



EMPOWERING INDONESIA'S LOCAL SEAFARERS TO CONTAIN SMUGGLING A CASE STUDY: BATAM, RIAU ISLANDS

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Executive Summary

- Batam is one of the primary entrance points of contraband commodities to and from Indonesia.
- Indonesian authorities lack the resources to prevent smuggling.
- Indonesia's seafarers, particularly in Batam and scattered in various sections of surrounding waters, are greater in number than the authorities.
- Authorities can take advantage of the existence of local seafarers to help prevent contraband smuggling.

Local Seafarers as Non-State Actors in Contraband Prevention

Indonesian authorities have long been aware of the fact that they are ill-equipped to prevent contraband smuggling in waters surrounding Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. These limitations make it necessary for them to use innovative means to address their inability to fully cover the large area of waters surrounding the region. Utilization of local seafarers is one option.

Involvement of local seafarers as non-state actors in law enforcement is feasible. Their engagement would be limited to the early stages of prevention, namely providing information to local maritime authorities. This is possible since seafarers have the geographic coverage and situational awareness to provide monitoring and early warning. More in-depth exploration of best practices and suggestions is required to discover effective usage beyond these functions.

This paper will answer the following question: What is the most effective method for the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) Office in Batam to utilize seafarers to prevent contraband smuggling? In answering this question, the author will address potential benefits and challenges as well as methods of operationalizing such a plan, based on past experience and future recommendations.

Weaknesses vs Strengths

Inadequate equipment and resources, among other limitations, are recognized by the DGCE. For example, the agency, a vanguard in contraband control, only has nine patrol boats.ⁱ

Other law enforcement agencies, such as the Marine Police and Coordinating Agency for Maritime Security, Bakorkamla, also do not have a great number of ships. In fact, Bakorkamla has only three vessels operating to cover all regions surrounding Indonesia.ⁱⁱ Riau Island Marine Police has only nine patrol boats at its headquarters in Batam.ⁱⁱⁱ

In addition to limited numbers, not all ships can conduct routine operations for a number of reasons. Among these, is a lack of budget for operational costs and inadequate resources.^{iv} In order for policing to operate efficiently and effectively, every ship or boat movement must be recorded. However, under current conditions, this is not feasible.

It is a major challenge to monitor the area surrounding Batam, an island with much of its coast used as a landing point. Given the fact it's surrounded with thousands of small islands, the challenges for control of smuggling expand exponentially. Many of these landing points have been acknowledged as illegal ports.

However, according to DGCE Batam, it has been arduous to consistently monitor their personnel. As a result, they are often bases for contraband smuggling.^v This situation is exacerbated by a personnel shortage. The DGCE office in Batam only has 62 personnel in the Surveillance and Prosecution unit against an ideal requirement of 152 personnel. Among these 62 personnel, only two hold diplomas as sailors.^{vi}

From the vantage point of seafarers, the exact opposite conditions apply. Seafarers in Batam, which includes fishermen, boat captains and ship crew, number in the thousands. The Batam Fisherman Association claims 10,000 members.^{vii} Captains navigating boating vessels are also numerous given that boats are the main form of transportation for coastal and island territories like Batam.

It's a fact that some of these persons have been involved in smuggling.^{viii} They transport certain goods, primarily for their daily needs, from Malaysia and Singapore, since much of these are easily obtained from neighbouring countries. Additionally, there remains a long history of transactions between residents of Batam in Indonesia and Johor in Malaysia. This is due to the fact that Batam and Johor were once under the rule of Johor Kingdom.^{ix}

However, there are many more seafarers not involved in smuggling. They are only concerned with fishing or transporting people and goods from Batam's main island to those that surround it. In their travels, they are already occupying places meriting routine monitoring by law enforcement agencies and patrols, but often at great expense and difficulty.

