

Waves of opportunity

Enhancing Australia–Indonesia maritime security cooperation

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With recently-installed President Joko Widodo proclaiming Indonesia as the ‘World Maritime Axis’, there’s great momentum for Australia and Indonesia to enhance maritime security cooperation. The importance of cooperation is enshrined in articles 13 and 14 of the Australia–Indonesia 2006 Agreement on the Framework for Security Cooperation:

13. Strengthening bilateral cooperation to enhance maritime safety and to implement security measures, consistent with international law.

14. Enhancing existing Defence and other cooperation activities and capacity building in the area of aerial and naval maritime security in accordance with international law.

Illegal cross-border activities often occur in the few hundred kilometres between the Indonesian archipelago and Australia and have become a focus of bilateral cooperation. Both countries share interests in maintaining regional stability and seeing regional disputes resolved peacefully. Keeping up the momentum for cooperation isn’t easy. Innovative thinking and creative ways are needed to sustain it.



Royal Australian Navy Armidale-class patrol boat HMAS Ararat and a Royal Australian Air Force AP-3C Orion join forces with the Indonesian Navy ships KRI Sultan Nuku and KRI Sura to conduct the second Australia–Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (AUSINDO CORPAT) in the waters between Australia and Indonesia from 15–28 April 2011. Photo courtesy Department of Defence.

Common interests

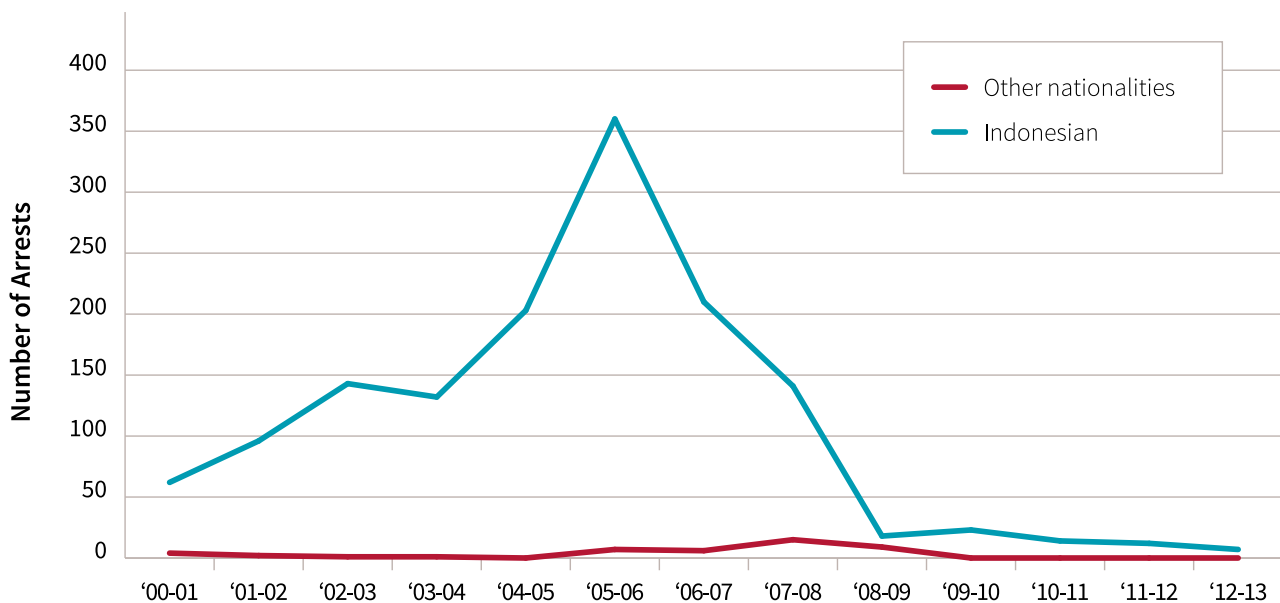
Australia and Indonesia face common security threats in the maritime domain: people smuggling and illegal fishing, along with more ‘traditional’ problems, such as regional instability, territorial disputes and threats to the security of sea lines of communication (SLOCs). The challenge is not only to address these common threats together, but to agree on the best approach to take.

