

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Regional Overview



SOUTHWEST ATLANTIC OCEAN

Geography

The Southwest Atlantic Ocean runs along the coast of Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. Warm ocean currents from Brazil meet with cold water from the Falkland Islands and create a rich tapestry of nutrients and biodiversity. In particular, the Patagonian Continental Shelf of Argentina (PCSA) is one of the most diverse and productive marine environments in the world. It is home to a wide variety of fish and aquatic life, and has one of the world's largest squid fisheries. Hake, shrimp, grenadier, and squid are principle targets.

Strategic Significance

The Southwest Atlantic Ocean is the only sea area in the world without a fisheries management governing structure. Increasing distant water fleet activities occurring just outside of exclusive economic zones (EEZs) are crippling stock and making it harder to manage fisheries. China's influence in the region is growing, making it an important factor in great power competition.



Argentina is estimated to be losing \$5 billion USD and thousands of jobs a year due to foreign fishing just beyond the EEZ.



The Port of Montevideo is one of the world's central ports for suspected IUU fishing vessel operations.

**Transshipment
Hotspot**

A large red target graphic with concentric circles is overlaid on a background image of fishing boats. The text "Transshipment Hotspot" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the target.



SOUTHWEST ATLANTIC IUU CHALLENGES

EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONES (EEZ) ADJACENT ACTIVITIES

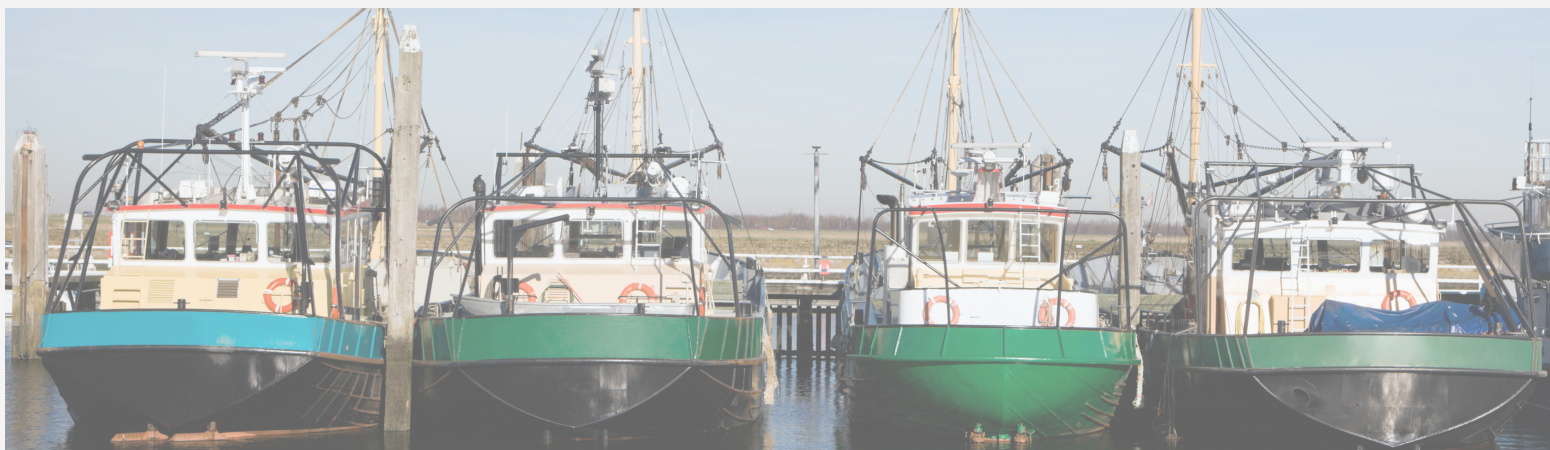
Distant water fishing fleets are increasingly conducting operations just outside of Brazilian, Uruguayan, and Argentinian EEZs. While not explicitly illegal, the operations negatively impact fishing stocks inside the EEZs and increases the likelihood of overfishing and disruption of aquatic food chain systems. These activities compound and create additional challenges for stock management, maintaining records, and monitoring legal fishing. Similarly, waters just beyond Argentina's EEZ have become a hotspot for suspect transshipment activities.

DISTANT WATER FLEETS (DWFs) & DARK FLEETS

Distant Water Fleets consist of industrial sized trawlers which originate in nations without any territorial claim to Southwest Atlantic Ocean waters, such as Spain, South Korea, and China. Dark Fleets, meanwhile, turn off their automatic identification systems (AIS) to avoid detection, which creates information gaps for ship activities and overall accountability. A June 2021 Oceana Report noted that during an approximately three year monitoring period of waters off the coast of Argentina, Chinese vessels were responsible for 66% of "gap events" where activities and locations were unknown. The same report listed Spanish vessels as responsible for 20% of gap events, and South Korean vessels responsible for 8%. More than 30% of these "dark" ships also visited the Port of Montevideo in Uruguay, adding to its reputation as a hotspot for illegal shipping.

TRANSSHIPMENT HOTSPOT

Transshipment, the process of unloading goods from one ship to another, is legal and part of routine maritime operations. However, since it is largely unregulated and occurs at sea, it can also be used to mask a multitude of illicit activities, including IUU fishing, human trafficking, drug smuggling, and forced labor. Transshipment policies vary by region, EEZ, and vessel flag state, and data on frequently and operations is sparse.



SOUTHWEST ATLANTIC KEY PARTNERS & ACTIVITIES

REGIONAL

The Southwest Atlantic is the only sea area in the world without a regional governing body for fisheries management. However, there are ongoing discussions to establish a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) as well as progress to facilitate information sharing in the Regional Operational Cooperation Network of Maritime Authorities of the Americas (ROCRAM). Likewise, there is a Joint Argentinian-Uruguayan Technical Commission of the Maritime Front (CTMFM) which studies and analyses catches and enhances fishing management.

UNITED STATES

Presidential Policy Directive 23 (PPD-23) provides an overarching framework for security sector assistance and capacity building. Under PPD-23 the Department of Defense and Department of State, and the U.S. Coast Guard work closely to provide security assistance in South America. Examples include:

- U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM)/U.S. Coast Guard Operation Southern Cross
- U.S. Department of State Office of Marine Conservation
- U.S. Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement (SAFE) Act
- U.S. Interagency Working Group on IUU Fishing
- U.S. Coast Guard Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Strategic Outlook

INTERNATIONAL

- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) - IUU Fishing
- International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) International Maritime Bureau (IMB)
- International Maritime Organization
- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)