



THE ILLEGAL CHINESE FISHING

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE DUBIOUS CHINESE
DISTANT-WATER FISHING FLEET

ABSTRACT

Chinese Distant Water Fishing Fleet (DWF) is deployed across every ocean of the world. It is often found guilty of violating the domestic laws of the respective countries and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It also indulges in targeting endangered species, falsifying licenses & documentation, espionage & reconnaissance activities, seizing territories, generating a lot of sea waste, and violating EEZs of other nations. This is a comprehensive report on illegal Chinese fishing using the DWF.

Table of Contents

The Illegal Chinese Fishing	3
China’s illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU)	5
Modus Operandi	6
Types of Chinese vessels and their routes	6
Chinese Trawlers	6
Chinese Long liners	8
Activities of prominent Chinese fishing vessels	11
Chinese activity around Africa	12
Western Sahara	13
Cameroon	15
Gabon	16
Guinea	17
Guinea Bissau	18
South Africa	19
Ghana	20
Ivory Coast	21
Mauritania	21
Senegal	22
Liberia	24
Sierra Leone	25
Chinese activity in Indian Ocean Region	26
Pakistan	27
India	29
Sri Lanka	30
Maldives	32
Oman	33
Indonesia	34
Malaysia	35
Iran	36
Island Nations	37
East African countries in the IOR	41
Chinese activities in Oceania	44

Australia	45
New Zealand	45
Norfolk Island	46
Fiji	46
Cook Islands	47
Hawaii	48
French Polynesia	48
Line Group	48
Samoa	49
Vanuatu	50
Chinese activity around South America	51
Galapagos Islands	52
Argentina	53
Chile	54
Brazil	55
Uruguay	57
Peru	58
Chinese Activity near China	59
South China Sea	59
Vietnam	61
Philippines	62
East China Sea and Yellow Sea	62
Japan	62
South Korea	64
Russia	64
Issues faced due to Chinese DWF	65

The Illegal Chinese Fishing

An Investigation into the Dubious Chinese Distant-Water Fishing Fleet (DWF)

China is the **world’s largest producer of aquaculture and capture fisheries**¹. According to the United Nations, China consumes around **36% of total global fish production** and **hauls in 15.2 million tonnes of marine life a year**, a massive **20% of the world’s entire annual catch**.

According to **the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**, China ranked top of the **top ten global capture producers in 2020 from Marine sources**. The graph below depicts how other countries like Indonesia and Peru, compared to China, are way behind.

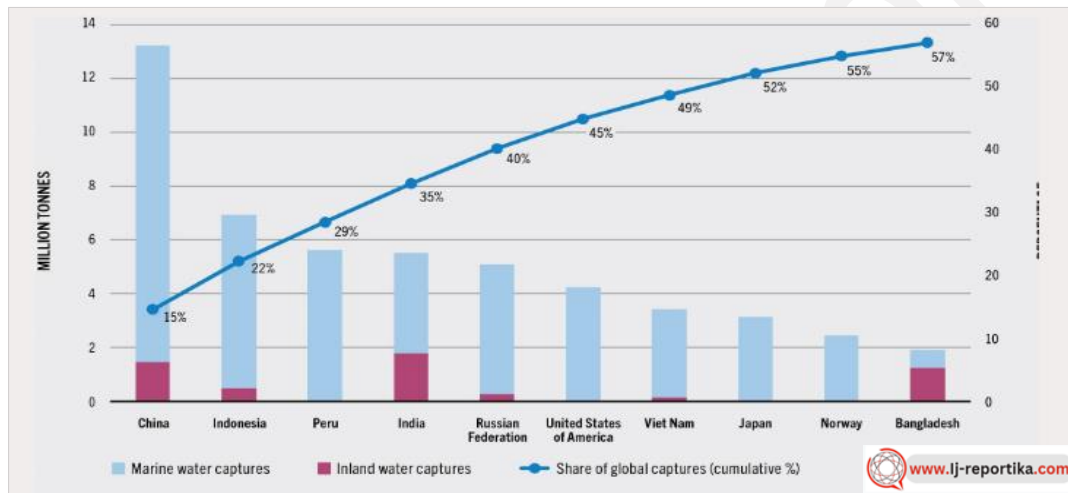


Figure: Top Ten Global Capture Producers, 2020 (FAO)

Country or territory	Production (average per year)				Production			
	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	2017	2018	2019	2020
	<i>(million tonnes, live weight)</i>							
China	3.82	9.96	12.43	13.24	13.19	12.68	12.15	11.77
Indonesia	1.74	3.03	4.37	5.98	6.56	6.71	6.56	6.43
Peru (total)	4.14	8.10	8.07	5.13	4.13	7.15	4.80	5.61
Peru (excluding anchoveta)	2.50	2.54	0.95	1.01	0.83	0.96	1.29	1.22
Russian Federation	1.51	4.72	3.20	4.28	4.59	4.84	4.72	4.79
United States of America	4.53	5.15	4.75	4.89	5.01	4.77	4.81	4.23
India	1.69	2.60	2.95	3.55	3.94	3.62	3.67	3.71
Viet Nam	0.53	0.94	1.72	2.70	3.15	3.19	3.29	3.27

Figure: Fish production over the years (FAO)

¹ Capture fishery refers to all kinds of harvesting of naturally occurring living resources in both marine and freshwater environments.

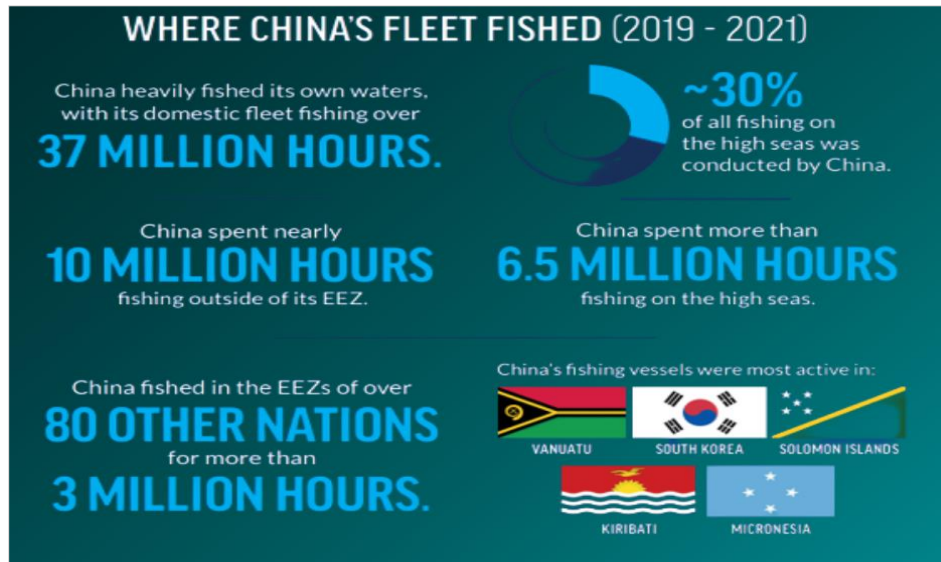


Figure: Chinese DWF at a glance

Having depleted fish stocks in domestic waters, including the South China Sea, the fleets of **China** are now traveling further afield to meet the rising demand for seafood. Beijing says its distant water fishing fleet numbers **2,500 ships**, but multiple studies claim that it is more than **18,000 boats** in the world's oceans.

From 2019 to 2021, China fished in Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs²) of over **80 other countries** for more than **3 million hours** and spent nearly **10 million hours outside its own EEZ in the high-seas³ and the EEZs of other nations**.

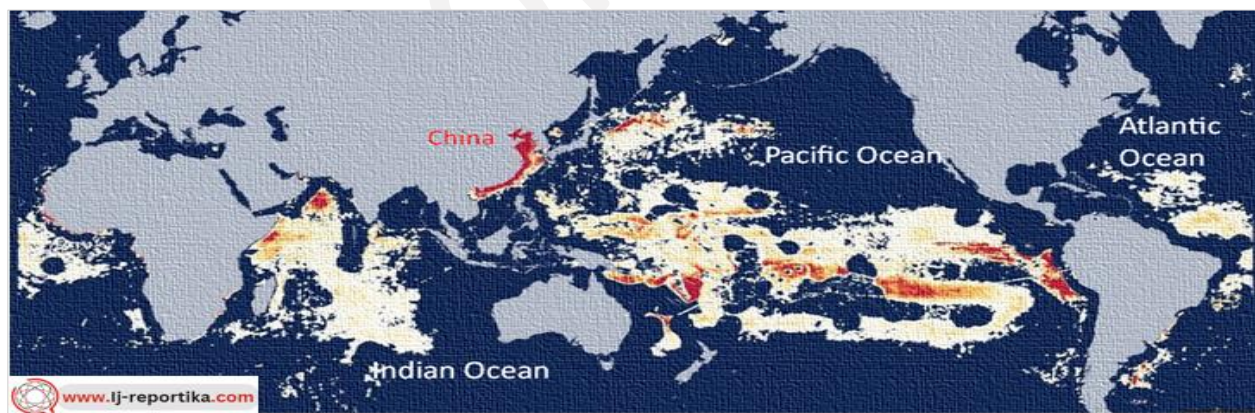


Figure: Map depicting the intensity of Chinese fishing around the world from 2017-2021

² The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as generally extending 200 nautical miles from shore, within which the coastal state has the right to explore and exploit, and the responsibility to conserve and manage, both living and non-living resources.

³ High seas are international marine waters outside the jurisdiction of any country. Under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea, the high seas begin 200 nautical miles from the coastline.

In practically all of the world's major oceans from 2017 to 2021, Chinese fishing activity was intense, as shown on the map above. The **Chinese DWF** is often found guilty of violating the **domestic laws of the respective countries** and the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**⁴. It also indulges in targeting **endangered shark species, falsifying licenses & documentation, espionage & reconnaissance activities, seizing territories, generating a lot of sea waste**, and violating **EEZs** of other nations.

China's illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU)



Figure: China ranks top in the IUU fishing index

2021 rank	rank change from 2019	country
↑↓	↑↓	↑↓
#1	- 0	China
#2	↑ 2	Russia
#3	↑ 34	Korea (Rep. South)
#4	↑ 6	Somalia
#5	↑ 2	Yemen
#6	↓ -4	Taiwan
#7	↑ 24	Ukraine
#8	↑ 53	Eritrea
#9	↑ 16	Egypt
#10	↑ 2	Libya

Figure: China ranked at the top in IUU rankings with no change in the rank from previous rankings (Credits: [IUU Fishing Index](#))

⁴ The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, also called the Law of the Sea Convention or the Law of the Sea Treaty, is an international agreement that establishes a legal framework for all marine and maritime activities. It has over 170 member states including China.

China has been ranked number one on various parameters of **illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU) rankings**. Over **60% of its vessels are involved in IUU fishing worldwide**, according to the IUU rankings report 2021.

Tuesday Reitano the Deputy Director of Global Initiative made the following observations:

“IUU fishing is also often found to be associated with many other forms of transnational organized crime, such as human trafficking, drug trafficking and piracy, not to mention the exploitation of weak and corrupt elements of national management regimes.”

Modus Operandi

Captains of Chinese DWF ships **disable their transponders** while engaging in illicit fishing to avoid being watched in sensitive areas. It has been observed that the **automatic identification systems (AIS)** aboard **these ships suffer transmission pauses of at least eight hours near the EEZ of other countries**.

Types of Chinese vessels and their routes

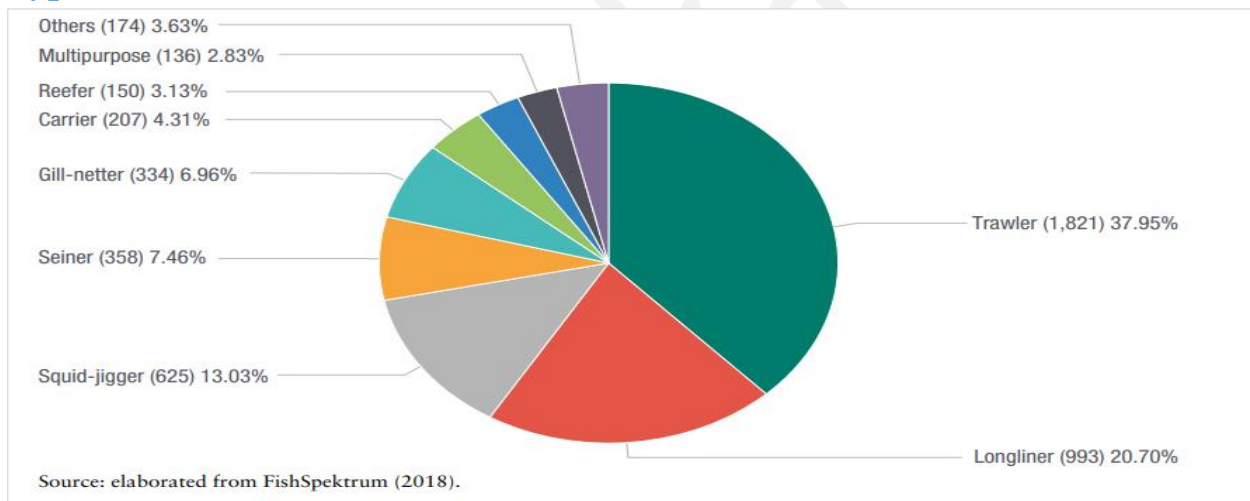


Figure: The most used Chinese DWF vessels (sample size: 4798)

Chinese Trawlers

Ij-Reportika tracked prominent **Chinese Trawlers**⁵ and plotted them on a map using **Global Fishing Watch** (founded by Oceana, Skytruth, and Google). We observed that these Trawlers did **bottom-trawling**⁶ mostly outside their EEZ, close to countries of **Africa, South America, Russia**, and littoral states of the **Indian Ocean, the South & Mid Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean**.


Following are some of the prominent Chinese Trawlers and their routes:

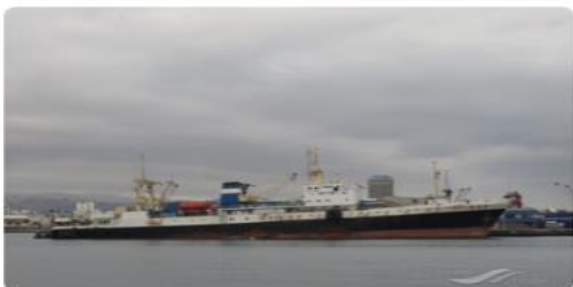
⁵ Trawls are fishing nets that are pulled along the bottom of the sea or in midwater at a specified depth.

⁶ Bottom Trawling is an incredibly destructive method of fishing that involves dragging weighted nets across the seafloor

An Xing Hai

The vessel **AN XING HAI** (IMO: 8724339, MMSI 412200083) is a Fish Factory Ship built in 1987 (35 years old) and currently sailing under the flag of **China**.

POSITION & VOYAGE DATA 




	Dalian, China	
	ATA: Nov 27, 13:00 UTC	ARRIVED
	Predicted ETA	-
	Distance / Time	-
	Course / Speed	118.3° / 0.0 kn
	Current draught	7.8 m
	Navigation Status	-
	Position received	-
	IMO / MMSI	8724339 / 412200083
	Callsign	BALE
	Flag	China

Figure: Details of Chinese Trawler An Xing Hai

Kai Li

The vessel **KAI LI** (IMO: 8607244, MMSI 413236000) is a Fish Factory Ship built in 1989 (33 years old) and currently sailing under the flag of **China**.

POSITION & VOYAGE DATA 



	Destination not available	
	ETA: -	
	Predicted ETA	-
	Distance / Time	-
	Course / Speed	137.6° / 2.7 kn
	Current draught	6.2 m
	Navigation Status	-
	Position received	-
	IMO / MMSI	8607244 / 413236000
	Callsign	BIWV
	Flag	China

Figure: Details of Chinese Trawler Kai Li

Long Teng

The vessel **LONG TENG** (IMO: 8607373, MMSI 412270002) is a Fish Factory Ship built in 1990 (32 years old) and currently sailing under the flag of **China**.

POSITION & VOYAGE DATA 



	48.3	
	ETA: Feb 13, 09:00	
	Predicted ETA	-
	Distance / Time	-
	Course / Speed	214.1° / 10.0 kn
	Current draught	6.2 m
	Navigation Status	-
	Position received	-
	IMO / MMSI	8607373 / 412270002
	Callsign	BZZQ6
	Flag	China

Figure: Details of Chinese Trawler Long Teng

Routes of Chinese Trawlers



Figure: Map depicting the routes of the three prominent Chinese Trawlers from 2019 to 2023

The map above shows the paths taken by **Kai Li**, **An Xing Hai**, and **Long Teng**. Between 2019 and 2023, **Long Teng** fished in **South American waters** while sailing the entire **Pacific Ocean**. Additionally, it traveled via the **Atlantic and Indian Oceans** throughout that time. In the preceding three years, Kai Leng and An Xing Hai engaged in **unrestricted fishing in the EEZs of Japan, South Korea, and Russia**. These are only a few instances of Chinese Trawlers; there are many more of them operating in international waters and other countries' EEZs.

Chinese Long liners

The second most prominent vessels used by China are the Long liners. Long-line fishing or long-lining is a fishing method that involves setting out a large number of short lines **carrying hooks**, which are attached to a longer main line at regular intervals. **Long-line fishing is detrimental to the environment. Chinese Long liners kill a lot of endangered species⁷ as by catch and are also infamous for ghost fishing⁸.**

The Chinese Long liners have a **huge capacity** and **fish hold volume**. China has a significantly larger fleet of Long liners vis-a-vis other major economies.

Following are some of the prominent Chinese Long liners and their routes:

⁷ Longline fishing is a technique where long fishing lines, up to 10 km long, and containing thousands of baited fishing hooks, are floated along the surface of the ocean to catch pelagic fish species such as tuna or marlin. These lines are set in place for many hours to days and left to drift on the ocean to catch their prey. Over this time, however, many other species are both exposed to and attracted to the baited hooks, meaning that longline fisheries are responsible for a large amount of unwanted bycatch. Long-line fisheries have the dubious record of killing larger animals such as seabirds, turtles, sharks and whales. For example, it has been estimated that global longline fisheries kill somewhere between 160,000 – 320,000 seabirds annually. Most of it are by the Chinese Long liners.

⁸ This is when the fishing gear is lost and not collected by the fishermen, allowing it to float around the world's oceans indiscriminately catching and killing marine life. For longlines it is easy to see how this can occur, as the lines are kilometres long and can be lost when other ships run over the lines, cutting them and separating them from the marker buoys so the fishermen cannot find them again.

Chang Rong 3



Information	Dimensions/Technical characteristics
IATTC #: 15274 Flag: China Gear: Longline Port of registration: Qin Huang Dao Registration #: (Ji)Chuandeng(Ji)(2014)FT-200086 OMI #: 8947204 Call sign: BZYC9 Year built: 1998 Shipyard:	Length (m): 50.8 - Type of Length Unknown Beam (m): 9 Depth (m): 3.96 Fish hold volume (m3): 631 Confirmation date: Carrying capacity (t): Gross tonnage (t): 625 Engine power (HP): 1176

Contact

Owner(s) [registered]: Zhong Yu Global Seafood Corporation
Business Address: 7th Building 19 Block 18, 188 West Road South, 4th Ring Road, Fengtai District, Beijing, China

Figure: Details of Chinese Long Liner Chang Rong 3

Dong Yu 1518



Information	Dimensions/Technical characteristics
IATTC #: 14719 Flag: China Gear: Longline Port of registration: Zhoushan Registration #: (Zhe)Chuandeng(Ji)(2019)FT-200066 OMI #: 8668523 Call sign: BZ7VK Year built: 2012 Shipyard:	Length (m): 40.67 - Type of Length Unknown Beam (m): 7.2 Depth (m): 3.7 Fish hold volume (m3): Confirmation date: Carrying capacity (t): 150 Gross tonnage (t): 345 Engine power (HP): 936

Contact

Owner(s) [registered]: Zhejiang Xingpeng Ocean Fishery Company, Ltd.
Business Address: Room 503 5F Building 1, No. 1 Xingye Road, Ganlan Town, Dinghai District, Zhoushan, Zhejiang, China

Figure: Details of Chinese Long Liner Dong Yu 1518

Fu Yuan Yu 017



Information	Dimensions/Technical characteristics
IATTC #: 15532 Flag: China Gear: Longline Port of registration: Registration #: (Min)ChuanDeng(Ji)(2013)FT-200031 OMI #: Call sign: BZU1D Year built: Shipyard:	Length (m): 44.74 - Length Registered Beam (m): 8.3 Depth (m): 4.6 Fish hold volume (m3): 757 Confirmation date: Carrying capacity (t): 379 Gross tonnage (t): 482 Engine power (HP): 1267

Contact

Owner(s) [registered]: Fujian Changfeng Fishery Company, Ltd.

Business Address: Jiacheng C-1005, Liuyi Road 28, Fuzhou, China

Figure: Details of Chinese Long Liner Fu Yuan Yu 017

Lu Qing Yuan Yu



Information	Dimensions/Technical characteristics
IATTC #: 15636 Flag: China Gear: Longline Port of registration: Registration #: (Lu)Chuangdeng(Ji)(2019)FT-200020 OMI #: 9748502 Call sign: BZYX2 Year built: Shipyard:	Length (m): 51.2 - Type of Length Unknown Beam (m): 9.1 Depth (m): 3.95 Fish hold volume (m3): 631 Confirmation date: Carrying capacity (t): 410 Gross tonnage (t): 698 Engine power (HP): 1599

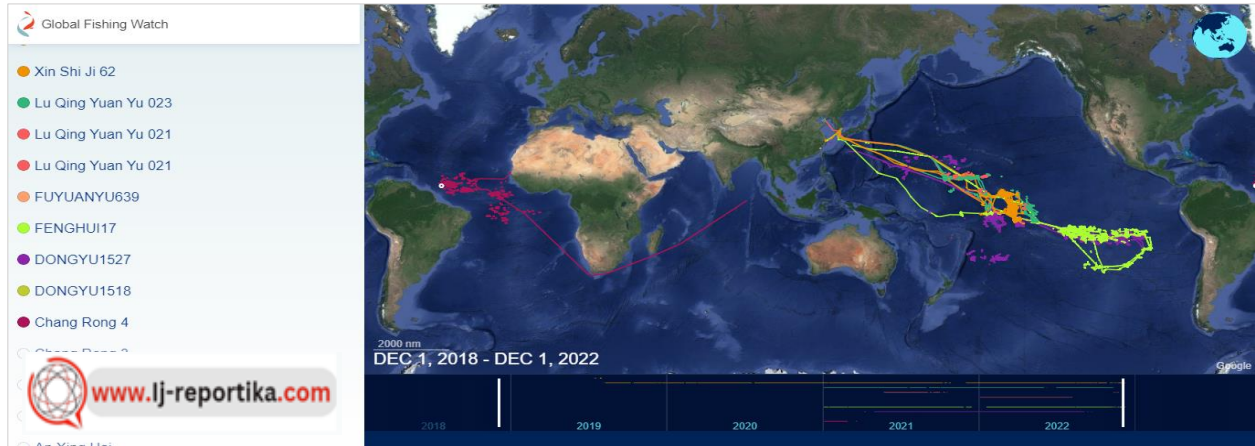
Contact

Owner(s) [registered]: Qingdao Furui Fisheries Company, Ltd.

Business Address: 2-1502 No. 19 Fuzhou Nan Road, Qingdao, China

Figure: Details of Chinese Long Liner Chang Rong 3

Routes of Chinese Long liners



Map depicting the routes of the Chinese Long liners from 2018 to 2022

The Pacific Ocean is where the Long liners, such as **Chang Rong 3, Dong Yu 1518, Fu Yuan Yu 017, and Lu Qing Yuan Yu**, primarily fished. However, they were active in all of the world's major oceans. For instance, **Lu Qing Yuan Yu 023** increased its fishing activities in the mid-Atlantic Ocean in 2022 and was engaged around the EEZ of West African countries and Brazil throughout the year.

Activities of prominent Chinese fishing vessels

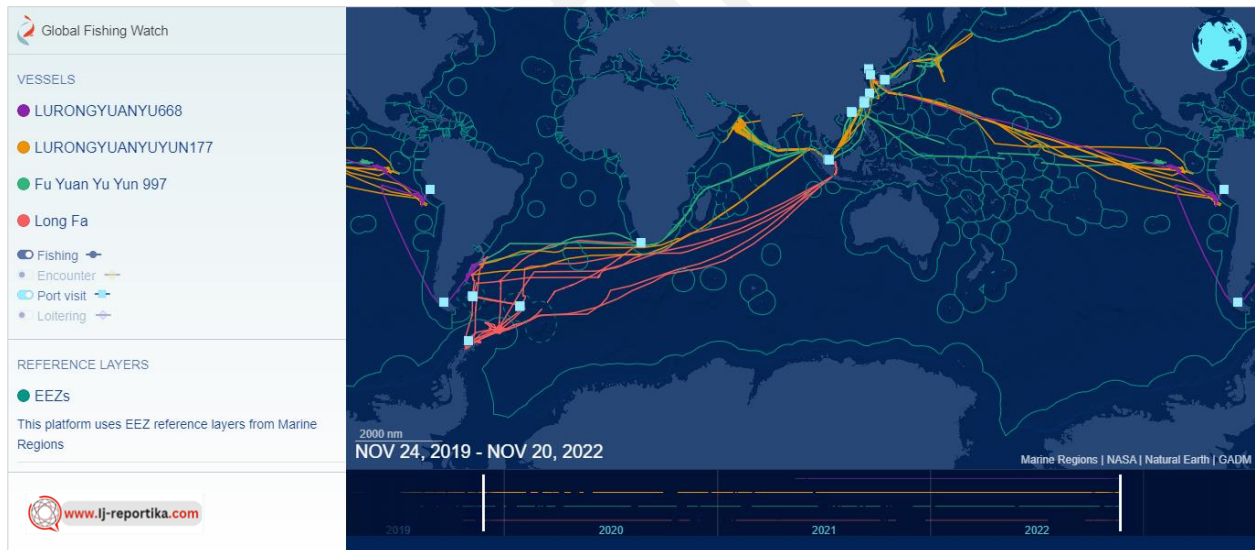


Figure: Routes of prominent Chinese fishing vessels from 2019 to 2022

This map depicts the fishing routes followed by some of the **prominent fishing vessels** of China in the world's oceans. It can be seen that fishing is not restricted to the Chinese EEZ, but has proliferated to the EEZ of several countries in the Indian Ocean Region, Africa, South America, Russia, and Oceania. **We have marked the EEZs of other countries in the above map to highlight the gross violations of the EEZs of other countries by the Chinese vessels.**

Chinese activity around Africa

China's DWF has expanded rapidly, particularly off the coast of **West Africa**. The **Gulf of Guinea** waters along the coasts of **West and Central Africa** has long been a target of **China's DWF**.

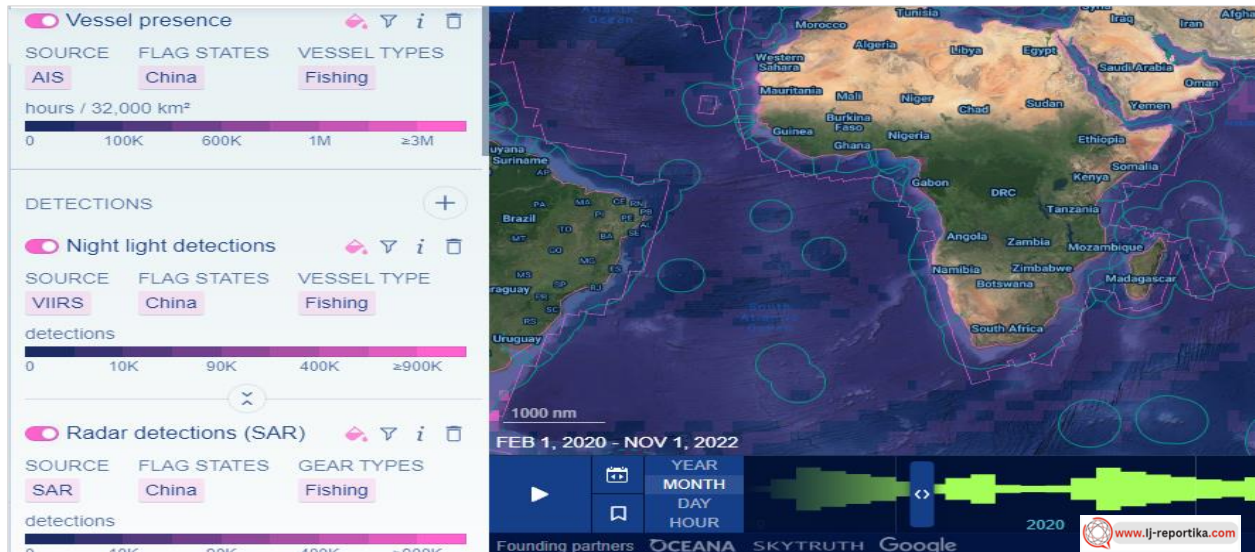


Figure: Map depicting the intensity of Chinese fishing around Africa from 2020-2022

The map above depicts the presence of **Chinese Fishing Vessels** all around Africa in the last two years, in the **South Atlantic Sea, Southern Ocean, and Indian Ocean**. The Chinese DWF is **omnipresent** in the region. It is disturbing that the **pink color** used for depicting Chinese DWF on the map has **overshadowed the ocean's blue color**.

Chinese fleets are notorious for engaging in **illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Nigeria**, according to a recent study by the **Hoover Institution**, a think tank at **Stanford University**. The study looked at the impact of China's DWF on these nations. Analysts estimate that **40% to 60%** of the fish in the entire region is illegally captured.

Concerning **Africa, 20% of the global IUU catch** comes from just **six West African countries (Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and Sierra Leone)**. The opportunity cost⁹ of IUU activities to the economies of these six countries is **\$2.3 billion a year and 300,000 jobs** (Daniels et al., 2016 Belhabib,2017).

⁹ Opportunity cost is the potential forgone profit from a missed opportunity—the result of choosing one alternative and forgoing another.



Figure: Map depicting distance from China to West Africa

The West African countries are far away from China's ports. The distance is over **19,000km**, and it is **not economical for a country to travel thus far for fishing only**. Our on-ground reporters reported that **smuggling fentanyl from China and wildlife products for Traditional Chinese Medicines from Africa to China** is also done via this route using DWF.

China is the main economic competitor for **G7** countries across **Africa**, and its influence in the region is such that government officials declined to respond to interview requests by **Ij-Reportika** at the mere mention of China.

Ij-Reportika, in this exclusive report, presents the regions in Africa exploited the most by Chinese DWF.

Note: We have covered the Chinese activities in the East African Nations with the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Western Sahara

This region has seen a **massive gain** in fishing activity in the past three years. Most prominent fishing regions in the **West of Africa (Mid-Atlantic Ocean)** are depleting due to **disproportionate fishing activity**. Thus, China is veering its DWF to the **North-West of Africa**. In 2022, China fished for over a million hours in the Western Sahara EEZ. The European Union also has its fishing fleet in Western Sahara competing for fish with its Chinese counterparts.

In the competition, the loser is always the local communities of **Western Sahara**.

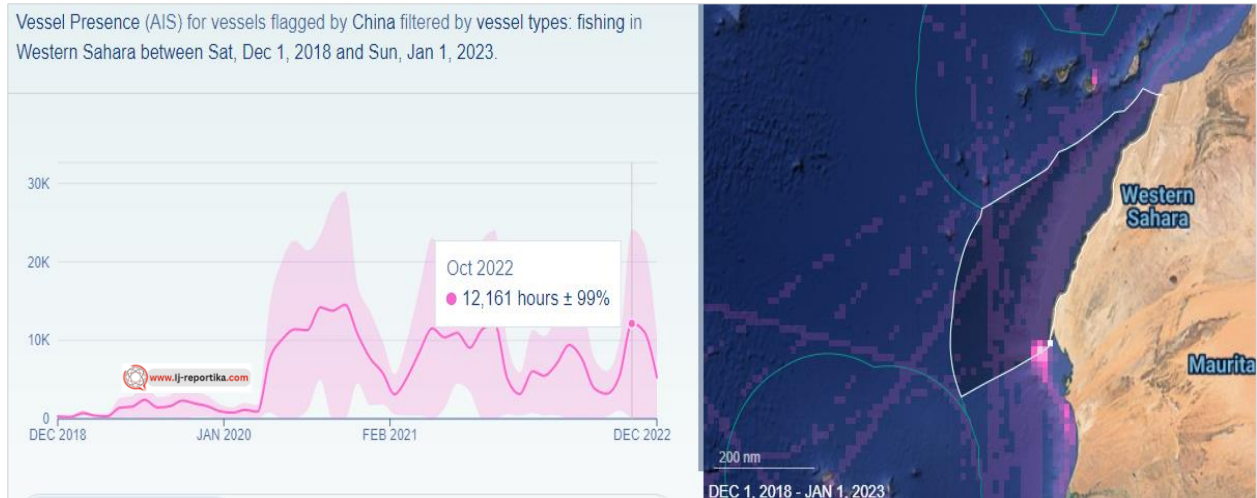


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Dec 2018 to Jan 2023

In the **small EEZ of Western Sahara**, the Chinese fishing vessels fished for **over half a million hours** with the Chinese flag and another **700K hours in a dubious manner**, according to the local media reports accessed by Ij-Reportika.

