

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS SERVICE

Question No. 87

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2006:

In relation to apprehension of illegal vessels can details of the range of incidents be provided including:

- (a) the reason for authorisation to shoot across the bow?
- (b) the type of weapon used and the response?
- (c) was the response expected?

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

The following information relates to the Australian Customs Service only.

- (a) In accordance with the authorised Rules of Engagement regime warning shots may be fired across the bows of illegal foreign fishing vessels (IFFVs) detected inside the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone (AEEZ) as a signal and/or show of force when the master of an IFFV fails to comply with lawful directions to stop his vessel for boarding. The Commanding Officer of an Australian Customs Vessel (ACV) and the Group Commander of the Civil Charter Vessel (CCV) *Oceanic Viking* are authorised to fire warning shots in accordance with current operational instructions.
- (b) The ACVs fire warning shots using 7.62 mm FN Herstal MAG 58 General Support Machine Guns. The CCV uses a 12.7 mm Heavy Machine Gun. The response from illegal vessels is varied. Operational security requirements preclude providing specific details of the incidents.
- (c) The response offered by the masters of the IFFVs following a show of force varies from low level non-compliance to the deployment of anti-boarding measures to thwart attempts by Customs boarding parties to embark their vessels. Customs officers are trained in a variety of methods to ensure the subsequent boardings are conducted in a safe and effective manner.