

## 'Blue boats' are a problem!

*Blue boats are small wooden fishing vessels that sail from provincial Vietnam. While they are not always blue in colour, the vast majority of these vessels have blue hulls and deck structure as shown in the poster below. These vessels target inshore species that do not require refrigeration or those that can be salted or dried such as sea cucumbers, giant clams or shark's fins. These species also have high value in the Asian market and are very easy to sell. The vessels target isolated reefs and remote islands where their presence may go undetected and not be reported to authorities.*

Indonesia has recently taken a tough stance on illegal fishing in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and this is having an impact on where the blue boats operate. This has included an extensive campaign of burning boats and there have been reports that the Indonesian Navy has fired warning shots at illegal vessels at sea. These actions, along with the severe depletion of the stocks that blue boats target in their own waters, appear to have led to a transfer of illegal fishing in the Pacific Islands region.

Blue boats have been apprehended or sighted in Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Given this distribution of blue boats, and noting the vast distance to some of these locations, it is not unreasonable to suspect that they may also be able to reach Kiribati and Tuvalu.

Addressing the blue boats ingress into our region will take a multi-faceted and concerted effort by the affected Pacific Island countries and territories, and their regional support agencies. The Pacific Community (SPC) and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) are working together and sharing information in order to maximise efficiencies and assist in building ways to deter these boats from fishing in members' territorial seas and inshore waters.

SPC has developed awareness and identification posters for outer island communities and remote villages so they can report blue boat activity when sightings occur. The posters are customised for each country and include the phone numbers for the local fisheries agency and local police. So far the posters have been produced for Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati. The posters are available in both English and local languages and are produced on plastic coated paper so they can handle the outdoor elements such as rain and sunlight.

In addition, strong penalties that are imposed on these vessels when they are apprehended will be an important deterrent tool. The courts in Solomon Islands imposed penalties exceeding USD 1 million on three Vietnamese fishing captains whose vessels were apprehended in March 2017 for fishing in Solomon Islands archipelagic waters. The court further ordered four years imprisonment should these fines not be paid, which is a very strong message that would-be future offenders may well heed.

**IF YOU SEE THESE BOATS  
CALL IMMEDIATELY!**

**Help the authorities to stop them  
Report all sightings to:**

**Ministry of Fisheries  
and Marine Resources**  
39143  
7217907  
7492806  
7251057

**Royal Solomon  
Islands Police Force**  
7645426  
28327  
22566  
7479228

**They are illegal boats  
stealing your resources!**

This 'blue boat' poster was produced for the Solomon Islands. The same poster can be produced for other countries, and eventually in the local language, upon request.

### For more information:

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