



Turks and Caicos Islands Government Ministry of Border Control & Labour Rescue at Sea Operations

“PARTNERSHIPS.....THAT’S WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT”!

**UNHCR IOM Caribbean Regional Conference
on the Protection Of Vulnerable Persons In Mixed Migration Flows
Promoting Cooperation and Identification of Good Practices
May 22-23, 2013- Nassau, Bahamas**

Presenters:

**Peter Parker - Assistant Director of Immigration
Simon Excell - UK Immigration Adviser**

BACKGROUND: Turks & Caicos Islands

- **British Overseas Territory located between Bahamas and northern rim of Caribbean**
- **8 major Islands, 5 inhabited and 299 smaller uninhabited Cays**
- **90 miles north of Haiti, 575 miles south-east of Miami.**
- **Location and transport links attract significant US and Canadian visitors**
- **Population of c. 32,000, around 7,000 registered Turks and Caicos Islanders/Belongers**
- **Significant Haitian, Dominican Republic & Jamaican migrant populations.**
- **Estimated unlawful Haitian migrant population, primarily in Providenciales, > 10,000**

Caribbean



THE THREAT: Haitian Sloops

Primary objective of Border Control & Enforcement: *Maintaining the integrity of TCI Borders*

Table : Cost of Sloop Arrival in the Turks and Caicos Islands 2008 to Present

	2012 to present	2011	2010	2009	2008	Total
Cost of Detention and Repatriation	1,302,565	859,223	1,519,078	613,131	837,418	\$ 5,131,415

Source: Ministry of Border Control and Labour

Limited Ministry response capability; reliant on partnership approach.

Issues of;

- **Control**
- **Security**
- **Safety**
- **Island Economy**
- **Community Cohesion**
- **Victim identification**
- **Identification of persons seeking humanitarian protection**



THE DANGERS

Significant risk to life of 'sloop' migrants

July 09

- Sloop carrying > 200 Haitian men women and children capsized in TCI waters.
- 124 rescued by Royal TCI Marine Police and
- 65 missing, 15 bodies recovered.

September 2011

5 Haitian females tragically drowned whilst attempting to transfer onto a smaller boat which capsized from a large sloop vessel in TCI waters

Additional tales of fights and beatings on board when promised destination proves false.



Potential trafficked persons, for forced labour purposes. *(2012 US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report)*

THE RESPONSE: *Prevention & Interception at Sea*

US COAST-GUARD – OPBAT (*Operation Bahamas and Turks & Caicos*)

- **Tri-partite agreement since 1982; US, Turks and Caicos (UK), Bahamas**
- **Priority- DEA support to address narcotics flow up Windward Passage from South America to US**
- **Regional Disaster Management response (*2010 Haitian earthquake*)**
- **Intelligence-sharing**
- **Search and rescue at sea**
- **Support for migrant interdictions**



THE RESPONSE: OPBAT

- Patrol area – 100,000 sq. miles of territorial waters (*size of California*)
- Helicopter, aircraft and sea vessel assets
- Overall costs to US of \$20m per annum
- Maritime support from partners
- Single Central Control Point for operations
- c. 130 migrant interdictions/2,000 migrant engagements per year.
- c. 120 lives saved per year



THE RESPONSE: TCI COASTAL RADAR STATION

- **Opened 26 September 2012**
- **Located on southern shores of Providenciales, covering busiest waterways South & West of Islands**
- **Short Pulse, Dual Band, X-Band frequencies to detect and track variety of marine objects in all weather conditions**
- **40 meter (131 ft.) galvanized, lattice tower sitting on a specially designed foundation**
- **5.5 meter (18 ft.) reflector antenna that sends and receives radar signals**
- **Enhances Island Border Security with 'Track & Trace' Capability**
- **Important partner for OPBAT, 911, Marine Police, Customs & Immigration assets**



THE RESPONSE: TCI Irregular Migrant Contingency Plan

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS



**NATIONAL
IRREGULAR MIGRANT
CONTINGENCY PLAN**

- Guides TCI Response Agency actions for Sloop events
- Articulates different response levels for different scenarios
- Sets out strategic roles, responsibilities and procedures for all contributing agencies, and who they are
- Supplemented by individual Agency plans
- Set in context of local Agency Ordinances and international agreements around humanitarian protection and human rights

THE RESPONSE PROCESS

- **OPBAT/RADAR identification at sea**
- **911 Agency notification**
- **Marine Police interdiction/safe passage into Port**
- **Dynamic Risk, Health & Welfare assessments at Port**
- **Urgent provision of immediate food, water and medical supplies**
- **Initial security search of persons & vessel by Police/Customs Officers**
- **Transportation to Island Holding Facility**
- **Identified minors, vulnerable persons placed into Welfare department care**



THE RESPONSE : SCREENING PROCESSES

Processes undertaken in the secure & safe environment of the Holding Facility

Individual Protection Safeguard/Screening interviews to establish;

- Identity
- Immigration status
- Security/Risk factors
- Humanitarian Protection issues
- Victim (trafficked) issues
- Health and Welfare needs
- Subjects photographed, fingerprinted and records compiled
- Secondary interviews arranged for persons seeking protection/asylum
- Repatriation processes undertaken as appropriate.



THE CHALLENGES

Resources

- **36 operational officers including senior management across all TCI**
- **10-12 operational officers only generally available on Providenciales**
- **Inadequate holding facility**
- **Significant repatriation costs**

Capability

- **Interpreter availability**
- **Evolving asylum process**
- **Limited victim identification and support processes**



THE LEARNING

Post Sloop event de-briefing of Contingency Plan

De-briefing of subjects to identify:

- **Organisers/facilitators/traffickers in departing & 'host' countries**
- **Additional intelligence (*links to organised crime, drug & weapons trafficking*)**
- **Development of plan and intelligence picture to improve future responses**
- **Methods/routes employed to TCI**
- **Cost of journey**



THE FUTURE for Turks and Caicos Islands

- Smarter targeting and deployment/visibility through improved intelligence
- Increased focus on perpetrator threat
- Development of Island asylum processes
- Enhanced community media messaging of issues and dangers
- Development of Island (*trafficked*) victim identification & support
- Development of IOM voluntary return arrangement programme

Enhanced local, regional & international partnerships.....*that's what it's all about!*

THANK YOU!