



FFA

Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries

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Strengthening national capacity and regional solidarity for sustainable tuna fisheries

FFA MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IUU cases open up in wake of regional Island Chief Fisheries Operation

August 15th 2017, FFA HQ, Honiara SOLOMON ISLANDS—Investigations into four serious breaches of vessel fishing licenses have opened up after another regional fisheries surveillance sweep in the Pacific tuna fishery.

Operation Island Chief, a ten-day annual operation which ended August 4, involved nine Pacific patrol boats from the 10 participating FFA member nations- Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, Palau, PNG, Nauru, the Marshall Islands, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Island Chief 2017 covered more than 14 million square kilometres of Ocean. Of the four 'QUAD' nations who offer their defence and military assets to support regional surveillance, Australia, NZ and the US participated in Island Chief 2017.

The HMNZS Otago and Hawea, supported by an RNZAF P-3K2 Orion aircraft, the HMAS Success, and two US aircraft played a key role in aerial and surface support to the operation. QUAD assets added to the Island Chief at-sea total of 75 days and the aerial assets providing 73 hours of surveillance. "The contribution of the QUAD partners in safeguarding the Pacific fishery from Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) activity brings a much-appreciated layer of support to the national patrols and vigilance led by maritime headquarters across the region, and we are heartened by the level of engagement, commitment, and action assisting developing Pacific nations in this regard" says FFA DG James Movick.

"Regional cooperation and sharing of resources and information is a critical cornerstone of the strong Pacific vigilance against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing. The incorporation of newer technologies has seen the regional Fisheries Surveillance Centre hosted by FFA, adapt accordingly over recent years," he says.

Operation Island Chief 2017 saw a total of 1,989 vessel detections via radar, a record of 117 at sea and in-port vessel boardings, and infringements involving

four vessels -- three flagged to China and one to Chinese Taipei. The infringements, in Vanuatu and the High seas, centred around non reporting or misreporting of critical information, and unmarked gear.

All cases and investigations will be led by the national authorities.

Regional surveillance operations such as Island Chief typically involve several hundred or more personnel across the region, with joint coordination led by the FFA RFSC team. Pacific watch keepers join the RFSC crew for the around the clock shifts involved in the operation.

Noting the continuing capacity-building role for operation Chiefs-of-staff, DG Movick thanked the Operation's Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Commander Semisi Tapueluelu of the Tongan Navy for his active participation, "and a major thanks also to the more than 350 personnel who participated in Island Chief 2017. Your vigilance and joint efforts continue to deter IUU fishing and reinforce the message to all vessels operating in Pacific EEZs that they must comply with their license rules."--*ENDS*

ABOUT FFA:

The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) strengthens national capacity and regional solidarity so its 17 members can manage, control and develop their tuna fisheries now and in the future. Based in Honiara, Solomon Islands, FFA's 17 Pacific Island members are Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Since 1979, FFA has facilitated regional cooperation so that all Pacific countries benefit from the sustainable use of tuna – a multi-billion dollar resource important for many people's livelihoods in the Pacific.

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