



## ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, & UNREGULATED FISHING STRATEGY

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing exacerbates poverty, threatens livelihoods, and fosters food insecurity. IUU fishing activities pose a significant national security threat by enabling other illicit activities such as money laundering, drug smuggling, illegal arms dealing, and other transnational organized crimes. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) identified IUU fishing as the leading global maritime security threat due to the expected deterioration of government authority within fragile coastal States and increased tension between fishing nations. Without U.S. and international efforts to stop illegal fishing, the tension among fishing nations could threaten geopolitical stability worldwide.

**20-32%**

of wild-caught  
seafood in the  
U.S. is illegal

**\$25 to  
\$50 billion**  
is lost annually to IUU  
fishing

**3 billion**  
people rely on  
seafood for protein

## THE UNITED STATES' LEADERSHIP ROLE

The United States has the ability to assist developing countries to build capacity for monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) operations and share resources and knowledge to combat IUU fishing. Further, the increasing pressure on global food supplies and growing demands from Americans for transparent and sustainably sourced seafood creates a ripe environment for meaningful fisheries management policy introduction. The United States should ensure that policies and agreements to which it is party have the same standards for reporting, vessel registration, and MCS capacity.

# IMPROVING MARITIME SECURITY THROUGH STRATEGIC POLICY

## SEAFOOD IMPORT MONITORING PROGRAM

In 2016, the U.S. government established the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP), which requires catch documentation and traceability for 13 types of seafood at risk of illegal fishing and seafood fraud. However, SIMP only screens up to 10% of globally traded and imported fish products under its current implementation. SIMP should expand to monitor all seafood, including information covering the entire supply chain of fish catch, from where it was caught to how it got to the consumers' plate. Adopting more robust requirements for imported seafood in the U.S. would encourage States worldwide to strengthen their fisheries management and reporting requirements and hold imported seafood to the same standard as the U.S. caught seafood.



## MARITIME SECURITY AND FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT ACT

In 2019, the U.S. established the Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement Act (Maritime SAFE Act), which aims to support a whole-of-government approach to counter IUU fishing and its related threats. The Maritime SAFE Act established an Interagency Working Group on IUU Fishing comprised of representatives from NOAA, the Department of State, the USCG, and other federal agencies. Throughout 2019 and 2020, NOAA worked with global enforcement partners to better detect and interdict IUU fish and fish products. NOAA worked in Indonesia, Latin American and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Thailand, and Vietnam to increase the nations' and regions' capacities to mitigate IUU fishing. These partnerships and programs will require ongoing support from the U.S. Congress to realize lasting benefits and prevent illegal fisheries activity.



## SHIPRIDER PROGRAMS

The USCG's ongoing bilateral maritime law enforcement shiprider program provides a means by which states without sufficient enforcement capacity can monitor their sovereign waters. Fisheries enforcement personnel from partner states ride onboard U.S. vessels to conduct patrols and protect critical fisheries resources. The USCG currently has shiprider agreements with 16 countries in the Indo-Pacific and West Africa. Congress should ensure this program continues and expands.



## UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) remains unratified by the U.S. However, U.S. forces regularly enforce freedom of navigation principles enshrined in UNCLOS without full Congressional ratification. Every Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since the adoption of the convention in 1982 has supported its ratification. Ratification of the UNCLOS would strengthen U.S. maritime policy and influence abroad.