Therefore, their existence offers great potential for law enforcement agencies in term of providing information and early warning on illicit activities. They can provide "eyes and ears" surveillance on regions law enforcement agencies are unable to monitor on a regular basis. Thus, non-state actor involvement in law enforcement in port and sea is feasible and advisable.^x

The numerous people and boats provided by seafarers already travelling throughout the region provide much greater coverage than those belonging to authorities. In short, they can provide information on illegal activities at the border. However, there is still a model lacking for how to best utilize this potential.

Overture for Tomorrow

Deficiencies in equipment and resources are not easily overcome. It is necessary to achieve a breakthrough to prevent contraband smuggling in areas surrounding the Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia border by utilizing non-state actors. The DGCE office can utilize seafarers in Batam as conduits of information.

To this end, stringent screening prior to their engagement is an absolute necessity. Parts of the screening process could include their criminal records, neighborhoods, and areas of operation. Once a seafarer is appointed as an information source, a degree of supervision will be necessary to ensure they remain on-track.

To this end, a coterie of DGCE agents, in particular from the surveillance and prosecution unit, will need to be assigned to maintain relations with and supervision of these seafarers. In an off-the-record exchange with an officer in DGCE, he noted that maintaining relations and supervision of seafarers engaged in such surveillance would be considered as part of the duties held by the DGCE's surveillance and prosecution unit .^{xi}

A supervisory agent must ensure seafarers will not use their positions to assist in contraband smuggling or take advantage of others' smuggling activities by accepting bribes for not reporting them to law enforcement agencies. In addressing this issue, the DGCE officer admitted that no standard pattern has been found for this form of surveillance engagement. However, he emphasized seafarers could be utilized for their coverage and knowledge of the waters surrounding Indonesia and its neighbors.

Apart from supervision, it would also be necessary to include incentives for seafarers to engage in this endeavor and add to their responsibilities. A method to incentivize seafarers has not been found yet. But, to this end, the surveillance and prosecution unit in the DGCE office could allot part of its budget for incentives.

It's worth noting this initiative can be implemented in the relatively short term. An appointed seafarer would only have to inform his supervisor, via short text messages or calls, about when and where smuggling is occurring. The recruitment process, from screening until utilize would not take more than one year.

By contrast, procurement of every ship, from planning to operations, would require more than two years. This is evident from each and every boat's procurement in DGCE. One year for proposal, one year for budgeting than procurement, then another year for crew compliance would mark the general trajectory and timing for this project's implementation.

Recommend restating briefly the initiative's benefits...will provide greater coverage and help overcome manpower and equipment shortages.

End Notes

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^{vi} Pencawan, Yoseph., 2014, Bea dan Cukai Batam Buka Lowongan Personel Patroli, [Bisnis Indonesia, http://batam.bisnis.com/m/read/20140812/10/45164/bea-dan-cukai-batam-buka-lowongan-personel-patroli](http://batam.bisnis.com/m/read/20140812/10/45164/bea-dan-cukai-batam-buka-lowongan-personel-patroli) 12/08/2014/ 18:24 WIB

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^{viii} Harian Pos Metro, 2013, Gula dan Minuman Selundupan Yang Diangkut Dua Pompong Disergap Polisi, Harian Pos Metro, <http://posmetrobatam.com/2013/07/gula-dan-minuman-selundupan-yang-diangkut-dua-pompong-disergap-polisi/> 21/07/2013

^{ix} See Tagliacozzo, Eric., 2002. Smuggling in Southeast Asia: History and its Contemporary Vectors in an Unbounded Region. *Critical Asian Studies*, 34 (2), pp.193-220

^x see Sciascia A. 2013. Monitoring the border: Indonesian port security and the role of private actors. *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 35(2):163-87. Ford, Michele and Lenore Lyons., 2013. Outsourcing Border Security: NGO Involvement in the Monitoring, Processing and Assistance of Indonesian. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 35 (2), -- 215-234

^{xi} Mentioned via bbm, October 15th 2014.

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