

# Prevention of Vietnamese Stowaways via Sea to Taiwan – Measures Proposed to Hsinchu Government as an Example

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**Abstract-** Previous literature on stowaways in Taiwan mostly focused on those from China, less on those from Vietnam. However, the percentage of Vietnamese stowaways has exceeded that of Chinese stowaways, as times have changed and economic situations have shifted. In fact, the percentage of Vietnamese stowaways continues to increase, and they find new techniques in slipping themselves into Taiwan. The illegal entry of Vietnamese stowaways has posed a social hazard and a threat to national security. Therefore, it is an imperative to come up with preventive measures. This study adopted the Modified Delphi Method and Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to research the preventive and control measures adopted by the Coast Guard Administration on stowaways. It discussed the merits and demerits of the mechanisms, policies, and systems on preventing and controlling the stowaways by the Coast Guard Administration. Based on the results, research findings and suggestions were proposed. Regarding relevant problems, this study proposed improvement plans and coping strategies for the implementation of preventive and control measures, as well as the actual seizing operations, in order to curb the problems caused by the stowaways of Vietnam, and contribute to the national security. The results of this study showed that the influential factors that affect the preventive and controlling measures on stowaways from Vietnam are (in the order of priority): voluntary smuggling, planned smuggling, duty command center, leadership and command, and establishment of joint force to combat smuggling. The findings can serve as reference to future policy-making of relevant units.

**Keywords: Vietnam, smuggling, preventive measures, modified Delphi method, Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)**

## I. INTRODUCTION

### *1. Research Background and Motives*

The Coast Guard Administration (CGA) is responsible for coastal safety and security of the Republic of China. Since its inception over ten years ago, the CGA has been at the forefront of the coastal defense in Taiwan, protecting the marine rights of the country and the life and properties of the people. It also spares no efforts in the assurance of the appropriateness of law enforcement. The goal is to ensure the fairness, thoroughness and suitability of legal measures for Taiwan as a marine nation.

The researcher works in the CGA, and handles stowaway cases on a regular basis, thus having the first-hand experience of witnessing the adverse impact of these cases. This study probed into the modus operandis of Vietnamese stowaways in order to devise preventive measures for the Hsinchu government.

### *2. Research Questions and Objectives*

The increasing interactions between the Taiwan Strait have contributed to the massive reduction of Chinese stowaways seeking to sneak into Taiwan. In fact, the largest group of arrested stowaways are from Vietnam, followed by those from Indonesia. In order to help the front-line organizations to understand the characteristics of stowaways and their evolving mode of operations, the CGA, has consolidated the investigation transcripts concerning the busted stowaways from 2016 and up to date. Among these cases, four were opportunistic attempts by Indonesia fishermen and one attempt from a Chinese seeking to take a flight to Taiwan with forged documents. All the remaining 27 cases were organized efforts by Vietnamese stowaways. It is hoped that this research initiative can help to prevent Vietnamese stowaways from sneaking into Taiwan.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *1. Comparison of Stowaways to China and to Taiwan*

This paper employs the case study method, in the examination of the government's management of outbound travels and the change in the modus operandi of stowaways. This paper argues that China is no longer a pure exporter of stowaways. Rather, the strong economic growth has attracted an increasing number of stowaways directly to China or via other countries (Hsiao, 2016).

2. The study on the border policy in Taiwan focuses on how the CGA cracked down on Vietnamese stowaways attempting to land in Taiwan via fishery boats in China.

This paper conducts a literature review and performs in-depth interviews to explore the issues associated with how Vietnamese stowaways coming to Taiwan via fishery boats in China.

This paper suggests that the profile of stowaways change over time. In the early days, the stowaways from

China were mainly male workers. Nowadays they are mostly prostitutes. Meanwhile, the growth of the Chinese economy and the improvement of the China-Taiwan relationship have seen the change in the method of sneaking in Taiwan to a legal façade such as fictitious marriages, visits to relatives and sightseeing (Chang, 2015).

### *3. Modus Operandi: Chinese Stowaways vs. Vietnamese Stowaways Coming to Taiwan*

This paper samples the stowaways from China and Vietnam to Taiwan busted in 2007-2013. The focus is on the stowaways from South East Asia, with supplementary data on Chinese stowaways. The purpose is to apply the push and pull theory to explain the stowaway attempts and analyse different sneak-in methods and profiles.

This paper argues that the growing job market and the better economic environment in China have mitigated the interest of stowaways coming to Taiwan. On the contrary, the percentage of stowaways from other countries has been on a steady increase. The year 2007 saw the percentage of stowaways from other countries surpass that from China, among the cases cracked down by the CGA. In fact, these foreign stowaways are mostly from South East Asia, particularly Vietnam. The percentage continues to rise (Yang, 2014).

### *4. Landing Hours and Locations of Vietnamese Stowaways and Marine Meteorology in Taiwan (2007~2011)*

This paper conducts a literature review on the Vietnamese stowaways seeking to land on Taiwan. A total of 19 Vietnamese stowaways busted by the CGA in 2007-2011 were sampled. An analysis on the time and geographic information was performed in order to construct the possible paths of these stowaways find their way in.

