

Achieving Multi-Agency Situational Understanding

Rear Admiral Goddard, Commander Maritime Border Command

Maritime Border Command (MBC) as a multi-agency organization, is a blended Australian Border Force and Australian Defence Force Command. Our mission is to support a whole of government effort to protect Australia's national interests by responding with assigned forces to undertake civil maritime security operations to detect, deter, respond to and prevent illegal activities in the Australian Maritime Domain.

The civil maritime security mission is vast – and covers almost 11% of the earth's surface. It is a mission that the ADF nor ABF can achieve alone – and so my command is a practical example of integration of several arms of the Australian government. Through our capacity as a convening authority, at any point in time I can rely on ADF, AFP, AFMA, intelligence agency, AFP and others unified together for effect; a true Multi-Agency. However, the advantages of this unity of effort must be leveraged ultimately at the tactical level, through what I would term Command and not control – Robbin Laird has termed control the 'legacy approach to hierarchical approval' and I would tend to agree with his assertion that any advantage on the battlefield we currently have would be negated by a hierarchical approach. MBC must take advantage of the opportunities afforded from a distributed force to achieve mission success through technological advantages – our future will be through allowing sound decision making at the tactical level through sound connectedness.

By virtue of the nature of the command, MBC is answerable to both the Home Affairs Portfolio and the Australian Defence Force through the Chief of Joint Operations. This in itself has the opportunity to create advantage for the civil maritime security mission; the advantage of operating in the so-called 'Grey Zone.' While MBC operations are civil in nature, it has a high end mission – security of our maritime borders – and uses high-end assets to do so; an ideal future would to see the entire spectrum of both civilian and military assets put to the task.

Operating within this grey zone allows MBC to play a large role supporting and engaging a large remit of stakeholders. With regular contact with all facets of government from State/territory up to Commonwealth as well as industry in a supportive role, MBC's force elements encompass land, sea and air – a unique arrangement in regards civil maritime security, however Australia's Borders are unique which necessitate this approach. Reflecting a Fifth Generation approach, the force is scalable dependent on the threat or response that is required and the structure at Maritime Border Command allows this force to fully integrate providing both situational awareness and effect.

Why do we need the flexibility such a force provides? Maritime Border Command is responsible for 8 Civil Maritime Security Threats; not all these threats represent what might be considered traditional Coast Guard functions, rather they embody Border threats across the spectrum of Crime, violence, environment and exploitation. Piracy, robbery and violence at sea,

response to Oil Platform and illegal domestic activity in our marine parks might be three examples of Coast Guard like functions performed by MBC on any given day.

MBC – even with the combined force assigned elements at its disposal – cannot conduct this mission alone. It takes global partnerships and strong interagency co-operation and co-ordination.

Maritime Border Command's co-ordinating function is aimed to create time and space aiming to prevent crisis management. By way of example, in the counter narcotics space, MBC coordinates with the Australian Federal Police, Australia Criminal Intelligence Commission, AUSTRAC and State Police Forces as well as international agencies such as the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime and the INTERPOL. Overseas national law enforcement agencies such as the US Drug Enforcement Administration and the UK's National Crime Agency not only provide valuable and timely intelligence, they also allow us to push our national border for narcotics importation far off shore.

The ability to create time and space beyond our physical national borders improves MBC's responsiveness within the SFAA and is only achievable through effective Maritime Domain Awareness. Technological improvements in platforms are only part of the picture for effective MDA – the platforms must be combined as a Joint effect and they must be interconnected – isolated pockets of effect will not only devalue the operating picture, such a limited focus may lead to decision making out of context with the wholistic picture; the veritable fog of war. Our collective mission through the Fifth Generation manoeuvre must be a forcing function to enable effective decision making through interconnectedness.

A unique environment – one that encompasses civil maritime security from the northern extremes to the southern, from some of the hottest to the coldest places on earth. The challenges transcend geography though, how to ensure the tactical elements are receiving real-time information which will maximise their effect? How to avoid paralysis through analysis and ensure effective identification of the threats within normal patterns-of-life? MBC examines a region of the world in which major shipping lanes traverse east-west, north-south and the volume is large – more than 20000 contacts per day.

A vast area to which, on a daily basis, sufficient surveillance to provide logical decisions as to force disposition and responses can be made.

To improve understanding, MBC relies on an effective and complex network of inter-agency interactions, a force-multiplier greater than MBC or its Force assigned elements alone. Government Policy as always is the driver supported through the Domestic and International Engagement. Awareness is achieved through wide information sharing; MBC continuously looks to foster relationships with like-minded organisations facing similar challenges where information sharing is mutually beneficial.

So to be effective in this massive area of the global commons MBC:

- Seeks to push our national borders as far offshore as possible

- Work with international agencies to ensure a global response to Maritime Security Threats
- Develop and maintain a Common Operating picture covering our Maritime Domain to ensure we can identify and respond to threats well out to sea or be well prepared for their arrival in the littoral
- Harnessed the resources of the ADF and ABF and other government agencies to maximize the surveillance and response options available to us.
- Work closely with domestic agencies to ensure a robust response when threats arrive at the national border.

What of the future?

A healthy, open and accessible maritime environment is key to Australia's economy, security and culture. We expect that the maritime domain will become more interconnected than ever before.

Australia will have to consider ways and means to share information with regional partners more fulsomely, and more rapidly; if we are to truly support a regional surveillance and awareness effort. Current ways of sharing may not be flexible enough to meet our needs – our international engagement efforts in realising this are critical to shared situational awareness.

In summary, Maritime Border Commands effectiveness is reliant on building and maintaining strong relationships between a broad network of interagency stakeholders; government and industry. This provides me the assurance that I am achieving the level of situational understanding I require to achieve my mission.