



## UKNDA DISCUSSION PAPER

# Protection of the UK's EEZ and Territorial Seas: *Does the Government care?*

By Graham J.L. Edmonds

It is not surprising that illegal immigrants, frustrated by better security at European channel ports, have resorted to crossing the Dover Straits, English Channel and southern parts of the North Sea by fishing boat, yacht, RHIB and Gemini-type dinghies. It is reported that one delivery by yacht was made to Dittisham, a village a mile or so up the River Dart from Dartmouth.

The responsibility for controlling the United Kingdom's borders and points of entry (ports, railway stations and airports) lies with the UK Border Force. It is a law-enforcement command within the Home Office and is accountable directly to ministers.

Concern has been raised within the media by politicians and other commentators that the physical resources of personnel, ships and aircraft available to Border Force to prevent an 'invasion' by sea are totally inadequate and embarrassingly pathetic in comparison to other coastal states.

The Armed Forces are not law-enforcement agencies and Government Departments have to seek resources – in this case from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force – to assist in locating, identifying, reporting and tracking vessels suspected of carrying illegal immigrants, terrorists and contraband such that they can be formally arrested and properly detained on arrival in UK territorial waters, at a port or on the coastline.

It is not often understood or widely known that the length of the UK's coastline and the area of its territorial sea and exclusive economic zone ranks the country near the top of the appropriate 'league table' – possibly a surprise for those who undermine the UK's position in the world as a 'small island'. As Julian Lindley-French wrote recently: "Britain [is] a top five world political, economic, and military power."

The UK and the 14 Dependant Overseas Territories for which the UK Government has responsibility for defence and foreign affairs 'owns' the world's 5<sup>th</sup> largest EEZ with 1,984,191 sq nm (6,805,586 sq km) after France, the USA, Australia and Russia (*see Table 1*) – even Canada's EEZ is smaller. In comparison, the UK's land area is a mere 243,000 sq km. The UK's coastline at 7,723 (land) miles (6,711 nm or 12,429 km) is the 12<sup>th</sup> longest in world 'rankings' (CIA Factbook) – and there are 153 coastal states. The UK is truly a maritime nation. (*See Table 2.*)

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) allows nations a 'sovereign right' over their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) with respect to exploration and exploitation of resources below the surface, including energy production from water and wind, whilst the EEZ surface remains

'International waters'. The EEZ extends from the coastal baseline out to 200 nautical miles (nm). Resources include oil, gas, minerals (including rare earth minerals) and, of course, fish.

The UK's Territorial Sea, defined by UNCLOS, is a belt of coastal water extending 12 nm from the coast. It is sovereign territory over which the UK has jurisdiction, although foreign military and civilian ships are permitted 'innocent passage' through it. Sovereignty extends to the airspace above and the seabed below; when there is an overlap with another state's territorial sea, the border is taken as the median point between the states' coastal 'baselines', unless the states in question agree otherwise.

## **United Kingdom**

The UK's paucity of investment in resources to patrol and protect these assets and the coastline border does not reflect their value and importance, particularly in comparison with the more serious approach taken by other nations with large EEZs. The Royal Navy has four Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) with three more under construction, the latter more to keep Clyde Bank shipyards in employment rather than to boost national defence. Such is the stretch on the dwindling destroyer and frigate surface fleet that HMS Mersey, an OPV of 1,700 tonnes, was deployed *in lieu* on a recent routine Caribbean and Falkland Islands patrol; a long and challenging voyage for a relatively small ship.

In the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> Century decades, light frigates (Type 14s) and MCMVs based in Northern Ireland and Scotland made up the Offshore and Inshore Fishery Protection Squadrons and larger frigates could also be allocated fishery protection duties when required. Fishery protection is now the prime role for the OPVs in English, Welsh and NI waters as the Scottish Government deploys three marine patrol vessels and two small aircraft for the task in 'Scottish waters'. Four of the Royal Navy's 15 MCMVs are permanently deployed to the Gulf.

