

Integrated coastal surveillance system for effective maritime security: Bangladesh perspective

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Bangladesh is a maritime country with 710 km of coast line and she is exclusively exercising her own sovereign rights over 118,813 square km of waters extending up to 12 nautical miles of territorial sea and a further Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles into the sea. It is obviously a vast area of commercial and economic interests together with environmental stakes, warrants appropriate protection and security beyond doubt. Approximate 90% of the trade is being done by sea. In addition to that the future economy of Bangladesh is sketched at sea 'Blue Economy'. Therefore, a secure maritime area is critical for sustained economy of Bangladesh. Bangladesh cannot afford to let lose protection of her vital lifeline. To ensure such security, surveillance is the first step.

Worldwide trend of illegal maritime trade, piracy, poaching, immigration, terrorism, etc escalate maritime insecurity. Bangladesh is also experiencing some of these challenges in Bay of Bengal (BOB) and thus compelling law-enforcing agencies to

shift their increasing focus towards sea for ensuring Maritime Security (MARSEC). At this transition of national focus towards sea, present security infrastructure does not fully complement the purpose. The country requires an effective mechanism capable of detection, identification and most importantly monitor all those agencies ensuring the existing laws, rules and regulations in internal, territorial, contiguous waters and beyond that to establish MARSEC.

Careful scrutiny of maritime security stakeholders reveals that the surveillance of the bay is being conducted by various law enforcing agencies but without dynamic coordination amongst all. Bangladesh Navy (BN) and Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) are performing the prime role by the physical presence of their vessels. The maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) and helicopter of BN and Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) are also contributing by conducting surveillance over the sea. The intelligence agencies of Armed Forces, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), BCG, Bangladesh

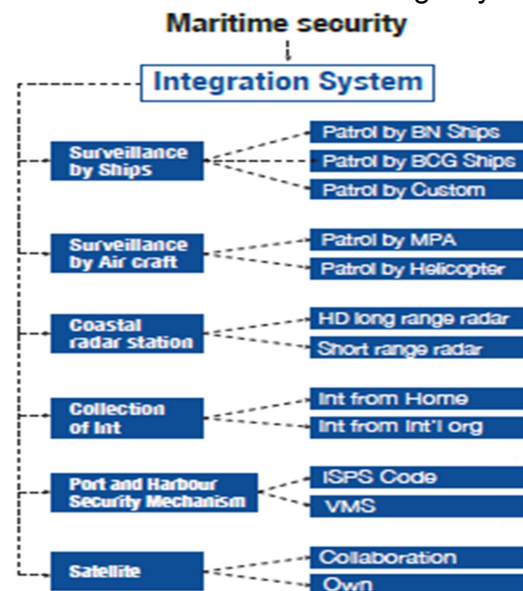
Police and Sea Customs also provide intelligence which in turn contributes towards MARSEC. The fishing community play an important role in providing information on sea affairs as well as at harbours. Port and harbour security system is contributing on MARSEC by enforcing ISPS Code and conduct surveillance by Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). These are the present existing systems for our coastal surveillance. However, these are not fully active or partly active due to non-availability of proper or required instrument. At the same time, it must be noted that the available systems are working in standalone and hardly augment each other. Concept of collaboration of these existing systems is not also there. Therefore, present infrastructure and functional capability of the above mentioned organisations are not enough to ensure effective surveillance and thereby the MARSEC.

It is important to mention here that the technology has given far better advantages on coastal surveillance which are being practiced throughout the world to ensure MARSEC. Coastal surveillance system by installing series of coastal radar stations along the coast can contribute a lot for surveillance. Own and friendly satellites can also contribute by providing intelligence at present and maritime picture in future.

There is no functional system or mechanism present in our country to collect, collate and analyse the information collected by various agencies to get a pragmatic output that can enhance the surveillance system. Integration of all available options can really provide seamless surveillance which can ultimately contribute effective maritime security. A well-coordinated Shore Based Coastal Radar Station with the physical presence of ships and

aircraft at and above the sea, port and harbour security mechanism with support from various intelligence agencies and satellite surveillance is the option to get optimum output with available resources avoiding duplication of effort. They can be also augmented by information from friendly countries by their intelligence agencies and satellite. A collaborated functional concept is proposed below:

To implement the proposed integrated coastal surveillance system, Bangladesh should take endeavour to install the coastal radar stations immediately. We have to make all existing system



Concept of Integrated Surveillance System

functional and operational. We need to have a framework for the coordination of these agencies, infrastructures, assets and organisations to work together. May be, establishment of an integrated headquarters to coordinate and control the systems such as Maritime Headquarters is a viable option. We need an authority to implement this concept of the integration. A government laid policy is required to introduce this integrated coastal surveillance system which will ultimately ensure the MARSEC in the BOB.