

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 72

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 13 February 2007:

For the years 2005-06 and 2006-07 (to date) please provide:

- a) the number of illegal foreign fishing vessels sighted and identified in Australia's EEZ in the northern border command;
- b) the number of illegal foreign fishing vessels boarded in the northern border command;
- c) the number of illegal foreign fishing vessels apprehended in the northern border command;
- d) the number of IFF vessels sighted in total for those years.
- e) With regards to the Southern Ocean patrols (per page 71 of the Customs Annual Report), how many foreign vessels reported for unregulated fishing were not apprehended?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- a) The following Table shows Coastwatch reports of Type 3 and Type 4 foreign fishing vessels in northern waters, and all ADF foreign fishing vessel reports. It should be noted that in areas of concentrated aerial surveillance, the same vessel may be reported by successive flights on the same or subsequent days. Reports may also include vessels legitimately transiting the AEEZ.

Table: Reports of Type 3 and 4 foreign fishing vessels

<i>Month</i>	<i>Reports</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Reports</i>
Jul-05	808	Jul-06	504
Aug-05	870	Aug-06	933
Sep-05	1272	Sep-06	818
Oct-05	954	Oct-06	450
Nov-05	755	Nov-06	520
Dec-05	693	Dec-06	97
Jan-06	407	Jan-07	113
Feb-06	800	Feb-07	40
Mar-06	448	Mar-07	0
Apr-06	446	Apr-07	0
May-06	883	May-07	0
Jun-06	283	Jun-07	0
Total	8619		3475

- b) In 2005-06, 817 foreign fishing vessels were boarded by crew of Customs and ADF surface assets. In the period 2006-07 to the end of February, 402 foreign fishing vessels were boarded by crew of Customs and ADF surface assets. It should be noted that foreign fishing vessels are boarded for a number of reasons and not all of these vessels were fishing illegally.

- c) During 2005-06, 367 foreign fishing vessels were apprehended in Australian waters. In the period 1 July 2006 and 28 February 2007, 189 foreign fishing vessels were apprehended in Australian waters.
- d) See answer to part a)
- e) None of the vessels reported to Australian fisheries authorities for suspected illegal fishing in the zone governed by the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) was apprehended.

As part of its Southern Ocean Maritime Patrol and Response program, Customs gathers evidence on illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) vessels that are operating in the CCAMLR zone when not licensed to do so. While the zone is subject to the restrictions of an international Convention (not Treaty), there are no international or domestic laws that enable these vessels to be apprehended.