The RAF is hoping for swift delivery of nine new Maritime Patrol Aircraft, the P8 'Poseidon' from Boeing, but it is unlikely that they will arrive in the immediate future. This leaves the Sea King Mk 7 as the only advanced maritime and shipborne aircraft capable of tracking small vessels and at least three would be needed, and preferably ship based, to provide unbroken surveillance of a specific sea area.

The UK Border Force has 5 'cutters', small and reasonably fast patrol vessels of less than 500 tonnes, one of which was deployed recently to the Mediterranean to help with the immigrant crisis. However the onboard accommodation is limited and periods of more than 48 hours at sea are difficult. The MGA is responsible for the SAR helicopters that assumed the task from the FAA and RAF and two fixed wing aircraft are 'available' for surveillance. This is very small beer for even the most routine 'peacetime' tasks and would be overwhelmed were there to be a summer swarm of small boats heading out from the Continent.

What of other nations at the top of the EEZ rankings? What is their investment in their responsibilities?

**France**, whose EEZ is boosted considerably by the overseas Departments, can call upon 18 MCMVs and 21 OPVs (390 – 2300 tonnes) of the French Navy. The Maritime Gendarmerie has 39 high-speed PBs of between 10 and 105 tonnes. The Maritime Gendarmerie is a law enforcement force whose role includes research, monitoring of the littoral seas, marine reserve protection, intervention, reinforcement and surveillance. They are distributed across French coastal territory worldwide, including La Manche (English Channel), Brest, Toulon, Guadeloupe, French Guyana, Mayote, Polynesia, New Caledonia and Martinique.

**The United States** has enormous resources available in the USN, but only 11 MCMVs and 13 PBs. Most, if not all, of the maritime patrolling and protection task is undertaken by the US Coast Guard (USCG), which is a branch of the US Armed Forces in its own right. It is a "maritime, military, multi-mission service" which uniquely has a maritime law enforcement role with jurisdiction in both domestic and international waters. In peacetime it operates under the US Department of Homeland Security but in time of war can be transferred to the Navy Department.

The USCG deploys approximately 260 'cutters' in a variety of classes in two oceans and eight districts. A cutter is a vessel of more than 65ft length with a permanently assigned crew and accommodation for extended periods at sea. The USCG also operates about 1,400 boats (any vessel less than 65ft), which generally operate near shore and on inland waterways.

The Coast Guard deploys also approximately 204 fixed and rotary wing aircraft from 24 CG Air Stations jointly based at civilian airports, air national guard fields, naval air stations and army air fields. MQ9 Reapers are being evaluated.

### **Australia**

The Royal Australian Navy has six MCMVs and 13 x 270 tonne PBs. The Australian Border Force (ABF) has 8 Cape-class patrol boats, two of which two have been loaned to the RAN until the end of 2016. In naval service the patrol boats retain the blue-and-red customs colour scheme. The Australian Border Force is tasked with border protection and national security duties. ABF officers are equipped with firearms. As well as the Cape Class PBs, the ABF contracts Dash-8 surveillance aircraft and can call upon RAAF P3 and P8 MPA and the RAN's PBs. Australia has two volunteer Coast Guard organisations.

### **Russia**

The Border Guard Service of Russia tasks include: defence of the Russian national border, prevention of illegal smuggling of people and goods / contraband across Russian land and sea borders; protection of Russian Federation economic interests and natural resources, including fishery protection within land and sea border areas, territorial waters and internal seas; to combat threats to Russian Federation national security border areas, including terrorism and foreign infiltration.

The Coast Guard of the Border Service of the FSB deploys 6 FFG (Krival III / Nerei) and 1 Okean Class; 12 Grisha II FFL; 7 Rubin Class PB; 27 OPVs of various classes; 8 Icebreakers; 74 fast PBs and 22 river boats. The Coast Guard flies AN-26 (Curl) and Il-76 (Candid) fixed wing aircraft and Mil Mi-8 (Hip) helicopters.

### **Canada**

The Royal Canadian Navy has 4 Maritime coastal defence vessels, and 5 Patrol craft training vessels. The Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) has responsibility for providing: aids to navigation; marine communications and traffic management services; icebreaking and ice-management services; channel maintenance; marine search and rescue; marine pollution response; and support to other government departments, boards and agencies by providing ships, aircraft and other services.