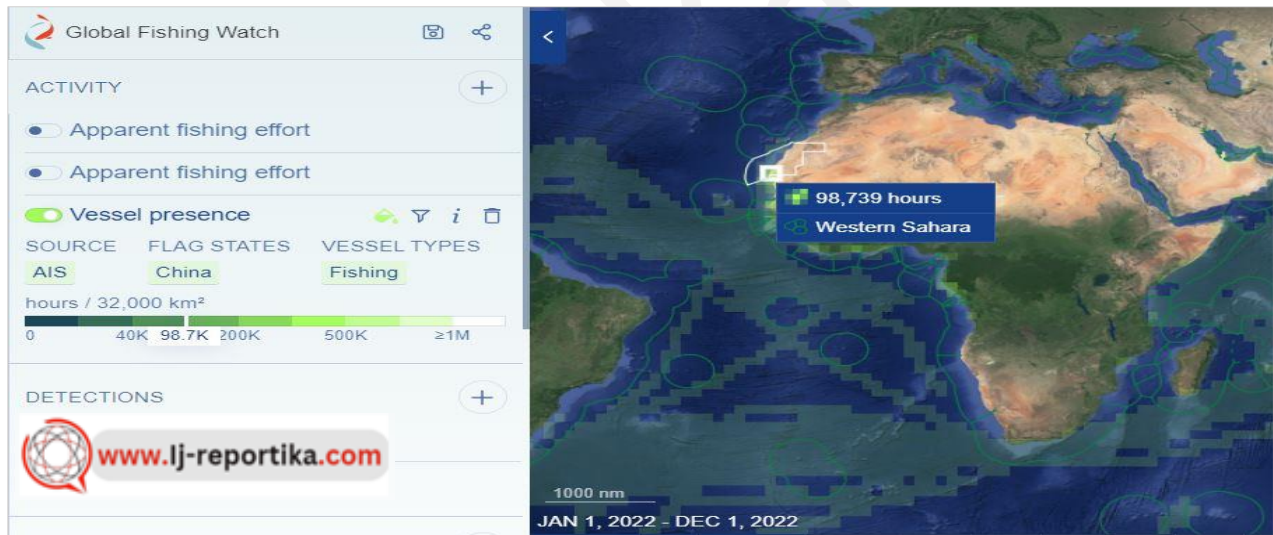


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Western Sahara in 2022

Note: We inspected the presence of **Chinese vessels** in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the **EEZ of several countries** and **plotted** the hours on the map. **The actual hours of fishing would be much higher in the entire EEZs of these countries.**

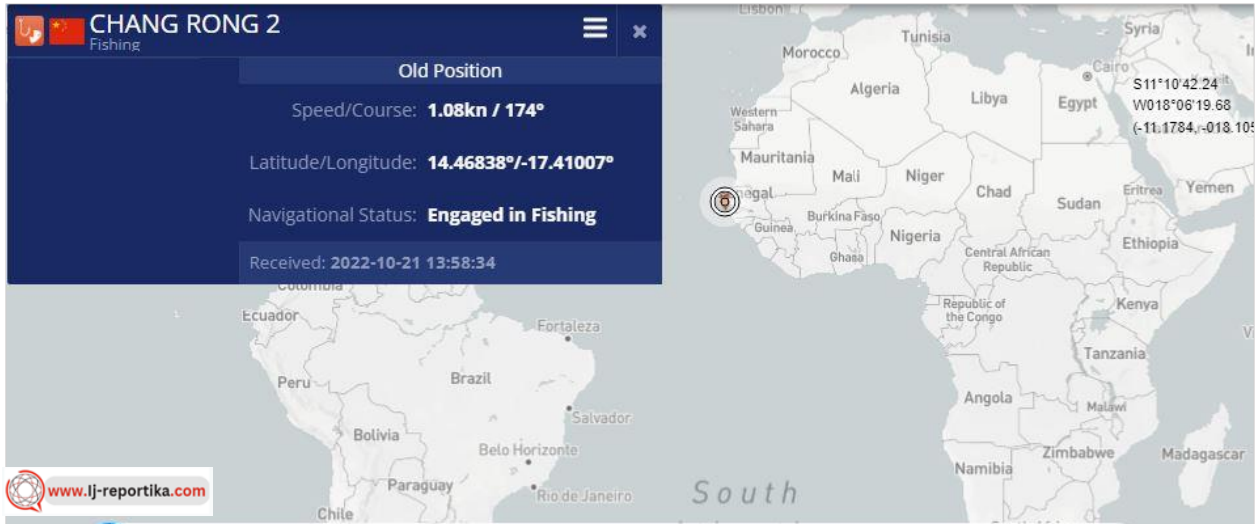


Figure: Map depicting live locations of Chinese fishing vessels near Western Sahara (In October 2022)

Cameroon

The region saw a presence of a large number of **Chinese Trawlers** with **thousands of fishing hours despite the smaller size of its EEZ**. Fishing off the coast of Cameroon is regulated by law to allow both **small and large-scale** operators to carry out their activities without conflicts. The Chinese Trawlers are not allowed to carry out activities closer than **3nm from the coast**, because this area is **reserved only for artisanal or local fishermen**.

Yet these **local Cameroon fishermen** have been accusing Chinese DWF and the Chinese fishermen for the past six years of sweeping all contents in the water including **fingerlings** without mercy, be it ‘Awacha’, Mossubu, Trong Kanda, Crab or Njenga. ([Types of fishes popular in Cameroon](#)).

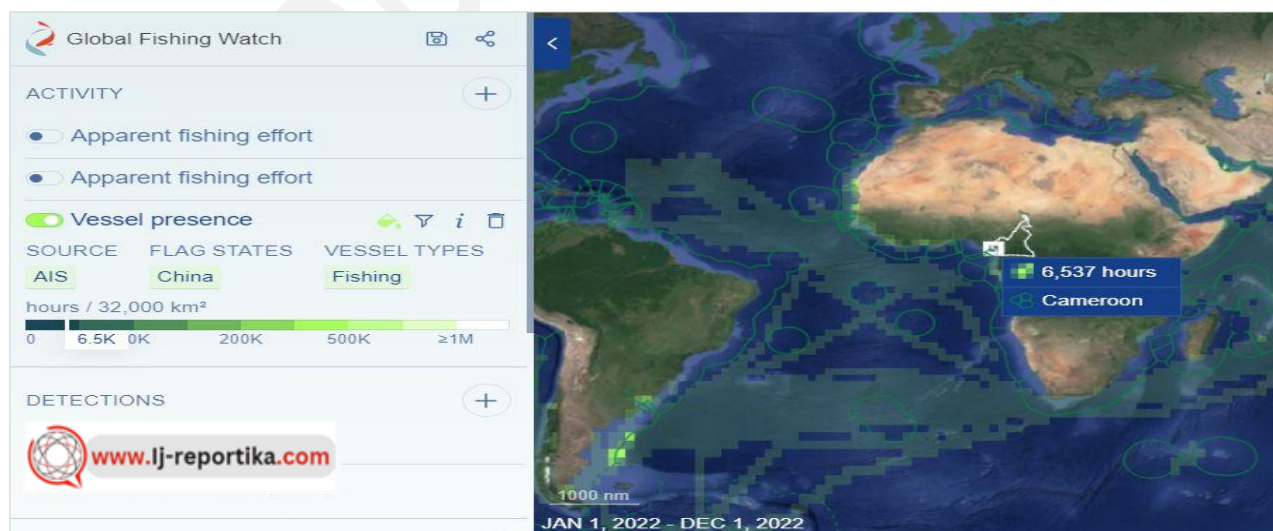


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Cameroon

The **Chinese Trawlers** were identified by **Ij-Reportika** within the stipulated 3nm from the land boundary in the year 2022.

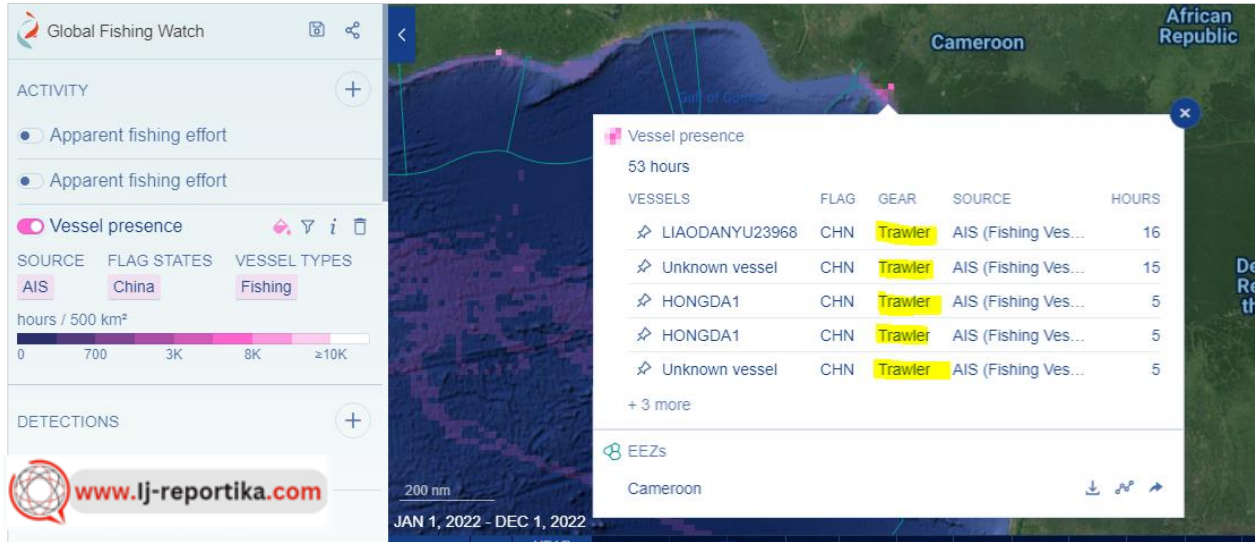


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Gabon

In 2021, many Chinese Trawlers were arrested after the **Minister of Fisheries in Gabon** declared a **crackdown on Illegal Fishing by the Trawlers**. Despite this, Ij-Reportika was able to map the presence of **Chinese Trawlers at the land boundary of Gabon all around the year 2022**.

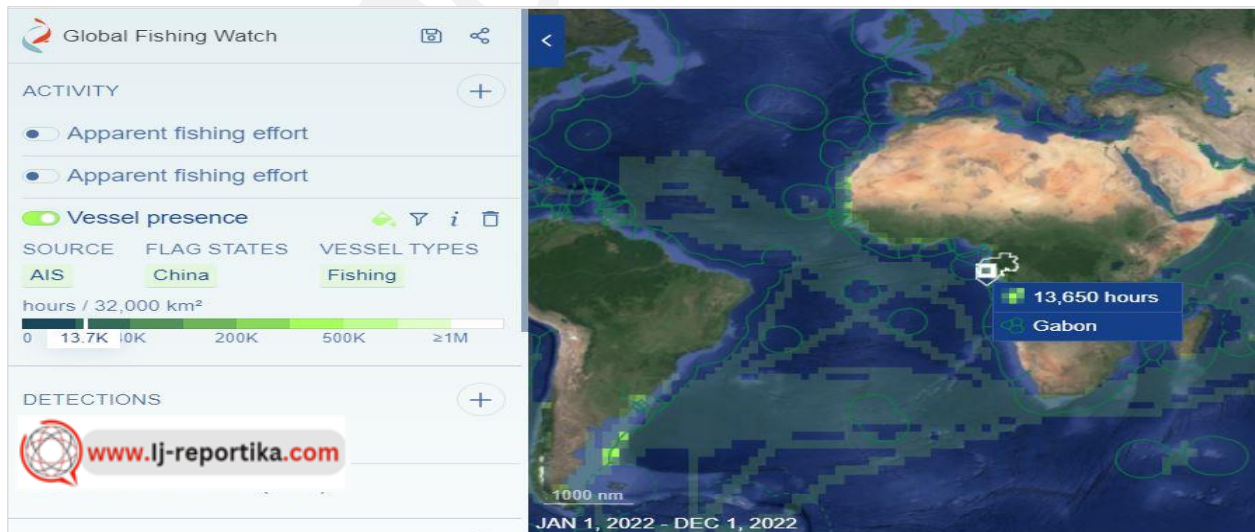


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Gabon

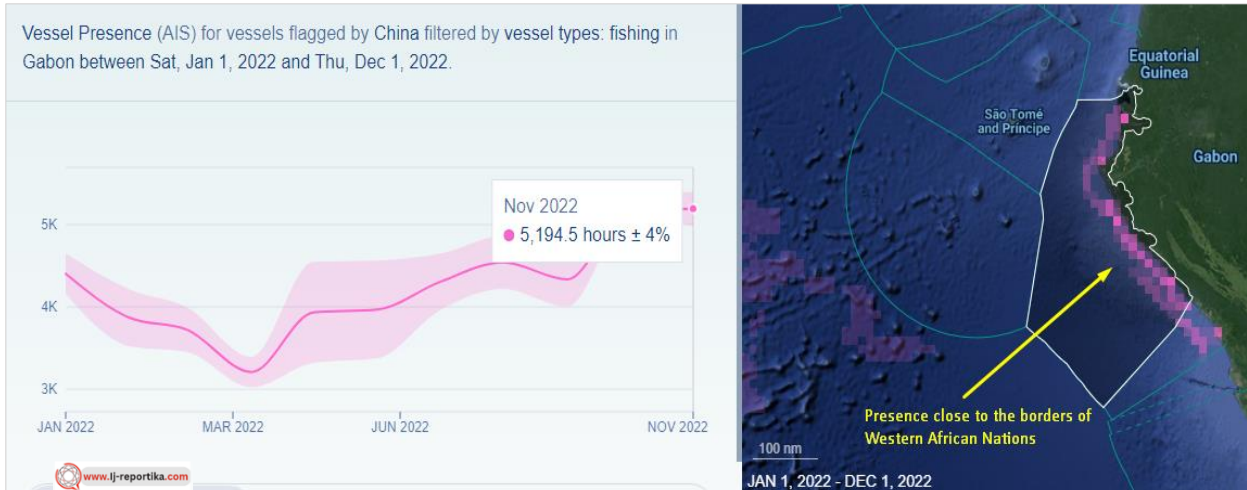


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Dec 2022

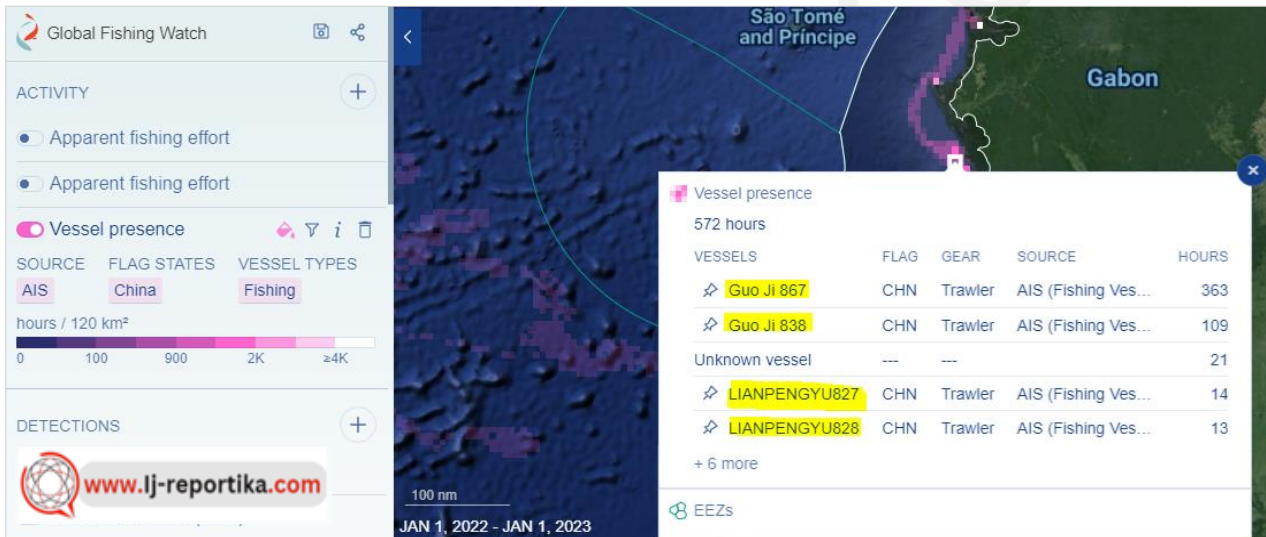


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Guinea

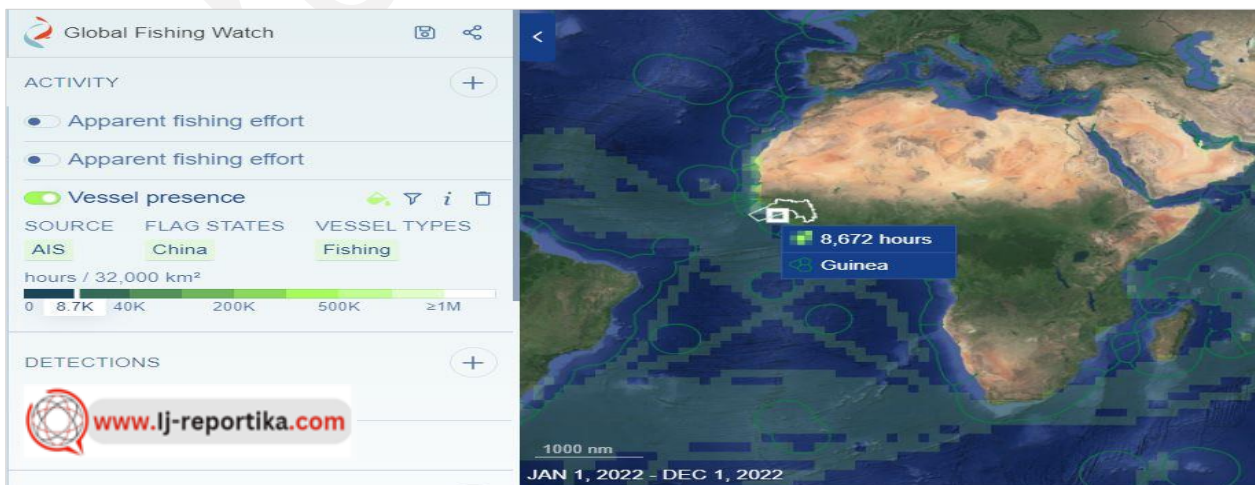


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Guinea

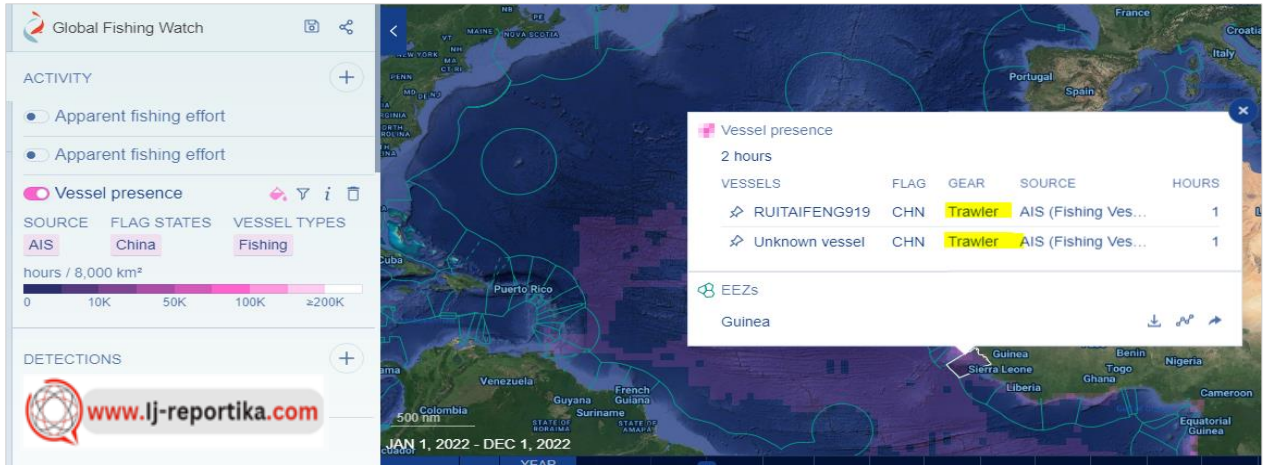


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Guinea Bissau

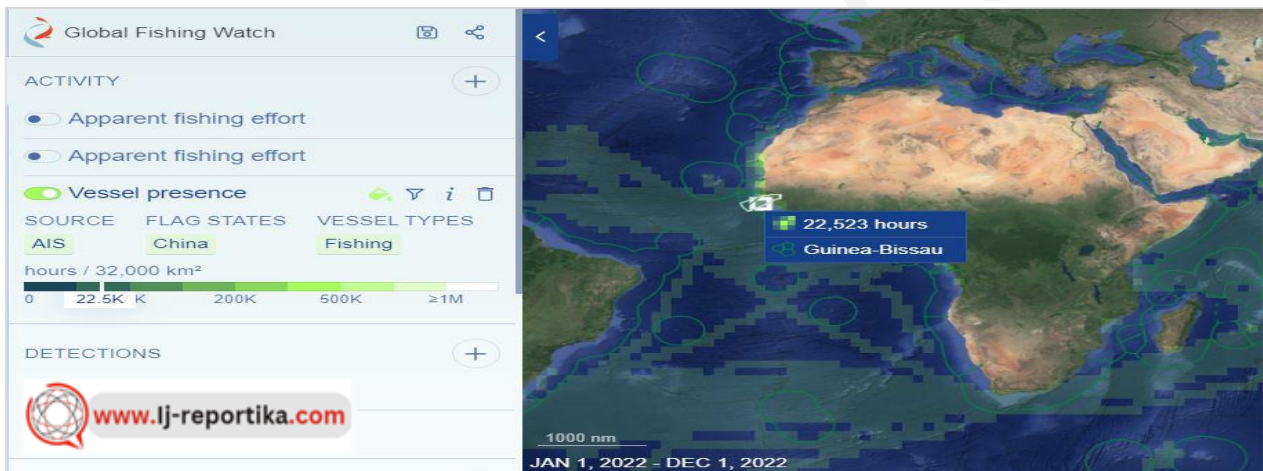


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Guinea Bissau

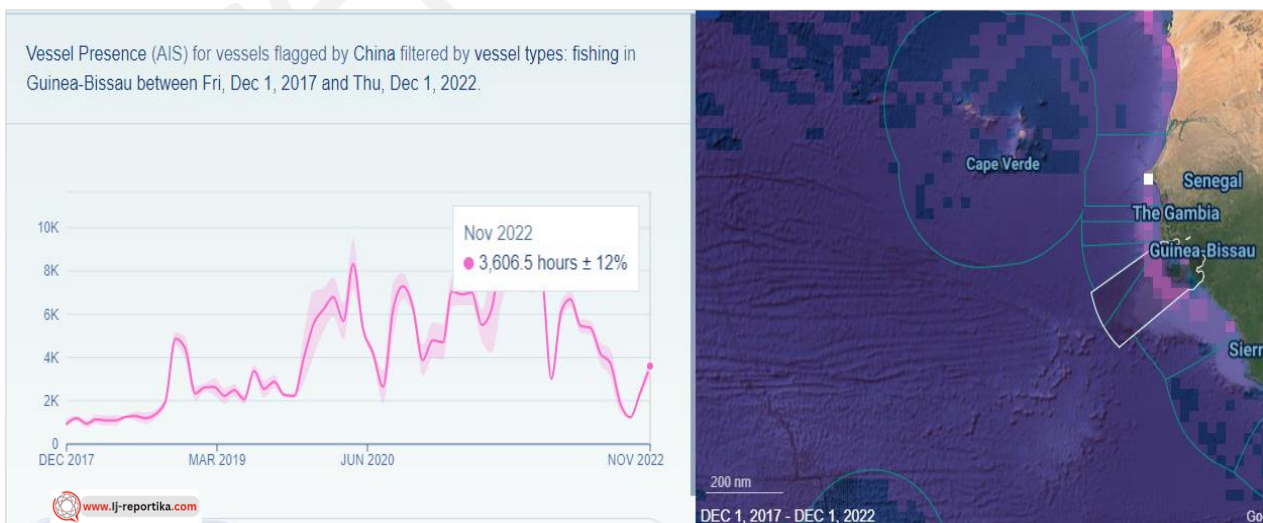


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Dec 2017 to Dec 2022

South Africa

South African EEZ is both **the transit route** of the Chinese DWF to South America **and rich fishing ground**. A large presence of Squid Jiggers¹⁰ in the EEZ of South Africa has been observed this year. Six Chinese Trawlers were detected entering the **South African Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the Northern Cape coast on 3 April 2020**, after being ordered out of Namibian waters by the Namibian authorities. **The Chinese fishing Trawlers were detained and issued with fines after they had entered South African waters without the required permission.**

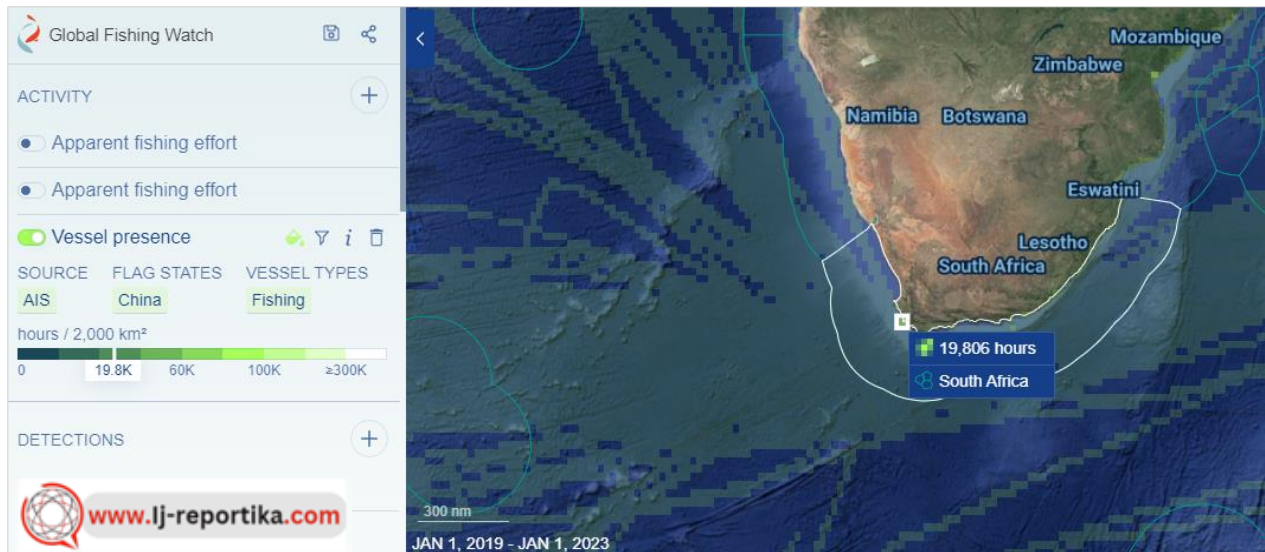


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of South Africa

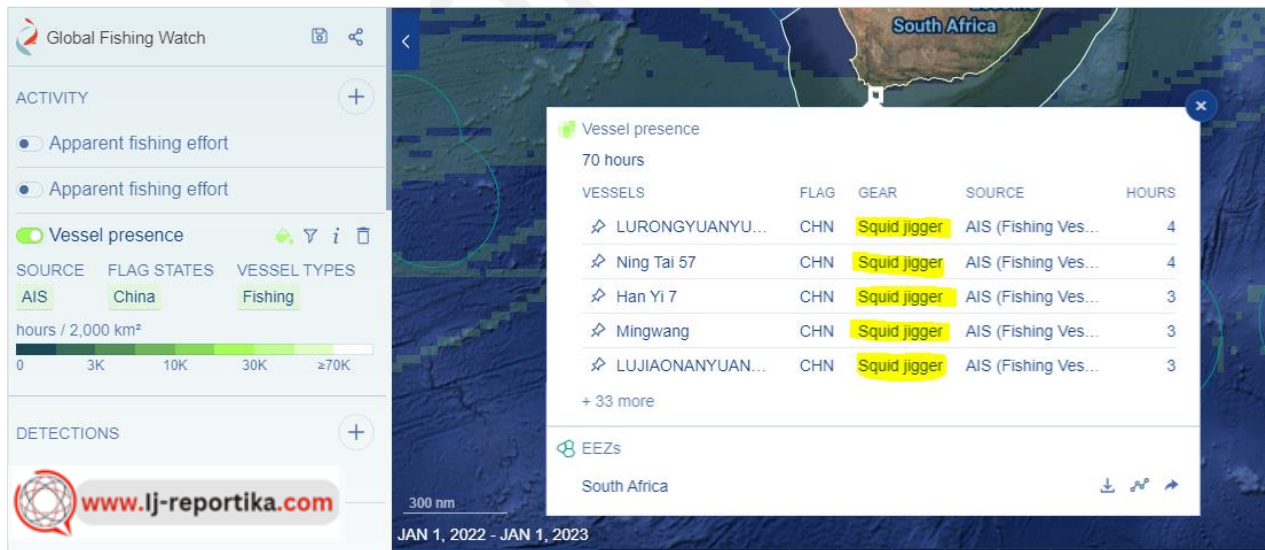


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

¹⁰ Specialized fishing vessels to attract and catch Squids. A Squid is any of more than 300 species of 10-armed mollusks constituting the cephalopod order Teuthoidea (or Teuthida). They are found in coastal and as well as oceanic waters. Squids may be swift swimmers or part of the drifting sea life.

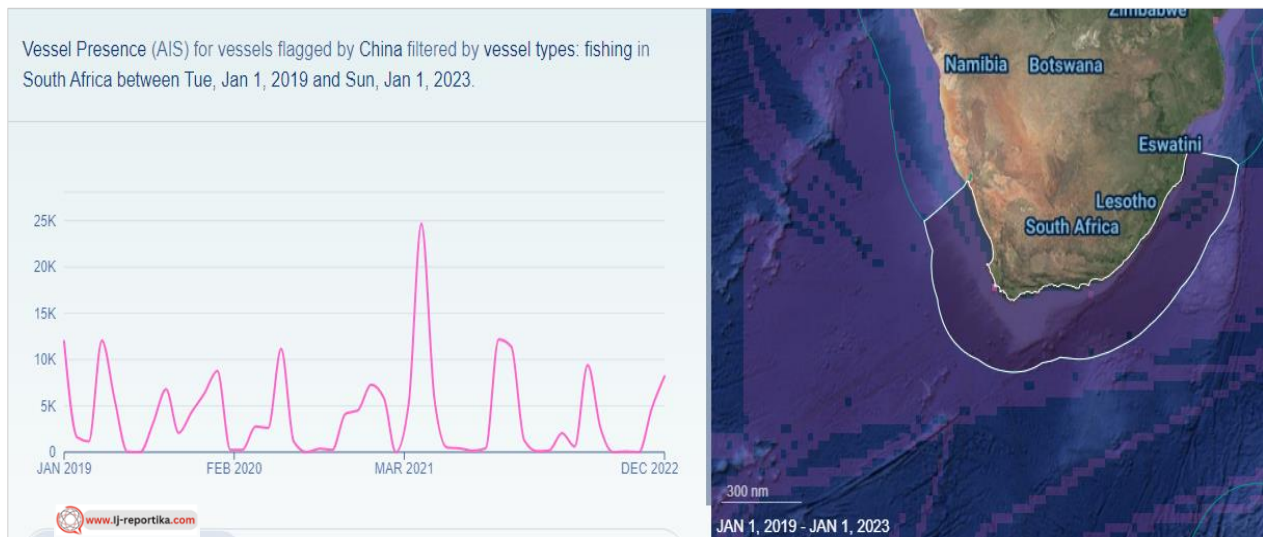


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2019 to Jan 2023

Ghana

The **fishing activity in Ghana EEZ** is declining, and so does the **health of the marine area** and the number of fishes in the region. China is widely involved in **Ghana’s commercial fishing through opaque arrangements**. Although accurate data is unobtainable, research and interviews estimate that 80-95% of the Trawlers operating in Ghana have links with Chinese interests (Penney et al., 2017) (EJF, 2018).

In **Ghana**, a group of **fishers/collectors** known as “**Saiko**” has emerged as an informal means of transshipment, selling bycatch caught by **Chinese Trawlers** to the local markets and artisanal fishers. An estimated 1,00,000 tons of fish are traded through this system, which has been criticized by **traditional fishers of Ghana for long**. (Penney et al., 2017).

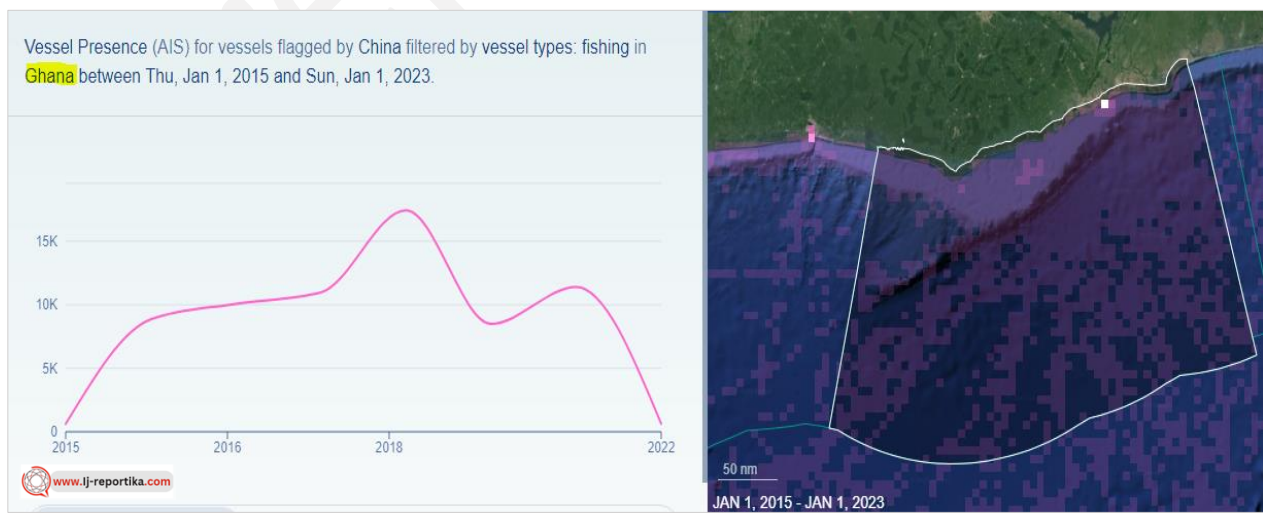


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2015 to Jan 2023

Ivory Coast

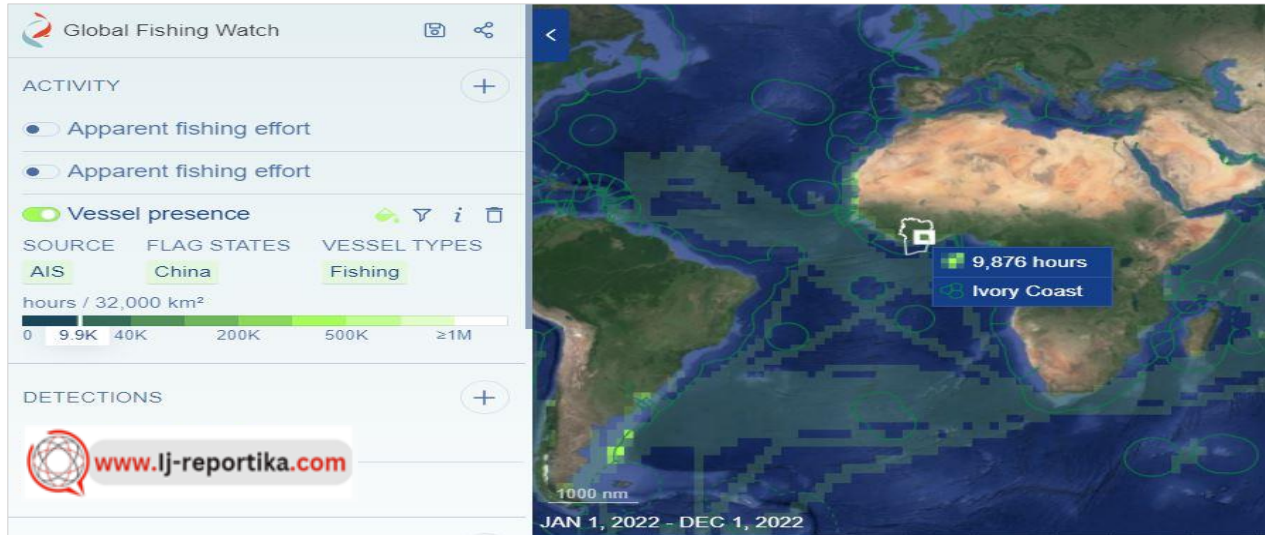


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Ivory Coast

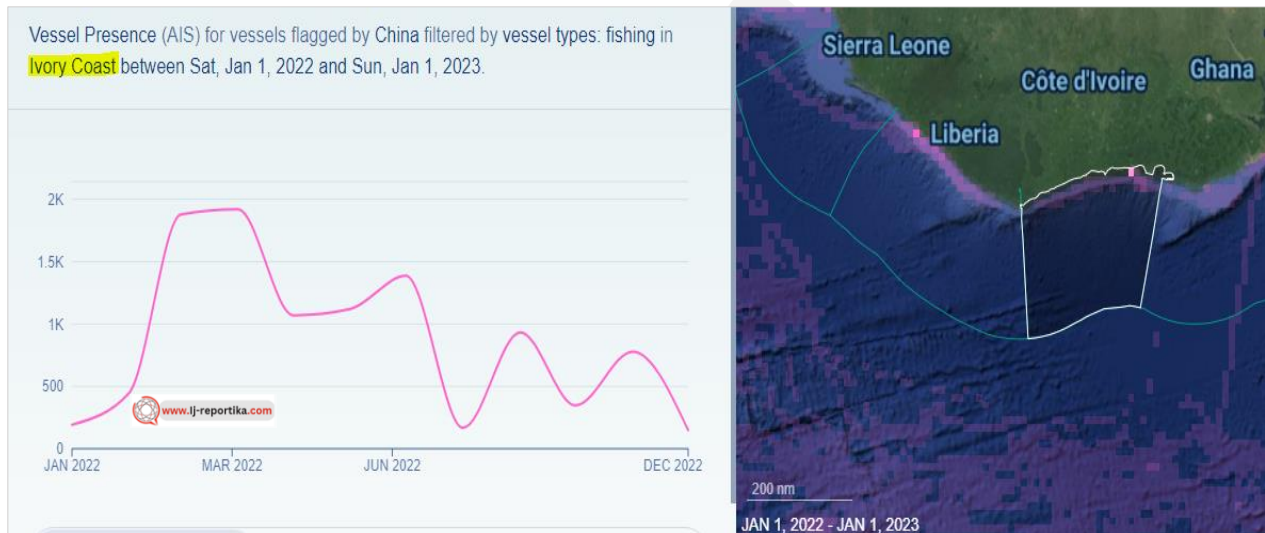


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

Mauritania

Mauritania is suffering from Chinese incursions and aggressive fishing vessels since 2018. **In 2020, three Mauritanian artisanal fishermen died when their boat was struck by a large Chinese Trawler.** The captain of the Chinese vessel was detained but such incidences have instilled fear in the **African fishermen.** Mohammedan Obeidat, vice president of a traditional fishing group, accused the Chinese Trawler of deliberately striking the Mauritanian boat because the Chinese vessel had turned off its lights and Automated Identification System (AIS) in the early morning darkness.

