

INVESTIGATION NO. 4

THE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES OF THE NAHAM-4



VESSEL TYPE
Longliners

FLAG STATE
Oman

The NAHAM-4 investigation highlights the extent of vessel identity fraud occurring in the fishing industry. The vessel, a tuna longliner was detained and later confiscated by South African authorities due to uncertainty about its identity, meanwhile at least four other vessels were identified as having operated with the name NAHAM-4. A global system of vessel identification, including using mandatory IMO numbers on industrial fishing vessels, is essential to overcome these issues.

KEY EVENTS

MAR 2013 A tuna longliner, NAHAM-4 with call sign A4DK6, was inspected in Cape Town. Inconsistencies were identified between the amount of fish held on-board and the supporting documentation. The name of the vessel had been painted on the hull but a faded name could be seen under this, which raised questions about the true identity of the vessel.

The vessel was detained under suspicion that it was falsely claiming to be NAHAM-4 and a forensic analyst confirmed that there was indeed a hidden name, DER HORNG 569.

DER HORNG 569 had been flagged to Belize, where authorities reported that the vessel and a sister vessel (the DER WEI 686) had been reported as stolen by their Taiwanese owner Der Wei Fishery Co. Ltd.

JUN-JUL 2013 Investigations revealed that between 2010 and 2013 at least four different vessels had been operating

with the name NAHAM-4 and that the vessel held in Cape Town was significantly larger than the NAHAM-4 authorised to fish in the IOTC region. Comparisons of photographs of vessels showed significant differences in the structure of the vessels and inconsistencies between the call signs painted on the vessels. In one example, the name NAHAM-4 was marked on a vessel alongside the call sign A4DK5. This call sign is officially recorded with IOTC as the call sign for the NAHAM-3. The NAHAM-4 seized in Cape Town had the correct call sign painted on the side, but showed obvious structural differences to another NAHAM-4 photographed at sea in April 2012.

Photographs taken in Oman in August 2010, at sea in April 2012, in Cape Town in July 2012 and in Cape Town between October 2012 and July 2013 were compared. This revealed that four different vessels had been operating with the name NAHAM-4.

To add to the confusion – the original tonnage certificate was for a vessel even smaller than that seized in Cape Town, which was itself smaller than the vessel photographed in Oman. This suggested that perhaps none of these vessels was in fact the ‘real’ NAHAM-4 – meaning there may be as many as five vessels bearing this name.

Investigation confirmed that the documentation provided for the port entry to Cape Town had been falsified and the Omani owners, Al-Naham Co LLC, and the agent, Trade Ocean, could not prove that the vessel was the real NAHAM-4.

JUL 2013 South African Authorities seized both the vessel and the fish on board.

SEP 2013 Al-Naham Co. LLC and its representatives were charged and convicted on seven counts related to South Africa’s fisheries legislation.

► **2013** The ship owners abandoned the vessel, leaving the agent with debts amounting to USD 100 000. The vessel and fish on-board were forfeited to South Africa.

JUL 2014 The NAHAM-4 was sold at auction for USD 40 000.

2015-2016 Renamed the NESSA 7, FISH-i tracked the vessel from South Africa to South America, then Namibia and finally to Mozambique where she was inspected by the authorities, arrested and confiscated (see FISH-i Investigation 9).



WHAT WORKED?

- A port inspection identified the identity issues and triggered the investigation.
- Systematic cross checking of information highlighted anomalies.
- Accessible photographs of fishing vessels, drawn from a range of sources, provided crucial evidence of the number of vessels using a single identity.
- Investigative tools supported the investigation by mapping connectivity and nodes of activities.

WHAT DID FISH-i AFRICA DO?

- Used analytical tools and investigative techniques to gather and share intelligence.
- Analysed photographic evidence to reveal the previous name of the vessel.
- Communicated with the authorities in Belize.
- Cooperated with the Omani press to raise awareness with the authorities in Oman.
- Investigated ownership of the NAHAM-4 and links to other illegal fishing vessels.
- Publicised the case using the media and the Stop Illegal Fishing website.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

- A global, mandatory means of identifying commercial fishing vessels through the allocation of a unique vessel identifier such as an IMO number.
- Publicly available photo databases of fishing vessels would help to prevent identity fraud.
- Flag States must inspect their fishing vessels, monitor their activities and act when non-compliance is detected.
- Tougher penalties that not only deter illegal activity, but once identified stop those involved from continuing to operate in the fisheries sector.
- INTERPOL engagement that encourages strengthened cooperation between national police and fisheries authorities to progress investigations.



In working together on over thirty investigations, FISH-i Africa has shed light on the scale and complexity of illegal activities in the fisheries sector and highlighted the challenges that coastal State enforcement officers face to act against the perpetrators.

FISH-i investigations demonstrate a range of complexity in illegalities – ranging from illegal fishing, to fisheries related illegality, to fisheries associated crime to lawlessness.

In this case evidence of illegal fishing and fisheries related illegalities were found.

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HOW?

The evidence uncovered during FISH-i investigations demonstrates different methods or approaches that illegal operators use to either commit or cover-up their illegality and to avoid prosecution.

VESSEL IDENTITY With no mandatory identification system fisheries inspectors rely on vessel names, which can be easily painted over to fit with available licences or to hide a history of non-compliance, as was the case with the NAHAM-4 name.

BUSINESS PRACTICES A complex network of company ownership raised challenges with the accurate identification of the beneficial owner. Threats were made to a journalist

that was delving into the Omani registration and business aspects of Al-Naham Co LLC., raising suspicions that corrupt practices were taking place in Oman.

DOCUMENT FORGERY Four different vessels operated as the NAHAM-4 providing evidence that at least three of these were fraudulently using this name, documents were also identified as forgeries by South African authorities.

FLAGGING ISSUES (suspected) The owners of NAHAM-4 do not appear to have any connection to Oman, the flag State so there is suspicion that flagging to Oman was intentional to benefit from Oman's limited application of their responsibilities.