The CCG has no naval or law enforcement responsibilities. Naval operations in Canada's maritime environment are exclusively the responsibility of the RCN. Law enforcement of Canada's maritime-related federal statutes is carried out by officers serving with various federal, provincial or even municipal law enforcement agencies. The CCG may operate in support of naval operations, or have an operational role in maritime law enforcement and security in Canadian federal waters by carrying personnel from one of the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

The CCG deploys 7 Polar and Arctic icebreakers, 7 'program' vessels, 5 fishery & oceanographic research vessels, 3 offshore fishery science research vessels, 4 marine service vessels, 4 OPVs, 16 mid-shore PVs, 5 mid-shore hydrographic research vessels; 5 inshore research vessels, 4 river vessels, 5 mid-size hovercraft / air cushion vehicles; 46 lifeboats of similar types to RNLI boats, 15 speciality vessels, 22 helicopters and 8 fixed wing aircraft.

The Canada Border Service Agency does not operate ships or aircraft, but provides law enforcement officers at ports, airports etc.

**Table 1 – Top 10 Countries by EEZ Area**

Country	Ranking	EEZ Sq Km	EEZ Sq nm	Naval OPVs, PBs and other agencies' vessels	Military & Agency MPA fixed wing
France	1	11,691,000	3,408,550	50 or 1 vessel / 68,171 sq nm	40? Atlantique
United States	2	11,351,000	3,309,422	273 or 1 vessel / 12,122 sq nm	USN 100+ P3 20+ P8 USCG 204 aircraft
Australia	3	8,505,348	2,479,763	21 or 1 vessel / 118,083 sq nm	19 P3 tbrb 12P8 (2017)
Russia	4	7,566,673	2,206,089	127 or 1 vessel / 17,370 sq nm	62 various types plus Border force a/c
United Kingdom	5	6,805,586	1,984,191	12 or 1 vessel / 165,349 sq nm	0
Indonesia	6	6,159,032	1,795,686	-	
Canada	7	5,599,077	1,632,430	48 or 1 vessel / 34,009 sq nm	19 CP-140 (P3)
Japan	8	4,479,388	1,305,981	-	
New Zealand	9	4,083,744	1,190,629	-	
Chile	10	3,681,989	1,073,496	-	

Maritime patrol aircraft and helicopters greatly increase the sea area under surveillance and are resources more swiftly available than surface vessels to support border force and coastguard agencies. France, Russia, the USA and Canada all have military fixed wing MPA. The UK does not and this is a considerable, if not drastic, shortcoming given the huge sea areas for which the UK is responsible and the operational and defect stretch affecting the RN's surface fleet.

**Table 2 – Coastline length by ranking – top 12**

Country	Ranking	Length km	Nautical Miles	Land Miles
Canada	1	202,080	109,114	125,567
Indonesia	2	54,716	29,544	33,998
Russia	3	37,653	20,331	23,296
Philippines	4	36,289	19,594	22,549
Japan	5	29,751	29,751	18,486

Australia	6	25,760	13,909	16,006
Norway	7	25,148	13,579	15,626
United States	8	19,924	10,758	12,380
New Zealand	9	15,134	8,172	9,404
China	10	14,500	7,829	9,010
Greece	11	13,676	7,384	8,498
<b>United Kingdom</b>	12	12,429	6,711	7,723

### Table 3 – British Overseas Territories

The defence of British Overseas Territories (BOTs) is the responsibility of the UK.