The number of hours of fishing is reaching a **million** despite the smaller EEZ and reportedly more than 2 million hours this year in darkness.

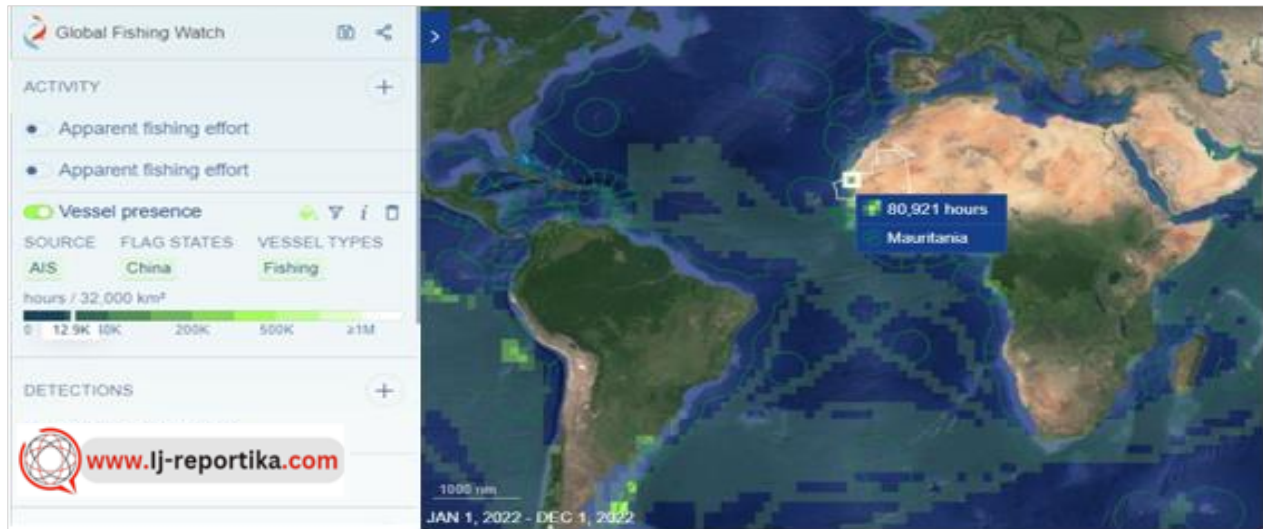


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Mauritania

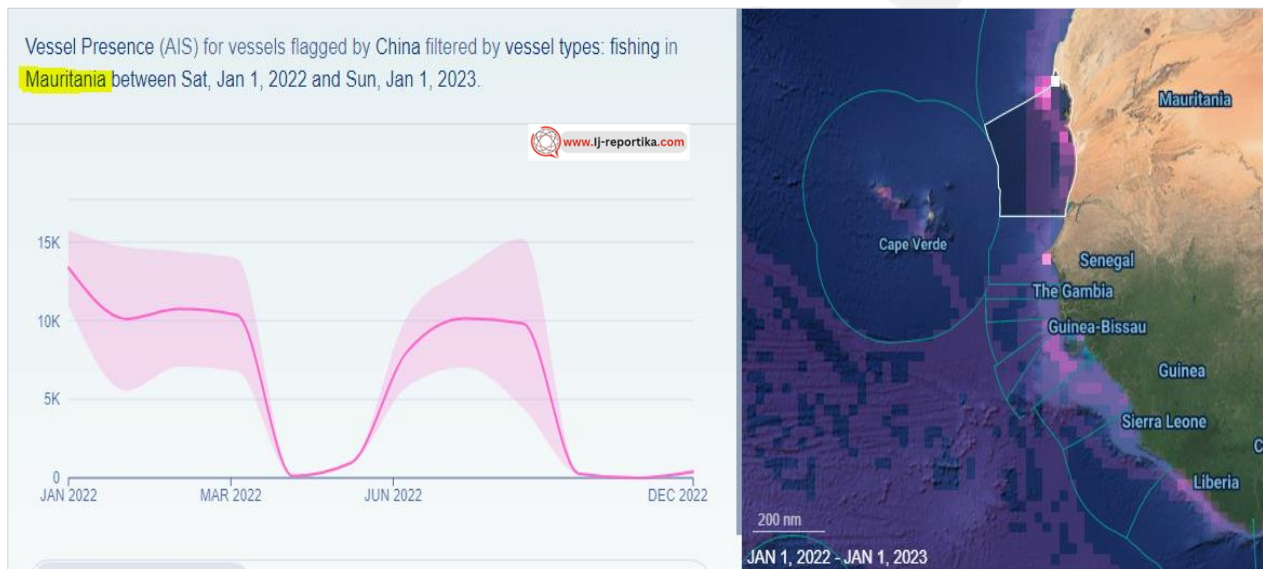


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

Senegal

Senegal's decision to **deny fishing permits to Chinese industrial Trawlers in 2019** marked a **turning point in the region**. Chinese activities have declined since then. However, incursions by Chinese Super Trawlers are getting more frequent and aggressive. Many cases of conflicts between the **fishermen of Senegal** and **Chinese Super Trawlers** have also been reported off late.

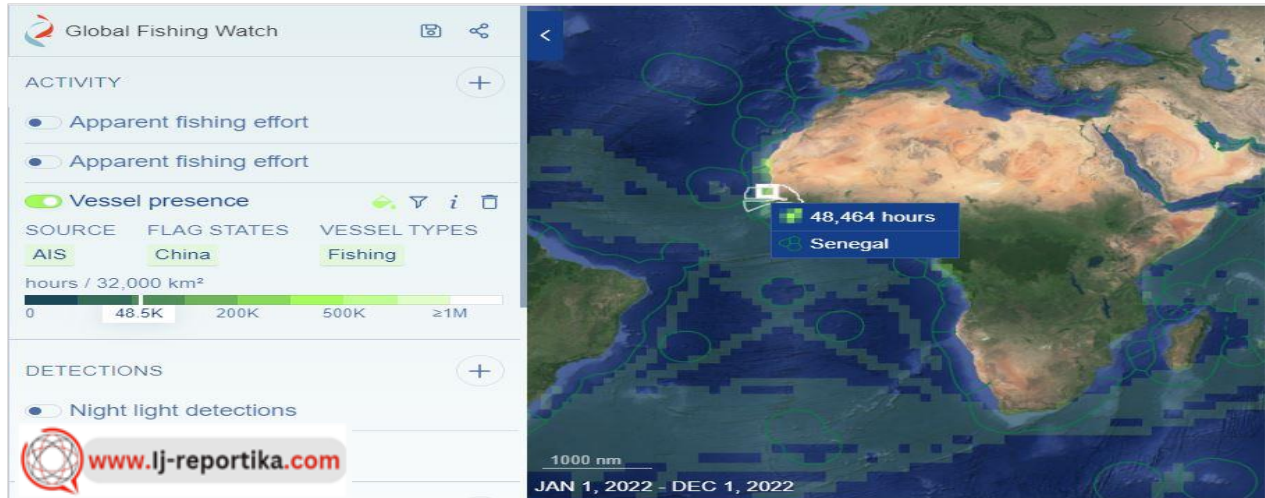


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Senegal

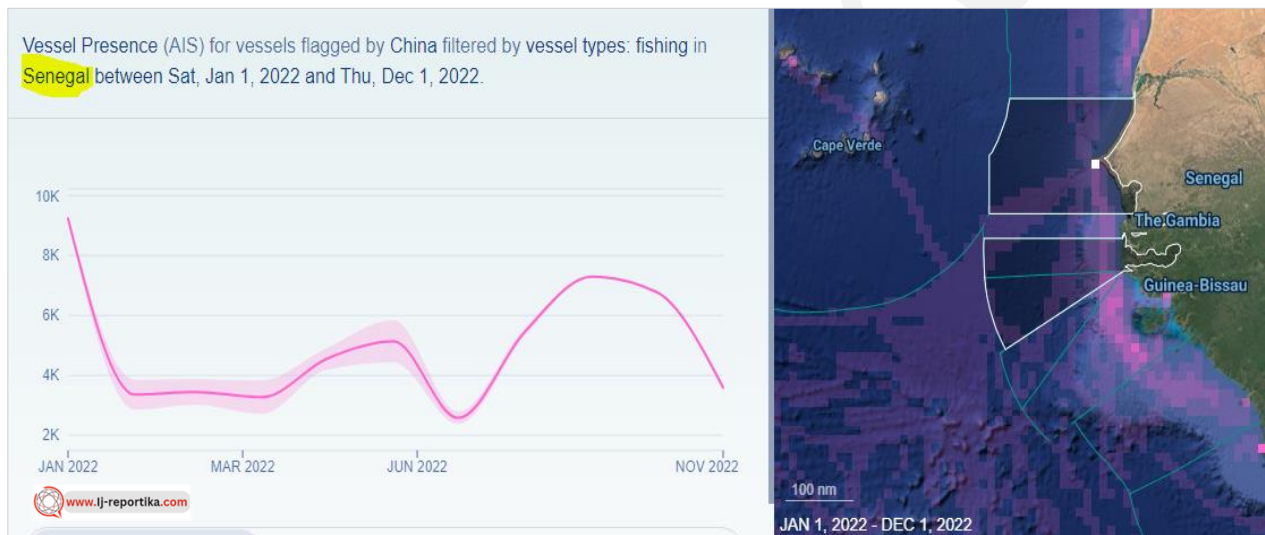


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Dec 2022

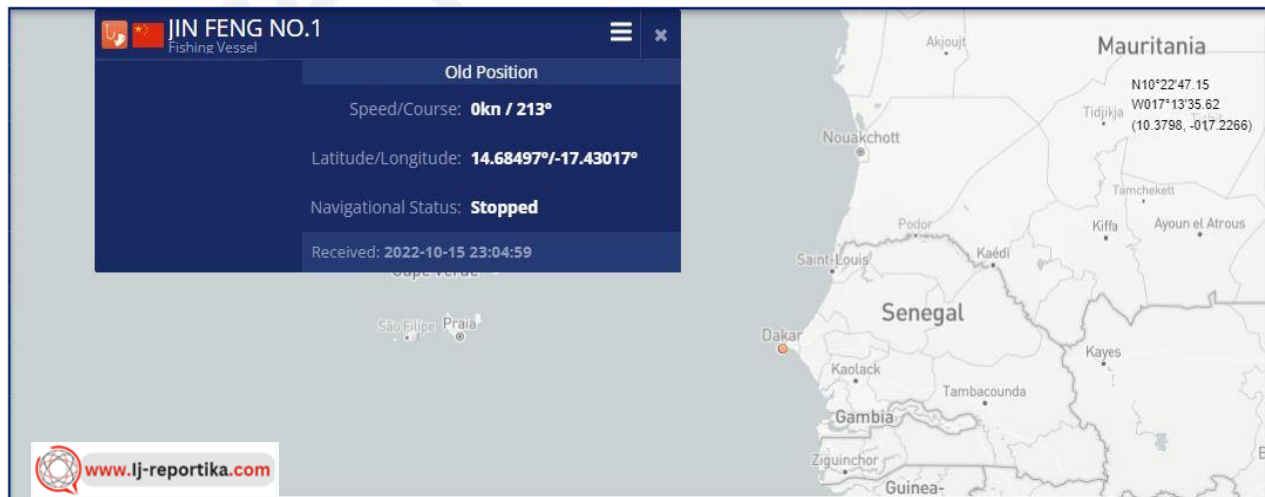


Figure: Map depicting live locations of Chinese fishing vessels near Senegal (In October 2022)

Liberia

The Liberian government has **refused to issue fishing licenses to a fleet of six Chinese-flagged Super Trawlers, safeguarding local livelihoods and food security in late 2020**. The vessels would have been capable of taking **over 12,000 tonnes of fish a year** – nearly twice the nation’s sustainable catch of key species that local fishers depend on.

Liberia’s decision follows Senegal’s refusal to license a fleet of foreign Trawlers earlier in the year. It marks a turning point in the effort to protect West African small-scale fisheries along with their ecosystems.¹¹

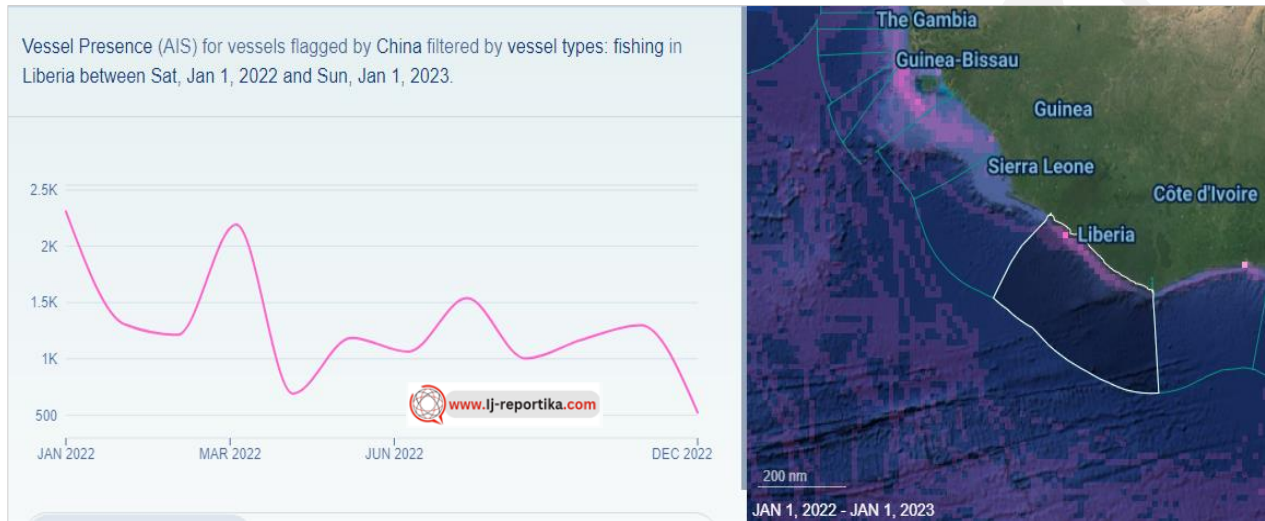


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

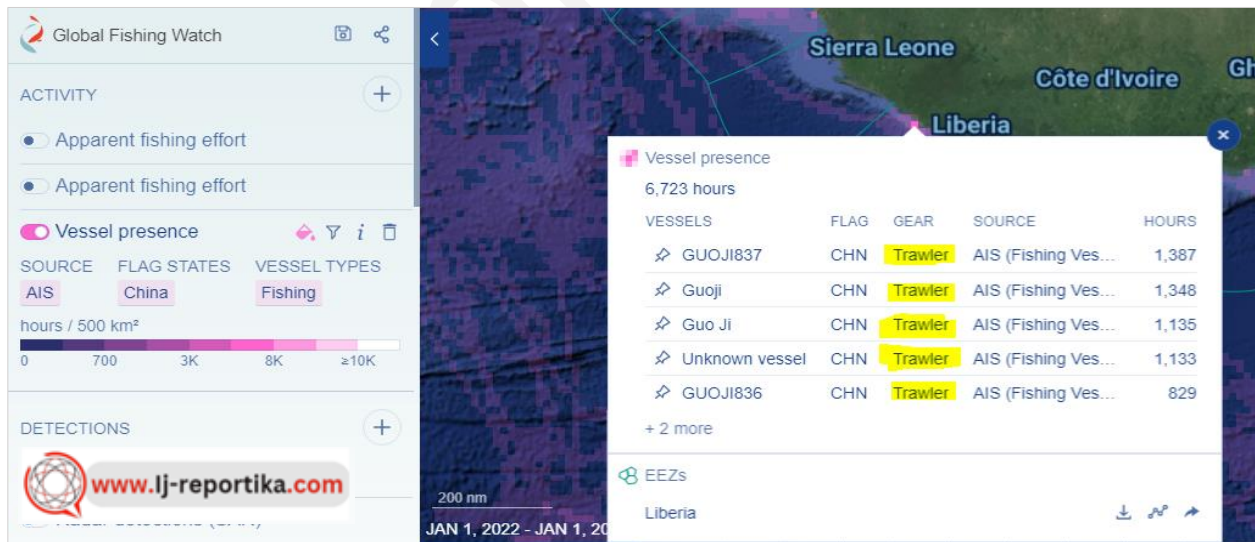


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

¹¹ <https://www.newsafrika.net/world/china-stealing-africa-s-fish>

Sierra Leone

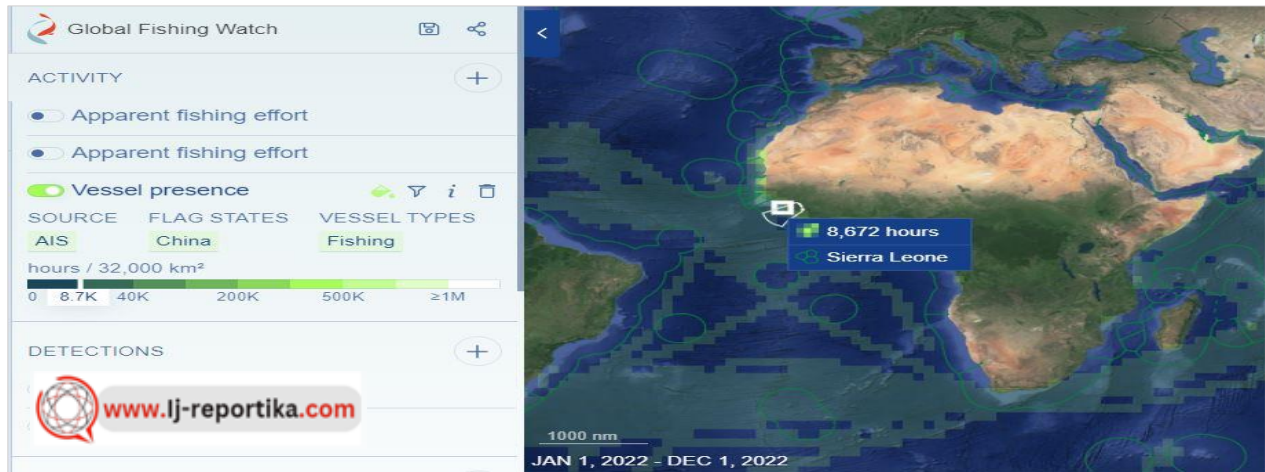


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Sierra Leone

More than 15 Chinese Trawlers were seen within 50nm by locals from the land boundary of Sierra Leone. Ij-Reportika contacted a lot of local fishermen who verified the same.

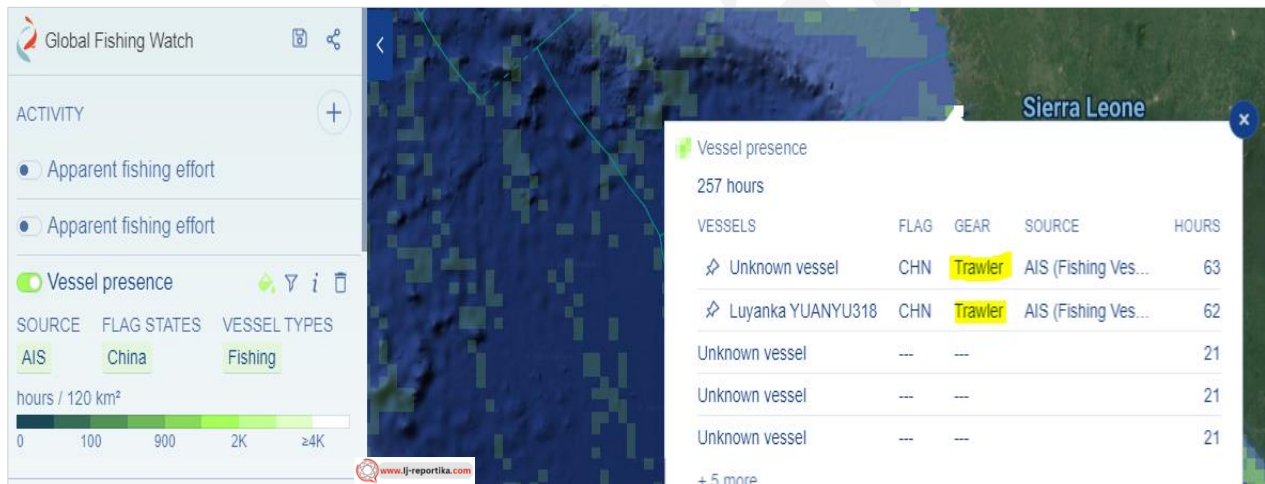


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

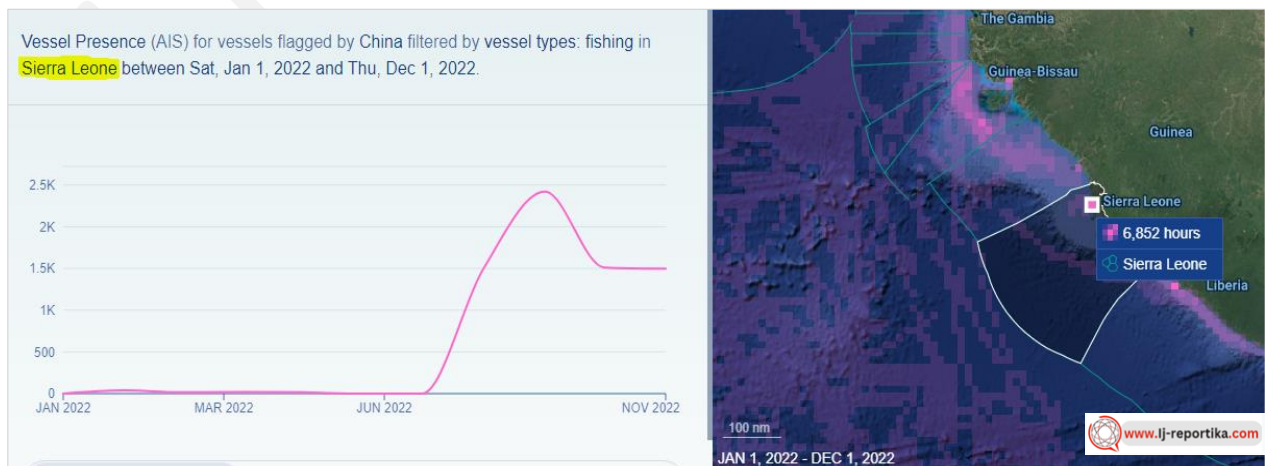


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Dec 2022

Chinese activity in Indian Ocean Region

The Indian Ocean is one of the epicenters of the geopolitics of the contemporary world. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has the presence of many countries like Cocos Keeling (Australia), Reunion (France), Andaman and Nicobar (India), and Diego Garcia (United States/UK/Mauritius). Despite this, the Chinese DWFs have increasingly become a hazard in the region. Most of their illicit stir is in the **Northern Indian Ocean Region**. The activities of the Chinese ships include **illegal fishing, intelligence gathering, espionage, information surveys, and space tracking**.

Recognizing the impact of IUU fishing, which can lead to the **depletion of fish stocks affecting marine ecology, the Quad, comprising India, Australia, Japan, and the U.S., in May 2022** announced a major regional effort under the ambit of **Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)**. It aims to provide a more accurate maritime picture of “near-real-time” activities in the region.

According to various local media reports of **India, Srilanka, Bangladesh, and Maldives**, there is a surge in unregistered Chinese fishing vessels among those operating in the IOR. According to the Indian Navy, they monitored more than **392 Chinese IUU** fishing incidences in the Indian Ocean in 2021 compared to **379 in 2020**. The Navy added that “they monitored more than **200 Chinese fishing vessels** in the Indian Ocean in the first half of this year (2022)”.

Spy ships disguised as fishing boats and research ships are used by the Chinese to spy on assets of other countries, including India’s **Andaman and Nicobar islands**.

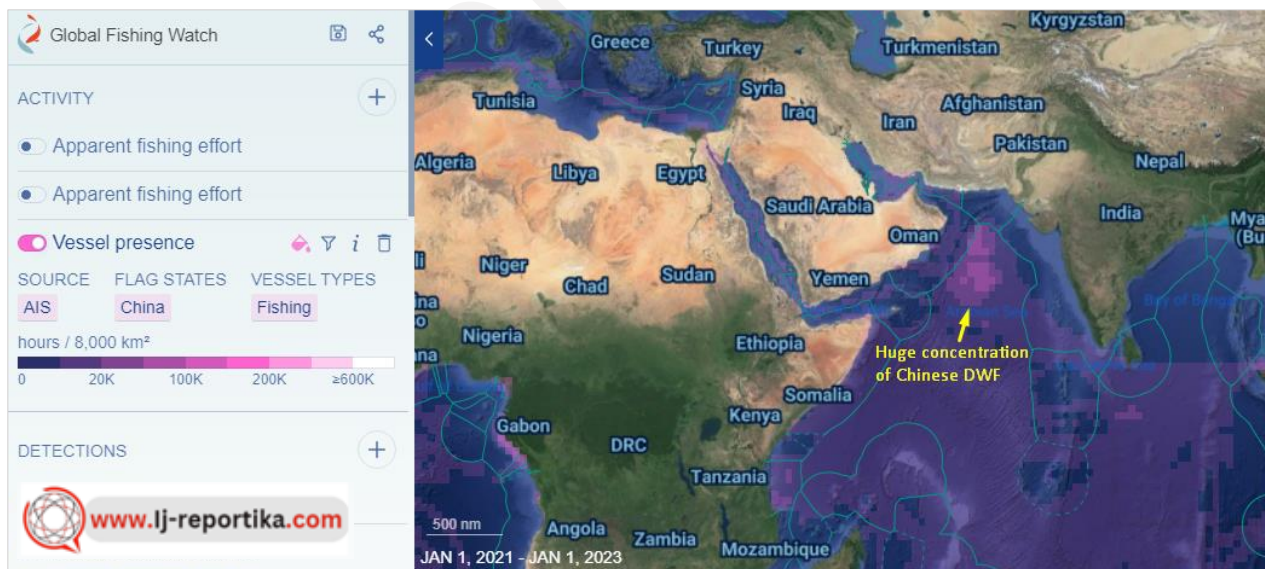


Figure: Map depicting the intensity of Chinese fishing in IOR from 2021-2023

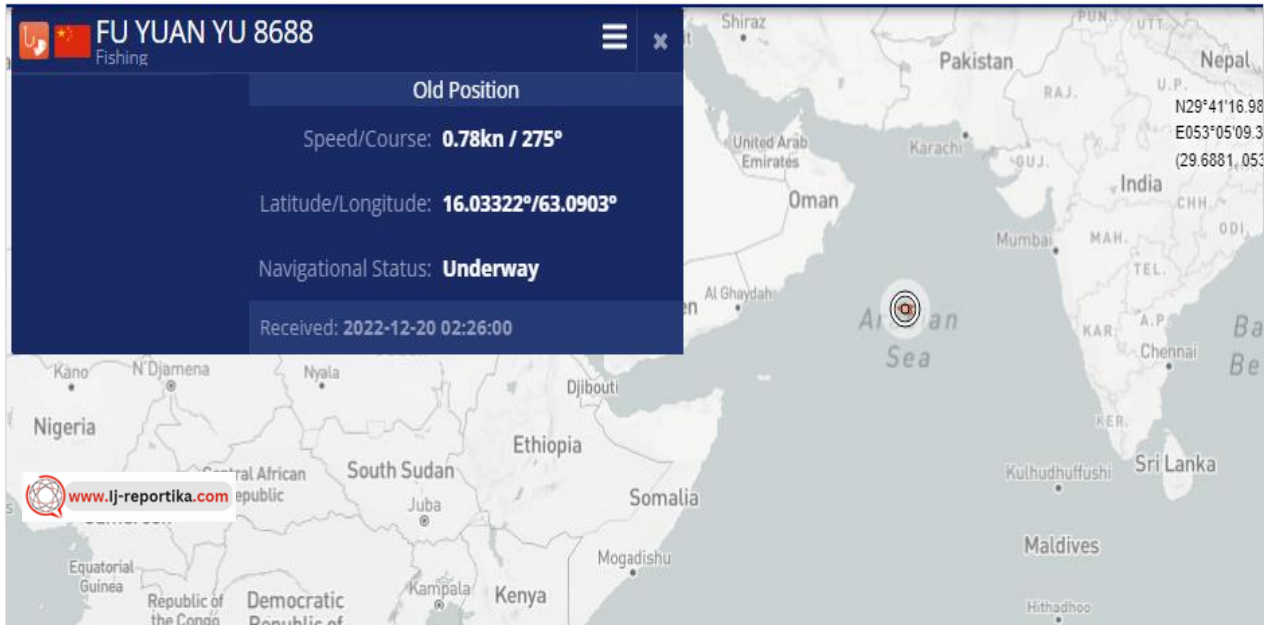


Figure: Map depicting live location of Fu Yuan Yu 8688 in the Arabian Sea (In December 2022)

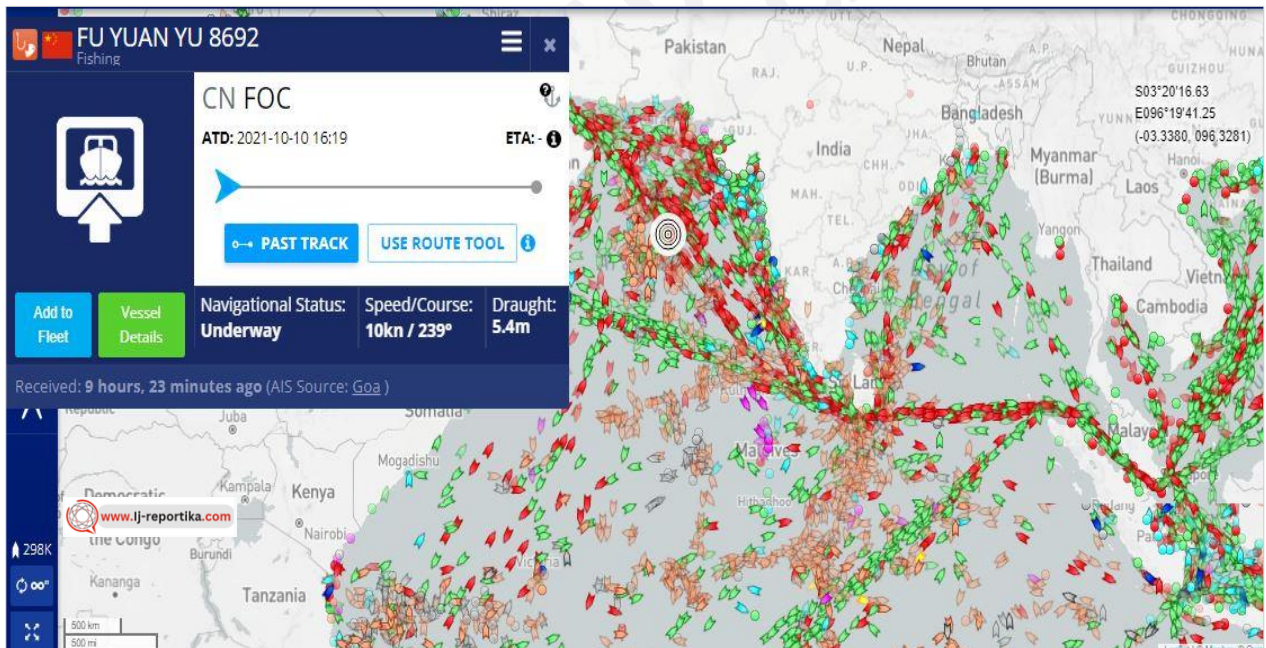


Figure: Map depicting live location of Fu Yuan Yu 8692 in the Arabian Sea (In December 2022)

Pakistan

Pakistan is a significant trading partner and an ally of China. China is developing the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan (CPEC)**. Yet surprisingly, the presence of Chinese DWF in Pakistan's EEZ is minimal and on a downward slope.

