

## CLOSE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: SEIZURE OF DRIFTNET VIOLATOR IN CONVENTION WATERS

The NPAFC's Committee on Enforcement provides a forum for planning and coordination of international cooperation and timely information exchange in support of high-seas patrolling activities and port inspections by member nations. The threat of illegal high seas fishing activities requires member countries to remain vigilant in improving monitoring and enforcement efforts in the North Pacific.

Last summer, attentive agents on a Fisheries Agency of Japan (FAJ) patrol aircraft observed the fishing vessel *Bangun Perkasa* using driftnets on the high seas and notified the US Coast Guard (USCG) of the sighting. The USCG intercepted the vessel, and ascertained it was a stateless vessel conducting large-scale (driftnet longer than 2.5 km) driftnet fishing in violation of international moratoria and US domestic law. They then escorted the vessel and crew to Dutch Harbor, Alaska. In Dutch Harbor the vessel and crew were turned over to NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (NOAA OLE) for investigation. No salmon was found in the catch. The following is a timeline of these events compiled from agency press releases, official blogs, and media reports.



North Pacific Ocean—The crew of the fishing vessel *Bangun Perkasa* tend their fishing nets prior to a US Coast Guard law enforcement boarding conducted by the Kodiak-based Coast Guard Cutter *Munro* Sept. 7, 2011. US Coast Guard photo

**Aug. 31, 2011:** Persons on board a FAJ maritime patrol aircraft observe the fishing vessel *Bangun Perkasa* using a driftnet on the high seas and contact USCG to report the sighting (USCG press release).

**Sept. 7, 2011:** The Kodiak-based USCG Cutter *Munro* arrives on scene, launches its MH-65 Dolphin helicopter, and locates the *Bangun Perkasa* with 22 fishermen aboard, approximately 2,600 miles southwest of Kodiak, AK. The USCG observes the crew of the *Bangun Perkasa* fishing using an illegal driftnet exceeding 4 km in length. Once the helicopter flying above them is spotted, the *Bangun Perkasa* crew abandons their fishing nets and attempts to leave the area (NOAA OLE press release).

**Sept. 8, 2011:** The *Munro*'s crew boards the fishing vessel *Bangun Perkasa*. The boarding team determines the fishing vessel had more than 16 km of driftnet, 30 tons of squid, and approximately 30 shark carcasses on board (NOAA OLE press release). Based on original information from the ship's officers, the vessel is thought to be registered in Indonesia. Later, the Government of Indonesia denies the master's claim of ship registry.

**Sept. 30, 2011:** USCG announces that, in cooperation with international partners, it has seized the *Bangun Perkasa* and her crew, which were operating without valid flag state registration and suspected of large-scale illegal high-seas driftnet fishing in the North Pacific Ocean. The cutter retrieved the abandoned net and begins the lengthy escort of the *Bangun Perkasa* towards Dutch Harbor, Alaska. Because the fishing vessel was determined to be stateless, it cannot be returned to its home port to be prosecuted by local authorities (NOAA OLE press release).

**Oct. 3, 2011:** All 22 crew members of *Bangun Perkasa* are brought to shore and sent to Anchorage for interviews with NOAA OLE and customs officers before being returned to their home countries (Unalaska Community Broadcasting). It is unlikely charges will be filed against the crew, but the Taiwanese captain will be returned to his country to face local Taiwanese legal actions (KTUU.com).

**Oct. 6, 2011:** A private company is awarded a contract to make necessary repairs to maintain the refrigeration systems to keep the catch from spoiling, and to ensure the *Bangun Perkasa* is in compliance with US state and federal laws before being brought to Dutch Harbor (Alaska Native News).

**Oct. 15, 2011:** The USCG transfers possession of *Bangun Perkasa* to NOAA's OLE (NOAA OLE press release).



*Bangun Perkasa* approaches its driftnet on Sept. 7, 2011.  
US Coast Guard photo

### Epilogue

The Court granted the sale of the frozen catch of the *Bangun Perkasa*. It was determined the catch comprised approximately 55 tons of squid, 54 shark 1 mahi-mahi, 1 bonito tuna, and 300 kg of small unidentified fish (US District Court Order). Genetic samples of shark were collected to determine the species before the catch was auctioned. Later, the squid catch was sold for bait and the shark catch sold for production of fish feed (Unalaska Community Broadcasting). The legal process needs to run its course before any decision regarding forfeiture of the vessel can be made (NOAA OLE press release).

Coast Guard reported the *Bangun Perkasa's* mascot dog began a new life with a member of *Munro's* crew. The 17th Coast Guard District's official blog describes the story of Dog Lai Wong (an auspicious Chinese name meaning fortune bringer). Lai Wong appears to be a German shepard and Welsh corgi mix, and he was adopted by a member of *Munro's* crew at the request of the dog's owner, the *Bangun Perkasa's* Chief Engineer. When Lai Wong came aboard *Munro*, the crew gave him a thorough bath and he was declared to be healthy and happy by a veterinarian. According to the Coast Guard blog, "Lai Wong is very friendly and loves any attention he receives from the crew. He spends most of his time patrolling the ship's helicopter hanger or law enforcement vestibule. When in port he stands a vigilant quarterdeck watch and greets all who cross the cutter's bow. He responds well to some hand signals, but doesn't understand English."



North Pacific Ocean—The Coast Guard Cutter *Munro* monitors the fishing vessel *Bangun Perkasa* Sept. 9, 2011.  
US Coast Guard photo

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