People smuggling is a perennial issue in Australia–Indonesia relations. Many asylum seekers transit to Indonesia to get supplies and boats, arranged by people smugglers, to take them across the Timor Sea to Australia. The Australian Government began Operation Sovereign Borders in November 2013 to turn the boats back to Indonesia. It believes that the operation and the Bali Process can and should be complementary, and points out that Operation Sovereign Borders has been effective in deterring people smugglers from exploiting asylum seekers.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is another problem: Indonesian fishermen are still getting arrested in Australian waters, although the numbers have declined in recent years (Figure 1).

The security and safety of maritime chokepoints in the Indonesian archipelago—the Malacca, Sunda and Lombok straits—are a top priority in Canberra’s security cooperation with Jakarta. While Indonesia isn’t a member of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), both countries participate in the Information Fusion Centre in Singapore and have posted naval liaison officers there.

Figure 1: Illegal fishers arrested in Australian waters, 2000–01 to 2012–13



Source: Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

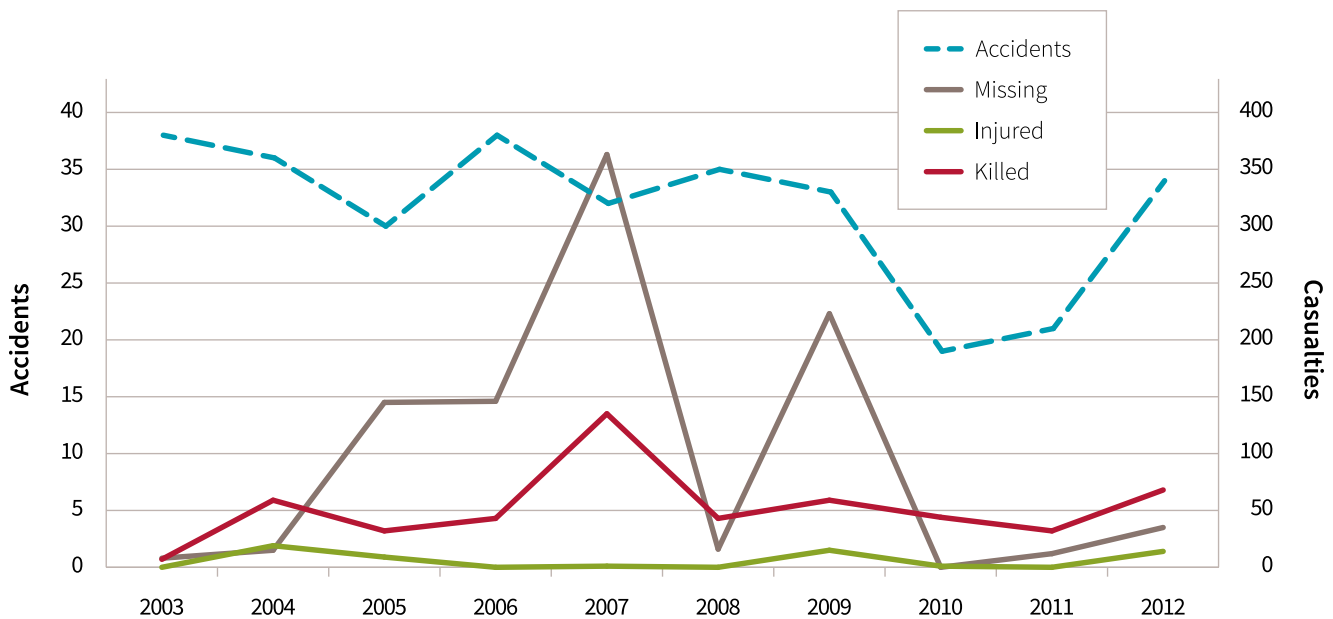
Ports and anchorages in Indonesia continue to be sites of sea robbery and petty theft. Another concern is possible links between piracy and terrorism in the tri-border area in the Sulawesi Sea where the maritime boundaries of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines meet. Mindanao and Sulawesi are known as terrorist hotspots.

