



ข่าวสารนิเทศ • Press Release

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Thailand to use Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to Monitor Illegal Fishing

On 14 June 2018, General Chatchai Sarikulya, Deputy Prime Minister, visited U-tapao Airport, Rayong Province, to oversee the launch of unmanned aerial vehicles' (UAV) sea patrol operations that will strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) capacity against illegal fishing.

The application of UAV for sea patrol consists of two elements; (1) deterrence: the UAV patrols the designated area at regular intervals and alerts the Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC) as soon as any misconduct is found, so that the FMC can inform the at-sea inspect team and the Port-in Port-out (PIPO) Control Centre to carry out further investigations, and (2) suppression: the UAV is utilised by the FMC to cross-check and gather information on any targeted vessel that has suspicious activity detected by the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), for comparison with those received from the at-sea inspection team and the PIPO Centre.

The UAV technology, used for aerial patrol by the Royal Thai Air Force for security purposes, is now being applied to increase the effectiveness of MCS against illegal fishing, particularly by foreign vessels in Thai waters. During the initial stage, the Royal Thai Air Force is supporting the operation by providing one UAV and collaborating closely with the Command Center for Combating Illegal Fishing (CCCIF) to draft a joint action plan. In the first phase, the areas of inspection will cover the upper part of the Gulf of Thailand, which will be extended to include the lower part of the Gulf in the second phase and the Andaman Sea in the third phase. All of these stages will be completed within 4 months.

The UAV technology will help the authorities distinguish between vessels conducting legal and illegal practices more accurately, including foreign fishing vessels illegally fishing in Thai waters. Moreover, UAV can solve constraints faced by at-sea inspection units by providing wider coverage and recording photographic evidence with modern digital technology which can then be used for law enforcement purposes.

The Royal Thai Government has continually enforced stricter measures in the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU). The use of UAV technology in this regard is a significant development which will reinforce existing efforts to improve fleet management and MCS as well as making law enforcement to be swifter and more effective.

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