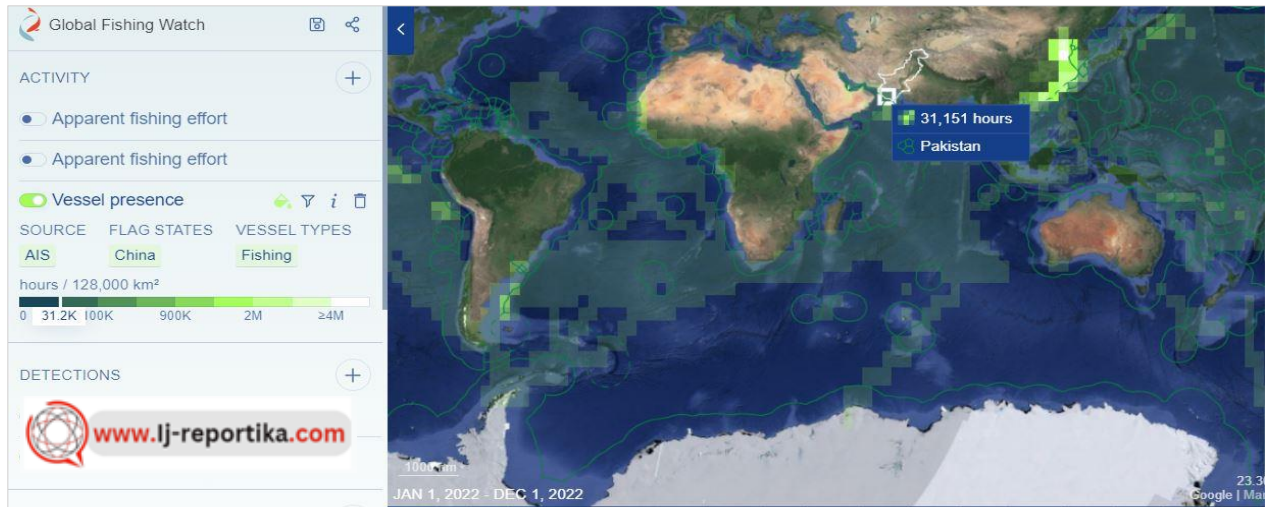


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Pakistan in 2022

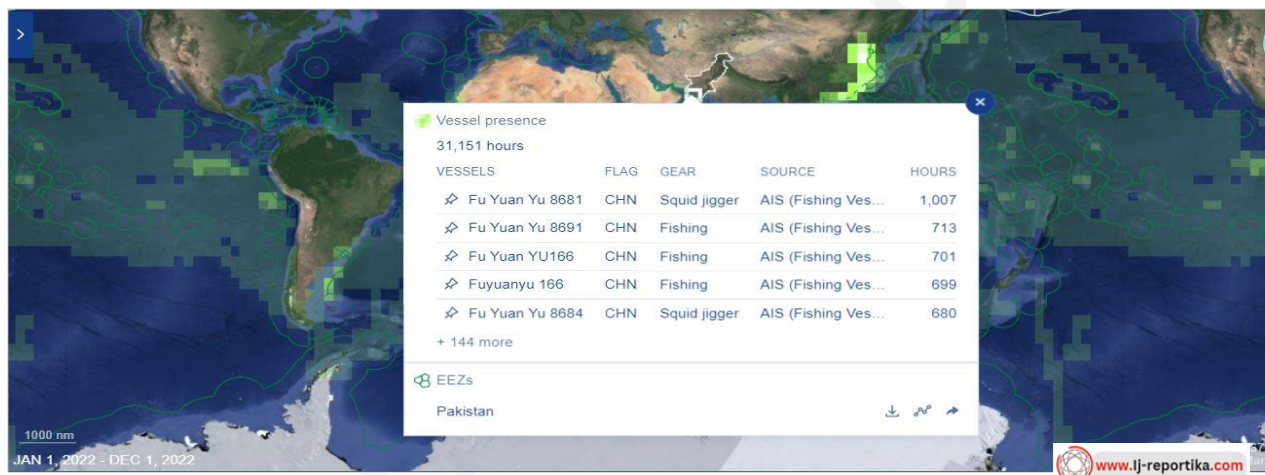


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

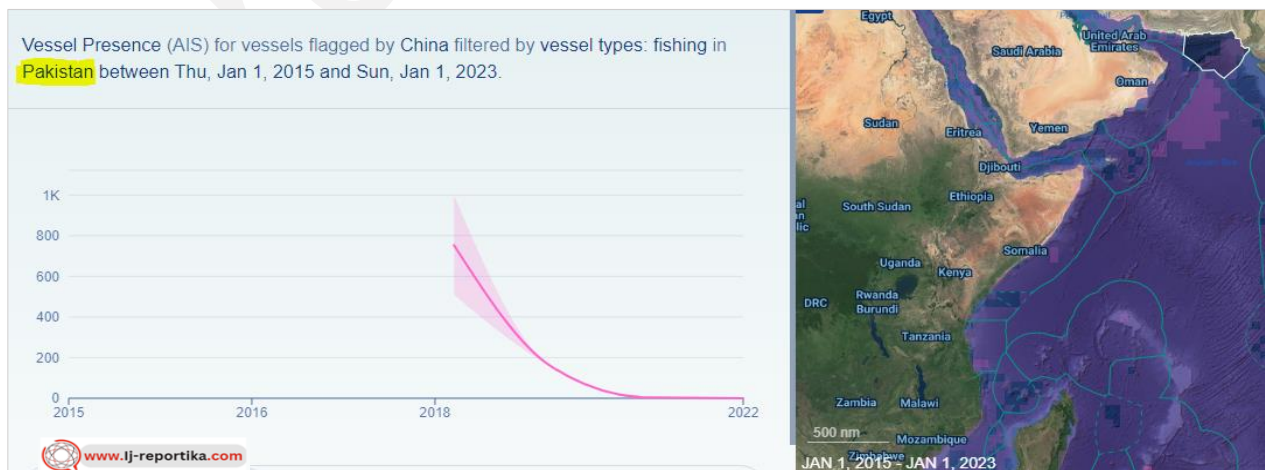


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2015 to Jan 2023

India

India is one of the most prominent countries in the IOR region. The Chinese DWF in the Indian EEZ is **growing** and becoming more **impudent**. It is evident from the number of fishing hours by the **Chinese flagged ships just inside the EEZ of India**, which peaked in **September 2022 with over 5385 hours of fishing**. The most prominent ship around the Indian EEZ was Squid Jigger in 2022.

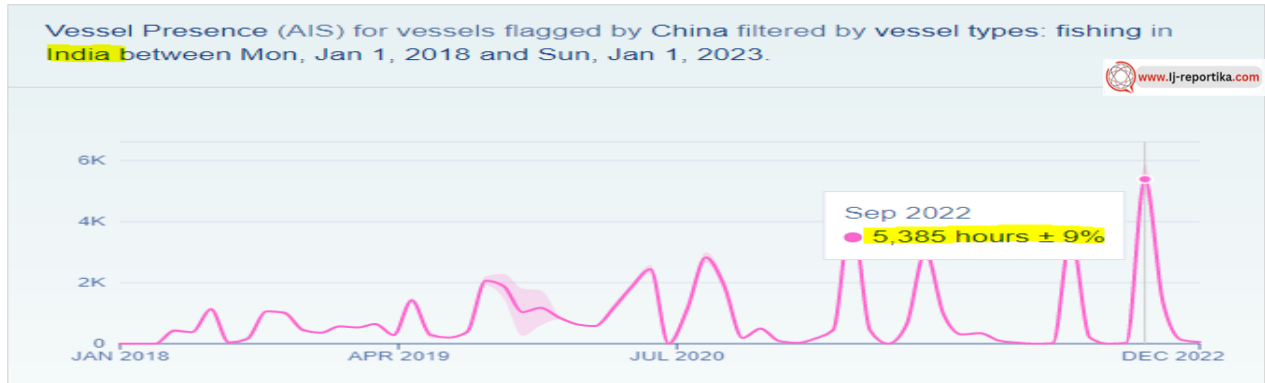


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2018 to Dec 2022

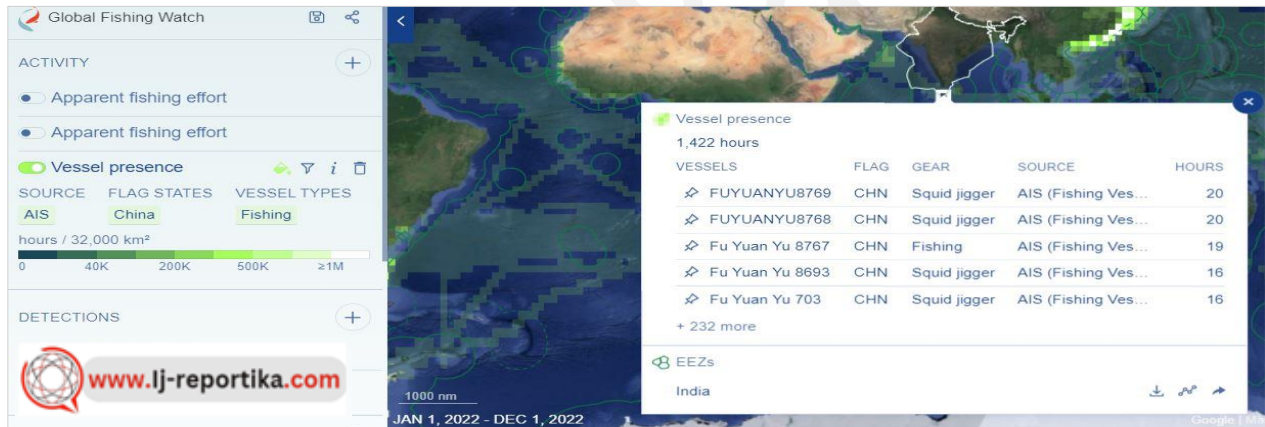


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

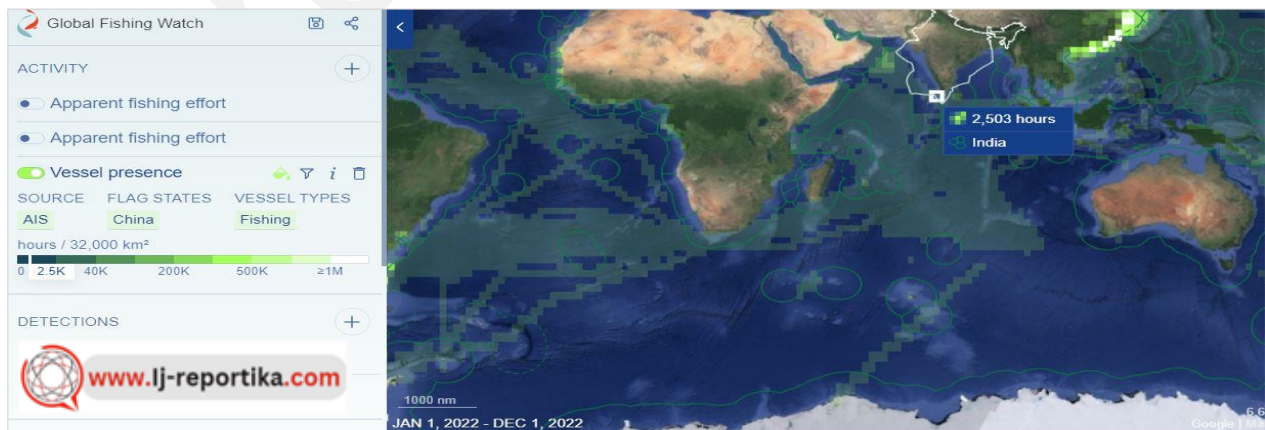


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of India in 2022

In the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India**, the presence of Chinese vessels is increasing as the following data suggest. The **Squid Jiggers and Pole and Line**¹² fishing gear were commonly observed by the locals.

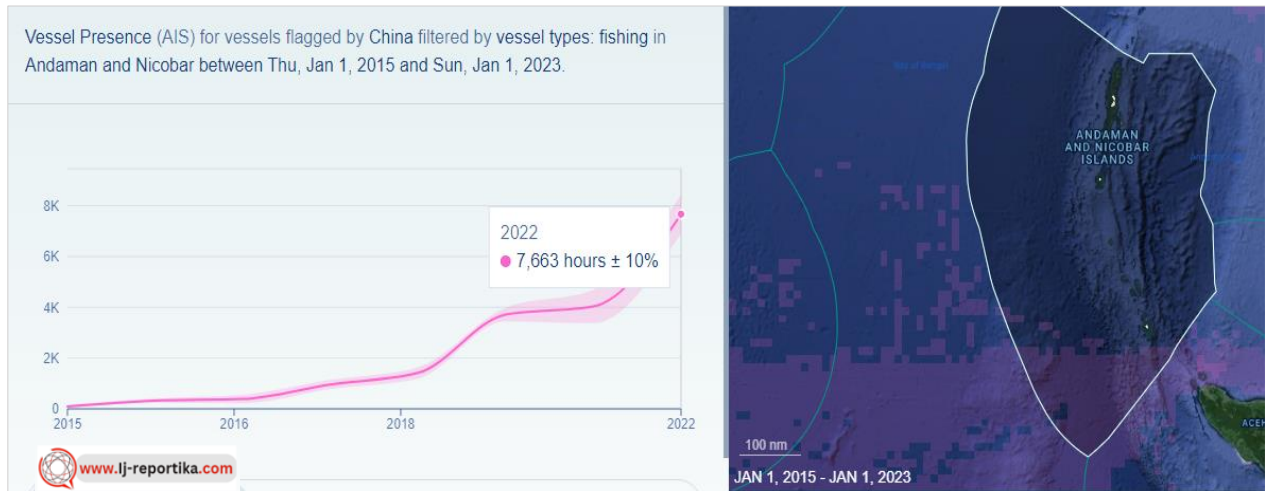


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2015 to Jan 2023

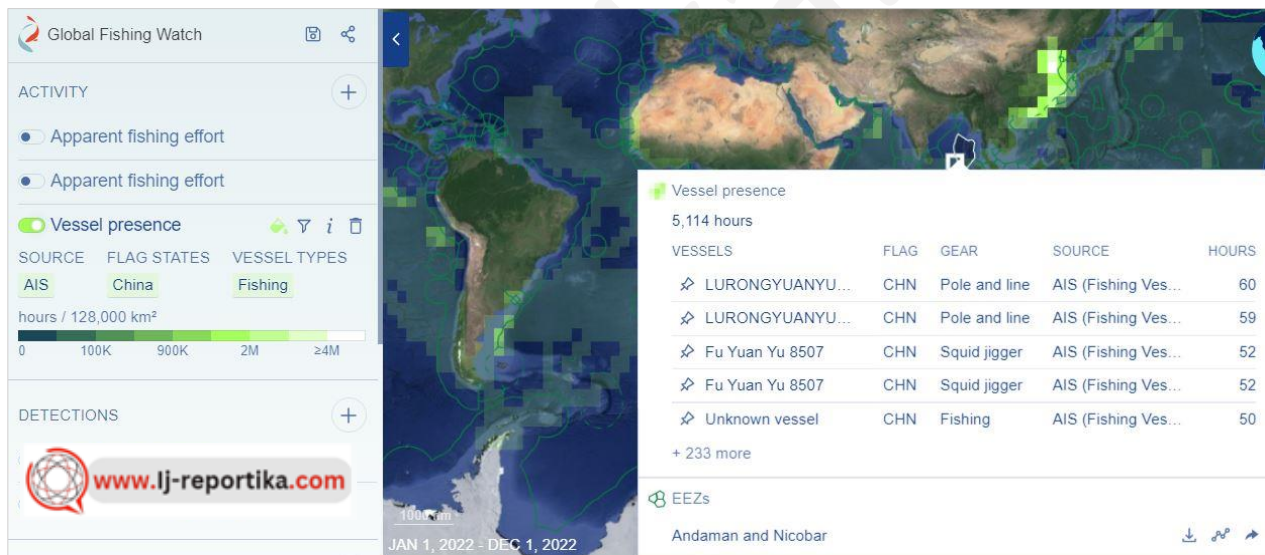


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Sri Lanka

The activities of the Chinese DWF in the **Sri Lankan EEZ peaked in 2020** following the economic downturns. The activities of the Chinese ships have increased yet again following the **protests in March 2022 that rocked Sri Lanka**. Many Chinese Squid Jiggers, Trawlers, and Long liners fish in the **South West Sri Lankan waters** and then move to other target areas in the Arabian Sea.

¹² Pole and line is a fishing method used to catch tuna and other large pelagic (mid water) species one fish at a time.

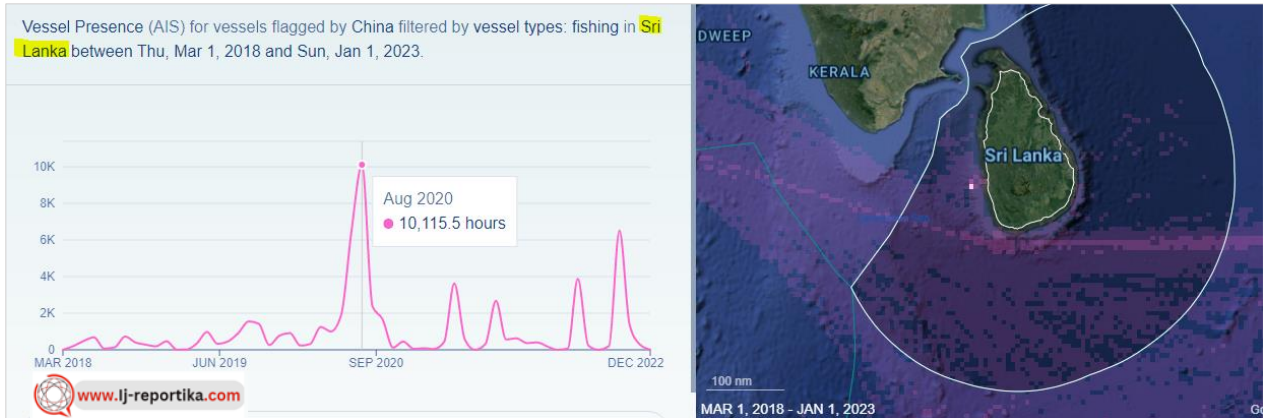


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2018 to Jan 2023



Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

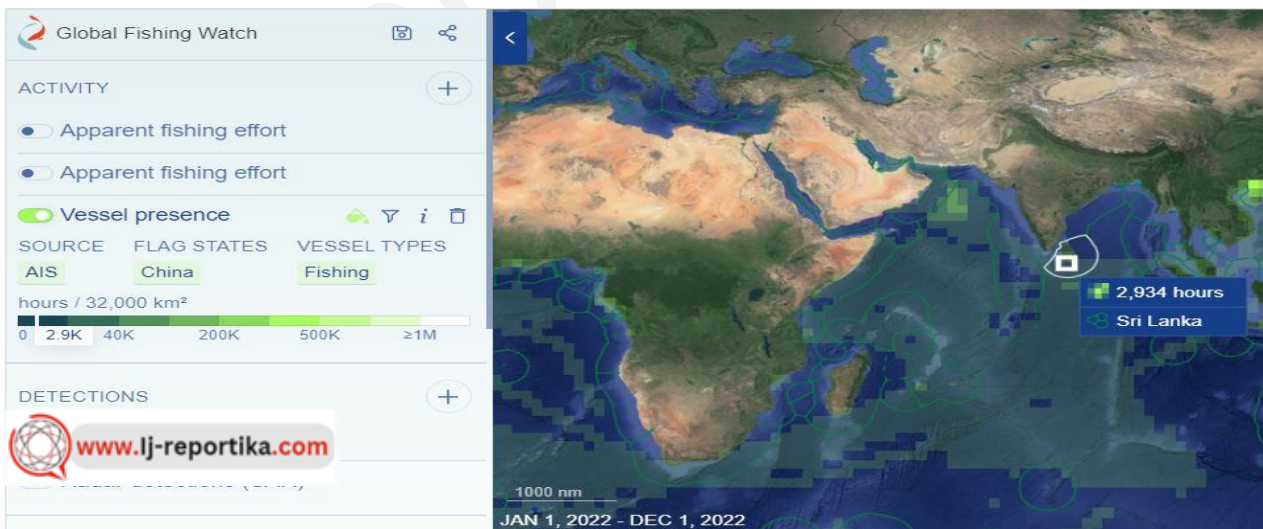


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Sri Lanka in 2022



Figure: Map depicting live locations of Fu Yuan Yu 8897 near Sri Lanka (In December 2022)

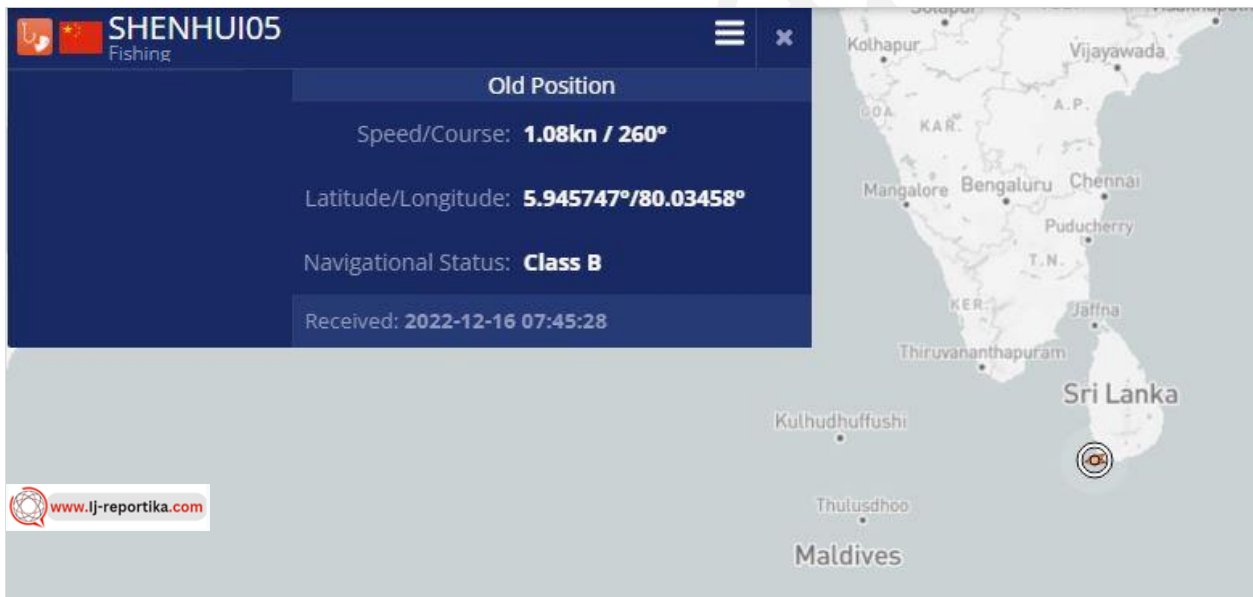


Figure: Map depicting live location of Shenhui05 near Sri Lanka (In December 2022)

Maldives

Maldives is one of the worst affected nations by **the climate change crisis**. The Chinese DWF has increased its activities in the **past four years in the Maldivian Waters**. Many local reports suggest that **some Chinese fishing vessels are deployed near Maldives solely for espionage**.

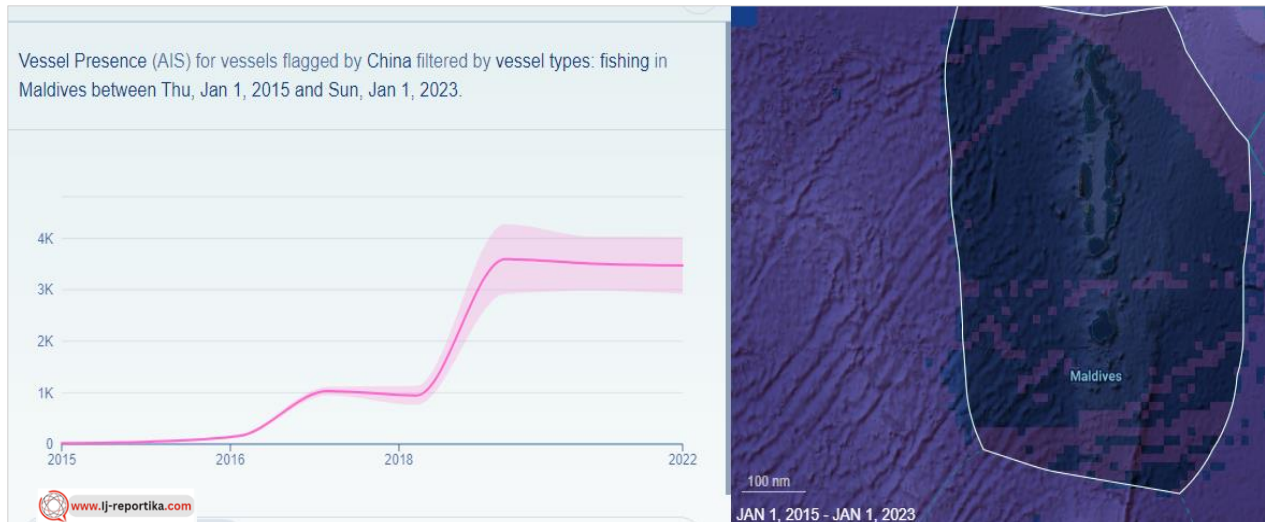


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Dec 2015 to Jan 2023

Following are some of the prominent Chinese ships in Maldivian waters. Most of the Maldivian EEZ is occupied by the Long liners.

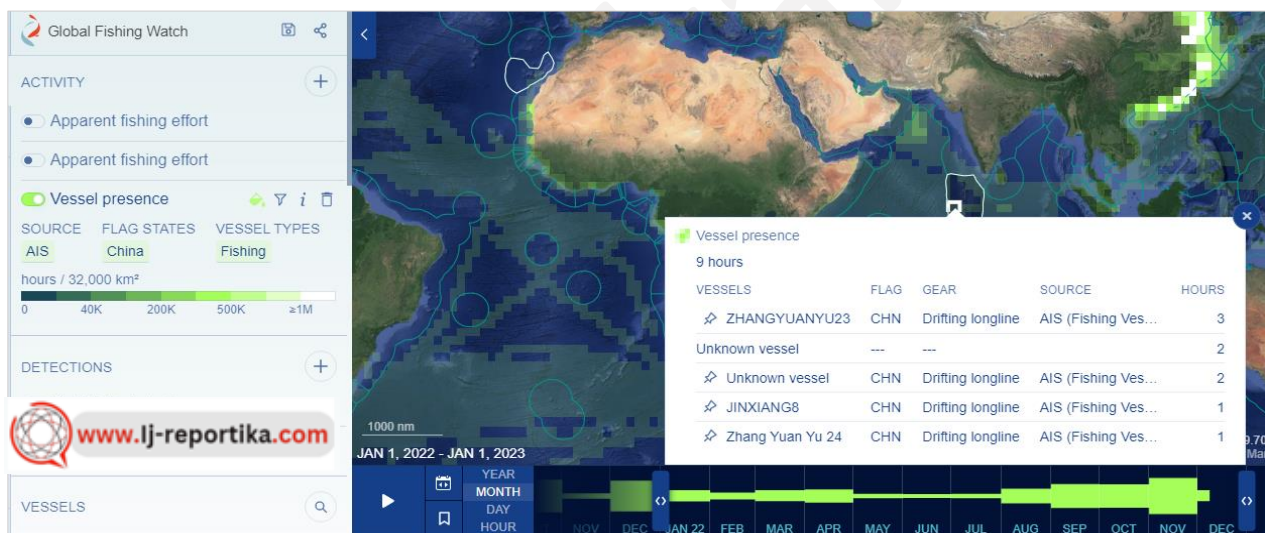


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Oman

The presence of Chinese vessels in the EEZ of Oman has increased **exponentially since 2016**. It was estimated, in **2022**, that **nearly 15,000 hours** of fishing were done by **Chinese-flagged fishing vessels there**.

According to many **Omanis**, the Chinese fishing vessels in the **Arabian Sea** often misuse the **Iranian flag to disguise and fish at an industrial scale**.

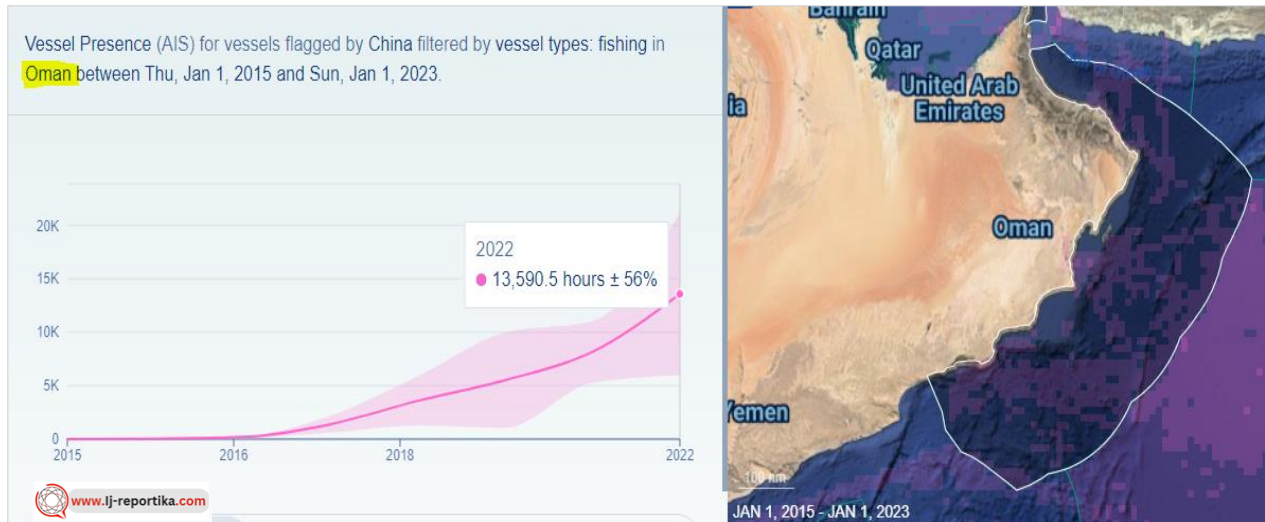


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2015 to Jan 2023



Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Oman in 2022

Indonesia

Indonesia is a transit route for the Chinese DWF through Malacca Strait to reach the IOR as well as a rich **fishing ground**. The cause of concern for Indonesia has been the presence of environmentally degrading Chinese **Trawlers** in the Java Sea in the Indonesian EEZ this year.

Indonesia is one of the major suppliers of labor to the Chinese DWF. Between 2019 and 2020, more than **30 fishermen from Indonesia died on Chinese long-haul fishing boats** due to the racial abuses and exploitation suffered by the workers. Reportedly, they were provided substandard food, and dangerous drinking water, and were made to work excessively.

The Chinese fishing in the Indonesian EEZ and the **death and racial abuse of Indonesian workers** in the Chinese DWF, don't go well with the **local people and government of Indonesia**. They **sunk many Chinese fishing vessels in the past four years** which were dangerously close to their land boundary. Indonesia also took such measures against illegal and unreported fishing by **Malaysian and Vietnamese** ships in its EEZ.

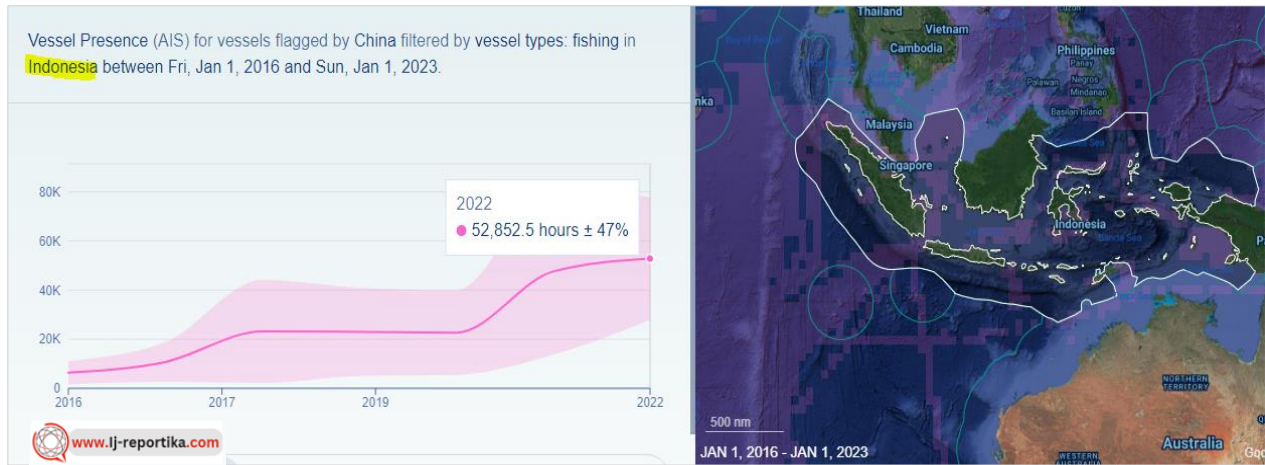


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Dec 2016 to Jan 2023

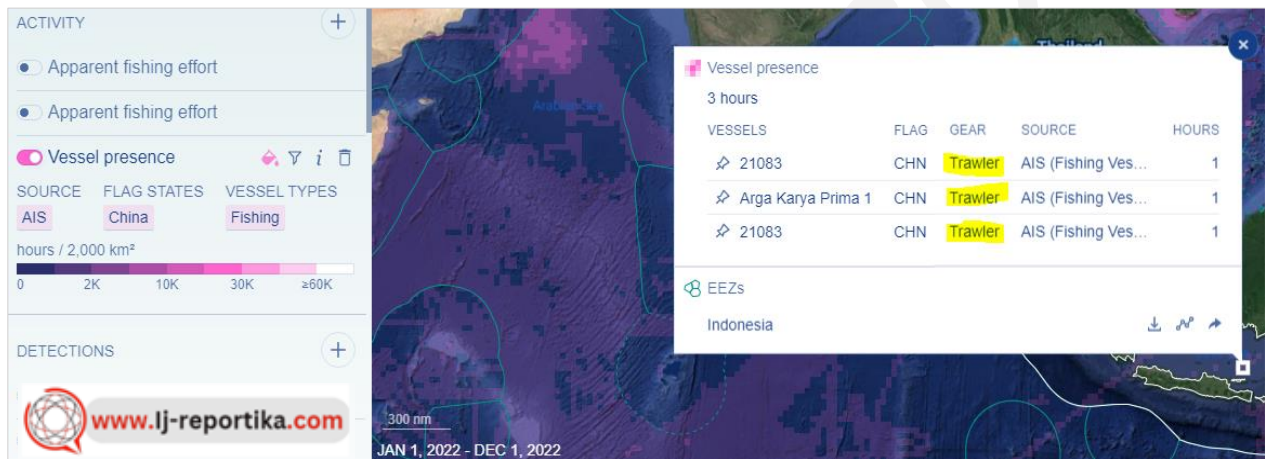


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Malaysia

Malaysia has also been impacted by the **Chinese DWF in the past few years**. Countries like **Indonesia and Malaysia** which are sea-based economies and dependent on fishing are finding it tough to challenge the Chinese DWF with **huge capacities and longer stay in the sea**.