Addressing maritime safety and marine environmental pollution is another common task. Because Indonesia is an archipelago, inter-island communication is vital for social and economic purposes. But Indonesia’s maritime connectivity is patchy at best and is subject to accidents and disasters (Figure 2).

More ‘traditional’ issues that have begun to receive common attention include the maintenance of regional stability, the peaceful resolution of regional disputes and the security of SLOCs.

Australia and Indonesia don’t take sides in the South China Sea disputes, but we both have interests in their peaceful resolution in accordance with international law. Australia supports Indonesia’s efforts to push for a code of conduct in the South China Sea.

Figure 2: Shipping accidents and casualties in Indonesia, 2003 to 2012



Source: Indonesian Ministry of Transportation.

Both Australia and Indonesia use the term ‘Indo-Pacific’ to highlight the importance of the confluence between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Australia’s 2013 Defence White Paper noted that the Indo-Pacific concept ‘adjusts Australia’s priority strategic focus to the arc extending from India through Southeast Asia to Northeast Asia, including the sea lines of communications on which the region depends.’¹

Indonesia has voiced the need for an Indo-Pacific Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in view of the growing trust deficit, territorial disputes and strategic change facing the Indo-Pacific region.² Located squarely at the centre of the Indo-Pacific region, Indonesia has recently declared itself as the ‘World Maritime Axis’—a maritime power enabled by its geography. The concept of World Maritime Axis rests on five pillars: rebuilding maritime culture, enhancing maritime economy, improving maritime infrastructure and connectivity, engaging in maritime diplomacy, and strengthening maritime defence.³ Australia can assist Indonesia to support some, if not all, of those pillars.

Enhancing cooperation

Australia and Indonesia view the security threats listed above as common problems, but often use different approaches to deal with them. Although recent tensions arising from Operation Sovereign Borders and Edward Snowden’s activities have subsided, culminating in the signing of a bilateral intelligence code of conduct, a trust deficit persists.⁴

What’s needed is a common perception that cooperation is important even when the bilateral relationship is under stress. Trust isn’t necessarily a prerequisite for cooperation, which can be both a way to build and maintain trust and an end in itself.

More interaction between policymakers

When it comes to Indonesia, nothing's more important than personal ties. Person-to-person links need to be consistently maintained between political and military leaders, but also between lower-level government officials.

At the strategic level, there's the Indonesia–Australia Defence Strategic Dialogue, as well as annual leaders' meetings (since 2010), the Australia–Indonesia Dialogue (since 2011), the '2+2' foreign and defence ministers' meeting (since 2012), and the inaugural meeting between the two countries' defence force chiefs in 2013.

However, it's better to build trust through a bottom-up approach. This requires a close and constant interaction between strategic- and operational-level policymakers. Therefore, personal ties should underpin the formal consultative and dialogue processes to provide ballast in the relationship.

Such ties, which have been built between selected agencies and armed services at the operational level, are necessary to smooth things out during technical–operational coordination, such as search and rescue.⁵ Current personal links between military personnel, such as those facilitated by the Ikatan Alumni Pertahanan Indonesia–Australia (the defence alumni association, IKAHAN), should be expanded to civilian counterparts, including law enforcement officials. This could be facilitated by establishing a common information-sharing portal for officials of the relevant agencies. The ASEAN Information-sharing Portal, jointly led by the Singaporean and Indonesian navies, is an example of operational coordination without lengthy administrative processes.⁶ In addition, both countries could consider mutual exchange of some junior military cadets to study at their respective service academies, similar to the Indonesia–Japan arrangement which began in 1998.⁷

Indonesia and Australia could cooperate on joint measures to prevent or counter the threat or use of force in territorial disputes, such as the South China Sea disputes. We shouldn't avoid 'sensitive' questions here, such as how our military and paramilitary forces could potentially be involved in such circumstances.

