

**TO: Dan O'Mahoney, Director Joint Maritime Security Centre**

**COMMISSION FROM SMALL BOATS WORKSHOP – Tactical Options to interdict Migrant Vessels**

**1.1** This strategic briefing has been produced following a meeting of subject matter experts from Border Force, Police and the Royal Navy. The discussions focused on the 4 scenarios outlined in the formal commissioning document and each scenario was considered in the context of increasing numbers of migrants.

**1.2 Summary of findings**

<b>What tactical options are available to:</b>	<b>Response</b>
1) Identify and safely close in on small migrant vessels in order to communicate with the migrants on board.	Agencies are trained in this tactic and currently deploy it in the English Channel.
2) Safely disable a migrant vessel that is underway.	A suite of tactics are available. Some agencies will require upskilling in order to increase capacity and the purchase of stopping devices.
3) Take control of the migrant vessel in a way that prevents migrants from taking action that might put themselves at risk.	Tactics are available, however the nature of migrant vessels makes this a high risk option.
4) Safely disembark the migrants from their vessels onto a UK vessel	Tactics exist but it is very much dependant on a dynamic risk assessment and the availability of a suitable reception vessel.

**1.3 Fundamental principles and planning assumptions**

During their discussions the group agreed on the following

- The lead agency for response is Border Force.
- The priority is saving lives at sea.
- The purpose of any interdiction under the current legal framework is search and rescue.
- The proposed tactics are assumed to be for low threat situations where the vessel is non-compliant where migrants are uncooperative through to displaying active resistance.
- Migrants will be considered to be vulnerable, unless there is evidence to the contrary.
- Migrant vessels will be heavily overloaded, low in the water, with small outboard motors travelling at 4/5 knots.

- Migrants are desperate to reach the UK and any approach by French vessels in French waters will result in active resistance.
- Any French intervention will be for the purposes of search and rescue.
- The French do not use force to intervene and if they do not get co-operation they will shadow the migrant's vessel into UK waters.
- The most effective ratio for any intervention, will be two UK vessels to one migrant vessel. This ratio is scalable dependent on the number of migrant vessels.
- An additional UK vessel with the capability to act as a 'Mother Ship' will provide the most effective response in order to safely manage rescued migrants during their on-going transit.

#### **1.4 Ministerial Considerations**

- 1.4.1 Minimise the risk of undertaking operations at sea by evaluating the investment in French authorities to prevent migrant vessels departing French shores.
- 1.4.2 Support Border Force to upskill staff and purchase assets, allowing them to safely disable migrant vessels underway.
- 1.4.3 Consider the most effective investment to increase the type and capability of marine assets to deliver the suite of tactical options and thus deter migrants.
- 1.4.4 Explore the use of other assets e.g. Ministry of Defence Police who have the potential to assist.
- 1.4.5 MACA will only provide a short term solution. All agencies agree that a consolidated longer term approach led by Border Force will be required to provide a more sustainable solution.



**Appendix One**  
Detailed Tactical Options

	Border Force	Police	Royal Navy
<b>Identify and safely close in on small migrant vessels</b>	<p>BF will respond under the co-ordination of HMCG, using their available fleet of either RHIB's, Coastal Patrol Vessels or Cutters.</p> <p>A 'rescue from sea' capability must be available should migrants jump into the water or the vessel capsizes</p> <p>Notification to HMCG of the movement of a migrant vessel will come through a number of existing channels including;</p> <p>Direct report from the French authorities Commercial shipping Leisure craft Migrants themselves Intelligence assets i.e. JMOCC / NMIC</p>	<p>Police will receive and act on information and intelligence from sources outlined above.</p> <p>Police have the capability to support BF by using assets to close in on MV's, but this is not currently a priority and will require a change in operational focus.</p> <p>May require mutual aid provision to move assets to the highest risk areas.</p>	<p>RN have assets and capability (47 &amp; 42 Cdo Royal Marines).</p> <p>However, in the main they specialise in opposed boarding and therefore are not considered proportionate to the threat.</p> <p>Should there be insufficient RHIB assets, RM boats and coxswains could be provided or training in small boat tactics could be provided.</p>
<b>Safely disable a migrant vessel that is underway</b>	<p>BF do not currently have an effective method to safely disable a migrant vessel underway.</p> <p>BF train to board a vessel of interest underway but that is not considered to be a viable option due to overcrowding and the risk to migrants and BF staff.</p> <p>BF have indicated that they are willing to train their staff and purchase equipment necessary to employ the tactic</p>	<p>Police are trained in a suite of tactical options that could safely disable a MV underway (see appendix two) and can be used in this scenario.</p> <p>Ideally the tactics should be deployed by 2 x RHIBs for safety reasons.</p>	<p>RN have a number of tactics that could be deployed to disable a MV but are not considered proportionate to the threat. The specific tactics were developed to stop drug smugglers in the Caribbean and are therefore not considered suitable.</p>
<b>Take control of the migrant vessel in a way</b>	<p>BF train to board a vessel of interest underway but that is</p>	<p>Police have the capability to board</p>	<p>RN have assets and capability but again specialise in opposed</p>