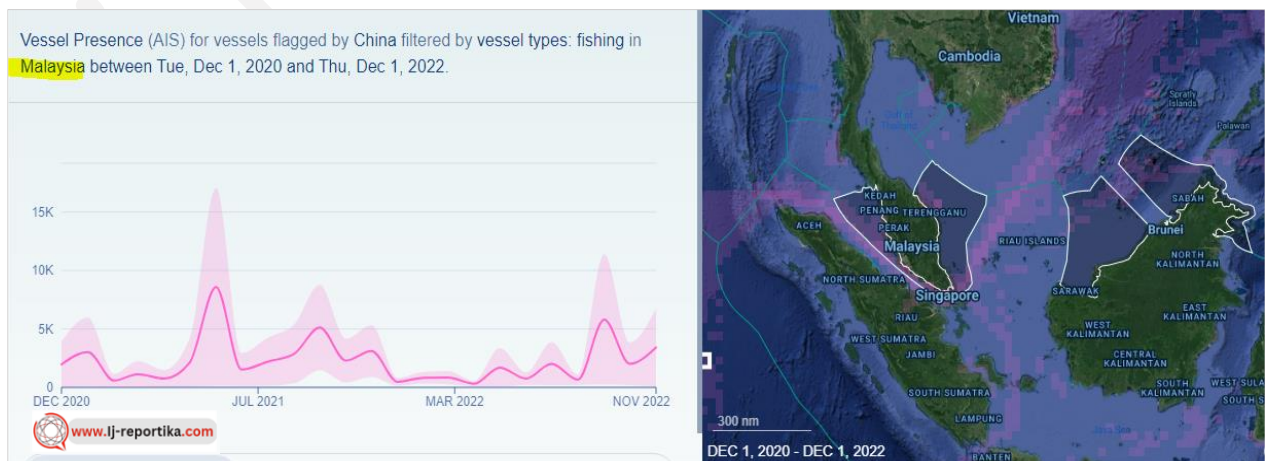


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Dec 2020 to Dec 2022

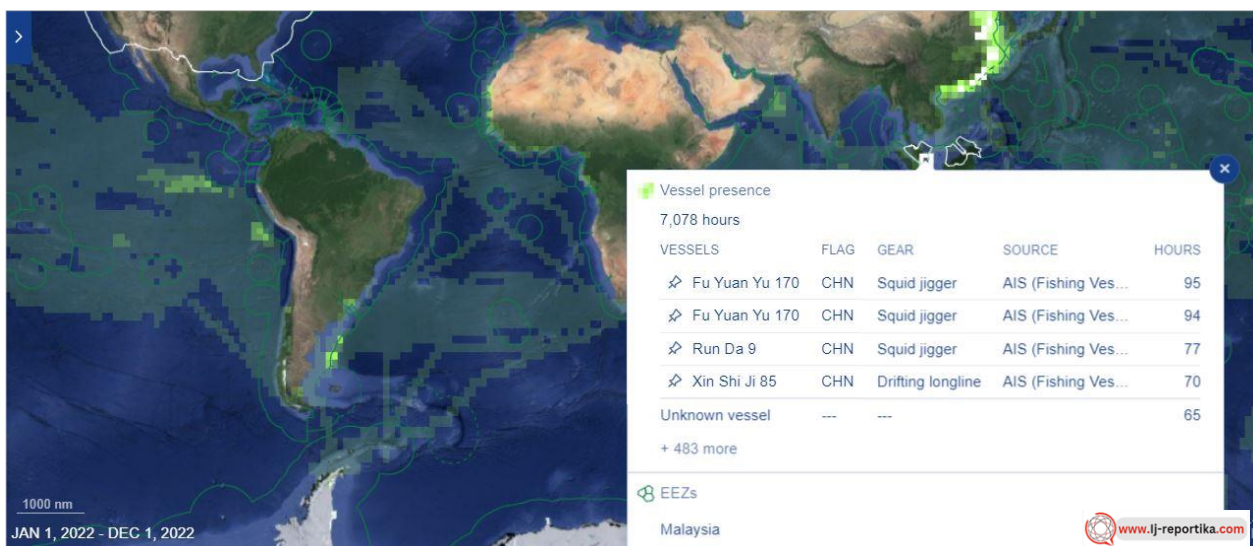


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

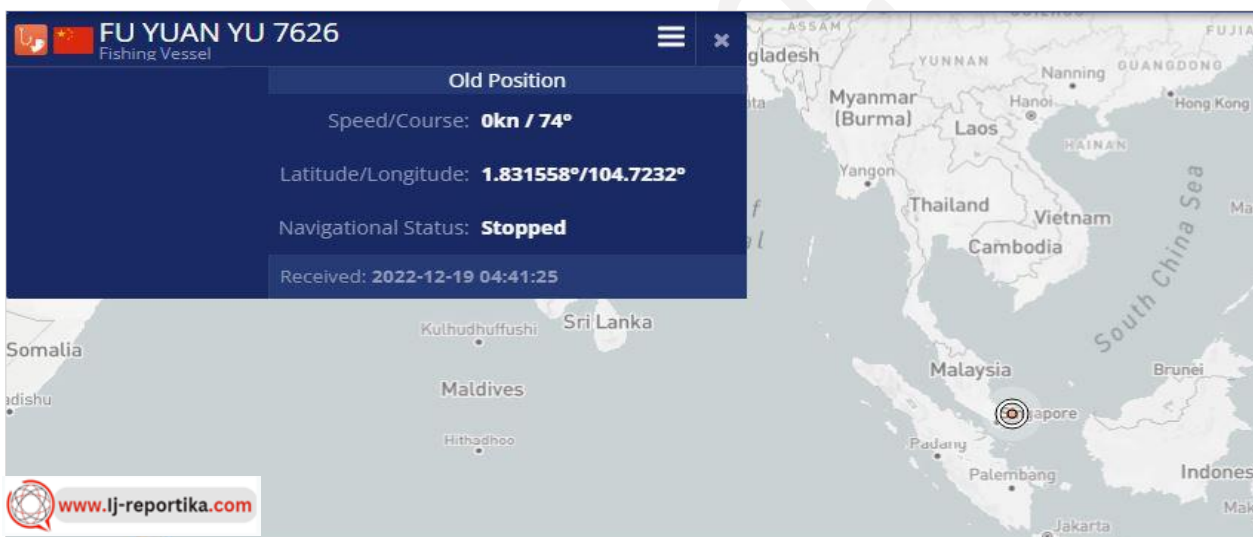


Figure: Map depicting live location of Chinese fishing vessel near Malaysia

Iran

Iran's EEZ though is very internal and there are chances of getting caught by the **local coast guards**, the presence of **Chinese Squid Jiggers** was observed in the year 2022.

Iranian fishermen operating in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea have seen their business take a massive hit with the arrival of Chinese Trawlers and Squid Jiggers.

A report issued by **Iran's parliament** states that **Chinese Trawlers** could soon take in **46,000 tons** of commercial fish. Due in large part to the practice of **industrial-scale fishing**, some species **not traditionally** associated with **commercial fishing** are in **peril**. In 2019, **150 dolphins** perished in commercial dragnets. In China, **seahorses** are often **dried and ground into a powder that is put into** Traditional Chinese Medicines, so Chinese vessels reflag with **Iranian flags** to fish for them at an industrial scale.

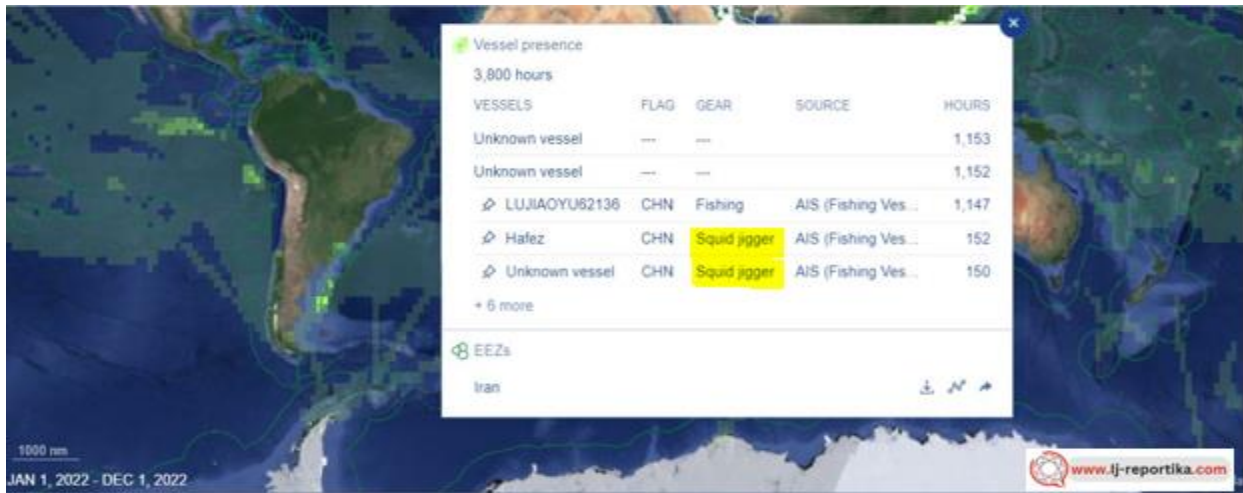


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Island Nations

Seychelles, Mauritius, and Réunion are island nations in the Indian Ocean. The EEZ of Seychelles and Mauritius have been petted by Chinese Long liners with thousands of hours of fishing. Whereas, EEZ of Réunion has been fished by the Chinese Squid Jiggers.

Seychelles

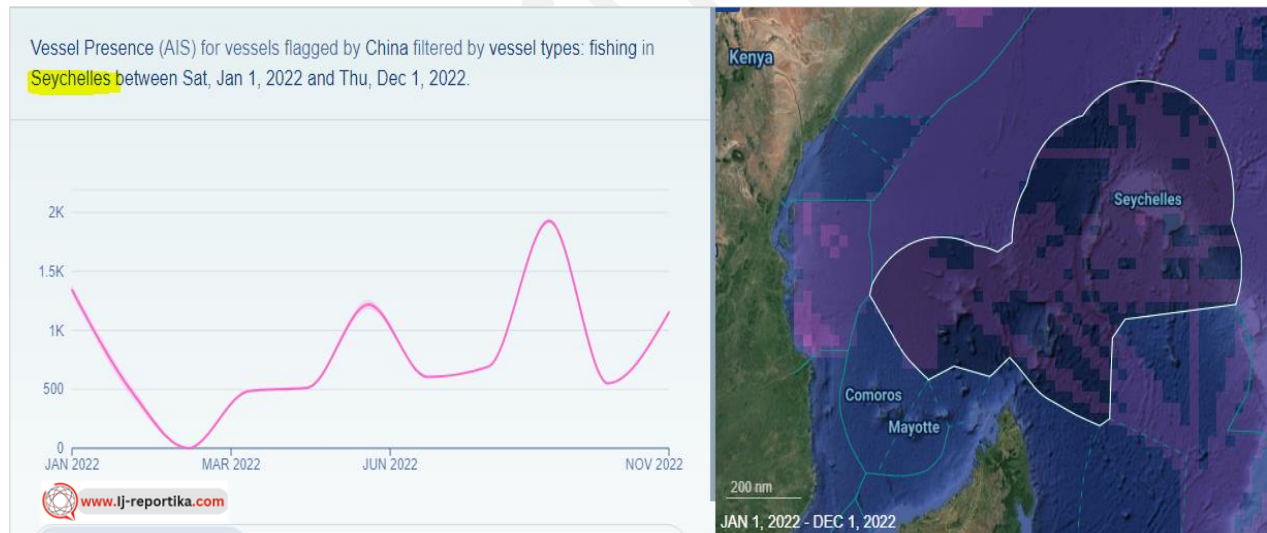


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Dec 2022

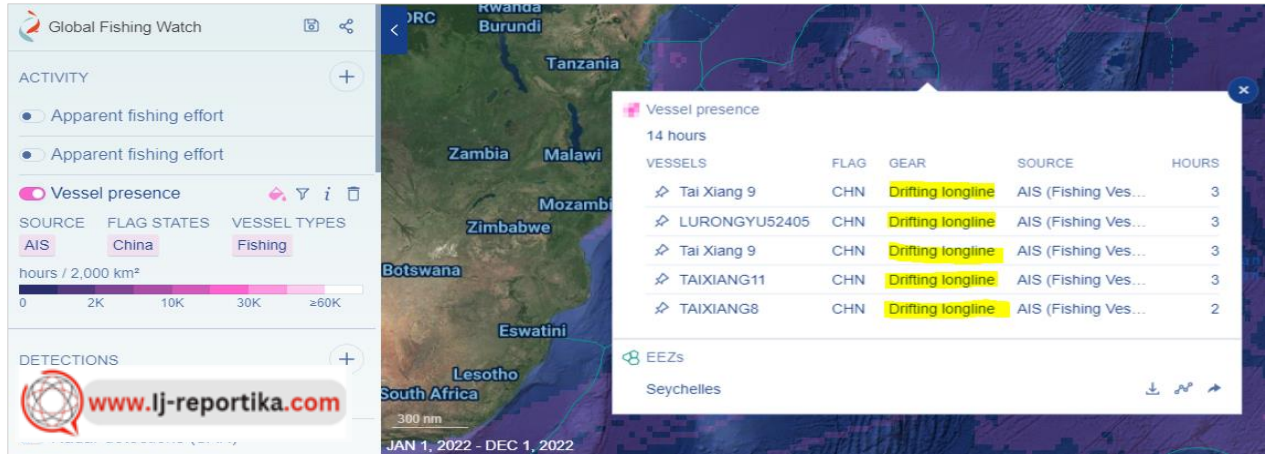


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Mauritius

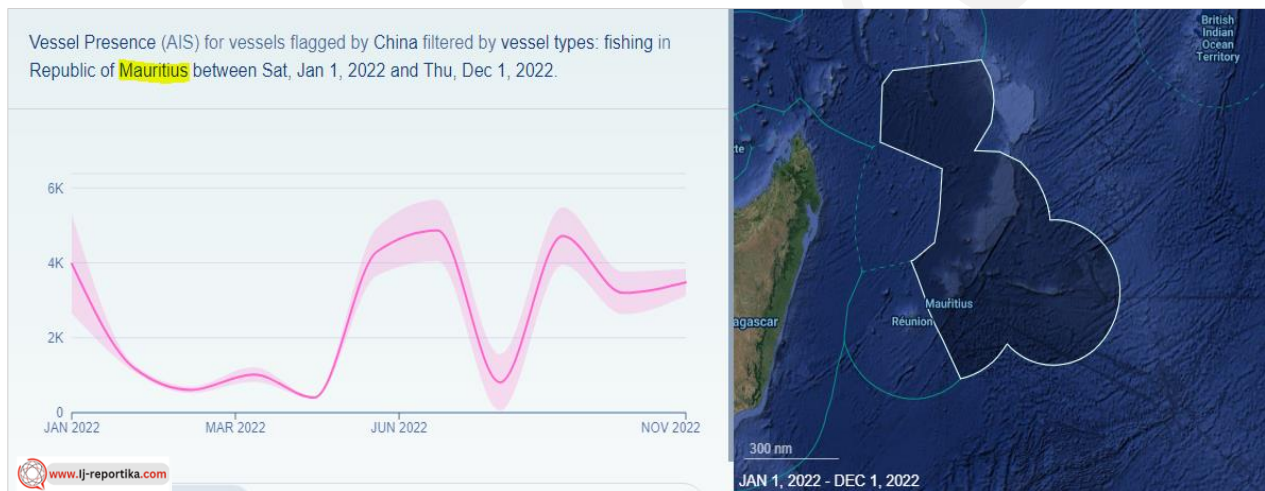


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Dec 2022

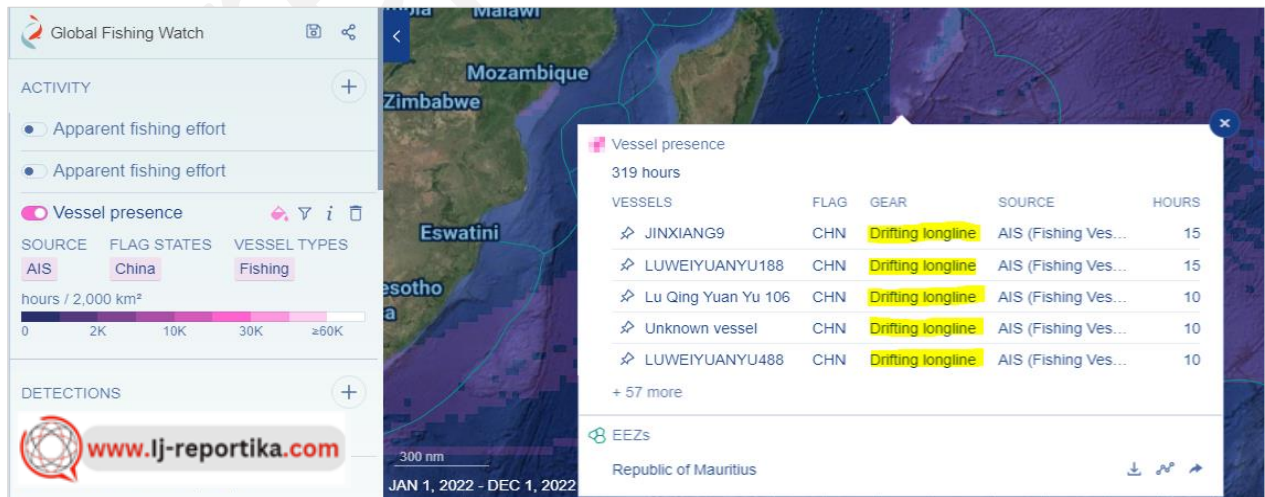


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

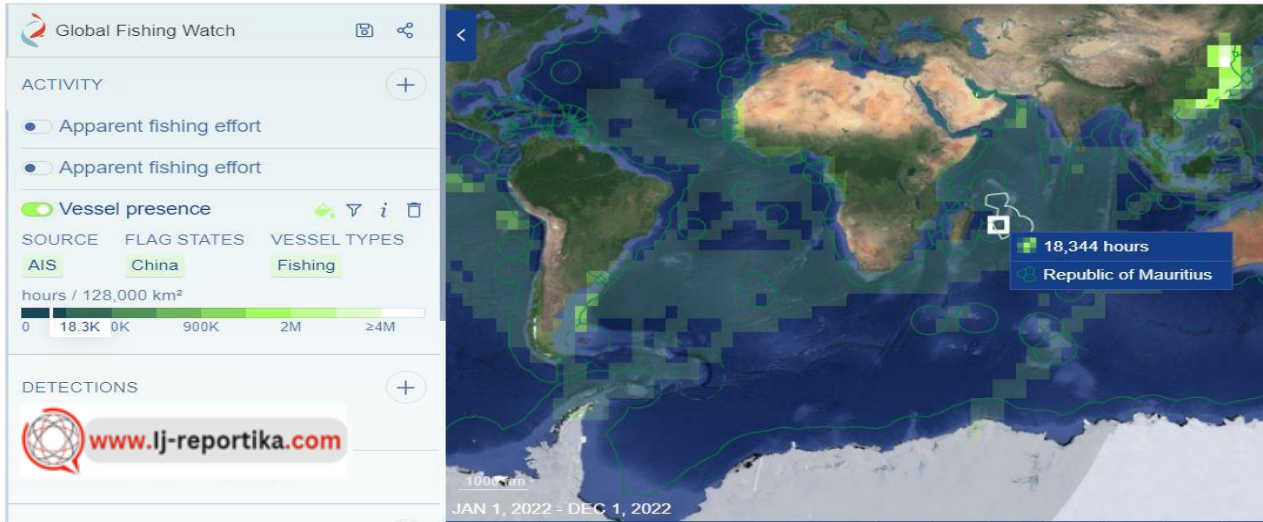


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Mauritius in 2022

Réunion

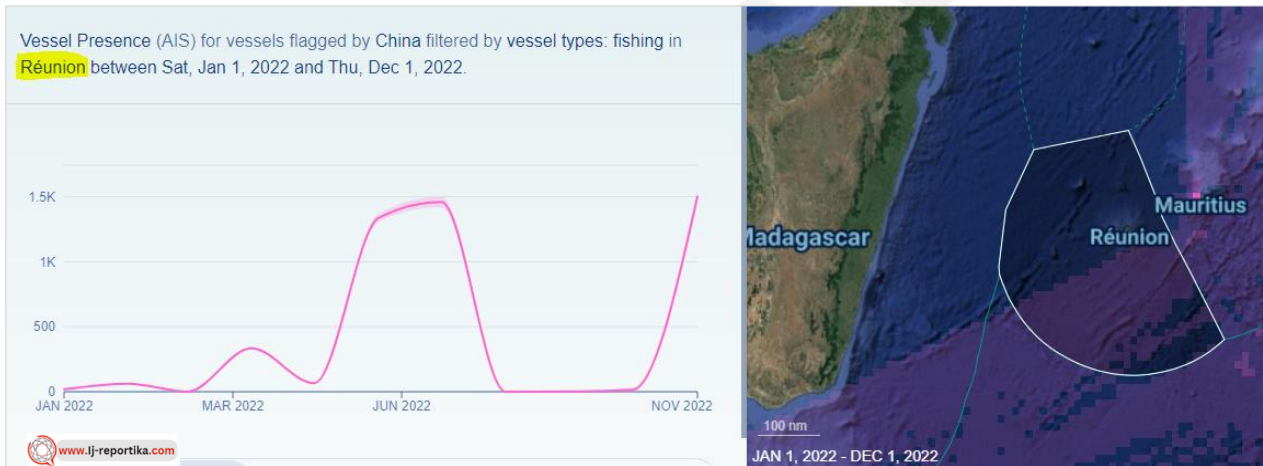


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Dec 2022

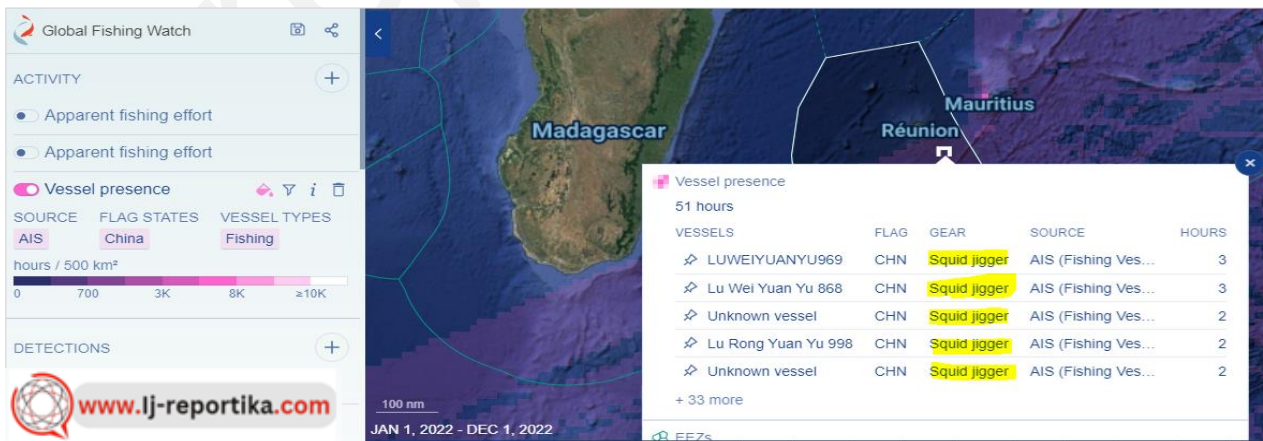


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Madagascar

According to tracking data produced by **OceanMind**, 132 Chinese-flagged vessels operated slowly between January 2019 and May 2021 in **Madagascar's exclusive economic zone (EEZ)**, which stretches **320 kilometers** (200 miles) from the coastline.

In recent years, **Chinese investors have targeted Madagascar's inshore and offshore fisheries**. In 2017, six Chinese-owned Trawlers began plying the waters off **southwestern Madagascar**, home to a large **concentration of small-scale fishers**.

Local people, who had not been consulted or informed of a deal with the Chinese, mounted a **campaign** against the trawling, and the **fisheries ministry eventually declared it illegal and seized equipment from the vessels**, which later moved to Senegal.

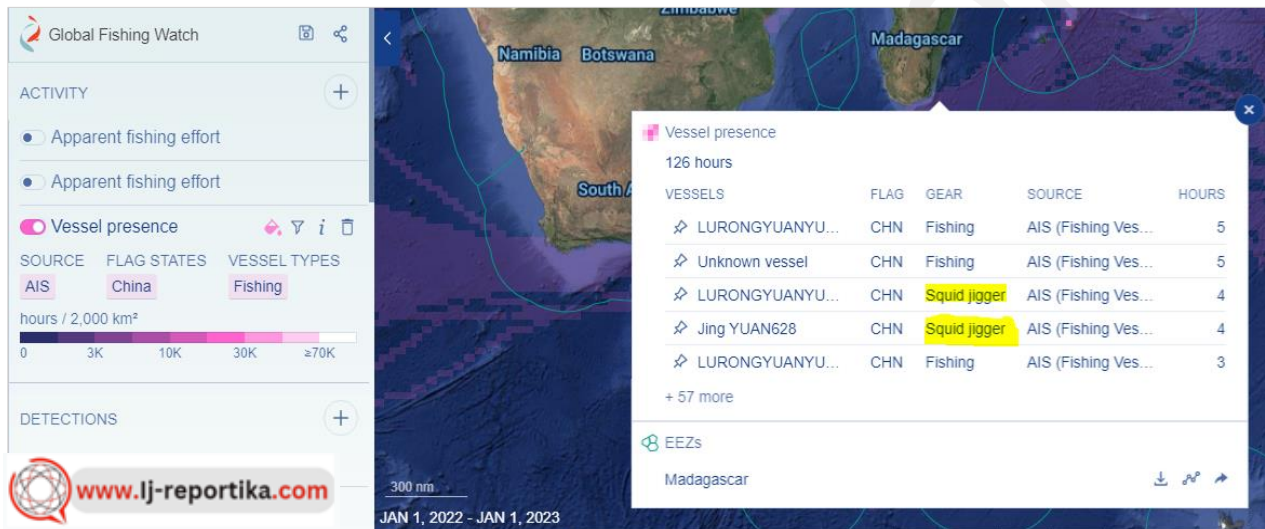


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

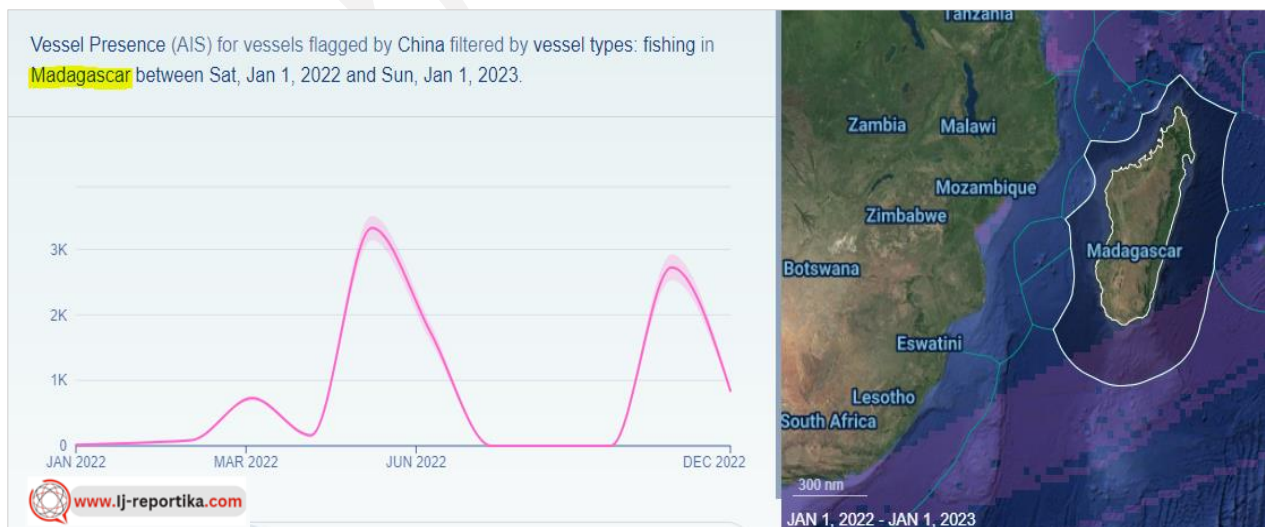


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

East African countries in the IOR

The Indian Ocean region around East Africa has been the hotbed of Chinese fishing activities this decade.

Near some East African countries, the **People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN)** also escorts the **fishing ships** around the choke point of the **Horn of Africa**. It does so in the name of **curbing piracy** activities from its **military base in Djibouti**.

Somalia

Somali waters have high fisheries production potential, but the sustainability of those **fisheries is compromised by the presence of Chinese fishing vessels, most of them fishing illegally**. The **Somali domestic fishing sector is small and relatively nascent**, but Chinese vessels have fished extensively in Somali waters since 2010.

The Somali government often ignores the needs and **demands of the locals and the artisanal fishermen and signs agreements with Chinese fishing companies** to allow Chinese Long liners and Trawlers in the Somali waters.

Significant levels of Chinese fishing combined with inconsistent governance means Somalis are not benefiting from the exploitation of their marine resources at a **local or national level**, leading to insecurity at both scales.

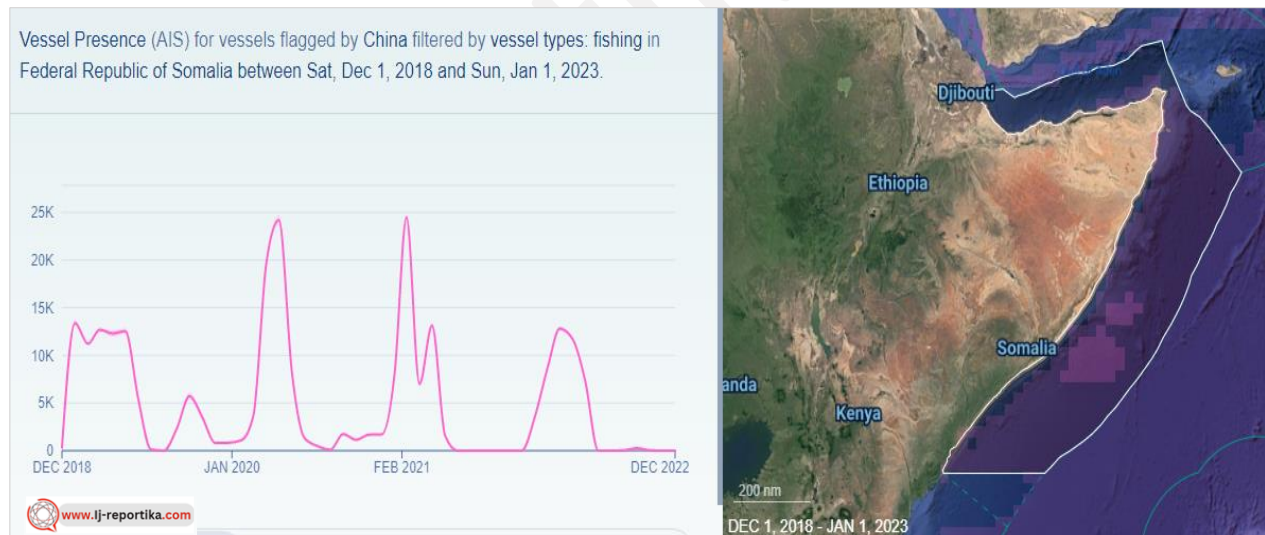


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Dec 2018 to Jan 2023



Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

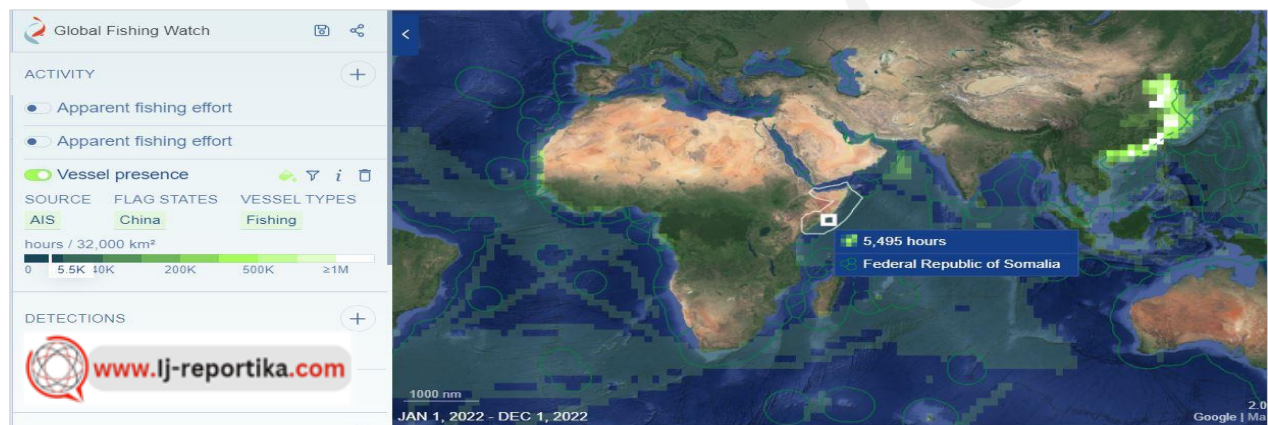


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Somalia in 2022

Other places in West Africa whose marine resources have been plundered by incessant fishing by Chinese DWF are Mozambique, Kenya and Tanzania.

