



**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN (MAP)
REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA (REMPEC)**

Thirteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of the Regional
Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre
for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)

REMPEC/WG.45/INF.18
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Agenda Item 4

INTERPOL OPERATION 30 DAYS AT SEA: BRIEFING NOTE

Note by the INTERPOL

SUMMARY

Executive Summary: This document provides an overview of the outcome of the INTERPOL Operation 30 Days at Sea.

Action to be taken: Paragraph 2

Related documents: REMPEC/WG.45/4

Background

1 30 Days at Sea was the first global law enforcement operation countering marine pollution crime. It was led by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and its Pollution Crime Working Group. A briefing note of the INTERPOL Operation 30 Days at Sea is reproduced in Annex to the present document.

Action requested by the Meeting

2 **The Meeting is invited to take note** of the information provided in the present document.

ANNEX

INTERPOL OPERATION 30 DAYS AT SEA



INTERPOL Operation 30 Days at Sea : briefing note



1. “OPERATION 30 DAYS AT SEA”: A LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TO MARINE POLLUTION

UN Environment alerted that by 2050 there may be more plastic than fish in the seas. The international community has recognized the need to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution by 2025, as reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Marine pollution crime is a serious and growing threat to environmental and human security. It poses significant risks to ecosystems, public health, food security and economies, and it undermines sustainable development, as millions of people in developing countries are directly or indirectly economically dependent upon marine products. It also provides business opportunities for transnational and organized crime to thrive. Offenders use the sea as a dumping ground to illegally discharge substances and participate in other polluting activities, such as unregulated ship emissions and shipbreaking, to avoid costs related to properly manage and dispose of pollutants on shore. Such violations are committed at the transnational level taking advantage of legislative gaps, logistic challenges in sea patrolling, and uneven enforcement capacities across countries. These acts may lead to the contamination of waters and coastal land, damaging the habitat of flora and fauna for decades, threatening marine life with extinction, and undermining the global food chain.

The law enforcement community can play a key role in meeting the growing challenge of marine pollution and contributing to achieve these goals, through a wider mobilization of marine pollution enforcement efforts.

2. SETTING-UP “OPERATION 30 DAYS AT SEA”: NETWORK BUILDING AND OPERATION PLANNING

30 Days at Sea was the first global law enforcement operation countering marine pollution crime. It was led by INTERPOL and its Pollution Crime Working Group. The strategic approach to set-up this Operation was to identify a global operational network of relevant stakeholders to further build national operational capabilities.

2.1 Establishing a Global Operational Network

An invitation to join the Operation was extended by INTERPOL to all its member countries, through the INTERPOL National Central Bureaus (NCBs). 58 countries from every regions of the world responded positively to this call for action, mobilizing 276 national agencies to conduct the Operation.

The first steps towards establishing this global operational network were the appointment of National Operational Coordinators (NOCs) by participating countries and the development of the NOCs network as a global operational cooperation mechanism specialized in marine pollution enforcement.

The NOCs Network comprised of 122 officers representing 98 competent national agencies, namely police (criminal, maritime, environmental, border police forces and NCBs), environmental authorities, coast guard, maritime authorities, coastal administrations, navy and customs.

NOCs acted as the national points of contact for the Operation both domestically and internationally and reported the results to INTERPOL.

2.2 Building Operational Capacities of countries

Capacity building was a key component of the operational planning phase, aiming to assist participating countries in enhancing their intelligence gathering, detection and investigative capacities

in preparation for their tactical deployment. It was organised around the country-to-country expertise sharing principle, complemented by INTERPOL technical support.

INTERPOL developed an Operational Support Package accessible to its member countries. The package included operational planning and reporting templates; the INTERPOL Investigative Manuals on Illegal Oil Discharges from Vessels and Illegal Garbage Discharges from Vessels; a set of risk indicators of illegal vessel activity; and an on-board investigation checklist.

Regional Training Courses on Investigating Shipping Pollution Violations involving several African and Asia-Pacific countries have been organized. Training was delivered by national experts from the United States, specifically from the US Coast Guards, the US Coast Guard Investigative Service, and the US Department of Justice.

To enhance cooperation and experience sharing among participating countries, eleven pre-operational planning meetings have been organized at the regional level (Asia-Pacific, Africa, Euro-Mediterranean region and North America) and at the national level (Indonesia-Timor Leste, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar and Republic of South Africa), and a teleconference has been held for Latin American participating countries.

Each participating country defined its own targets and operational activities based on its national priorities and capacities. Prior to the Operation, National Operational Plans were submitted to INTERPOL, who compiled the Global Operational Plan.

3. SCOPE OF OPERATION “30 DAYS AT SEA”

The overall objective of Operation 30 Days at Sea was to enhance the global law enforcement response to marine pollution violations in breach of the International Conventions and national legislations, with the ultimate objective of enhancing sea quality. Prior to the tactical phase of the operation, specific objectives and operation targets were defined among participating countries.