Multiagency cooperation

The effective implementation of strategic commitments at the operational level can be facilitated by greater integration among the agencies responsible for maritime security cooperation.

Cooperation currently takes a siloed form: each agency responsible for maritime security enforcement does its own thing. Streamlining them could save time and resources. The problem partly lies in Indonesia's multiple, but poorly coordinated, maritime security agencies. The Badan Koordinasi Keamanan Laut (Maritime Security Coordinating Agency, BAKORKAMLA) is supposedly responsible for coordinating 12 agencies, but competition among some of them has stymied operations and precipitated turf battles.⁸ BAKORKAMLA will soon become the Badan Keamanan Laut (Maritime Security Agency, BAKAMLA), which will allow it to take command authority rather than merely coordinate activities. BAKAMLA will thus be Indonesia's Coastguard, and will control and operate its own assets. But there will still be overlaps and duplication of roles with other agencies. For example, under National Law No. 32/2014 on Marine Affairs, BAKAMLA is authorised to conduct patrols, perform search and rescue, and enforce laws in Indonesian territorial seas, archipelagic waters and exclusive economic zone (EEZ). This authority is similar to that of the Marine Police (Polisi Perairan, POLAIR) and the Transport Ministry's Sea and Coast Guard Unit (Kesatuan Penjaga Laut dan Pantai, KPLP), as well as other agencies with more specialised tasks, such as Finance Ministry's Customs Unit (Bea dan Cukai) and Fisheries Ministry's patrol unit. Each agency operates its own patrol assets under an authority more or less legitimised by national laws, so major legal and institutional reforms are needed.

While Indonesia has its own legal and institutional arrangements, cooperation with Australia could give it useful insights into the way Australia carried out legal and institutional reforms to establish the Border Protection Command and the Australian Border Force, which is to operate from July 2015. The Australian Border Force will 'draw together the operational border, investigations, compliance, detention and enforcement functions' of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, in order to complement the Border Protection Command.

National and regional capacity-building

Capacity building is often understood simply as material and financial assistance provided to Indonesia by Australia. That form of capacity building has tended to dominate cooperation between the two countries because it's the easiest thing to do.

While Indonesia still needs hardware, handing over material assets is now less relevant. The focus should be gradually shifted towards improving the quality of Indonesia's maritime security policymaking, enhancing the professional development of its maritime security officials, and helping it to become a more responsible stakeholder in regional maritime security.

Efforts could start from cross-attachments between key Indonesian and Australian agencies, such as customs, police, immigration, search and rescue, and fisheries. This would expose both sides to internal policy debates without compromising the security of classified information. The two countries could consider attaching Indonesian liaison officers to the Border Protection Command and the Australian Border Force and an Australian liaison officer to BAKORKAMLA/BAKAMLA. Stationing a Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Armed Forces, TNI) liaison officer at the ADF's Northern Command (NORCOM) would facilitate information sharing.

While navies tend to dominate maritime security cooperation, it's useful to expand civilian involvement. BAKAMLA's establishment will involve significant recruitment and training of new personnel. This is an opportunity for Australia to improve Indonesian civilians' training in maritime security. Australia's Defence Materiel Organisation and Defence Science and Technology Organisation could help improve Indonesia's procurement strategies and scientific research, and Australia could provide training assistance to support security in Indonesian ports and anchorages.