Mozambique

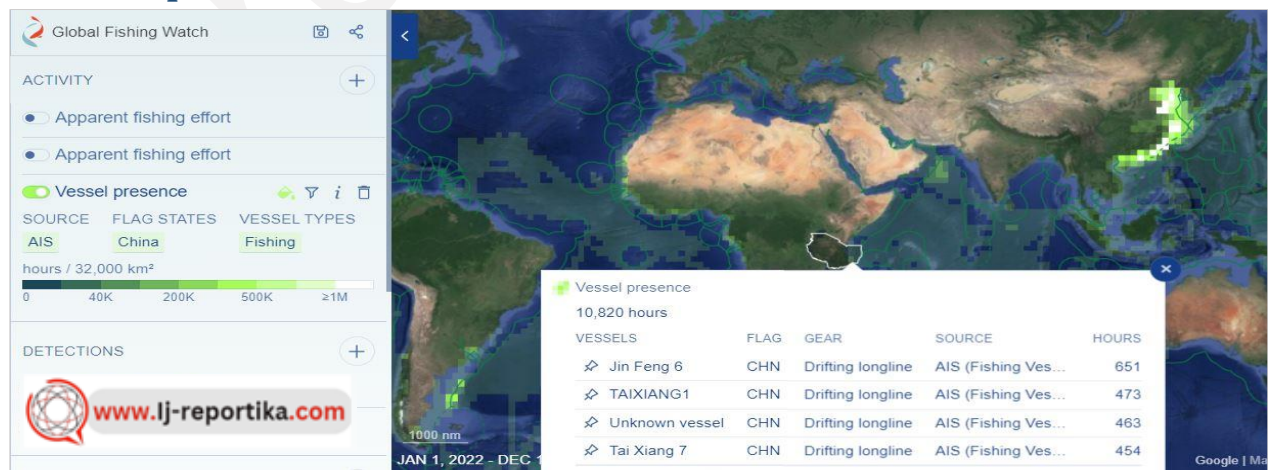


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Tanzania

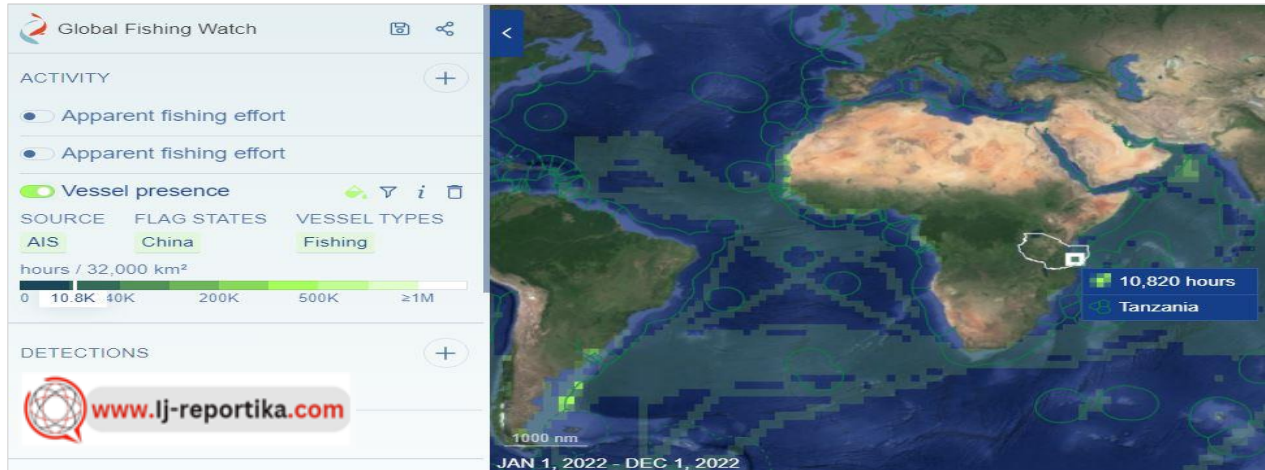


Figure: Hours of fishing by Chinese vessels in one of the 32,000 km² areas in the EEZ of Tanzania in 2022

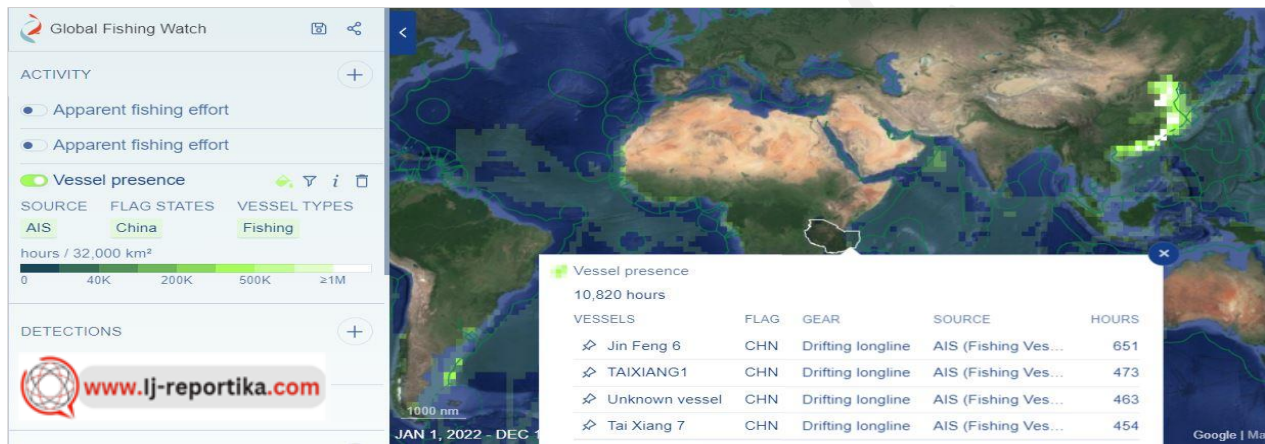


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Kenya

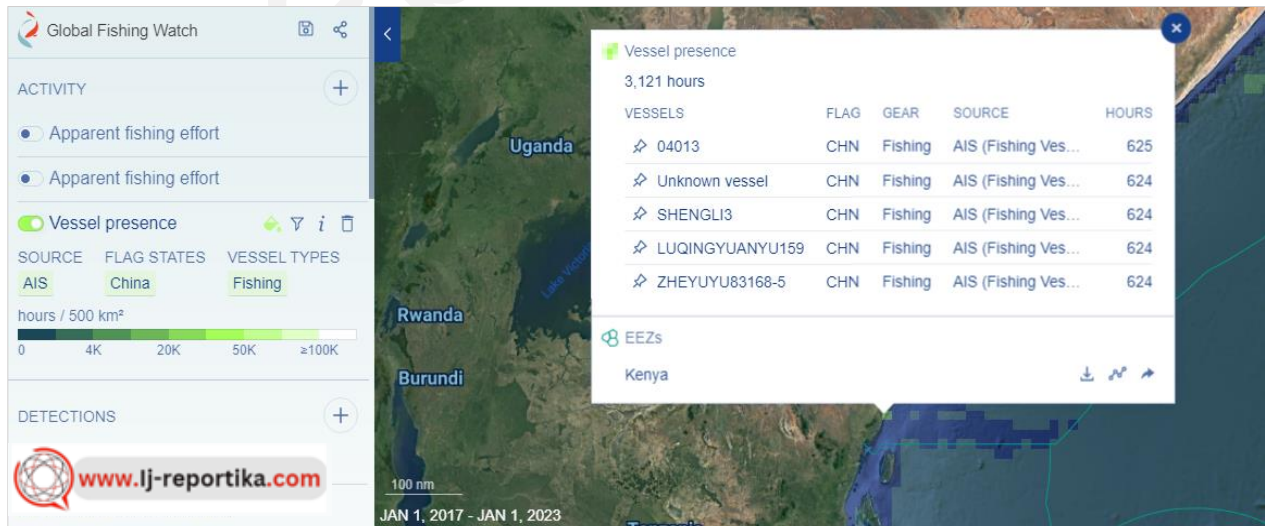


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Chinese activities in Oceania

Just off the South China Sea, countries in **Oceania** are seriously concerned about **Chinese fishing activities**, which increased **proportionally** with PRC's investments in **infrastructures like ports, and airports**. Between 2018 and 2019, **Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji, Cook Islands and Samoa** joined the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**. In 2020, Palau intercepted and detained Chinese DWF boats illegally fishing sea cucumbers in its territorial waters.



Figure: Map of Oceania

The following map shows how the Oceania countries and their EEZ are encroached on by Chinese Fishing vessels. **Due to corruption in these island nations, ambiguous and unsettled EEZ boundaries, and weaker navies and coast guard forces**, the fishing hours of the Chinese DWF reached over one million in most of these countries in 2022. The pull factor for the Chinese fishing companies to Oceania is the **presence of rich and varied marine resources and proximity to its major ports**.

Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii (under the USA) are the most developed countries in the region, and the presence of Chinese Trawlers in South Australia, Chinese Squid Jigger in New Zealand, and Long liners in Hawaii is a serious threat to their sovereignty.

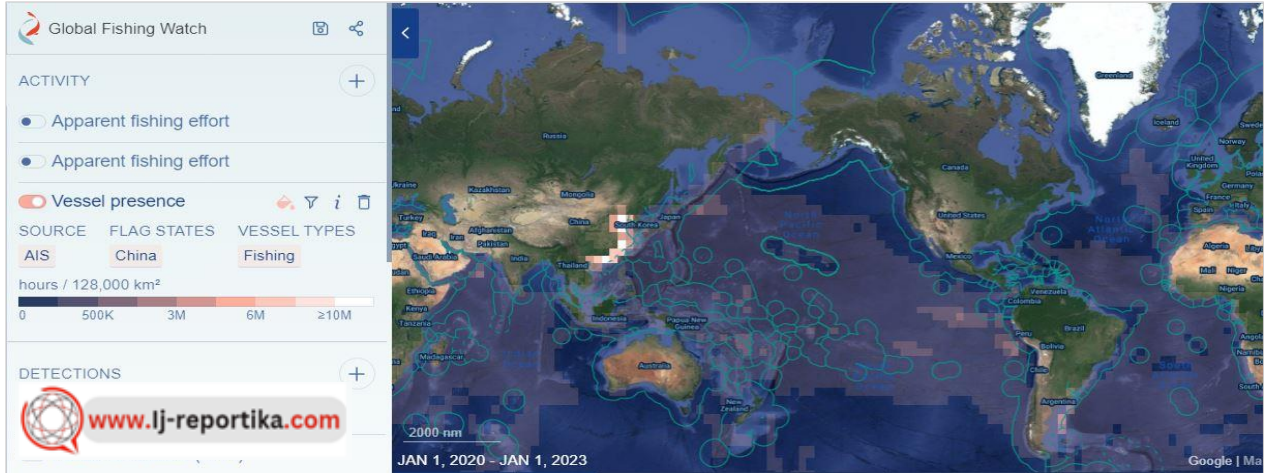


Figure: Map depicting the intensity of Chinese fishing in Pacific Ocean from 2020-2022

Australia

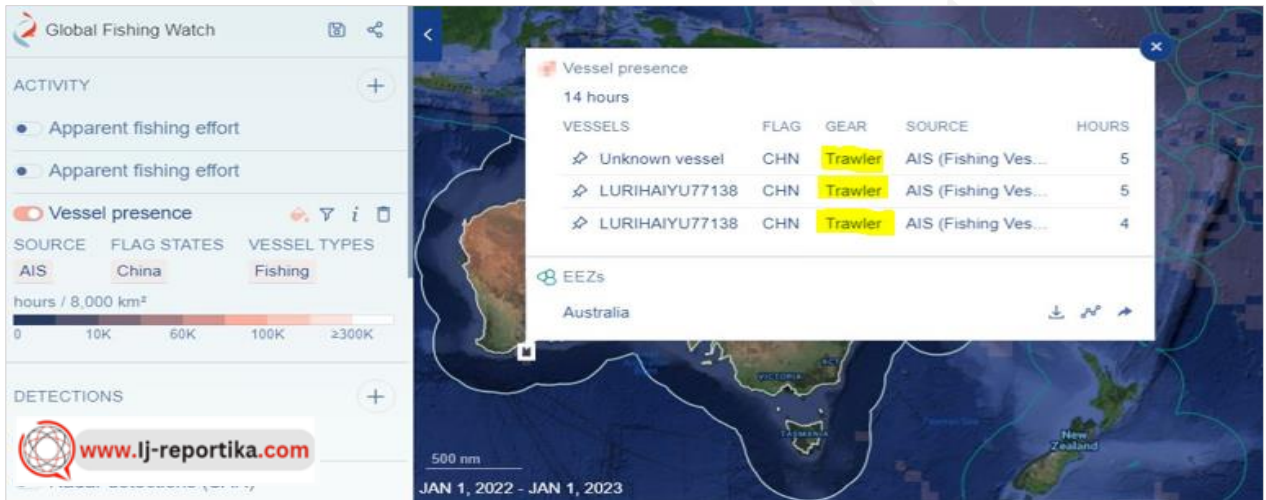


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

New Zealand

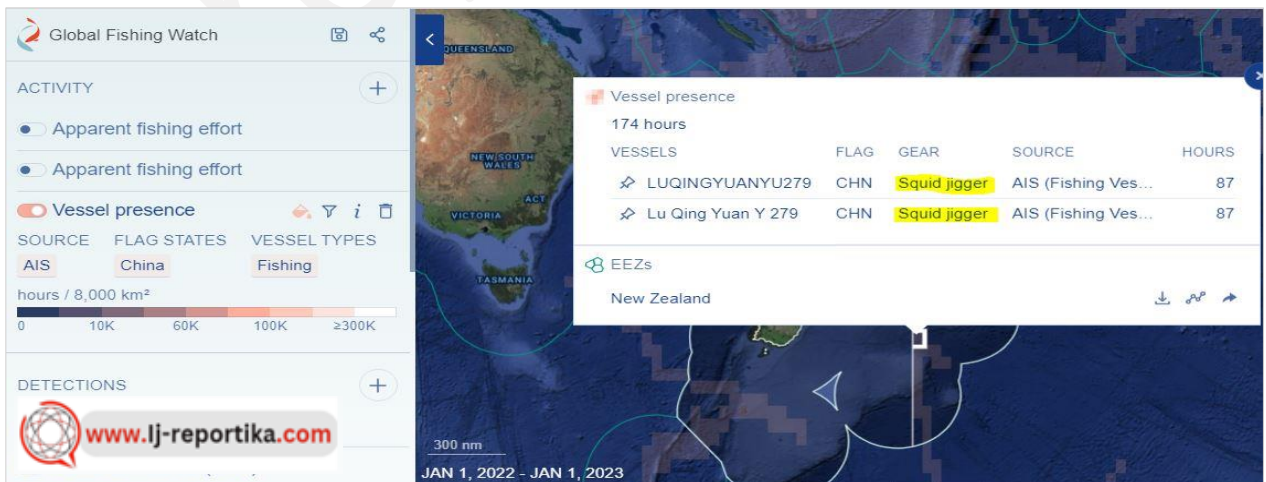


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Norfolk Island

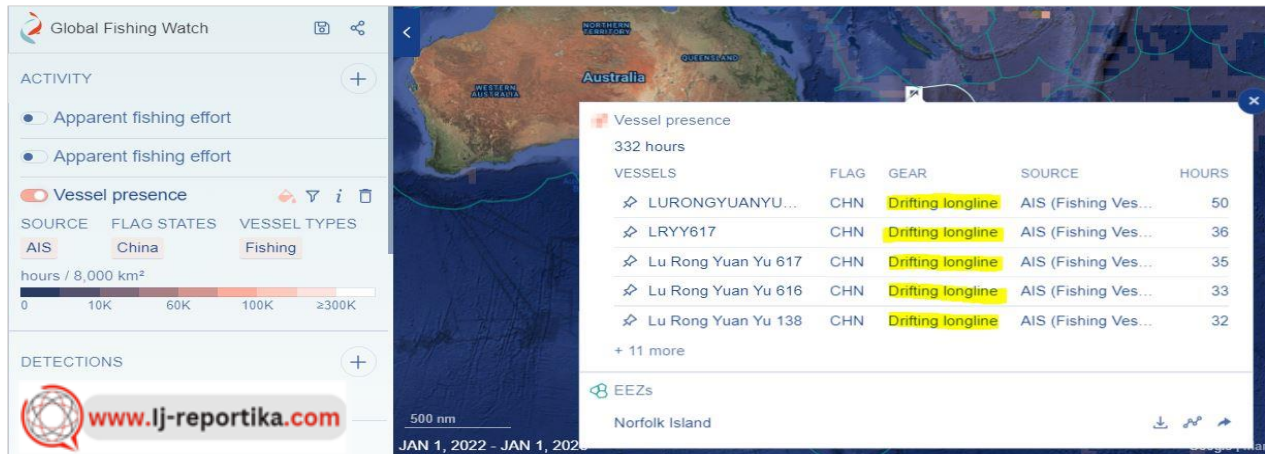


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

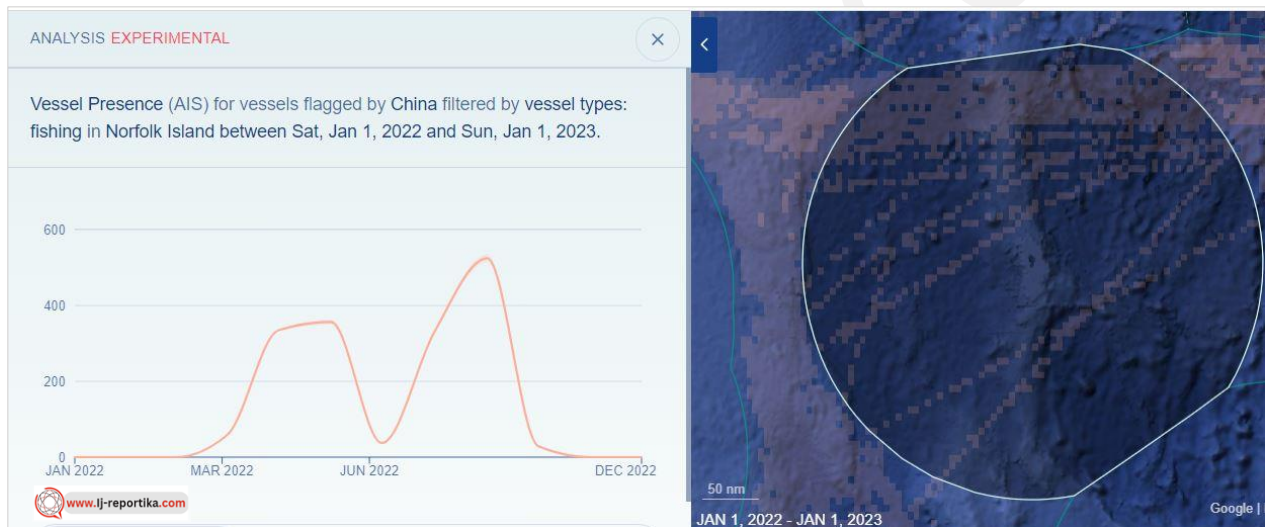


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

Fiji



Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

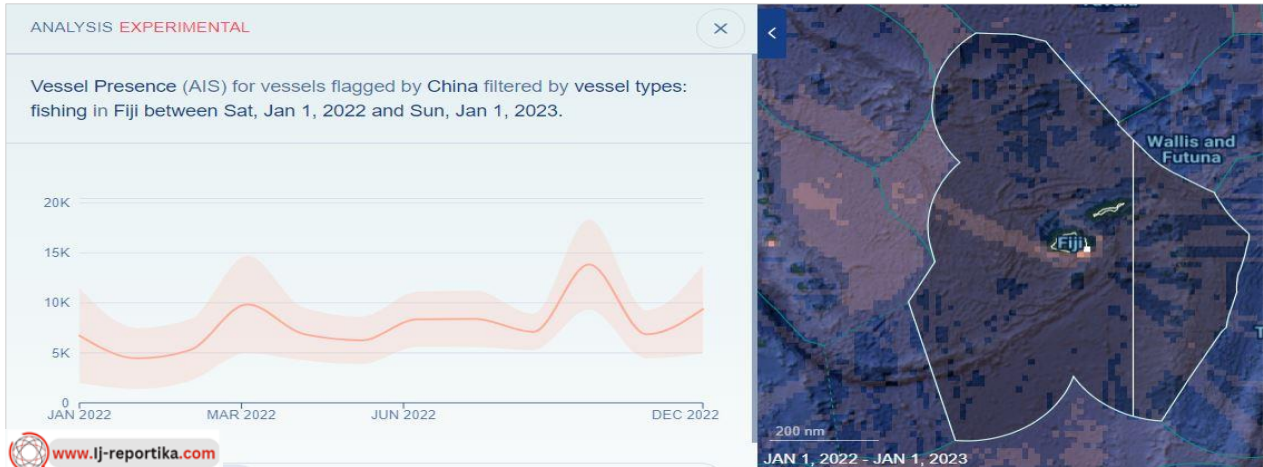


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

Cook Islands

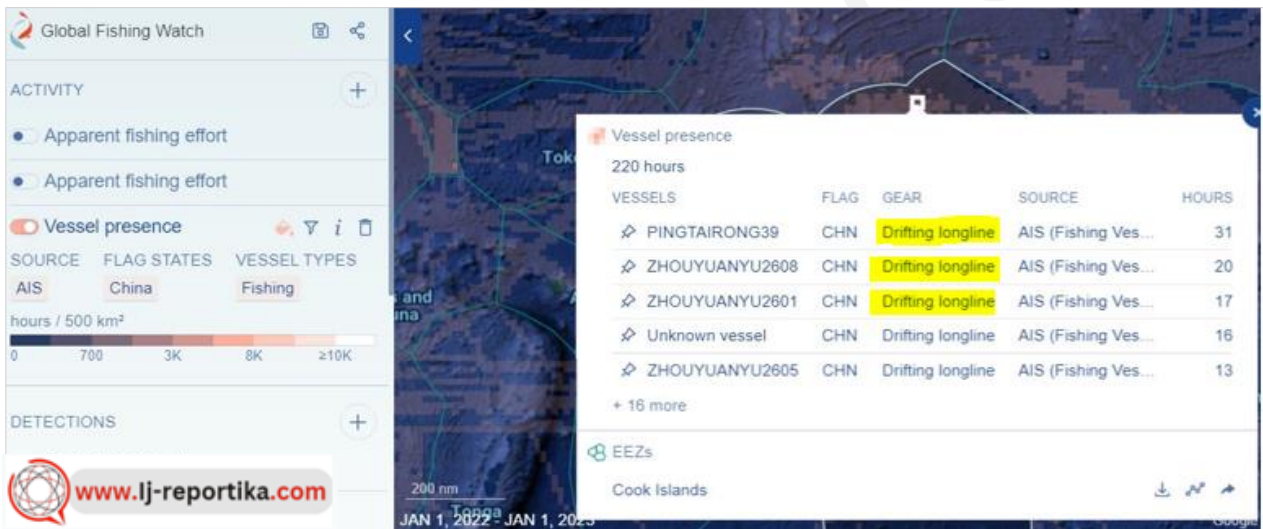


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

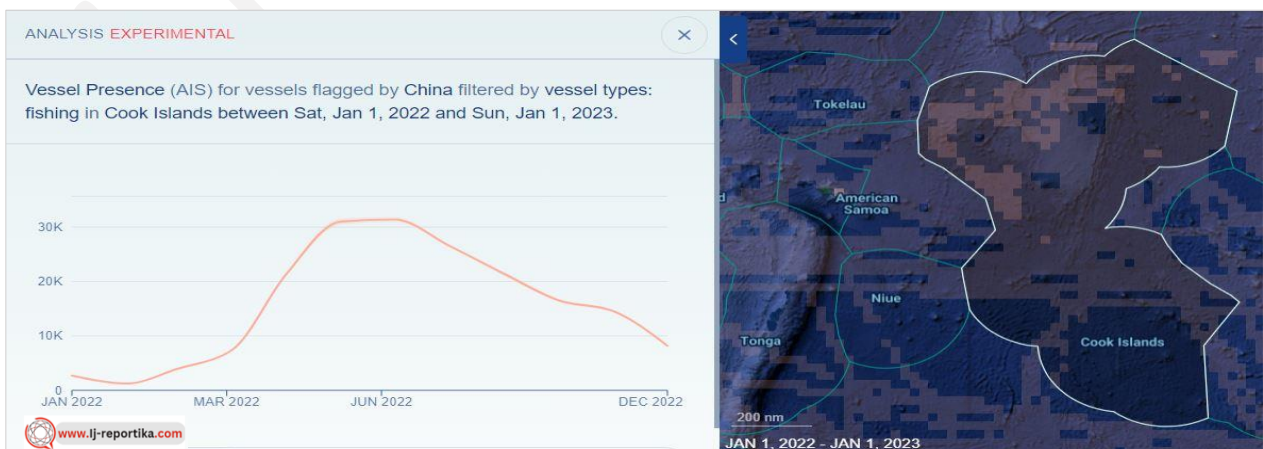


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

Hawaii

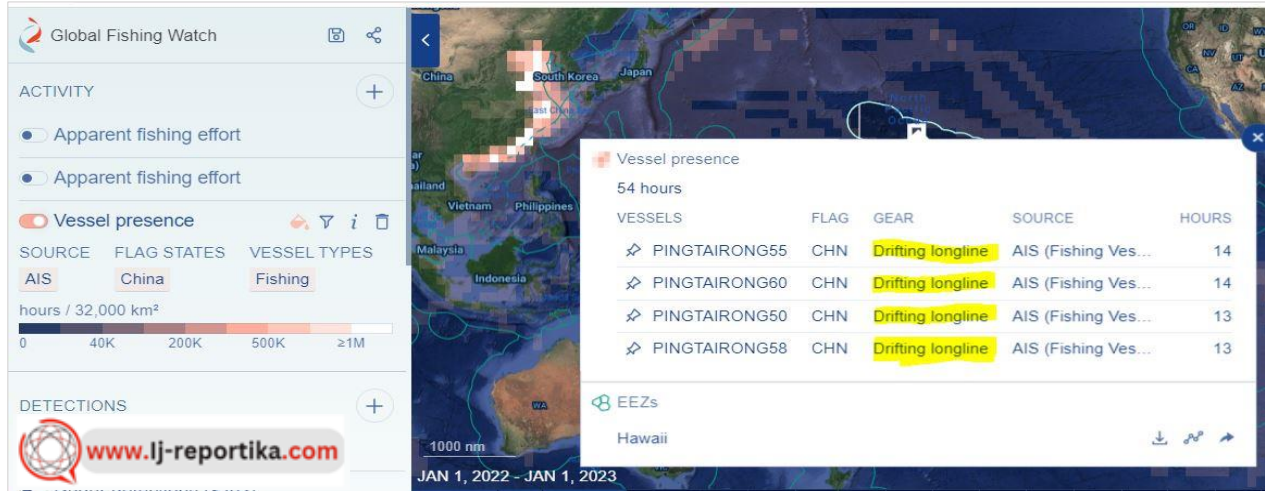


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

French Polynesia

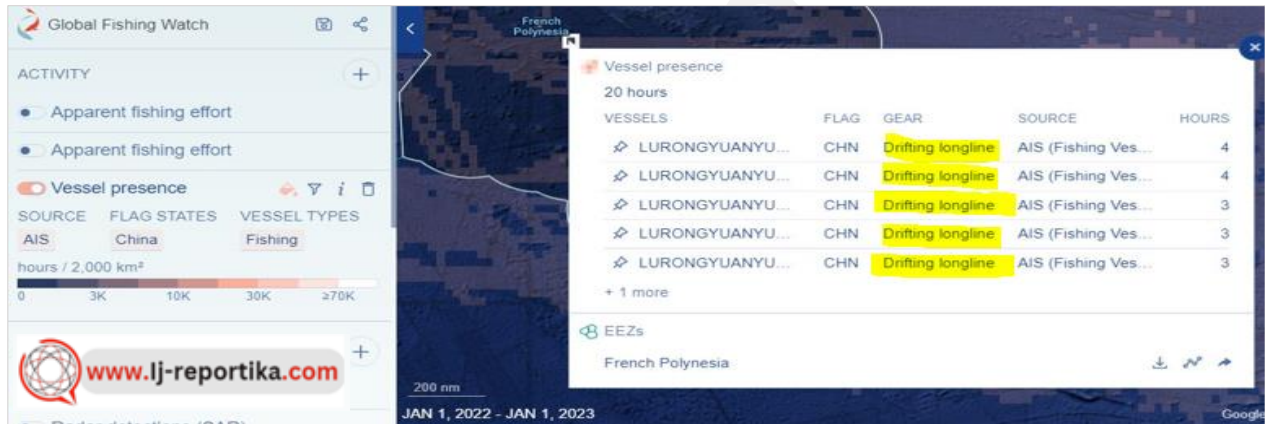


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Line Group



Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

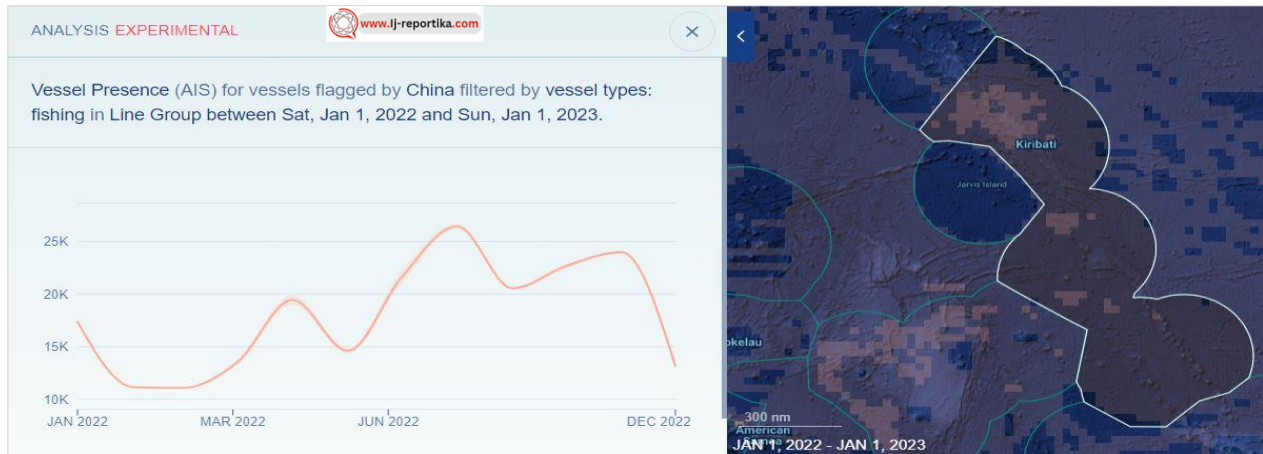


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

Samoa

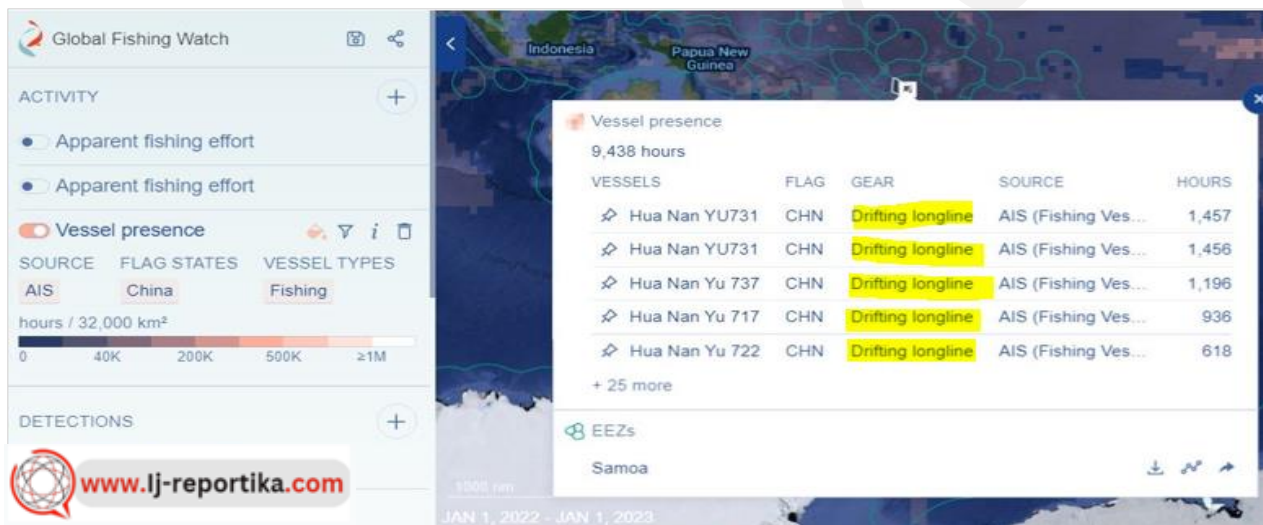


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

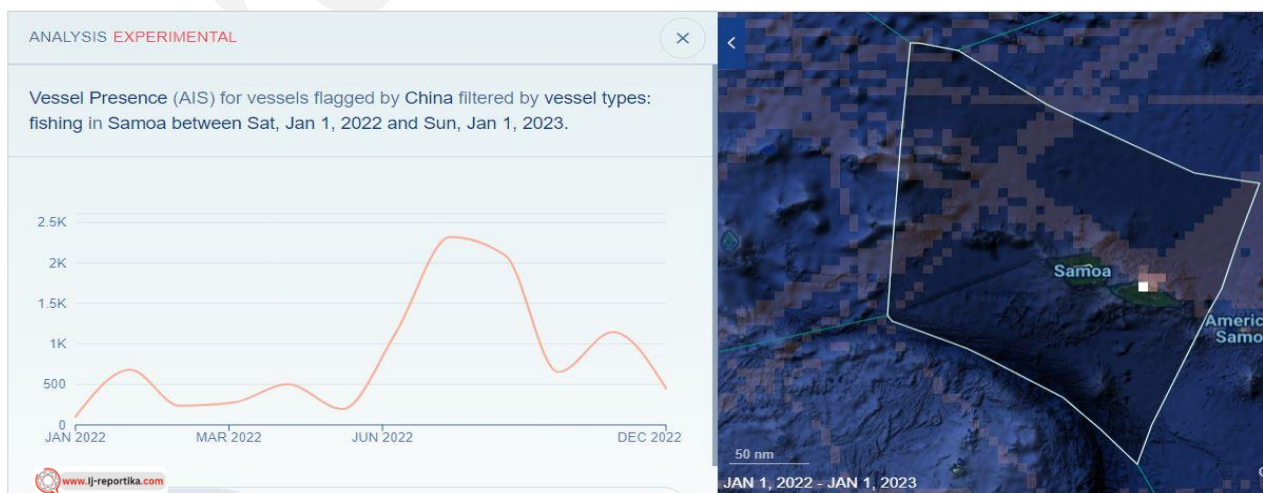


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

Vanuatu

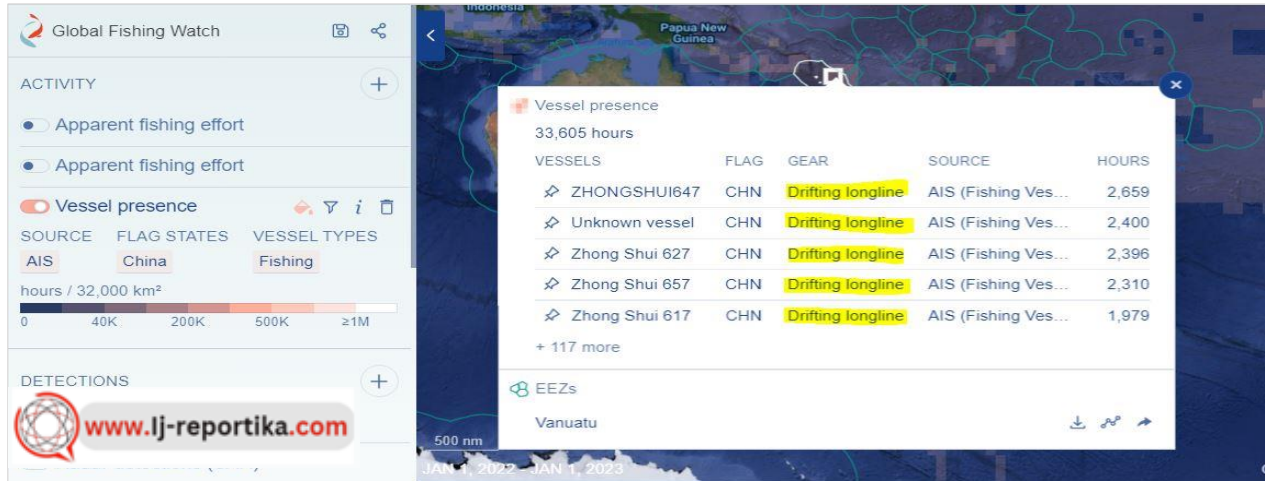


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

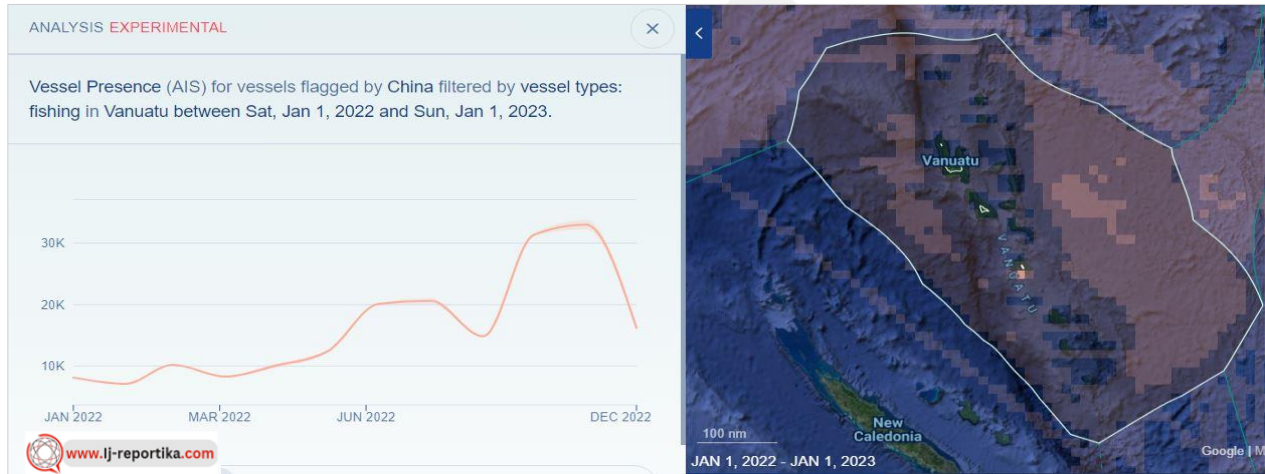


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

Chinese activity around South America

A lot of publications and investigative journalism websites have covered the **menace of the Chinese DWF around the Galapagos Islands**. Ij-Reportika while researching for this exclusive report found that the presence of the **Chinese DWF** was not only around **Ecuador's Galapagos Islands** but also in other countries like **Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Peru**.