3.1 Operation specific objectives

30 Days at sea specific objectives included:

- Supporting investigations to identify, arrest and prosecute individuals and/or companies responsible for marine pollution violations, through intelligence gathering and sharing and international cooperation;
- Increasing the enforcement of relevant international instruments, particularly the MARPOL Convention and its Annexes, and national legislations;
- Strengthening law enforcement capacity, interagency coordination and international cooperation in the field of marine pollution enforcement;
- Collecting and analysing data to profile risk indicators, modus operandi and hotspots, with a view to increasing early detection of marine pollution violations and developing long-term law enforcement strategies;
- Raising the profile of marine pollution from a law enforcement perspective, in order to integrate marine pollution in the global law enforcement priority agenda, strengthen mandates and mobilize increased resources to disrupt this crime more forcefully.

3.2 Operation targets

In the majority of participating countries, target identification resulted from intelligence gathering, which consisted mainly in screening vessels and companies of interest based on records of non-compliance extracted from a variety of sources: national compliance targeting matrix for marine traffic and related lists of interesting ships; databases of the regional MoUs on Port State Control; etc. Some countries coupled historical data with intelligence collected during the Operation through Vessel Traffic Management Information Systems, National Aerial Surveillance Program overflights, and satellite monitoring.

As a result, countries compiled a list of hotspots, targets and suspected vessels and companies that they aimed to pursue. The key operational targets were:

- Vessels Inspected at Sea;
- Vessels Inspected in inland waterways;
- Vessels Inspected at Ports;
- Pollution incidents or breaches detected on Rivers or Lakes;
- Pollution incidents or breaches detected in Coastal areas or Bays;
- Land Based Targets;
- Port Reception Facilities.

3.3 Enforcement techniques

This Operation saw an extensive use of both traditional surveillance vehicles and equipment, such as aerial surveillance and sea patrols, and innovative technologies applied to marine pollution detection, particularly:

- Satellite imagery;
- Advanced aerial surveillance: drones, including technologies such as sulphur sensors and mapping software; aircrafts equipped with side looking airborne radar (SLAR), electro-optical infrared camera system (EO/IR) and infrared and ultraviolet line scanner (IR/UV);
- Vessel tracking systems, including Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) and various software and mobile applications;
- Various IT equipment such as facial capturing systems, fingerprints scanning systems, night vision cameras, XRF scanners, X-ray scanners and special equipment for oil spills;
- Forensic equipment and laboratories.

4. "OPERATION 30 DAYS AT SEA": MAIN FINDINGS

Operation 30 Days at Sea was the first global operation ever led to focus a law enforcement response to marine pollution. With 15,446 inspections conducted worldwide, it resulted in the identification of 2,205 violations and led to trigger more than 700 investigations.

4.1 Main operational results

The 2,205 violations detected included 1,507 marine pollution-related offences committed on land, in internal waters or at sea; 633 minor violations and deficiencies; and 85 cases related to other types of offences, such as fishery crime, drug trafficking and violations of safety regulations, which were detected during multipurpose inspections.

As a result of the operation, 831 marine-pollution related cases were reported in details with criminal and qualitative information.

Operational findings indicate that every one out of ten inspections exposes a marine pollution offence. Such offences affect all regions of the world, usually presenting transnational profiles. Although marine pollution appears mainly as a corporate crime or as the consequence of negligence, indicators of transnational organized crime were found in at least one identified case.

4.1.1 Targets of inspections

Inspections leading to reported cases during this Operation can be broadly classified in three groups according to their target: vessels, land-based targets and other targets.

Over 70% of the reported marine pollution offences were detected through vessel inspections, particularly when inspecting vessels at port. The proportion of offences detected at sea was considerably lower, accounting for only 2% of the cases reported. The second largest number of offences were detected through land-based targets, especially businesses involving illegal plastic bags and sewage treatment plants.

This result seems to suggest that land and port inspections may be more effective to detect marine pollution offences than sea and coastal patrolling and monitoring. It is however difficult to validate this tactical implication based on the data available, which may simply reflect a greater law enforcement mobilization on land and in ports rather than at sea for reasons ranging from intelligence to expertise and availability of resources.

4.1.2 Marine pollution events detected

Oil pollution accounted for half of the marine pollution offences detected in this Operation, followed by garbage and sewage discharges, and activities related to illegal plastic bags. Other offences including discharges of noxious liquid substances and ballast water, air pollution from vessels, shipbreaking and waste management were also found, although accounting for a much lower proportion of the reported cases.

Oil events were an important share of the pollution events across all regions, especially in North America. However, other types of offences revealed that regions are affected by specific pollution events. Garbage discharges were prevalent in all developing regions and regions with economies in transition (all but Europe and North America). Sewage discharges were important in Africa and Europe.