Maritime security governance in the region is another opportunity for cooperation. A good start would be for Australia and Indonesia to adopt a complementary approach in building Timor-Leste's maritime security capacity. (Timor-Leste has recently been invited to join the Pacific Patrol Boat Program.) Australia could provide funding for Indonesian advisers to help train and build a Timorese navy, coastguard, or both. This would also develop Indonesia's professional training capacity in maritime security. If it's successful, a similar approach could be taken in selected Pacific island countries.

Regional capacity-building could also be an avenue for closer defence industry cooperation. For example, Indonesia's naval shipyards and shipbuilders have manufactured small patrol boats suitable for operations in territorial seas. Australia could invite Indonesian defence and shipbuilding companies to join competitive bids to supply boats for the follow-up to the Pacific Patrol Boat Program to be provided to third countries, such as Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea.

There's also an opportunity to expand Australia-Indonesia-Philippines-US maritime security cooperation. Having built Makassar class amphibious ships for Manila, Jakarta could ask Canberra and Washington to provide assistance for Indonesia's shipbuilding industry to build and provide more maritime security equipment for the Philippines.

Cooperative and collective maritime domain awareness

Maritime domain awareness (MDA) is essentially a comprehensive understanding about what's happening over, on and under the sea. Achieving MDA along the maritime boundary between Indonesia and Australia should be the ultimate goal of maritime security cooperation. Financial, technological and manpower constraints mean that neither of us can do it on our own.

Regional cooperation to support MDA has included the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre, the Information Fusion Centre and the Indonesia-Singapore SURPIC II project, but those efforts are focused on the western part of maritime Southeast Asia. Filling the gaps would require Australia and Indonesia to work together to establish similar MDA systems in the tri-border area and in eastern Indonesian waters, such as the Banda and Arafura seas, as well as along the Australia-Indonesia maritime boundary. A joint maritime information-sharing centre, including supporting nodes and network systems, could be established to monitor activities along the boundary. The centre could be jointly funded and staffed by maritime security personnel from both countries. Australia has voiced support for the establishment of Indonesia's National Maritime Security Information Center.

Australia could consider an enhanced Indonesia Transport Safety Assistance Package project to promote the safety and security of shipping in and around Indonesian waters, particularly along Indonesia's archipelagic sea lanes, following the example of the US Integrated Maritime Surveillance System established in the Malacca Strait and the Sulawesi Sea. However, drawing from experience with that system, we'd need to ensure its long-term maintenance and operational effectiveness.

While Indonesia remains constrained by gaps in its hardware capacity, there's a possibility of sharing capability. For example, Australia's maritime surveillance assets could help Indonesia patrol the southern approaches to the archipelago's sea lanes, such as the Sunda and Lombok straits. Joint maritime surveillance could also assist Indonesia to combat illegal fishing in the Arafura Sea.

There's an opportunity to establish a data link-up between BAKORKAMLA's surveillance systems and Australia's surveillance systems, so that both countries can generate better situational awareness along our common maritime boundary. We might explore possibilities to establish a multilateral information-sharing arrangement in the tri-border area without stoking the sovereignty concerns of the littoral countries. Surveillance cooperation in the tri-border area could be improved by integrating Malaysia's Sabah Sea Surveillance System (Sabah Swasla), the Philippines' Coast Watch South and the Indonesian integrated maritime surveillance system proposed above into a joint trilateral surveillance centre in Manado, North Sulawesi.

Expanded scope and area of cooperation

While joint exercises are mostly conducted on a single-service basis, a joint TNI–ADF tri-service exercise (armies, navies and air forces) would be worthwhile. It would not only contribute to increased interoperability, but would also familiarise the two armed forces with work in a joint environment.

In maritime security, there could be a joint exercise between BAKORKAMLA and the Border Protection Command along with their subordinate agencies. It could include the security of offshore oil and gas infrastructure, maritime counterterrorism, or counter-piracy operations.