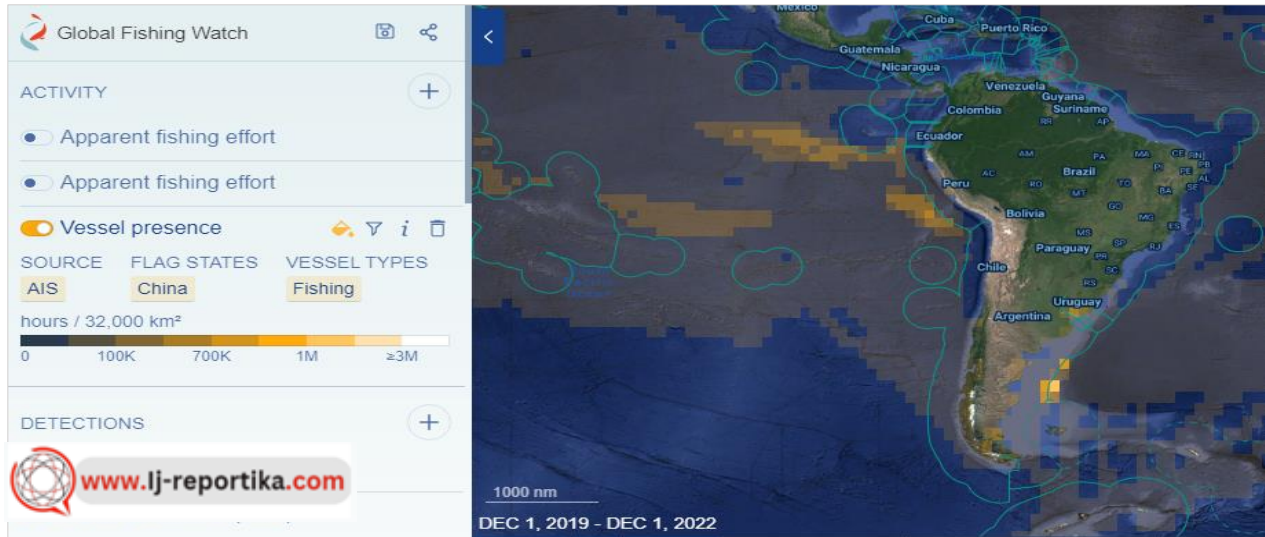


Figure: Map depicting the intensity of Chinese fishing around South America from 2019-2022

Despite a distance of **19,000km** from the **West of South America** and **22,000km** from the **East of South America**, **China's increasing presence near Galapagos Islands and South America is suspicious as well as an environmental hazard**.

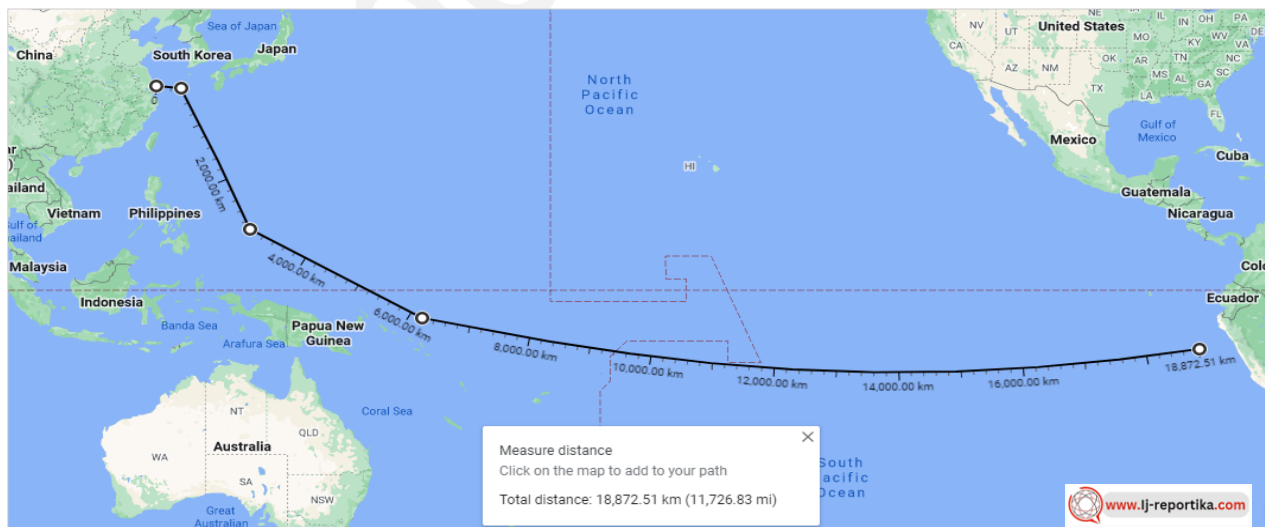


Figure: Map depicting distance from China to the West of South America



Figure: Map depicting distance from China to the East of South America

Galapagos Islands

The **Galápagos** are part of Ecuador, on the West of the South American continent. However, each year growing numbers of Chinese commercial ships, thousands of miles from home, fish here.

The Chinese fleet that periodically **threatens the Galápagos Islands in Ecuador** goes beyond engaging in **predatory fishing** that plunders the oceans of **Latin America**. The vessels also **throw tons of waste into the sea, killing wildlife, polluting the waters, and destroying an ecosystem that is home to more than 7,000 endemic species.**

Bottles, containers of marine oil, and Chinese-labeled jute bags have been accumulating on the beaches. Experts estimate that **30% of the garbage collected on the islands' shores comes from the Chinese fleets that fish off Ecuador's coasts.**

In 2020, several **hundred Chinese fishing vessels** were **found** taking numerous **sharks** from waters near the **Galapagos** Islands. They were operating with their identity **transponders** deactivated to evade detection.

Ecuadorian authorities have accused the **Chinese of fishing with impunity in the Galapagos Islands, the world's most biodiverse region, surrounded by a 193,000-square-kilometer marine protected area.** Under Ecuadorian regulations, only **artisanal fishing** by a limited number of local fishermen is permitted in the Galapagos as part of the country's resource management program for the marine protected area.

The issue of the Galapagos has been brought to the public notice by **various media outlets.** Therefore, there is **a high concentration of Chinese DWF outside the Galapagos EEZ but not inside it.** Ij-Reportika talked to many **local fishermen** who verified that most Chinese vessels nowadays enter **the EEZ with their transponders disabled or with deceiving flags.**

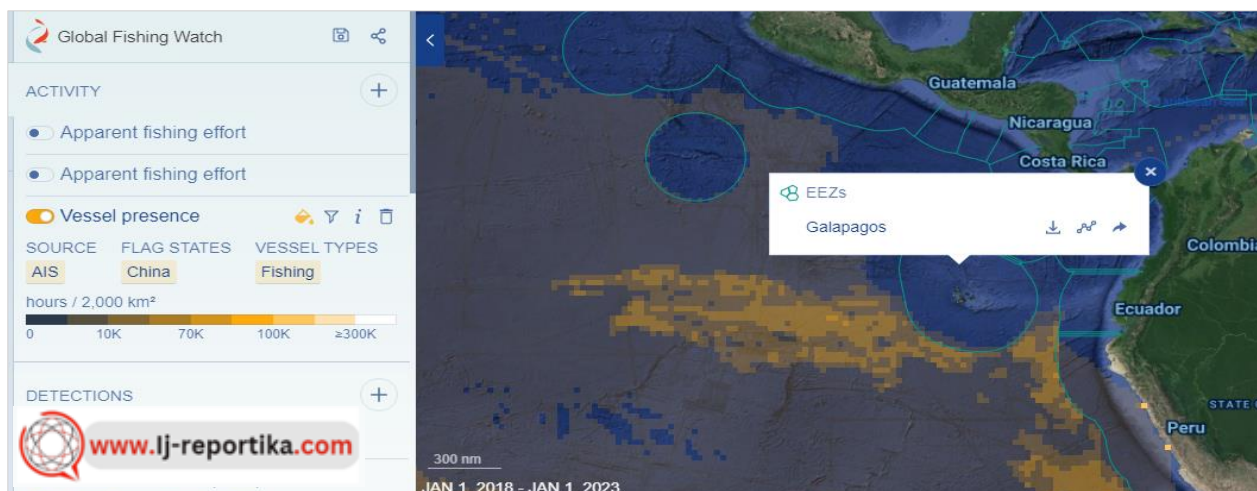


Figure: Map depicting the intensity of Chinese fishing around Galapagos Islands from Jan 2018- Jan 2023

Argentina

In 2016, a fishing Trawler flying the **Chinese flag** was sunk by **Argentine defense vessels** after being caught **fishing illegally within the country's EEZ**, according to media reports and a press release from the [Argentine Prefectura Naval](#), or coast guard.

The menace, however, has been a continued phenomenon ever since. **The Chinese fishing fleet fish outside the Argentinian EEZ every year with no mercy.** The coastal waters inside of the EEZ are bio-diverse and home to the second-largest Squid fishery in the world.

Since 2018, **Chinese fishing vessels have spent close to 1 million hours fishing between Argentina's maritime border and the high seas, yet spent 600,000 hours 'in the dark'¹³,** suspected of **illegal fishing within Argentine waters in the South Atlantic.**

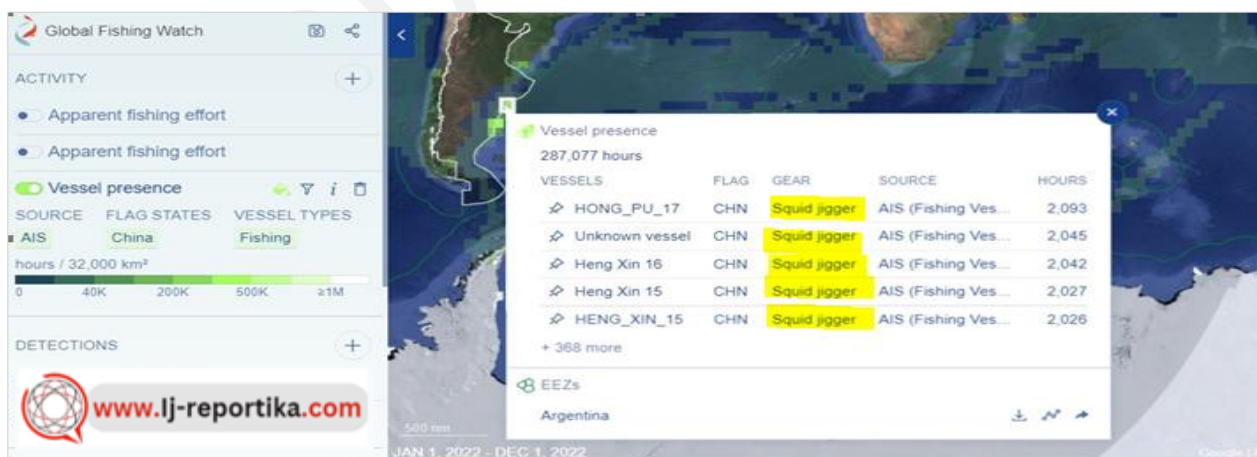


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

¹³ Going dark refers to when ships appear to disable their electronic tracking devices, or Automatic Identification Systems (AIS), and is associated with illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which fuels overfishing and undermines efforts to protect the seas and oceans.

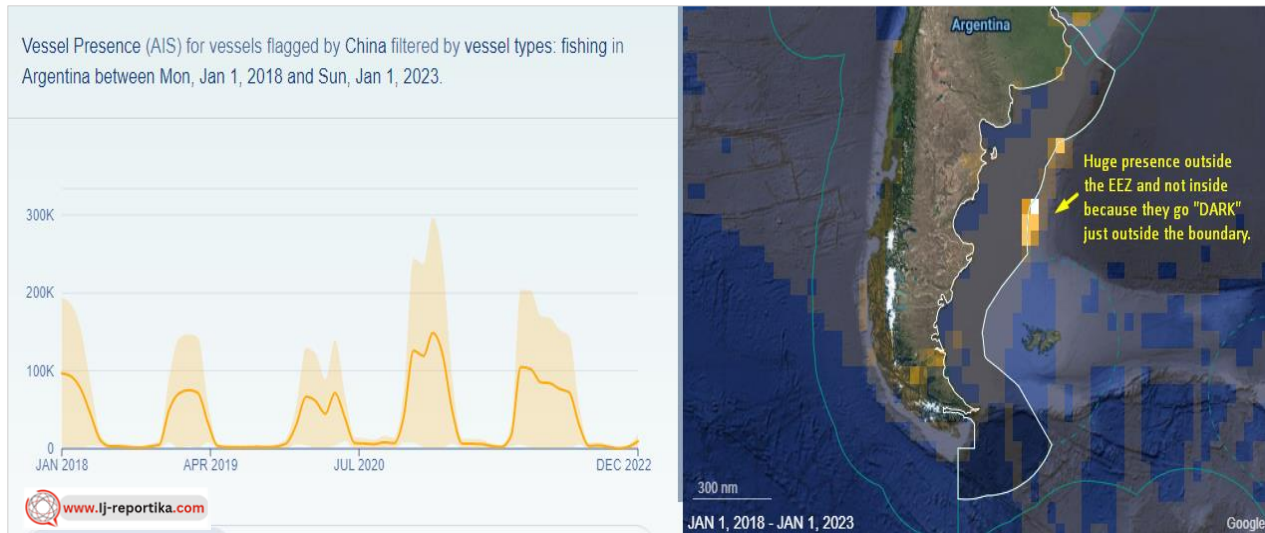


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2018 to Jan 2023

Chile

In Chile's EEZ, the Chinese ships seldom go dark and fish openly using **Squid Jiggers and Trawlers**.

The Chilean Navy's General Directorate of the Maritime Territory and Merchant Marine (Directemar, in Spanish) reported in a statement (in December 2020) that a total of **432 Chinese-flagged fishing vessels and 17 logistics support vessels were sailing off the country's coasts**.

Directemar said *"Of the previously mentioned [vessels], 77 are already in transit within the area of national responsibility, and only 11 of those are transiting through the Exclusive Economic Zone [EEZ], without using their gear or carrying out fishing activities,"*

As per the exclusive findings of **Ij-Reportika**, the statement of Directemar highly **underreports the number of Chinese fishing vessels in Chilean waters**.

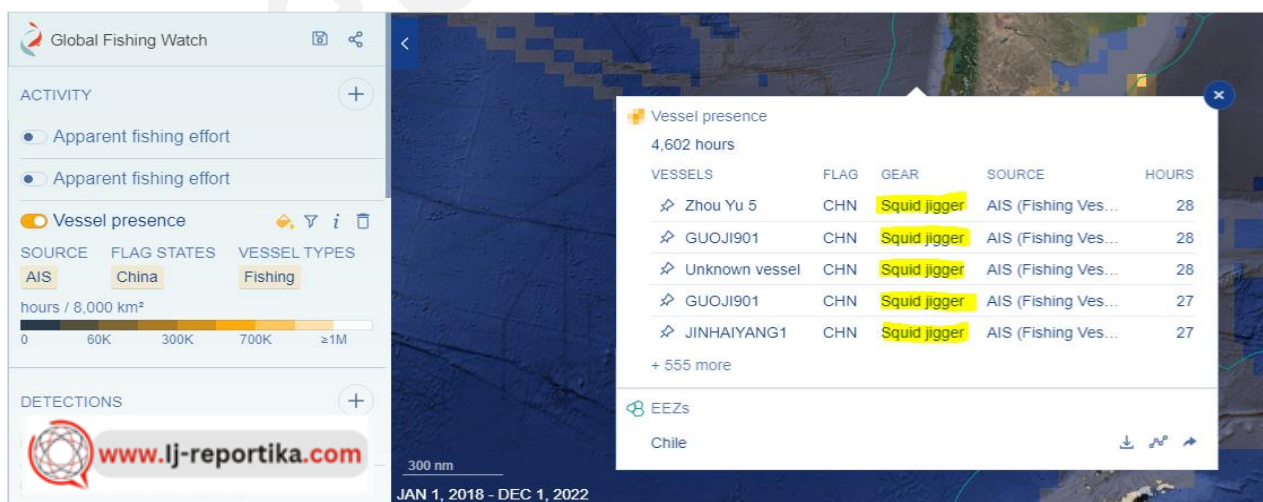


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

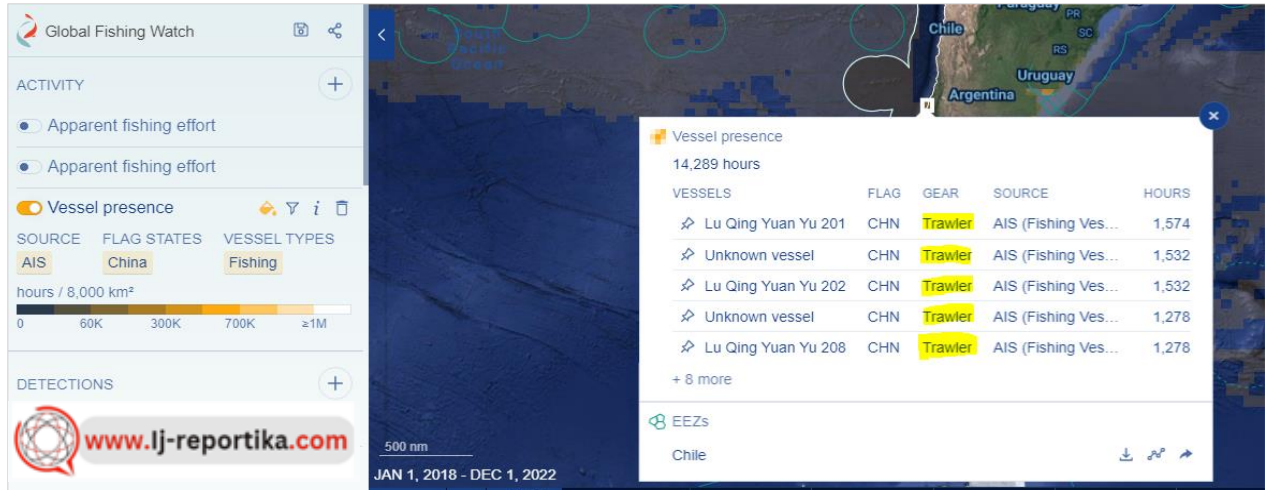


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Even though the presence of Chinese vessels has **decreased since 2020**, the hours of fishing are still a substantial **52k hours in 2022**. The **total hours of fishing in the Chilean Waters is over 7,00,000 hours (including illegal fishing and using deceiving flags)**, according to the on-ground investigation of the Ij-Reportika.

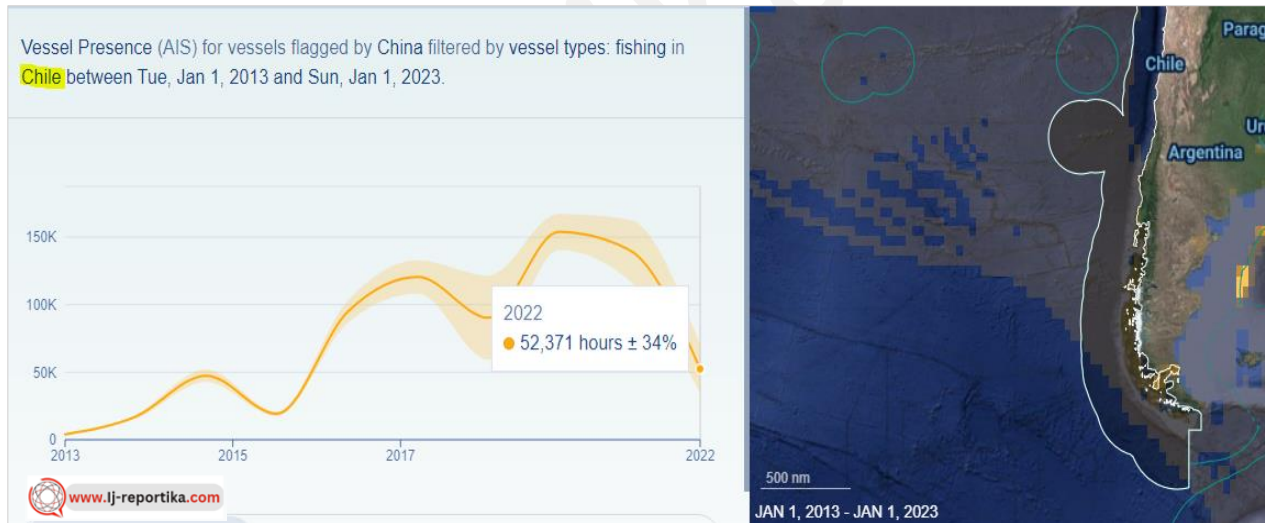


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2013 to Jan 2023

Brazil

Similar to Western Sahara, **Brazil has seen a massive gain in Chinese fishing activity in the past three years**. The Chinese ships spent long hours in Brazilian waters “**in the Dark**”. However, efforts by Brazil to control the menace in the past few years are praiseworthy.

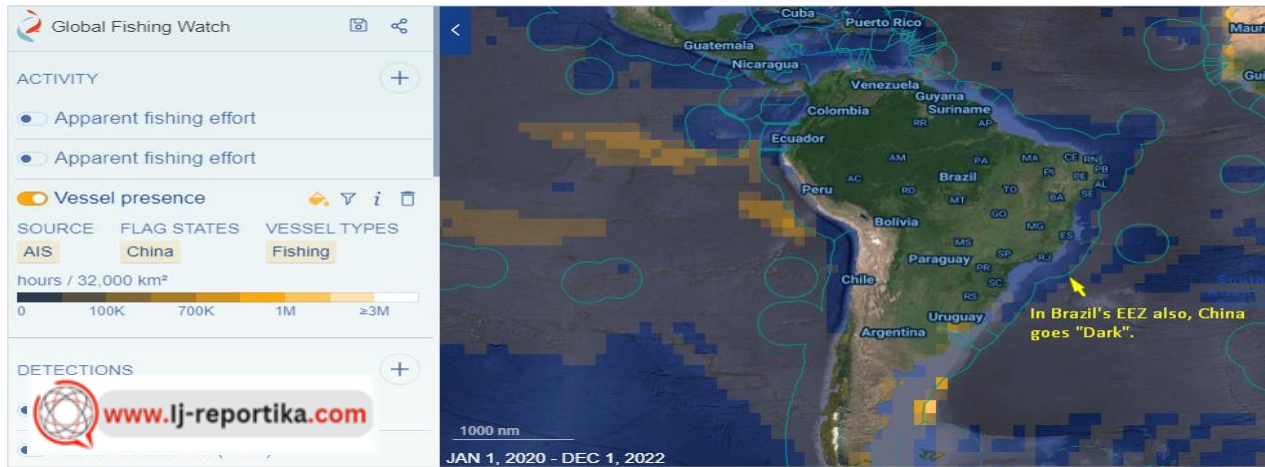


Figure: Map depicting the intensity of Chinese fishing around Brazil from Jan 2020- Dec 2022



Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

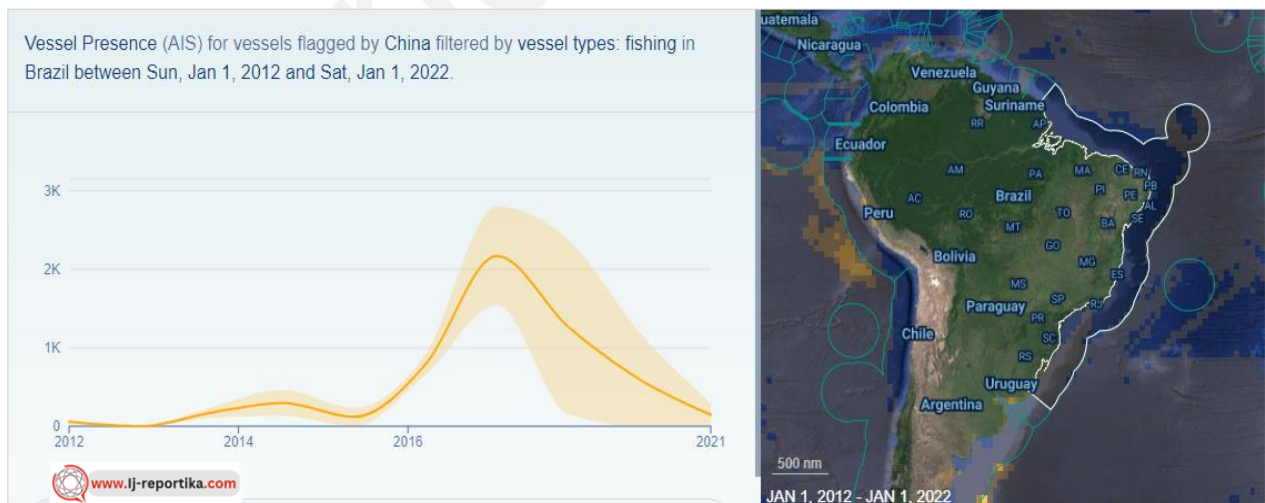


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2012 to Jan 2022

Uruguay

In July 2022, **11 tons of Squid were found in a Chinese-flagged vessel that was captured by the Uruguayan Navy**, after a long chase in the Uruguayan EEZ.

Chinese fishing vessels are a cause of concern for the Uruguayan locals and the ruling governments. **The vessels are not only present near the EEZ boundary but also the land boundary of the country.**

China deployed most of its vessels in 2022 **on the Uruguayan land border.** It includes **drifting Long liners¹⁴, Trawlers, and Squid Jiggers.**

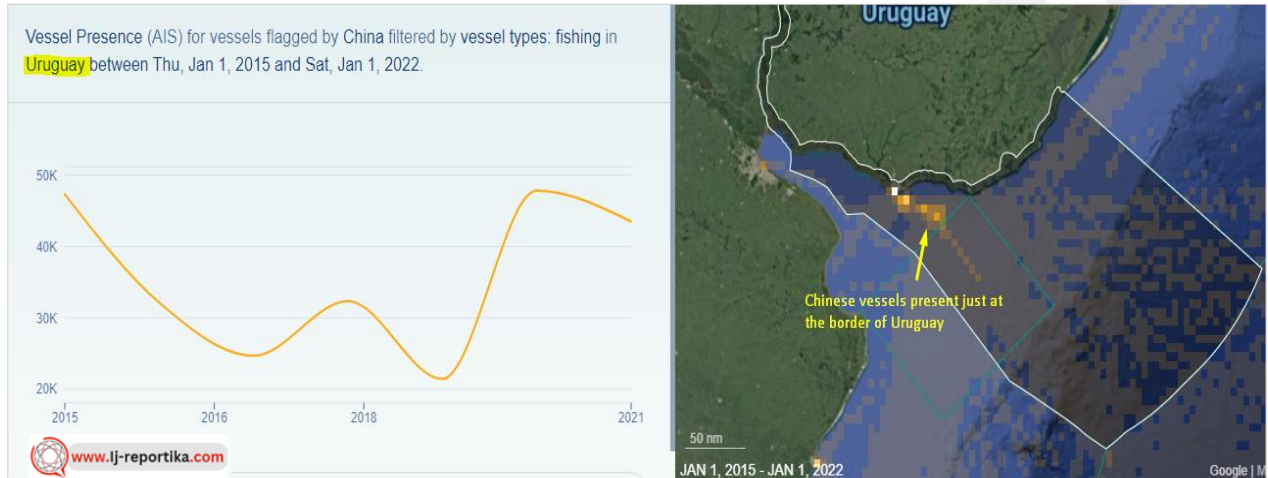


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2015 to Jan 2022

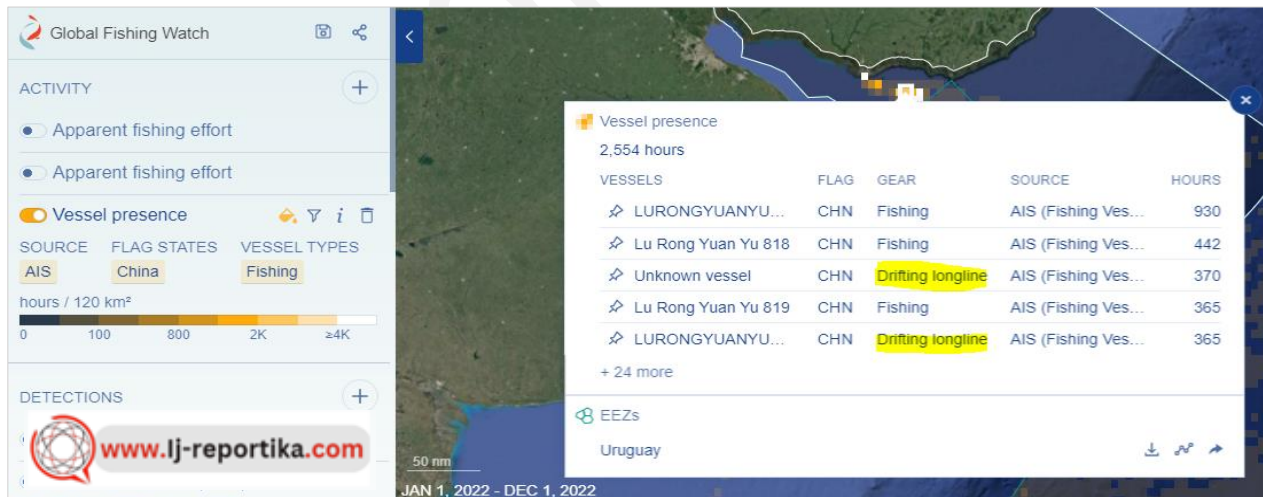


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

¹⁴ A long line kept near the surface or at a certain depth by means of regularly spaced floats. Drifting long lines may be of considerable length, and the snoods are usually longer and more widely spaced than for the bottom long lines. Some drifting long lines are set vertically, each line hanging from a float at the surface. They are usually worked in groups of several lines operated by a single boat. Also called drift line.

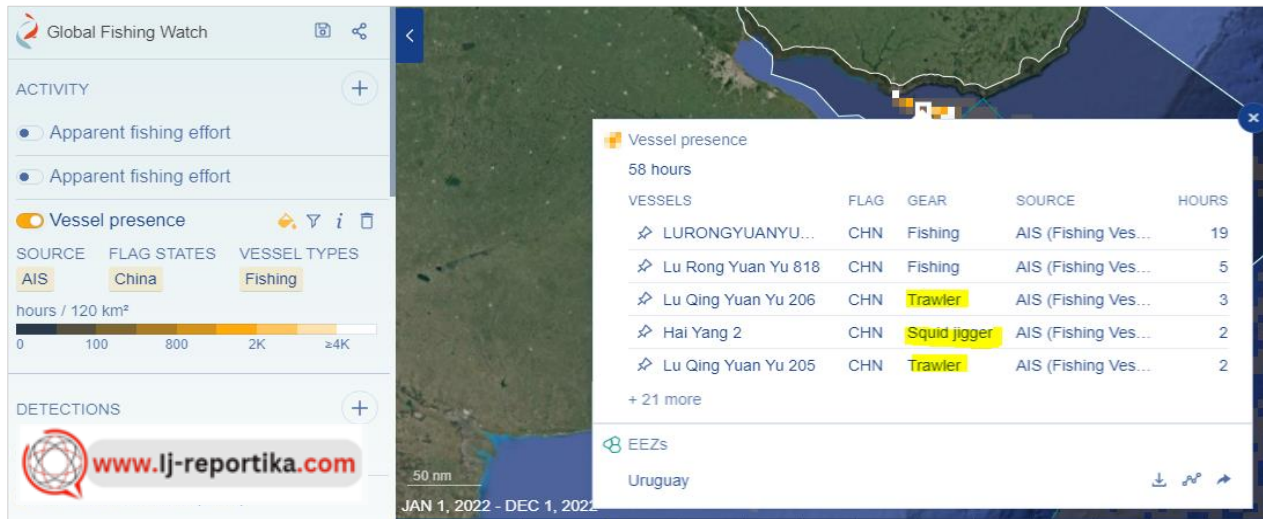


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ



Figure: Map depicting live locations of Chinese fishing vessels near Uruguay (In December 2022)

Peru

Fishermen in Peru have sounded the **alarm about Chinese overfishing of giant Squid**, which is the country's **second-biggest marine resource after anchovies**. Squid fishing ordinarily provides about **\$800 million in revenue and thousands of jobs for Peruvians**, but the industry is on the **verge of being wiped out by the unwelcome competition from the Chinese**.

