Maritime Information Sharing in the Asia-Pacific Region

Captain Raul (Pete) Pedrozo, US Navy

Abstract

Although the world’s oceans have historically served as barriers, the expansion of world markets, interconnected economies and instant communications have compressed the global commons. Today, the world’s oceans serve as highways for those who seek the free exchange of ideas and commerce. However, these same trade routes that serve the world’s economies and create stability and opportunity are threatened by a host of criminal elements. Transnational threats, such as piracy and armed robbery at sea, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, trafficking in drugs, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, trafficking in weapons, terrorism and illegal fishing, use the world’s oceans to facilitate their illegal activities.

Based on the scope of their operations, combating transnational criminal groups requires close cooperation between regional nations. Most nations in the Asia-Pacific region do not have the capability or capacity to go it alone. The first element of a maritime security framework is increased situational awareness and information sharing. The paper will briefly discuss several information sharing mechanisms that are currently in use in the Asia-Pacific region to enhance maritime security and maritime domain awareness, including: the International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre; the Malacca Strait Security Initiative; the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia Information Sharing Centre; the Philippine Maritime Drug Enforcement Coordinating Center; the Western Pacific Naval Symposium Regional Maritime Information Exchange; and the U.S. Navy’s Cooperative Maritime Forces

1 Captain Raul (Pete) Pedrozo, US Navy has served in the military for over 30 years and is currently the Staff Judge Advocate, United States Pacific Command. The author’s PowerPoint presentation may be viewed on the accompanying CD. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not represent the official views of the United States Government, the Department of Defense or United States Pacific Command.
Pacific (CMFP) initiative (a new community of interest in the existing Combined Enterprise Regional Information System).

Maritime security is a transnational issue that requires cooperation among regional nations to succeed. Lack of actionable information ultimately leads to missed opportunities for interdicting emerging threats and transnational criminal groups. Information sharing must therefore be made a critical priority. Comprehensive maritime information sharing enables broader maritime domain awareness between regional partners by affording access to more diverse information sources. By identifying and addressing capability and capacity gaps, information sharing provides the United States and its partner nations with pieces of the puzzle that are otherwise not available.

Introduction

Although the world’s oceans have historically served as barriers, the expansion of world markets, interconnected economies and instant communications have compressed the global commons. Today the world’s oceans serve as highways for those who seek the free exchange of ideas and commerce. Globally, over 90 percent of world trade moves by sea. Over 120,000 ships from at least 190 nations transport over 17 million containers to over 10,000 destinations worldwide. However, these same trade routes that serve the world’s economies and create stability and opportunity are threatened by a host of criminal elements. Transnational threats, such as piracy and armed robbery at sea, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, trafficking in drugs, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, trafficking in weapons, terrorism and illegal fishing, use the world’s oceans to facilitate their illegal activities. Transnational crime is encroaching on world markets as never before, creating unwanted and unfair competition and instability. The International Monetary Fund estimates that organized crime has the sixth largest Gross Domestic