The study finds that there have been Vietnamese stowaways each year since 2007. Most cases occur in the second quarter (from April to June) and they typically get on the shores from 12:00 am to 4:00 am, at southern cities/counties (such as Tainan, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung) (Tseng, 2013).

### *5. Landing Hours of Chinese Stowaways and Marine Meteorology in Taiwan (2007~2011)*

This paper conducts a literature review on the Chinese stowaways seeking to settlement in Taiwan. The National Immigration Agency's statistics on Chinese stowaways in 2001-2008 were sampled, and processed with MYSQL and EXCEL's VBA functions. A total of 11,251 data points were collated and, after the deletion of incomplete data, 8,654 effective data points were selected. The time-series data (arranged by the hour, month, quarter and year) and the geo data concerning individual cities and counties were contrasted and analyzed, and cross comparisons were made by factoring into the marine meteorology data.

The study indicates that most Chinese stowaways come onshore at night time, from 9 pm to 4 am. New Taipei City, Keelung City, and Yilan County are their landing hotspots, and approximately half of these stowaways choose these locations. It is also worth noting that they do not take advantage of the high tides when landing (Chen, 2010).

### III. RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

This paper aims to develop the preventive and control policies against stowaways from Vietnam on fishing boats, and adopt the modified Delphi method and AHP questionnaire to generalize the modus operandi of stowaways and propose suggestions on prevention and control.

#### *1. Research Method and Procedures*

This paper employs the modified Delphi method and AHP as the main research techniques. Given a small sample in the questionnaire survey, the statistics approaches for large samples may not be effective. Meanwhile, a high number of hierarchical levels may be too taxing for respondents and cause their level of attention to drop, and detriment the efficiency of the model. This paper hence decides to ensure research quality with consistency tests.

#### *2. Research Subjects*

The modified Delphi method collates a diversity of perspectives and helps to synthesize consensus based on various inputs. However, the personal values and instincts are also part of the mix in the valuation process. In other words, the application of the modified Delphi method relies on the intuition and judgement of participants. Therefore, the selection of participants is the key.

The consideration for the participating experts should take into account their professionalism, as well as their familiarity and experience with the modified Delphi method. This is because their reliability, accuracy and consistency matters. The researcher invited a total of 12 experts working in the CGA with hands-on experience of dealing with Vietnamese stowaways, including the Captain, the Deputy Captain, the Director, the Specialists, and the Investigators.

#### *3. Data Consolidation*

The research methodology consists of the following eight steps:

Step 1: Definition of the research topics on the basis of research background and motives;

Step 2: Establishment of assessment criteria by using the modified Delphi method;

Step 3: Gathering of data, papers and books according to the relevance;

Step 4: First interviews with experts on the basis of the abovementioned assessment criteria and data/publications collated;

Step 5: Development of the questionnaire for the second interviews with experts by modifying the question list for the first interview, so as to construct a complete and effective decision framework;

Step 6: Design of the AHP questionnaire;

Step 7: Questionnaire survey by using the AHP method;

Step 8: Synthesis and analysis of the weightings for decision criteria.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. Weightings are ranked on the basis of comprehensive scoring, in order to establish the relative importance of individual influencing factors. The purpose of this exercise is to assist in the formation of preventive measures for Vietnamese stowaways coming to Taiwan via fishery boats.

Target layer	Principles	Weight of principles	Secondary principles	Weight of secondary principles	Comprehensive weight	Ranking
Weightings for decision criteria of preventive measures against Vietnamese stowaways	Modus operandi	0.500	Spontaneous	0.390	0.195	1
			Planned	0.307	0.154	2
			Human trafficking	0.153	0.077	7
			Attempts by fishermen	0.150	0.075	8
	Suggestions	0.319	Collaboration in combating stowaway crimes	0.310	0.099	4
			Increase of penalties	0.209	0.067	9
			Encouragement of whistleblowing	0.188	0.060	11
			Confiscation of illegal vessels	0.131	0.042	13
			Enhancement of law reinforcement skills and intensity in specific sea regions	0.161	0.051	12
	Investigations	0.366	Command Center	0.344	0.126	3
			Leadership	0.264	0.097	5
			Higher importance in performance reviews	0.225	0.082	6
			More consultations and deployments	0.168	0.061	10

2. Modus operandi and investigations are the critical factors in the overall assessment. They are among the top

five criteria, evidenced of their significant influence.

Weight ranking	Assessment criteria	Overall weight	Dimension
1	Spontaneous	0.195	Modus operandi
2	Planned	0.154	Modus operandi
3	Command Center	0.126	Investigations
4	Collaboration in combating stowaway crimes	0.099	Suggestions
5	Leadership	0.097	Investigations
6	Higher importance in performance reviews	0.082	Investigations
7	Human trafficking	0.077	Modus operandi
8	Attempts by fishermen	0.075	Modus operandi
9	Increase of penalties	0.067	Suggestions
10	More consultations and deployments	0.061	Investigations
11	Encouragement of whistleblowing	0.060	Suggestions
12	Enhancement of law reinforcement skills and intensity in specific sea regions	0.051	Suggestions
13	Confiscation of illegal vessels	0.042	Suggestions

## *Section 2 Research Results and Suggestions*

### *1. Current Preventive Measures Focus on Spontaneous and Planning Stowaways*

The questionnaire analysis suggests that the current preventive measures pay more attention to spontaneous and planned stowaways. This is possibly due to the sporadic nature of spontaneous stowaways and a heavier impact on the planning of front-line duty officers. Meanwhile, the planned operations are organized efforts, with a bigger scale measured by the number of stowaways. They tend to attract headline attention and public scrutiny,

and therefore, affect the first-line investigators.