Moreover, the Chinese presence has completely derailed Peru's carefully managed program to impose harvest limits to ensure the sustainability of the Squid population. **Several Squid Jiggers were discovered by Ij-Reportika just at the Peruvian land boundary this year.**

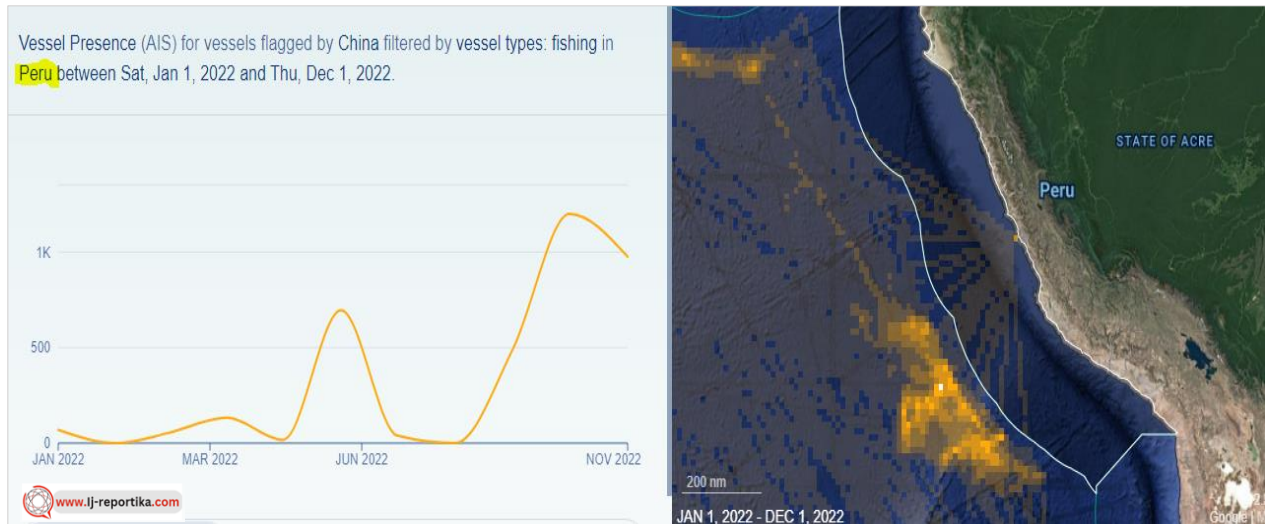


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Dec 2022

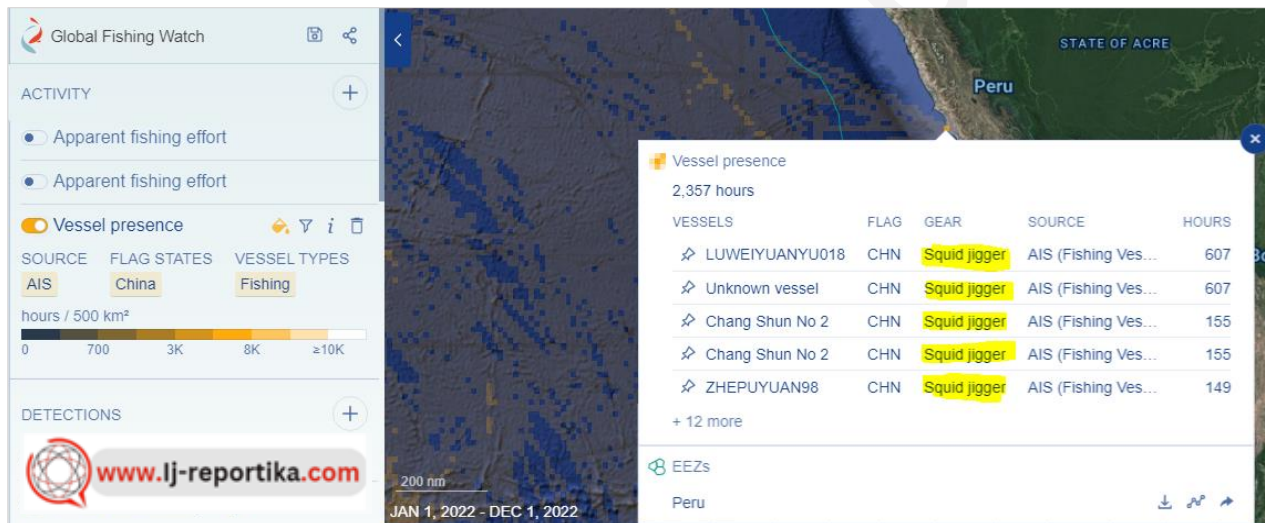


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Chinese Activity near China

South China Sea

South China Sea fisheries are estimated to generate **\$100 billion per year, supporting around 3.7 million people**. In the contentious region of the South China Sea, the Chinese DWF activities have not been very significant. Overfishing in the previous decade and climate change depleted most of the marine area. **Since 2000, catch rates have declined by 70%, and large fish stocks have shrunk by 90% in the South China Sea.**

Fishing fleets that operate as de facto **maritime militias** under the control of authorities in Beijing have **carried out construction activities at four unoccupied features in the Spratly Islands over the past decade**, according to media reports and satellite imagery. Some sand bars and other formations in the area expanded more than ten times in size in recent years.

China asserts rights to more than **80% of the South China Sea** based on a 1947 map showing vague markings that have since become known as the “[nine-dash line](#).” It has previously said it has the sovereign right to build upon its territory.

China’s actions have prompted other nations in the region to **step up defense spending and also undertake reclamation work**. For eg, Vietnam expanded dredging and landfill work at several of Spratly outposts this year.

Despite the depleted marine resources in the region Chinese fishing vessels' presence is observed by Ij-Reportika. **Chinese fishing activities increased in the South China Sea as they carried out construction activities in the Spratly Islands.**

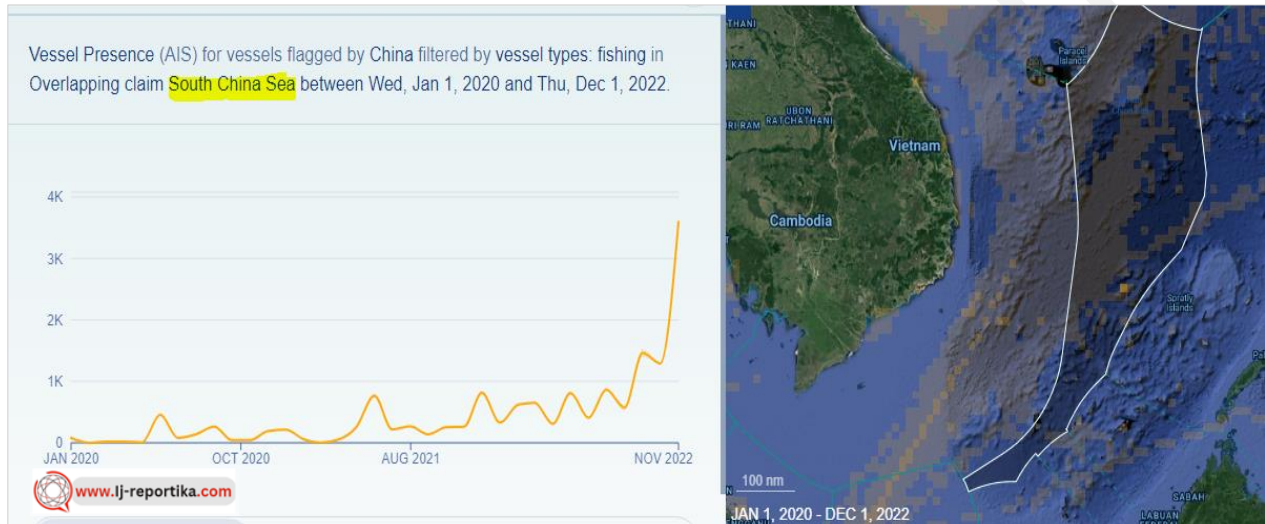


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2020 to Dec 2022

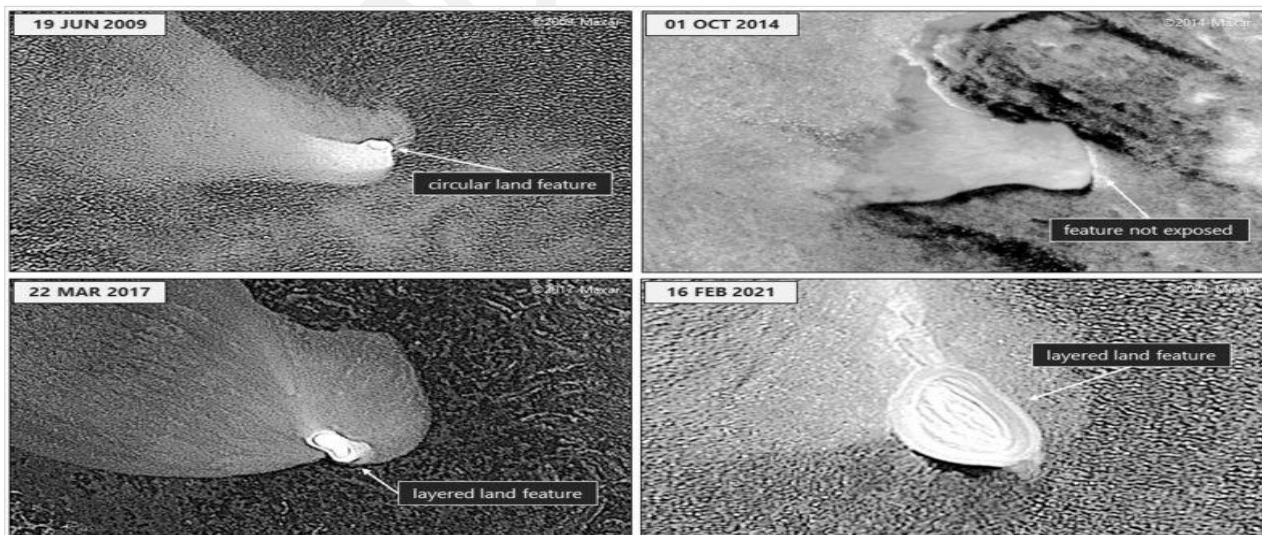


Figure: Physical changes to a layered land feature at Sandy Cay between 2009 and 2021. (Source: Bloomberg News)

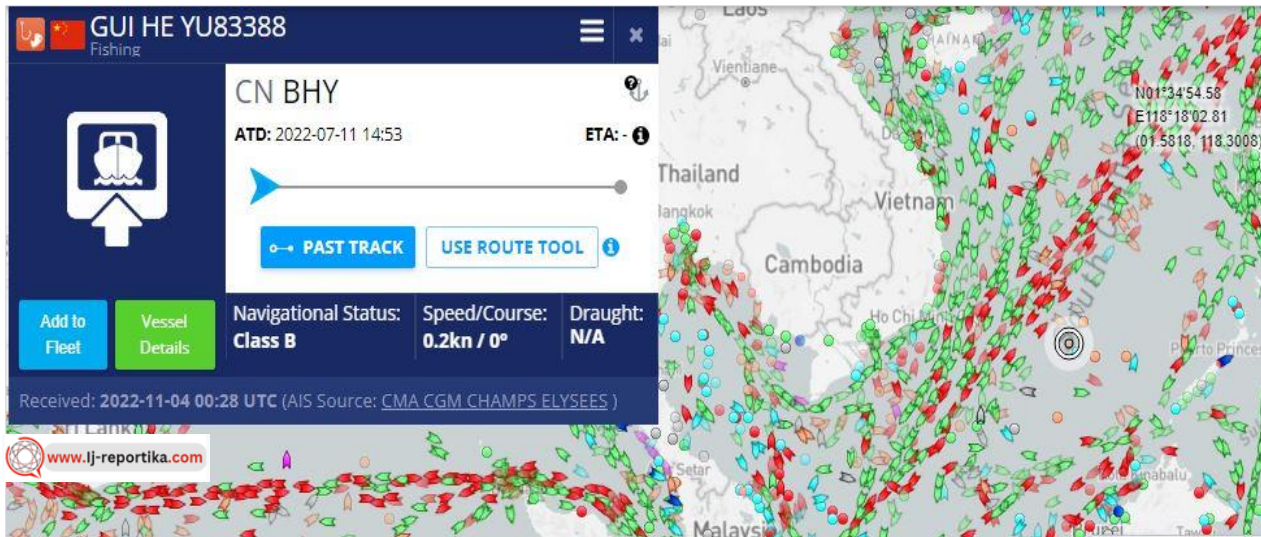


Figure: Map depicting live locations of Gui He Yu83388 in the South China Sea (In November 2022)

The Chinese DWF activities around the contentious area (9-dash line), in the EEZs of **Vietnam** and the **Philippines**, have been a cause of concern though. In both countries, China has fished for over a **million** hours this year through its **Long liners, Tuna purse seines¹⁵, Squid Jiggers, and Trawlers**.

Vietnam

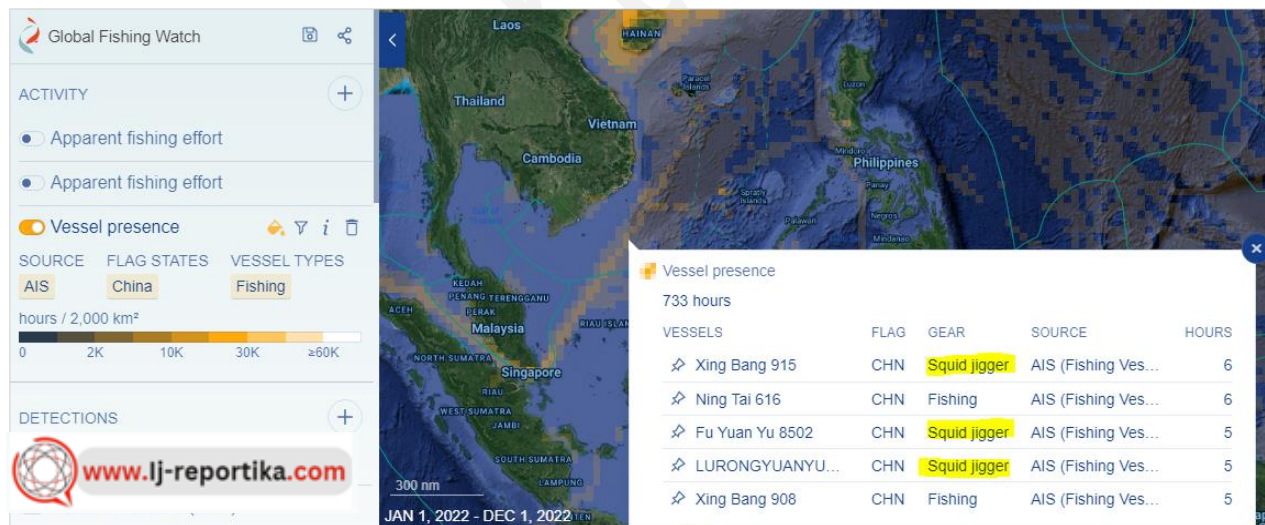


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

¹⁵ Purse seines are used in the open ocean to target dense schools of single-species pelagic (mid water) fish like tuna and mackerel. A vertical net 'curtain' is used to surround the school of fish, the bottom of which is then drawn together to enclose the fish, rather like tightening the cords of a drawstring purse.

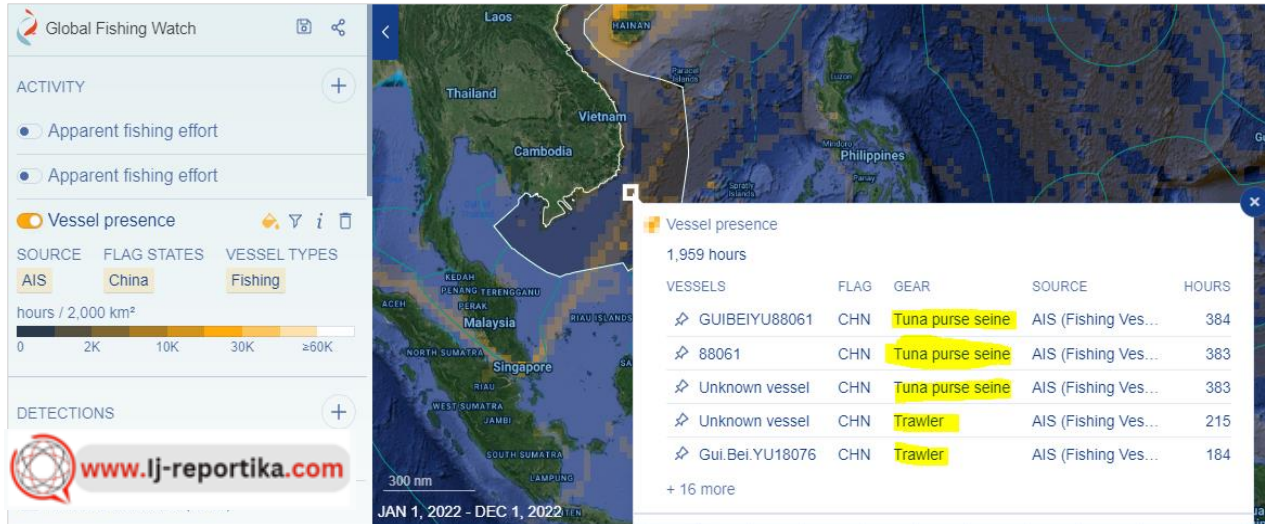


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

Philippines

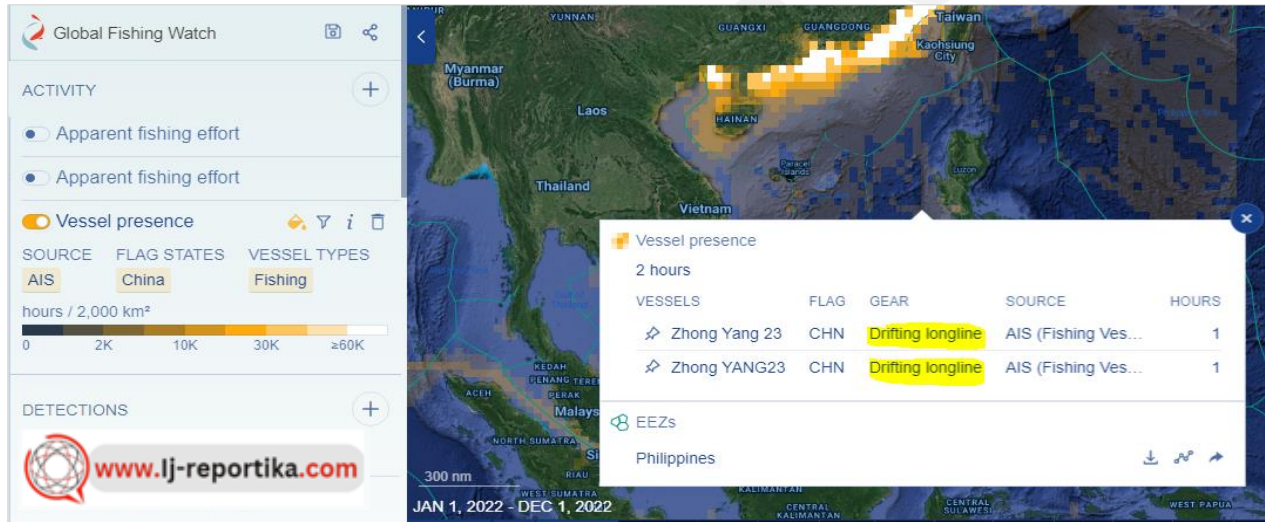


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

East China Sea and Yellow Sea

Due to their proximity, Japan and South Korea are the most vulnerable and the most impacted countries by Chinese DWF. Conflicts between **Chinese fishermen and Japanese Fishermen or South Korean fishermen are a common sight in the region.**

Japan

China Coast Guard ships and fishing vessels persistently continue unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the waters around the **Senkaku Islands**. This includes approaching Japanese fishing vessels inside Japanese territorial waters and intrusions by ships mounted with artillery.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan said *“The Senkaku Islands are indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law, and are, in fact, effectively under the Japanese control. In the first place, there exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands.*

It is a violation of international law for the China Coast Guard ships to act making their assertions in Japanese territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands, and such acts will not be tolerated.”

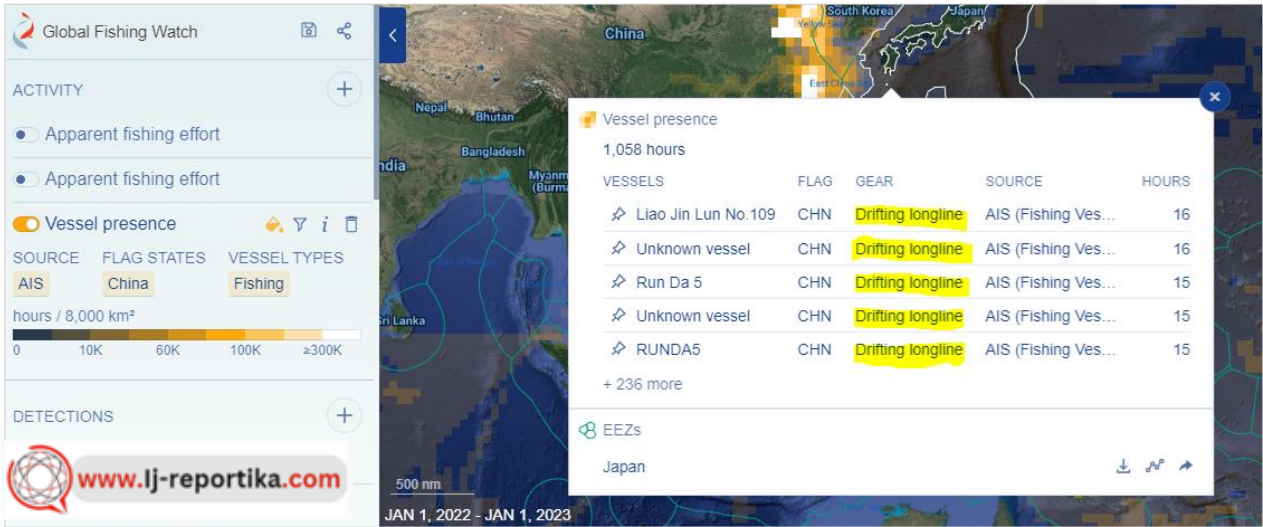


Figure: Some of the Chinese fishing vessels present near the EEZ

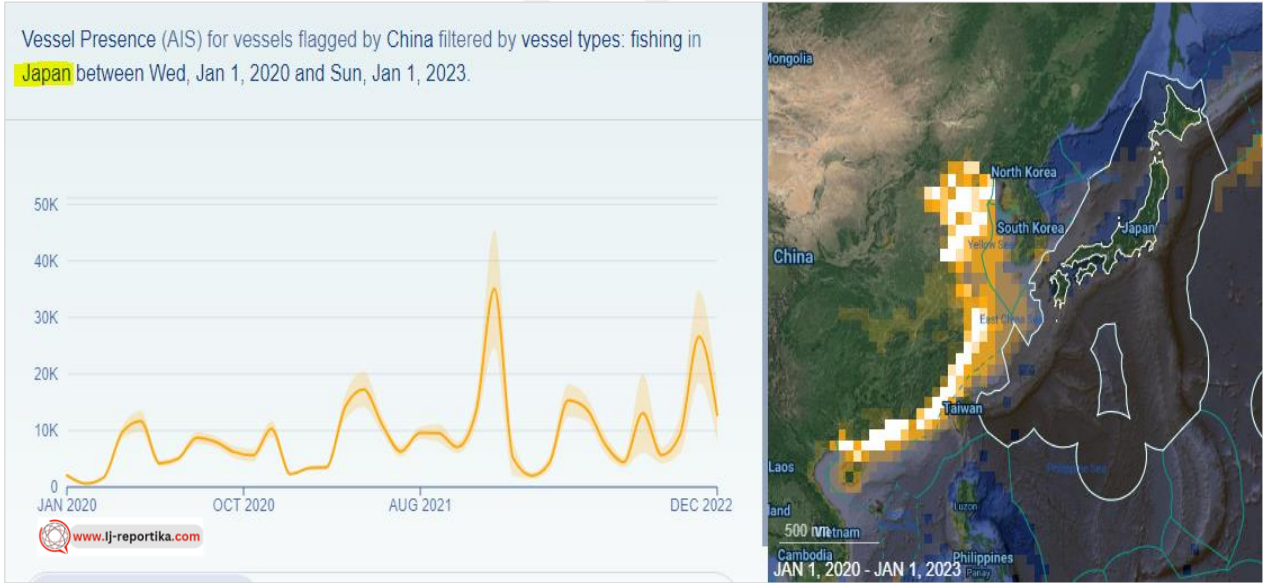


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2020 to Jan 2023

South Korea

South Korea has the most violated EEZ with over **300k hours reported Chinese-flagged ships fishing in their EEZ**. The region West of South Korea is the worst affected region of all. The South Korean and Chinese governments held **several talks** since the beginning of this decade to control the fishing menace in vain in the longer run.

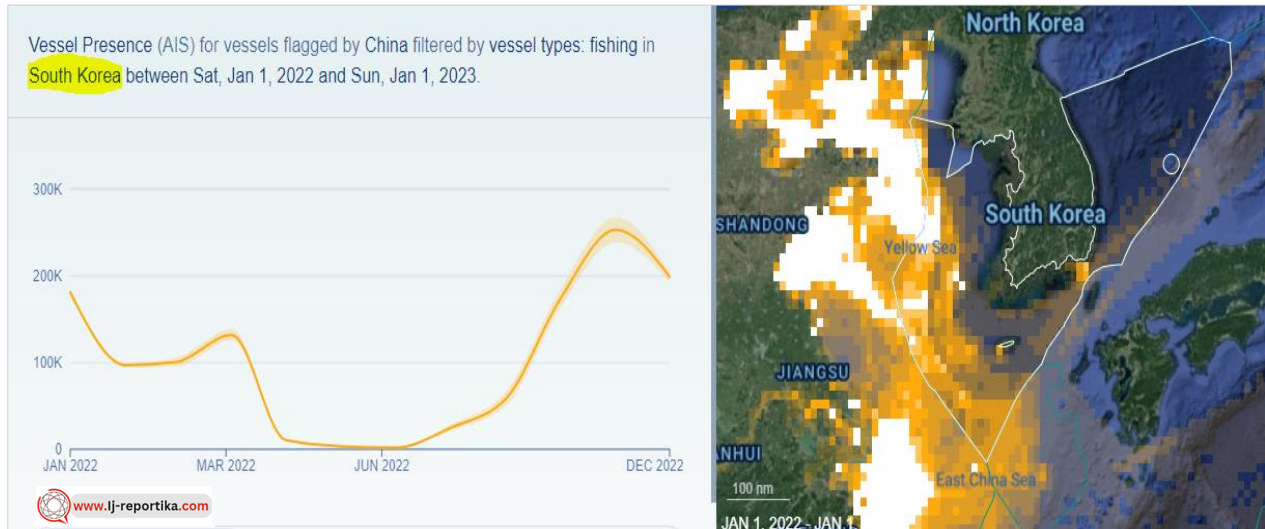


Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

Russia

Surprisingly, Chinese Trawlers were also seen in the EEZ of Russia. **The activity peaked this year in September with over 35000 hours of legal fishing and over 1,00,000 hours of dark surfing by China.**



Figure: Chinese vessel presence change from Jan 2022 to Jan 2023

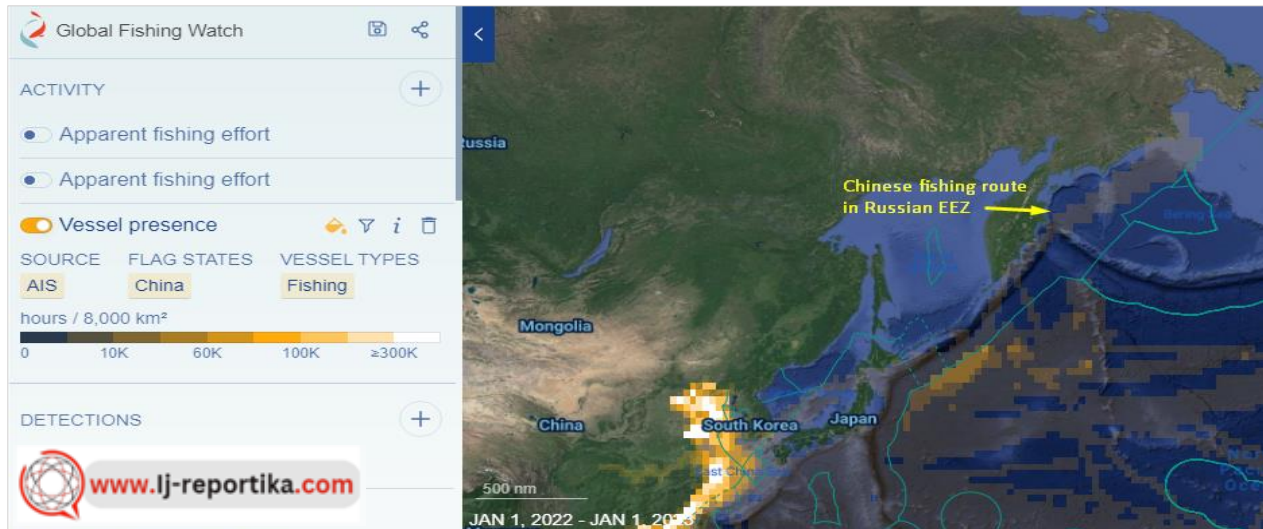


Figure: Chinese vessels fishing route in the Russian EEZ in 2022

Issues faced due to Chinese DWF

1. **Bottom Trawling:** Trawling by Chinese Trawlers entails significant bycatch (e.g. of juvenile fish, sharks, and sea turtles), damages the seafloor, and harms coral reefs. It also disturbs areas where fish congregate, which artisanal fishers have traditionally used to identify key fishing grounds.

Trawlers the world over are destroying the coral reefs that aquatic animals rely on to live and breed, and, in the process, contributing to ocean acidification, warmer seas, and reduced oxygen levels in the water. Severe overfishing and destruction of the reefs are ravaging coastal communities that depend on these waters for their livelihoods and survival.

2. **Disputes:** Disputes with Chinese fishing vessels operating illegally in other countries' waters, including those of [Indonesia](#), [Japan](#), [North](#) and [South Korea](#), and [Vietnam](#), sometimes lead to arrests of Chinese fishers, who are infamous for fighting back to the point where **coast guard members of other countries have died**.

In the western Pacific, “the Chinese fleet has a [fearsome reputation](#) for systemic illegal fishing and aggressive tactics when faced with competitors or foreign patrol vessels.” On one occasion, a **coast guard ship from South Korea was [sunk](#) after being rammed by a Chinese vessel**.

The DWF in **the South China Sea** has carried out construction activities at four unoccupied features in the Spratly Islands over the past decade leading to further disputes in the region.

3. **Maritime Militia:** Chinese fishers serve as a [maritime militia](#), with China [accepting](#) that its distant-water fishing vessels are **pseudo-military instruments**. Chinese [fishermen](#) are provided **basic military training** and education in **safeguarding Chinese sovereignty**. Armed fishing boats are often used to harass vessels from other countries and to assert China's claims of sovereignty over disputed waters, such as around the **Senkaku Islands**. They also serve as **mobile surveillance stations for the Chinese military**.

Following are some of the issues faced by **African countries** due to the Chinese DWF.

1. **Government corruption:** Local **officials sell excessive fishing permits or take bribes to turn a blind eye to illegal DWF activities**. African governments are reluctant to make arrests or sanctions to avoid jeopardizing **Chinese development aid**. That's why despite the close presence of the Chinese DWF on the borders of the African countries, the governments turn a blind eye towards them.
2. **Protests:** There have been [numerous protests](#) by the locals against the **livelihood crisis and environmental damage due to Chinese DWF in Senegal, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Nigeria, Gambia, and Togo**.
3. **Impoverishing African fishermen:** A hundred million people of Africa depend on the protein from **small pelagic fish such as Sardinella, fished by 330,000 local fishermen**. The amount of **small pelagics in the catches of the [Chinese Trawlers has risen to 75%](#)** because they have caught nearly all the bottom fish. This has led to unemployment as well as deficiencies in the local fishermen leading to impoverishment.
4. **Misusing Flags of the host countries:** It is reported in countries like Ghana that China's fleets often use the flag of the countries in which they are fishing. This protects them from the local laws and protects them from getting caught by the AIS as well. **For eg. The vessels – [Yu Feng 1, 3, and 4](#) – were all built in China in 2016** and were all flying the Chinese flag before arriving in Ghana, but then through corrupt practices, they fished in the Ghanaian waters using the Ghanaian flag.
5. **Racial abuse:** Kenyan fishers working aboard Chinese Trawlers in the Indian Ocean reported widespread mistreatment and abuse by their Chinese managers, [even threats of being pushed overboard](#). Many Africans have died onboard the Chinese fishing vessels due to mistreatment.

Following are some of the issues faced by countries in the **IOR** due to the Chinese DWF.

1. **Fisheries business taking a toll:** Fishermen operating in the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and Southern part of the IOR have seen their business take a massive hit with the arrival of Chinese Trawlers and Long liners.

2. **Maritime Security:** The presence of Chinese Trawlers in the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and the Bay of Bengal jeopardize the maritime security of Srilanka, Maldives, Madagascar, Australia, and India by fishing in their EEZ. Indian Navy has raised serious concerns regarding the same for the IOR region.
3. **ISR activities:** There are illegal deployments of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) research vessels along with the fishing vessels for deep-sea mining and ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance) activities that threaten the maritime security of the region.

Following are some of the issues faced by **South American countries** due to the Chinese DWF.

1. **Diplomatic and Legal Protests:** The Chinese DWF activities have prompted diplomatic and legal protests in most of the **South American nations**. The fleet has also been linked to **illegal activity, including encroaching on other countries' territorial waters, tolerating labor abuses, and catching endangered species**. In 2017, Ecuador seized a refrigerated cargo ship, the Fu Yuan Yu Leng 999, carrying an illicit cargo of 6,620 sharks, whose fins are a delicacy in China.
2. **Dumping of waste:** In the Galapagos archipelago, biologists and experts say Chinese boats in the region are dumping huge amounts of plastic waste into the water. Similar issues have been reported in Asian and African waters as well.



Figure: Garbage with Chinese labels on the shores of the Galapagos Archipelago

3. **Shark fishing:** Shark fishing is uniformly banned throughout Central and South America, but huge demand for it in China — particularly in Hong Kong, apparently — induces the Chinese ships to ignore the bans, hiding the illegal catch by transferring it between ships to evade the different countries' naval or coast guard patrols.

Sources :

- <https://globalfishingwatch.org/>
- <https://maritime-executive.com/editorials/no-ordinary-boats-identifying-china-s-maritime-militia>
- <https://activeoceans.wordpress.com/2015/05/13/environmental-impacts-of-trawling-and-longline-fishing/>
- https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/chilean-navy-increases-surveillance-due-to-chinese-fishing-fleets-threat/#.Y6FH_3bMLIV
- <https://www.marinevesseltraffic.com/vessels/FU-YUAN-YU-8897/CURRENT-POSITION/8786363/412440379>
- <https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/home/centerx:81.5/centery:5.0/zoom:5>
- <https://www.vesselfinder.com/?imo=8786363>
- <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0461en/online/sofia/2022/capture-fisheries-production.html>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/extra-regional-fishing-fleets-present-in-indian-ocean-navy/article66131872.ece>