Maritime Operational Threat Response Concept Note

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is defined by the International Maritime Organization as the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could impact security, safety, the economy, or the environment. To achieve MDA, it requires the effective use of technology to monitor the environment, the synchronization and analysis of the information, and the expeditious safe and secure sharing of this information to appropriate policymakers and operational stakeholders. In recent years, ASEAN Member States (AMS) have made great strides in their efforts to monitor and mitigate maritime threats such as piracy, IUU fishing, smuggling, and terrorism. Yet, knowing about these threats is not enough. An expeditious and effective threat response plan or protocol will allow maritime stakeholders to address these threats whenever and wherever they are detected. An ASEAN Maritime Threat Response Protocol can provide a collaborative framework whereby the capabilities and expertise of multiple organizations and agencies can be leveraged in order to respond to specific maritime threats. A Maritime Operational Threat Response Protocol will help provide an effective process to align efforts and facilitate an early resolution for interagency conflicts. For the United States, our Maritime Operational Threat Response (MOTR) Plan serves as a guide that helps coordinate our "unity of effort" when responding to national and international maritime threats.

Background

The US MOTR Plan was signed in 2006 and serves as the presidentially approved document that enables the U.S. Government to coordinate a response to a variety of threats against the United States and its interests in the maritime domain. Specifically, the MOTR Plan contains operational coordination requirements to ensure quick and decisive actions. Since its inception, the MOTR Plan has been utilized for more than one thousand maritime events such as migrant interdictions, drug seizures, terrorism, and piracy. Operational protocols complement the Plan by providing procedural guidance for specific cases, along with detailed and up to date contact information for each agency.

Concept

Establish an ASEAN MOTR Protocol can work towards:

- Facilitating a MOTR process that is employable among AMS 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Serving as a resource to help AMS develop interagency policies on MOTR-related issues.
- Identifying and supporting AMS initiatives that may require the use or potential use of MOTR.
- Providing MOTR exercise, training, and educational resources to multiple agencies at both the policy and operational levels.

Recommended next steps:

1. Look to the Maritime Single Points of Contact centers (Singapore IFC, Thai MECC, Philippines National Coastwatch Center, etc...) to serve as regional conduits that provide 24/7 monitoring and reporting of maritime threat information.
2. Leverage the "Our Eyes" initiative and the ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure as platforms whereby information and communication can occur in a safe and secure manner among appropriate AMS threat response agencies and stakeholders.
3. Receive advice and guidance from established ASEAN "Centers of Excellence" (such as the ASEAN Centre Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Management) on how to promote interagency coordination and policy development, as well as exercise, training, and educational support, among the AMS.