Territory	sq mi	Notes	Border & Maritime Security
Anguilla	35,590		1 M160 FPB, Marine Police
Ascension Island	170,525	Marine Reserve	Wideawake Airfield. RAF contingent
Bermuda	173,890		1 Austal EEZ OPV
British Indian Ocean Territory	246,552	Marine Reserve	1 Marine Reserve Patrol Vessel
British Virgin Islands	30,933		Police Marine & Airwing Branch
Cayman Islands	45,999		Joint Police & Customs Marine Unit with fast boats
Channel Islands	4,501	Marine Protected Areas	UK Fishery Protection
Falkland Islands	212,693		BFFI, 1 RN OPV and frigate. RAF C130. Helicopters
Gibraltar	164		BFG. Police Marine Units, GD Police Marine Unit. 2 RN PBs
Montserrat	2,927		Defence Force
Pitcairn Island	322,138	Marine Reserve	Satellite Watchroom at Harwell
Saint Helena	171,783		New Airport
South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands	559,667		Nil – BFFI
Tristan da Cunha archipelago	291,400		Nil
Turks and Caicos Islands			Police Marine Unit

Table 1 is simplistic in view of Column 5's vessel per sq area assessment; but it demonstrates just how thin the UK's 'defences' are. A helicopter operating at 1,000 ft with a 360 deg radar will 'see' approx 3,500 sq nm (4,750 sq mi) and a ship's radar at 100 ft has a range to the sea surface horizon of just over 10 nm. Table 2 shows the 12 longest coastlines based upon the CIA's Factbook. Table 3 lists the 14 British Overseas Territories and their Border and Marine forces, if any.

The UK has absolute responsibility to protect and patrol an enormous sea area, including very large areas of the South Atlantic, Caribbean and Pacific, but the ship and aircraft resources to meet this obligation has been dramatically reduced without any significant increase in local EEZ and Marine Reserve protection by BOT governments. This is hardly surprising as, for example, the EEZ of Pitcairn Island (322,138 sq mi) is more than three times greater than the land area of the UK (94,058 sq mi). Other than the purchase, to be confirmed week commencing 13 June 2016, of 9 P8 Poseidon MPA – less than the numbers that the Australian Government plans to buy – there is no plan for any significant increase in OPV numbers or longer term investment in corvettes and light frigates.

There has not been any discussion raised within the media or military 'think-tanks' about the possible need for a fourth armed military service with law enforcement powers akin to the USCG or CCG, usefully under Home Office mandate in peacetime and the RN Fleet commander in war. HM Treasury might, of course, try to cram any UK Coastguard equipment costs into the overall Defence Budget rather than set it up under a new and separate Homeland Security 'Vote' mandated by Parliament. Ex RN and Merchant Navy personnel may well find this form of national sea service more appealing than that currently not enjoyed at the moment, it is reported, in the Senior Service. Meanwhile, in the margins, the EU's 'Blue Water Policy' is edging towards the EU assuming central control and merger of all member states' EEZ.

Whether or not any Government can perceive the need, let alone fund, a modern US style Coast Guard it will not appear in time to secure the UK's maritime borders and provide adequate patrolling and protection of the UK and BOTs territorial waters and EEZs. Thus the Royal Navy, the Fleet Air Arm and RAF will have to operate on behalf of the Border Force and Home Office law enforcement to detect, deter, arrest and probably rescue any swarm of boats bringing illegal immigrants to the UK across the Channel, Dover Straits and North Sea.

The UK is badly prepared and poorly equipped, despite being outside the Schengen Agreement, to provide wider protection of its coastline, territorial waters and EEZ. Illegal immigrant smugglers have demonstrated the ease with which the quieter stretches of coastline can be penetrated, and if smuggling people is easy it can be assumed that that is the case for other types of contraband.

The first duty of Government is the protection of the state and its people. In the case of securing our maritime waters it has failed. Does it care? Probably not.

## **U.K. NATIONAL DEFENCE ASSOCIATION**

*President:* Cdr John Muxworthy RN

*Board of Directors:* David Wedgwood (Chairman), Cdr Graham Edmonds RN (Vice-Chairman),  
Andy Smith (Chief Executive Officer), Col Andrew Allen, Col Peter Walton

*Company Secretary:* David Robinson

UKNDA Ltd, PO Box 819, Portsmouth PO1 9FF. Tel 023 9283 1728. Email [secretary@uknda.org](mailto:secretary@uknda.org)

**[www.uknda.org](http://www.uknda.org)** Company No. 06254639 **Follow us on Twitter @DefenceAssoc**

June 2016 (2)