



SOUTHERN OCEAN PATROL VESSEL - OCEANIC VIKING

The Australian Government takes the protection of its sovereign territories and assets very seriously. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Southern Ocean presents a threat to Australia's Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) and Macquarie Island exclusive economic zones (EEZ), its valuable Patagonian toothfish fishery and the fragile Southern Ocean environment.

The remoteness of the HIMI and hostile Southern Ocean sub-Antarctic waters makes the detection and apprehension of vessels carrying out IUU fishing even more challenging.

Illegal activity in the Southern Ocean is being fuelled by rising fish prices, over fishing elsewhere in the world and excess fishing capacity in northern hemisphere fishing fleets. There is concern that, if left unchecked, such fishing could eventually lead to the commercial extinction of stocks of the Patagonian toothfish.

In response to this, the Australian Government, through the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) and the Australian Defence Force, has provided surveillance and apprehension of vessels operating illegally in this remote region. This has included on-the-water cooperation with other countries with similar Southern Ocean interests, in particular France who share an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) boundaries with Australia.

The Southern Ocean Maritime Patrol and Response (SOMPR) program provides a dedicated vessel, Oceanic Viking, which is able to conduct year-round patrols in sub-Antarctic weather conditions.

ABOUT THE OCEANIC VIKING

Oceanic Viking is the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (fisheries) Southern Ocean patrol vessel.

The vessel is contracted from P&O to conduct year-round patrols as part of the Southern Ocean patrol program.

The Oceanic Viking undertakes a minimum of 200 days in the Southern Ocean per year and can conduct up to 300 days per year.

These patrols are part of Australia's commitment to intercepting vessels and apprehending people suspected of illegally fishing in the ecologically fragile sub-Antarctic waters.

When not operating in the Southern Ocean, Oceanic Viking is available to patrol Australia's coastline.

SPECIFICATIONS

Length: 105 metres

Beam: 22 metres

Gross tonnage: 9075

Range: 15,900 nautical miles at 16 knots with 10 per cent reserve
33,800 nautical miles at 12 knots with 10 per cent reserve

Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBS)

Two 9.2 metre Norsafe SOLAS approved RHIBS powered by twin 233hp diesel jet propulsion in 6 tonne davits, with a range of approximately 60 nautical miles at 20 knots.

Accommodation

The vessel is licensed to carry 75 people.

Without a steaming party on board, there are 19 P&O crew and 56 people from Customs and Border Protection & other agencies.

With a steaming party on board, there are 25 P&O crew and 50 people from Customs and Border Protection & other agencies.

Equipment and facilities

- an emergency care and resuscitation room staffed by an Australian Antarctic Division doctor
- facilities to accommodate illegal foreign fishers
- operations room equipped with secure communications
- a Forward Looking Infra-Red camera
- a TerraScan system used to predict weather conditions
- other classified systems.

Weapons and Personal Defence Equipment (PDE)

- two .50 calibre machine guns deck mounted
- Glock pistols for Customs and Border Protection Boarding Party officers
- other PDE equipment is also on board.

Customs and Border Protection Marine and Aviation Unit personnel

The Customs and Border Protection Marine and Aviation Unit within the Maritime Operations Support Branch in Customs and Border Protection provides personnel and logistic support to civil vessels chartered by Customs and Border Protection to combat illegal foreign fishing in Australia's northern and southern waters.

All armed Customs and Border Protection Marine and Aviation Unit boarding party personnel are required to satisfy and maintain mandatory security, medical, dental, fitness and psychometric standards as part of their conditions of employment.

Customs and Border Protection Marine and Aviation Unit personnel are trained in use of force, ship search and undertake armed boardings at sea. Some staff also have specialised hospital theatre assistant training. Officers performing the role of tender coxswains must have the appropriate marine qualifications.

Officers operating in the region undergo extensive training in:

- cold climate survival and safety at sea
- use of force, including side-arms and deck-mounted weapons
- vessel familiarisation
- medical training
- operational command
- Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and Fisheries legislative provisions
- tactical boarding operations
- ship search techniques.

Southern Ocean Maritime Patrol and Response Program Outputs

To detect, deter and apprehend illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing vessels in Australia's EEZ. This includes:

- operating a marine vessel with deck-mounted weapons in the Southern Ocean EEZ
- undertaking marine patrols for a minimum of 200 days in the Southern Ocean.

Delivery of other services in the Southern Ocean and Northern waters as directed by Government. These services include:

- joint operations with France
- medical evacuations
- environmental checks of the HIMI for the Australian Antarctic Division
- buoy deployment for the Bureau of Meteorology
- ad hoc engagements for the Australian Government.

Southern Ocean Maritime Patrol and Response Program Outcomes

The desired outcomes of the SOMPR program are the protection of:

- Patagonian toothfish fisheries around the HIMI EEZ from IUU fishing
- Australia's Southern Ocean waters
- the fragile Southern Ocean environment
- the Northern Australian coast line
- other Government responses such as environmental and security requirements.

Southern Ocean conditions

Missions to the region are challenging. Severe weather conditions can include Force 12 gales and seas of more than 10 metres. Average temperatures are minus two.

MORE INFORMATION

For information on any Customs and Border Protection matters, contact Customs and Border Protection Information and Support Centre on 1300 363 263 or email information@customs.gov.au or browse the website www.customs.gov.au