



## Modus Operandi

**Type of incident:** illegal operations of the fishing vessel **STELLAR**

**STELLAR** was sighted twice in May 2014 operating on the high seas of the North Pacific Ocean by the United States Coast Guard (USCG). At the time of initial sighting the vessel displayed the name **SUNGARI** and was flying a Sierra Leone flag from her stern. When approached by a USCG vessel, the master initially claimed Sierra Leone flag for the vessel and confirmed the vessel's name as **SUNGARI**. However, during the course of the questioning, the **SUNGARI** crew changed the vessel name to **STELLAR** and hoisted a Cambodian flag.

**Date of incident:** 08-20 May 2014

**Location of incident:** High Seas, approximately 240 nautical miles southeast of Kamchatka Peninsula (Russia)

**Country:** High Seas

### Incident Summary:

- On May 8, 2014 a USCG aircraft sighted a fishing vessel on the high seas of the North Pacific Ocean at 49-57N, 162-46E, approximately 240NM southeast of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatka, Russia. This vessel was working very closely with another suspected IUU vessel (**SOVEREIGN**) in the vicinity of the Russian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- The vessel was again sighted on May 18, 2014 by a USCG cutter (patrol ship), approximately 35 miles outside the Russian EEZ. A helicopter was launched from the USCG cutter to further identify the fishing vessel.
- During both occasions the fishing vessel was flying a Sierra Leone flag from her stern. The vessel name **SUNGARI** and call sign were visible, however no hailing port or other identifying markings were observed.
- When questioned by the USCG cutter the master of the fishing vessel claimed Sierra Leone registry for the vessel and confirmed the vessel's name as **SUNGARI**. However, during the course of the questioning, the fishing vessel crew changed the name to **STELLAR** with temporary boards on the superstructure and hoisted a Cambodian flag.
- The vessel was approximately 50 nautical miles from the nearest shipping lane and there were no longer any fishing vessels observed within 100 nautical miles.
- On 19 May, 2014, the USCG received written denial of registry from the competent authority in the Government of Sierra Leone. The denial of registry states **SUNGARI**'s vessel registration was cancelled in July 2013 due to invalid certificates.



- **STELLAR** was previously also registered as the **PHOENIX** and was detained by Russian authorities in May 2011 with illegally harvested crab onboard.

## Description of Modus Operandi:

The fishing vessel **STELLAR** appears to change its name, national registration and other identifying characteristics in order to hide illegal activity. **STELLAR** is suspected of engaging in illicit fisheries transshipment activities near the Russian EEZ.

**STELLAR** has several features associated with vessels involved in IUU transshipment fishing activity. These features include: run-down appearance (extremely rusty hull and superstructure), a very tall mast with operating radar, large tire-type fenders along the entire hull, switching between flags of convenience, and an apparent modification to the vessel's stern.

## Additional Information:

Information concerning transshipment activity is of interest to the United States' multi-lateral partnerships and to the broader U.S. Government interests in deterring IUU activities on the high seas. Illegal transshipment vessels are a high priority to the coastal states who are members of the North Pacific Anadromous Fisheries Convention.

**STELLAR** was last known to have arrived in the port of Busan, Korea on 3 June, 2014. The USCG provided information to the Korean authorities regarding the suspicious activities of **STELLAR** and recommended the vessel be inspected for potential violations.

## Vessel identifiers:

The information presented may contain inaccuracies, as the networks involved may have made attempts to conceal the vessel's true identities. Please refer to the pictures to ascertain a possible match.

Vessel Name	SUNGARI/STELLAR	Status	Active
Vessel Type	Fishing Vessel	Year Built	1989
Current Flag	Unknown	Length overall	Unknown
Home Port	Unknown	Deadweight	0
IMO Number	8916011	Gross Tonnage	495
Call Sign	Unknown	Builder	Kanasashi – Zosen - Shizu
National Vessel Registration Number	Unknown		
Current Owner and operator	Unknown/Farisel Corp Ltd		
Current Operator	Farisel Corp Ltd		
Fishing Licenses	Unknown		
Fishing Gear	Unknown		
Historical Data (Sea Web – Lloyds)			
Month/Year	Name	Flag	
2013/07	Unknown	Unknown	
2012/06	SUNGARI	Unknown	
2010/11	PHOENIX	Sierra Leone	
2009/01		Cambodia	
1989/11		Japan	
1989/01	SHOEI MARU NO. 52	Japan	



**F/V SUNGARI – Imagery taken from USCG helicopter May 20, 2014**

## **Recommended action:**

The Government of the United States recommends and requests:

- That the vessel be inspected if detected in port or underway and that law enforcement action is taken as deemed appropriate;
- Any information on the past transshipment or fishing activities of the vessel, including the date, location, species and amount transferred, and the details of other vessels that received or offloaded catch;
- Any information regarding IUU fishing activities observed or discovered on board;
- Any information on the owners and operators of the vessel and its current location;
- Any information on previous illegal activities or associated vessels (such as those that transshipped with this vessel); and
- Any enforcement or investigative actions taken by member countries to document results and update vessel information.

It is strongly recommended that you circulate this Purple Notice to your law enforcement bodies to alert them about this modus operandi / hiding place so that they may take whatever preventive and precautionary measures they deem necessary. All recipients are strongly encouraged to share data on suspects, modi operandi, and provide any investigative information that could help establish links with similar events as well as identify the perpetrators.

**Points of Contact:** INTERPOL General Secretariat, Command and Coordination Centre  
[www.interpol.int/Forms/Contact\\_INTERPOL](http://www.interpol.int/Forms/Contact_INTERPOL)