

Australian Government gets tough – increased funding to combat illegal fishing



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

The Royal Australian Navy's supply vessel HMAS Success at Heard Island, returning from a successful Southern Ocean patrol in February 2004. The ship was involved in the combined operation to apprehend the suspected illegal fishing vessel Maya V.

The Australian Government has continued to take a tough stance on illegal fishing in the Australian exclusive economic zone (EEZ) surrounding Heard Island and McDonald Islands by committing \$40–\$50 million to surveillance and enforcement activities over the next two years.

On 17 December 2003, the Prime Minister, John Howard, the Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, Senator Ian Macdonald, and the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Chris Ellison announced that Australia would increase its surveillance and enforcement capabilities in the Southern Ocean in order to protect its sovereignty and its marine ecosystem.

An ice-strengthened vessel will carry a deck-mounted .50 calibre machine gun, an armed Customs boarding party, Australian Fisheries Officers and a civilian steaming party. With year round vessel



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Australian Prime Minister John Howard visits HMAS Warramunga at Fremantle Harbour, on its return from apprehending Maya V in the Southern Ocean.

availability, the primary purpose of the Southern Ocean patrols will be to detect and apprehend illegal fishing vessels targeting the valuable Patagonian toothfish. They will also send a strong message that Australia will not tolerate any breaches of its EEZ or its marine reserves, wherever they may occur.

The program will provide the capacity to board vessels and use force if necessary and will help avoid the need to undertake long pursuits of illegal vessels in the future.

Australia will continue to work closely with other nations including South Africa, France, the United Kingdom and New Zealand to combat illegal fishing operations and to protect the Southern Ocean ecosystem.

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