Based on the above stated, front-line personnel prioritize their efforts in response to the pressure from supervisors. The result is the heavier weight skewed toward spontaneous and planned stowaways shown in the questionnaire survey. The key towards the next step is the direction of investigation momentum.

## *2. Command Centre and Leadership Important to Investigators*

The survey indicates that Command Centre and leadership are important to front-line law reinforcement personnel. This is primarily due to the difficulty for any single organization to carry out the investigations. In fact, this requires joint efforts from multiple law reinforcement agencies. In the crackdown of Vietnamese stowaways via fishery boats, coastal investigation teams, police stations and the National Immigrant Agency have to gather evidence in advance. The law reinforcement also calls for support from coastal guards and frigate fleets.

In sum, it is imperative to ensure strong leadership from Command Centre to coordinate the front-line resources from different government agencies, in order to achieve effective prevention, investigation and law reinforcement.

## *3. Establishment of A Cooperative Mechanism to Combat Stowaway Crimes*

According to the questionnaire survey, all the front-line personnel agree that a joint effort in fighting stowaway crimes is the top priority. The cross-border collaboration to constantly keep an eye on suspicious behaviour when boarding the ships overseas is the best way to bust Vietnamese stowaways coming to Taiwan via fishing boats. However, this requires the cooperation between harbours and intelligence centres in different countries. The enhancement of these cooperative ties is critical.

4. Based on the abovementioned survey findings, this paper seeks to provide suggestions from the perspective of front-line investigators. It is hoped that these practical recommendations on the crackdown of Vietnamese stowaways can assist law reinforcement organizations.

### *(1) Performance Reviews as the Tool to Direct Investigation Efforts*

The research findings indicate that front-line personnel make priorities according to pressure from supervisors. In other words, if the front-line resources can be properly directed, it can significantly enhance the effectiveness of preventive measures. Based on the result, this paper suggests that performance reviews can serve the tool to orchestrate the efforts. For example, extra weightings should be given during the special projects and for targeted regions, in order to avoid uneven distributions of efforts and ensure the comprehensive deployment of law reinforcement operations.

### *(2) Prevention and Cross-Agency Cooperation*

There are often multiple contributors to a single stowaway case. The coordination of resources across different

government agencies will effectively increase the barrier for Vietnamese stowaways seeking to sneak into Taiwan. Effective prevention can be achieved ex-ante and ex-post.

*1. Ex-Ante Preventions*

Vietnamese stowaways are driven by economic incentives, i.e. seek work in Taiwan for money. Therefore, the focus from coastal guards, police stations and labour authorities should be on the crackdown of employees who fail to comply with the law. This will defer stowaways from the source.

*2. Ex-Post Prevention*

It is necessary to enhance the inquiries and interrogations of the busted stowaways. The law reinforcement officers and immigration agencies should work together to find out the modus operandi, organization and transportation means of Vietnamese stowaways whilst they are waiting for repatriation. The lessons learned can help to prevent the stowaways from the same channel, and cut off the umbilical cord of similar stowaway attempts.

The juridical police and administrative authorities in Taiwan are responsible for specific tasks in the prevention of Vietnamese stowaways seeking to enter into Taiwan. However, there is still room for improvement in the integration and orchestration of the resources across government agencies. A centralized approach to coordinate efforts from different organizations will be highly beneficial to the effectiveness of administrative and law reinforcement operations.

*(3) Enhancement of Cooperation and Deployment Consultation with Other Countries*

The support from law reinforcement authorities is necessary for collaboration and deployment consultation with other countries. The current barriers to international cooperation and consultation are the restrictions on government employees going to China and the lack of funding resources. These issues should be resolved in order to facilitate investigations.

*1. Relaxation of restrictions relevant personnel on traveling to China*

The majority of the boats used by Vietnamese stowaways come from China. Therefore, the deployment and collaboration with China is essential. However, the coastal guards in Taiwan as the first line of defense against Vietnamese stowaways are not allowed to visit China. This has been detrimental to the gathering of intelligence and the cooperation of crackdown efforts. It is suggested that such restrictions should be relaxed in order to achieve effective investigations.

*2. Funding Support to Law Reinforcement Organizations*

Intelligence acquisition is the key to success of crackdowns on Vietnamese stowaways. However, there is no sufficient funding to incentivize informers or to establish contacts with info sources. As a result, first-line investigators experience unnecessary hurdles in the deployment of intelligence networks. It is suggested that



more funding should be allowed on the basis of the characteristics of different law reinforcement organizations so that investigators can focus on their jobs.

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