Indonesian offshore infrastructure in the South China Sea, particularly around the Natuna Islands, could be an important factor in cooperation. Enhanced TNI naval and air bases in the Natunas could host visiting ADF assets for bilateral exercises and patrols in the South China Sea, perhaps akin to the Australia–Malaysia Operation Gateway, or the Indonesia–US sea surveillance exercise SEASURVEX last held in August 2014.⁹

There's a possibility of expanding NORCOM's role in cooperation with Indonesia. Along with an Indonesian liaison officer, NORCOM could host a joint surveillance centre for the Australia–Indonesia maritime boundary akin to the Indonesia–Singapore SURPIC II Project. It could also host an Australian regional defence engagement centre 'to sharpen the focus on regional defence engagement at the operational and tactical levels and to coordinate engagement activities, including with Indonesia'.¹⁰

For example, Exercise New Horizons could use more complex and demanding scenarios, such as antisubmarine and submarine warfare, or submarine search and rescue, with an expanded location beyond the Timor Sea, such as the Sulawesi Sea or South China Sea. Additionally, Indonesian military observers could participate in exercises held under the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), such as Exercise Bersama Lima.

Having a functioning submarine search and rescue capability is pivotal for Indonesia, which aims to procure three South Korean Type-209s by the 2020s, with potentially more orders to follow. Growing submarine acquisitions in the region could bring new operational challenges for the Indonesian Navy and the Royal Australian Navy. Both navies can consider submarine incident scenarios in critical chokepoints, such as the Lombok Strait, including by drawing up a joint response plan.

Concluding remarks

Maritime security cooperation between Australia and Indonesia is important because of our geographical proximity and common interests. Underpinned by Indonesia's desire to become the 'World Maritime Axis', greater attention should be paid to regional stability, territorial disputes and SLOC security. These areas provide opportunities for enhanced cooperation through more interaction between policymakers, integrated approaches across multiple agencies, and participation in regional capacity-building and collective MDA acquisition.

Notes

- 1 *Defence White Paper 2013: Defending Australia and its national interests*, para. 2.5., p. 7.
- 2 Marty Natalegawa, 'An Indonesian perspective on the Indo-Pacific', keynote address at the Conference on Indonesia, 16 May 2013, Washington DC.
- 3 Joko Widodo, 'The seas should unite, not separate us,' *The Jakarta Post*, 14 November 2014.
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- 5 Department of Defence, 'Minister for Defence and Minister for Defence Materiel—Joint press conference—Indonesia', 5 September 2012.
- 6 Ministry of Defence, Government of Singapore, *Fact sheet: ASEAN Information-sharing Portal*, 9 July 2012.
- 7 Aditya Batara, Beni Sukadis, Yusa Djuyandi, *RESEARCH REPORT: The Indonesian Military Officers' Perceptions of the Indonesia–Australia Defense Cooperation* (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi Pertahanan dan Studi Strategis Indonesia, July 2010), pp. 11–12.
- 8 Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto, Siswanto Rusdi, 'Maritime Security Agencies in Indonesia: More Not Merrier,' RSIS Commentary No. 001/2013, 2 January 2013.
- 9 Department of Defence, *Operation Gateway: general information*, no date; 'TNI-AL dan US Navy Gelar Latihan Operasi Pengamatan Laut di Kepri' [Indonesian and US Navies conduct sea surveillance exercise in the Riau Islands], *Batam Pos*, 10 August 2014.
- 10 Sam Bateman, Anthony Bergin, Hayley Channer, *Terms of engagement: Australia's regional defence diplomacy*, ASPI Strategy, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, 2013, p.8.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BAKAMLA	Badan Keamanan Laut (Maritime Security Agency)
BAKORKAMLA	Badan Koordinasi Keamanan Laut (Maritime Security Coordinating Agency)
MDA	maritime domain awareness
NORCOM	Northern Command
ReCAAP	Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia
SLOC	sea lines of communication
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Armed Forces)

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Acknowledgements

The author thanks Sam Bateman, Anthony Bergin, Andrew Davies, Natalie Sambhi, and Eliane Coates for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

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