4.1.3 Legal forms of marine pollution offences detected

While significant differences were observed across regions with regard to types of pollution events detected, the criminalization of marine pollution offences rather revealed consistencies across regions.

The overwhelming majority of offences were administrative cases (86%), with a clear correlation with some specific pollution events: all offences related to discharge of ballast water, source of air pollution, and record violations fell under administrative violations. Garbage discharges also tended to be considered administrative offences.

Criminal cases accounted for only 11% of the offences detected, with some specific patterns: all shipbreaking cases were considered criminal, and offences related to noxious liquid substances and sewage were relatively more criminalized than other offences.

4.2 Long term impacts

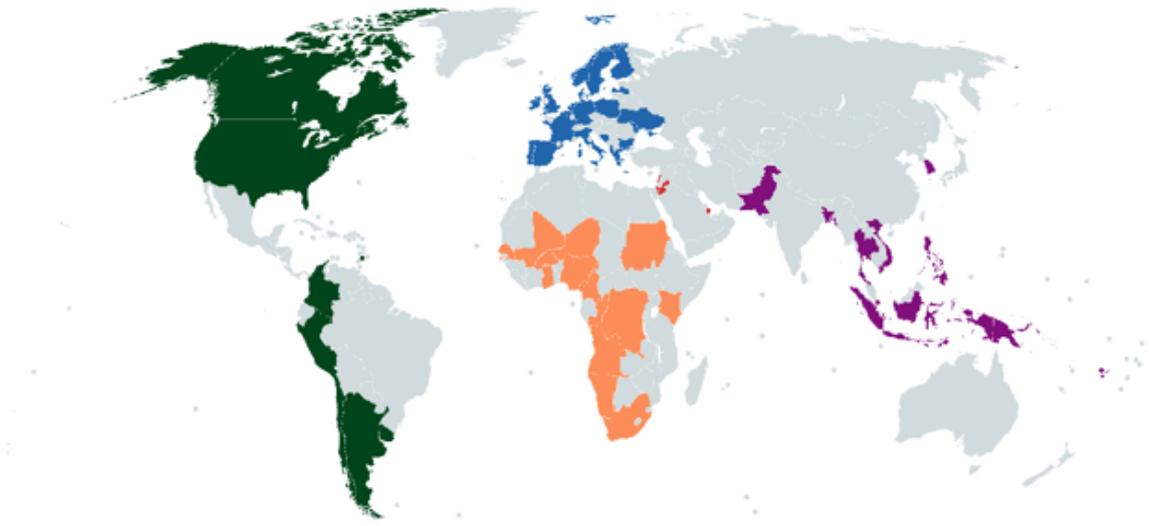
The Operation generated strategic and long term impacts, on which further law enforcement responses should build.

First, the Operation fostered a significant and synchronized law enforcement mobilization globally, sending a strong political message that marine pollution is an emerging priority in the agenda of the global law enforcement community. This impact was particularly important in a number of African, Asian and Pacific countries where marine pollution is still a very new or neglected area of law enforcement. In those countries, the involvement in a global INTERPOL operation encouraged an unprecedented engagement by law enforcers in this crime area, the development of technical capacities to address these challenges, and advocacy at the policy level to increase prioritization of marine pollution enforcement.

Second, in a large number of instances, the Operation brought stakeholders together to fight pollution crime in concert for the first time, at every level. At the national level, it fostered the setup of new multiagency teams in numerous countries, who reported some very positive outcomes in terms of how their operational model has been changing towards a more effective and holistic approach to marine pollution enforcement.

Third, this Operation generated actionable intelligence from the analysis of the operational results, to drive future targeted intelligence-led marine pollution operations.

Annex 1: Operation 30 Days at sea - participating countries



AMERICAS (8)	AFRICA (14)	MIDDLE EAST (3)	EUROPE (22)	ASIA – PACIFIC (11)	
Argentina	Angola	Lebanon	Albania	Italy	Bangladesh
Canada	Burkina Faso	Jordan	Belgium	Latvia	Fiji
Chile	Cameroon	Qatar	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Moldova	Indonesia
Colombia	Congo		Netherlands	Norway	Pakistan
Peru	Democratic Republic of Congo		Bulgaria	Poland	Papua New Guinea
St. Vincent & Grenadines	Ghana		Denmark	Portugal	Philippines
United States of America	Kenya		Finland	Spain	Republic of Korea
Uruguay	Mali		France	Sweden	Singapore
	Namibia		Germany	Ukraine	Thailand
	Niger		Greece	United Kingdom	Timor Leste
	Nigeria		Ireland		Vietnam
	South Africa		Israel		
	Senegal				
	Sudan				

Annex II: Timeline of the operation





INTERPOL

General Secretariat
200 quai Charles de Gaulle
69006 Lyon
France
Tel: +33 4 72 44 70 00
Fax: +33 4 72 44 71 63

Twitter: @INTERPOL_HQ
YouTube: INTERPOLHQ

www.interpol.int