<p><b>that prevents migrants from taking action that might put themselves at risk.</b></p>	<p>not considered to be a viable option due to overcrowding and the risk to migrants and BF staff</p> <p>Were a migrant vessel to have been disabled remotely, a BF vessel could take it under tow to a suitable reception location.</p> <p>Due to the type of vessels being used by migrants the ability to tow whilst loaded with migrants is very limited and requires the cooperation of those on-board.</p> <p>The risks of the vessel being bow-heavy and so taking on water, or the injury to the migrants should the tow rope part and 'snap-back' would outweigh doing this unless in only the most extreme cases, such as the vessel being directly in the path of commercial traffic.</p>	<p>vessels and disable their propulsion systems.</p> <p>Overcrowding makes this a high risk tactic.</p> <p>Were a migrant vessel to have been disabled remotely, a police vessel could take it under tow to a suitable reception location.</p>	<p>boarding and therefore not considered proportionate to the threat.</p>
<p><b>Safely disembark the migrants from their vessels onto a UK vessel.</b></p>	<p>BF 'Cutters' can be used as a 'Mother Ship' to receive migrants in the current circumstances of SAR and safely bring migrants to the UK.</p> <p>However, operationally limited as the vessels do not have the capacity or infrastructure to deal with large numbers of un-cooperative migrants who may pose a risk to themselves or the safety of the vessel.</p>	<p>The police do not possess any suitable craft to act as a reception vessel.</p>	<p>RN have a range of assets that, subject to MACA approval, could be used as a 'mother ship' to co-ordinate and receive migrants before returning them to France or the UK. This may enable the RHIBS to interdict further migrant vessels more rapidly or allow them to receive medical attention.</p>

## Appendix Two

### Capability

- 1) Border Force
  - a. Current assets operating in the channel
    - i. Cutter – 42m vessel with 12 crew. 2<sup>nd</sup> cutter is available to surge if required
    - ii. 2 x Coastal Patrol Vessels – 19m vessel with 5 crew
  - b. Other assets
    - i. RHIB – 7m vessel deployed from the slipway on the rear of the Cutter
  - c. Total coverage for UK and NI – 4 x Cutters and 6 x Coastal Patrol Vehicles
- 2) Police
  - a. Focus will be on using available assets in the high risk zones along the South Coast, from Essex in the east to Devon & Cornwall in the west
  - b. Effective deployment of assets may require mutual aid
  - c. 7m / 10m RHIBS
- 3) Royal Navy
  - a. Royal Marines have Off-shore Raiding Craft (ORC). Royal Navy have PACIFICs 24. Both are RHIBs and may be made available on request. Both train for robust boarding, including opposed boarding and may not be appropriate for rescuing vulnerable civilians.
  - b. Mother Ship – Landing Craft or Off-shore Patrol Vessel could be utilised in these waters (subject to Ministerial approval)
  - c. OPV Batch 1 – currently tasked to aid in Fishery Protection but could be re-tasked (1600 tonnes, 20+kts)  
OPV Batch 2 – Larger vessel and has own RHIBS and 2 has the advantage of large deck space back aft and internal area separate from the main internal area of the ship. It could also act as a mother ship for short range UAVs
  - d. Landing Craft – 2 types although both are flat bottomed and therefore not best suited to rough weather.
    - i. LCVP (24 tonnes – 20+knots) up to 35 troops, agile and can be fitted with deck cover for the well deck.
    - ii. LCU (250 tonnes - <10kts) up to 100 troops, much greater capacity and roll on / roll off capability.

## **Appendix Three**

### **Detailed Tactical Options**

#### **Safely disable a migrant vessel that is underway**

An escalated menu of tactical options is provided in the following video, all are possible with 1 RIB but ideally 2 RIBs working together for safety reasons and contingencies.:-

[ HYPERLINK "<https://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=7089&d=zJeZ3tsbnby847NoSQoZWl-yRjGHsJ9ntbzZgHYrOw&u=https%3a%2f%2fyoutu%2ebe%2fKpvcYKhXeTA>" ]

**Interception/Vectoring/Escorting/Comms** – Interception, communication, escorting and gaining compliance.

**Cross-decking compliant/non-compliant** – Police units have the capability to board compliant and non-compliant vessels and disable their propulsion systems from the helm position – in a migrant situation where a vessel is overladen, the lack of space on board may prevent this as a viable option.

**Rapid Deployment Boom** – Police units have the capability to lay an entanglement device around the front of a subject vessel designed to foul the propeller.

**VAS** – An enhanced version of the boom, the Vessel Arrest System fires an entanglement device across the bow of a subject vessel.

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