in time to prevent it closing. The Albatun Tres was first spotted on 22 May 2008 when she was in the international waters north of Kiribati. Greenpeace has evidence to show that OPAGAC is approaching Pacific island countries to try and get more licences in breach of the spirit of the specific exemption granted by the Tuna Commission last year.

Juventus – 1 June 2008 – Korean Purse Seiner

The Juventus is owned by DongWon Industries, one of the largest tuna companies in the world. The vessel agreed to leave the Pacific Commons and head into the Solomon Island's EEZ where the Captain claimed she holds a valid licence. Greenpeace peacefully escorted her out of the international waters. Activists demonstrated against the vessel by both painting "Pirate?" on the side of the vessel and holding banners reading "Marine Reserves Now!" and "Korea Pacific Tuna Destroyer" in English and Korean. This was to highlight the company's questionable record and Korea's role in contributing to the overfishing of the region's tuna stocks.

Xin Shi Ji 101 – 2 June 2008 – Chinese Purse Seiner

Greenpeace activists delivered a letter to the Captain of the Xin Shi Ji 101 in Chinese outlining the state of the regional tuna stocks and Greenpeace demands for the closure of the Pacific Commons to fishing. The vessel was requested to leave the international waters and was peacefully escorted into Nauru's EEZ where the Captain claims he holds a valid licence to fish.

The future of Pacific tuna and of everyone who lives from it is at the mercy of unscrupulous foreign fishers and a growing global appetite for tuna. The Pacific is in the grip of unsustainable and unfair fishing. Scientists have been warning since 2001 that bigeye and yellowfin tuna are suffering from overfishing. Current management efforts are not sufficient, and the control measures in place are proving to be ineffective. Pirate fishing activities puts further stress on the declining fishery. The lack of political will by countries tasked with the conservation and management of the regional tuna stocks has exacerbated the crisis. Added to this, is the failure of the WCPFC to regulate fishing activities on the high seas and a reduction in fishing effort to counter for the overfishing.

Greenpeace's expedition reveals the vulnerability of the Pacific Commons and the exploitative practices of the fishing industry. In particular, the loophole identified on the transshipment exemption by Philippine vessels; the illegal vessels observed and the limitation in proper MCS schemes to manage fishing activities in the Pacific Commons is jeopardising the future sustainability of the region's tuna stocks.

These loopholes need to be closed if Pacific island countries are to move towards sustainable fisheries management in the region.

Greenpeace calls on all member states of the WCPFC to adopt the following recommendations:

- Permanently close the three areas of international waters identified by Greenpeace – the Pacific Commons - and establish them as no take marine reserves.
- List the Queen Evelyn 168 on the WCPFC IUU record.
- Ban all at-sea transshipments, with no exemptions granted to any member countries. All fish transfers must to be carried out in port to collect accurate data.
- Immediately halve fishing effort across the entire WCPO.

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