



The Blue Shield

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Background

The Blue Belt programme protects over 4 million square kilometres of ocean around the Overseas Territories (OTs). During the first phase of the Blue Belt programme (2016-2021), the focus has been on engaging with those OTs who had, or who committed to developing, large-scale marine protected areas (MPAs). Other Territories, often with thriving marine economies who wished to explore alternative management approaches, were supported through increased funding for marine projects through the Darwin Plus initiative.

Many OTs have utilised this additional support over recent years to enhance sustainable management of their marine zones, by balancing sustainable use of their natural resources with environmental protection. One key gap identified by the OTs is in regards to surveillance, monitoring and enforcement support across their waters. The Blue Belt programme already offers maritime domain awareness assistance for protected marine areas. By extending this offer to other OTs, the improved maritime domain awareness would assist with active management and enforcement, and

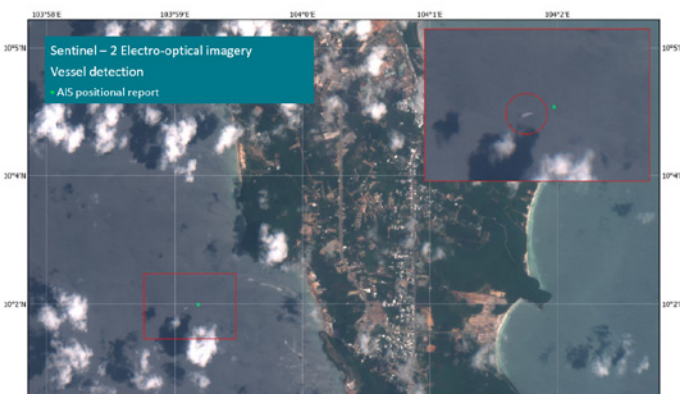


Credit: British Antarctic Survey

underpin the development of marine spatial management frameworks. Having comprehensive management frameworks in place would meet the overarching objective of the Blue Belt programme to enhance marine management and protection.

What is the Blue Shield?

The Blue Shield is a maritime domain awareness¹ project to assess and understand the activities in the OTs maritime domain that may impact the health and sustainability of the maritime environment. Such activities include but are not limited to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, commercial and recreational vessel activity and marine development projects.



Credit: European Space Agency - produced from ESA remote sensing data

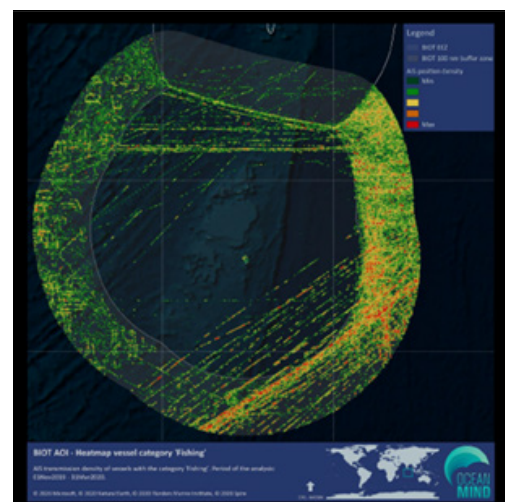
Blue Shield will support the Territories in establishing/enhancing appropriate compliance and enforcement frameworks, remote monitoring and surveillance to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and, where necessary, assist the OTs to undertake enforcement action against any non-compliance. Blue Shield Territories could also benefit from innovative, technology-based compliance and enforcement solutions identified through the Blue Belt programme, and potentially support the wider programme by acting as a testbed for technology trials.

The Blue Shield will focus on maritime domain awareness associated with environmental impacts, however, information and data collected could also be used to support broader security, safety and economic strategies.

¹ Maritime Domain Awareness is the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could impact the security, safety, economy, or environment. The maritime domain is defined as all areas and things of, on, under, relating to, adjacent to, or bordering on a sea or ocean, including all maritime-related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo, ships, and other conveyances - International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Blue Shield assistance will include some, or all of the following:

- Remote satellite surveillance (using a suite of sensors and systems) and historical/current analysis of Automatic Identification System (AIS) to inform OT management decisions on activities such as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU), ballast water exchange (prevention of invasive species), areas to be avoided and anchorage points for the protection of vulnerable habitats/species;
- Improve compliance and enforcement frameworks to prevent IUU fishing;
- Facilitate access to innovative enforcement technologies such as drone technology, passive acoustics and virtual AIS, as well as more well established enforcement technologies such as VMS/ iVMS, electronic logbooks, Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and catch recording apps to support sustainable management of commercial fisheries;
- Improve actionable intelligence via the Blue Shield Surveillance and Intelligence Hub within the Marine Management Organisation to inform management strategies;
- Support investigations of non-compliance of regulatory frameworks;
- Support engagement with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), flag States and Interpol to combat IUU;
- Assistance with regional level engagement and intelligence sharing to address enforcement issues that straddle administrative boundaries;
- Provide training for locally based OT staff regarding fisheries patrols, intelligence gathering and inspections onshore and at sea;
- Support active monitoring and enforcement of protected areas and/or spatial management frameworks;
- Provide ad hoc compliance and enforcement support, guidance and advice on marine activities. This would also include legal advice on the development of management frameworks;
- Access to wider UK Government capabilities, such as surveillance systems available through Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) and sighting reporting through the Royal Navy (RN);
- On island communications support (on-island initiatives to promote reporting intelligence, reporting of successful interceptions etc).



Credit: OceanMind and Blue Belt Programme



Credit: Dan Ward, Blue Belt Programme

OTs receiving Blue Shield support will be asked to confirm their intention and proposed timeline towards developing a marine spatial management framework, which includes commitments to enhance sustainable marine management and protection.

Blue Shield will be offered on a trial basis during 2021 in up to three OTs, which will inform further development and/or implementation, subject to future funding availability.