

# THE ADMIRAL'S VIEW

## A partnership in support of Canada's Maritime Security



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With three oceans and the largest coastline in the world, the protection of Canada's maritime interests is a demanding and challenging task. Prime Minister Harper emphasized the importance of our maritime security to the country's economic wellbeing when he stated that "Canada's economy floats on salt water." While the primary role of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) is the defence of Canada, the RCN fulfills an additional role whereby it supports other government departments which are responsible for the oversight of various aspects of the marine environment. It is important to recognize that the RCN has no mandate for law enforcement, but rather supports governmental agencies, such as the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), the RCMP and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), which have been charged with the authority to enforce Canadian law. For instance the RCN routinely supports the DFO in the enforcement of Canada's Fisheries Act by providing ships and boats to transport DFO officers while they conduct fisheries inspections and enforce the laws and regulations related to fishing. To be clear, the authority under which these DFO officers conduct their fisheries inspections and enforcement activities flows directly from their mandate as fisheries officers and not from the RCN.

Following the events of 9/11, the Government of Canada unveiled the National Security Policy (NSP), a policy aimed at enhancing our national and international security and ensuring that Canada is not a base for threats to our allies. In order to support this policy, government departments required better capability to monitor vessels operating in Canadian waters, a concept referred to as Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). Maintaining effective MDA is critical to deterring threats to Canadian security, to enforcing Canadian laws and to protecting Canadian resources and the environment. The NSP laid the foundation for better collaboration among federal government departments and was the impetus for the creation of centres known as Maritime Security Operations Centres (MSOCs). MSOCs located on each coast and in the Great Lakes operate as information gathering centres and are staffed by representatives of the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Forces, the CBSA, the Canadian Coast Guard, the RCMP, Transport Canada, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The strength of the MSOCs lies in the collaboration



of partner federal agencies to leverage their respective capabilities for the maintenance of MDA on behalf of the Government of Canada.

Under the MSOC program, the partners work cohesively in an integrated, interdepartmental, and cooperative environment to effectively identify, track, and report marine activity. This interdepartmental collaboration provides an improved assessment of potential risks posed by vessels and allows for the development of measures to intercept these vessels before they arrive on our shores. Moreover, this collaborative effort is an efficient use of Canadian tax dollars because it minimizes costly duplication of efforts among the partner agencies. When a significant event occurs, the onus to respond remains with the government agency having jurisdiction over the potential violation of Canadian law. For example, the proliferation of narcotics destined for Canada via maritime routes poses a direct threat to the security of all Canadians. While the RCMP is the lead agency for counter-narcotics and thus retains jurisdiction, the RCMP may require support from Canadian Forces assets and capabilities to interdict narcotics being brought into Canada by sea routes. For instance, in 2006, an RCMP counter-drug operation off the coast of Africa saw success with the seizure of 22.5 tonnes of hashish which was destined for the Canadian market. The seizure was the largest of its kind in Canadian history and would not have been made possible without effective MDA as well as support from Canadian Forces ships and aircraft.

Maritime Domain Awareness is critical to the enforcement of Canadian law and can only be effectively carried out through a strong partnership among key federal government agencies charged, directly or indirectly, with the security of Canada. This collaboration of partner agencies allows Canada to develop and maintain a comprehensive level of situational awareness and knowledge of the threat to our maritime environment. The RCN, as part of the Department of National Defence, plays a critical role in assisting its partner federal agencies in the oversight of Canada's maritime interests and in achieving the common goal of Canadian maritime security.