Please answer the below questions in the boxes provided. There is a 3,000 character limit per question. When you have completed your answers please hit the submit button at the bottom of the page.

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Threats remain almost constant and a 'given' geopolitically when we look at Russian vessels ability to invoke a perceived threatening presence either off Castletownbere or in the English Channel. I'm not up to speed at all on the state of Ireland's protocols in response to these scenarios but my reply above might offer an answer as to the strands of support needed that might work in tandem to internationalise further the respect and recognition of Irish capabilities when it comes to diplomacy, crisis management and deflecting sensitive scenarios.
How are vulnerabilities perceived by the electorate? Via media, usually. Either the elected representatives fully understand implications, long term vision and ring-fence a policy with appropriate budget or they will focus on local issues. Rarely both.
Visibility on the international stage is crucial. A fleet and staff (naval, aviation, human capital).
For example, is there sufficient public awareness and support for the current policy on immigration and specifically the role of the defence forces in a potential situation (at port or border)?
On trade, I'm also not aware of essential stock / storage requirements or positioning however my understanding [redacted] evolves around civil monitoring and ensuring supply chain stability.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Keeping commercial ports and hinterlands open to supply chains will require best practices in health and safety protocols. [redacted] Strong protocols reassure. Civil service staffing (in uniform) are critical to application.
Partnerships on the European level are a given.
Maintaining the fishing industry through economic and legislative support.
Communication infrastructure is a critical component to security overall and oversight belongs with Defence.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ports, dry ports, river potential, hinterland access and emerging population centres, to be conscious of bottlenecks and strategise on port functionality.
For ports with a civil-military context, reenergise with involvement in maritime education opportunities (we only see Cork at the moment but how about Waterford (reaches inland up to Kilkenny!) and Donegal?

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Technology: breakbulk and liner technology refreshed for commercial activity and supply chains / investment in ports
Infrastructure: support as needed for localised marine industries/ fisheries in terms of maintenance, grants for dredging (for example) training in civil defence, educational support. Review port authority personnel structures nationally and ensure occupants of posts are suitable qualified.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes.
Ensure Memorandum of Understanding between government and private entities are updated in the interests of national priorities: preferential use of equipment, berthing priority, staff allocation and training opportunities, affiliation with universities for research and development, employment opportunities and exposure to international innovation.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring

countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

All of above, to enable full understanding of crucial partnership commitments, opportunities and trending topics. And to form a candid and actionable dialogue around what Ireland should be doing to position itself globally relative to geopolitical safeguards and in serving it’s citizens

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes.

Key elements have been outlined above: engage with industry, intensify education, find ways to increase budget significantly, enhance reputation and staff retention. Involve communities.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

Maritime security is not an elite pursuit if those knowledgeable in maritime life and processes : you might be surprised at the level of support from environmentalists, tourism sector industry, local government and inland waterways communities. Leverage it all to get the budget needed to proceed.

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Threats from Russia China and USA. We need to protect cables for industry, green energy facilities, fisheries and drug cartels

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

We need to invest with the most up to date equipment and train our defence forces both sea and air

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

I don’t have the knowledge in this area

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

As stated above

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

I think this is essential

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, with today's threats it would be naive to think we would act alone

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

We very definitely need an action plan and we need to act on it as fast as possible. As a country we always seem to take so long to implement it

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

I feel we have some excellent people from our security services who have a very great knowledge of how we should go about protecting ourselves, use them!!

Contact

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Questions

Please answer the below questions in the boxes provided. There is a 3,000 character limit per question. When you have completed your answers please hit the submit button at the bottom of the page.

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

THE NEED FOR A BROAD DEFINITION OF MARITIME SECURITY AND THREATS

The main thing to appreciate is that a wide and broad definition of maritime security and maritime threats is advisable: it is not just about defending a state at sea. In fact, Ireland's threats are varied and shape-shift between the conventional and unconventional.

Threats cross the domains of maritime safety, rescue, navigation, protecting natural resources and increasingly there is valuable energy generation at sea, subsea cables and infrastructure, as well as a need to secure shipping or ports. Facing down organised maritime crime/drugs smuggling is increasingly a feature as well. This activity could be regarded as Coastguard or Garda type duty-not a security issue. However, some 'criminal' activity can be of a scale or nature that it poses a threat to our stability as a society-for example the volume and nature of drug smuggling that has been intredicted in recent years. And there is also the risk that some foreign state actors and or non-state actors can engage in hostile actions, subversion or poses risks within our Exclusive Economic Zone.

BRING HUMAN SECURITY INTO MARITIME SECURITY

Academic debates on security increasingly are infomred by a focus on human security which places the human subject, often the most vulnerbale persons, at the centre of any security policy. This is also consistent with a human rights approach. We easily forget that while maritime security must often be about protecting vessels, and social infrastructures like ports, or natural resources, it must also be about protecting people and human life. Therefore the prevention of lethal threats should be central and threats which move in this direction should be prioritised.

[redacted]

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

In my opinion there are two emerging threats that Ireland needs to watch and develop a response to above all others.

A LARGE INTER-STATE WAR AT SEA IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

In the short term, the geopolitical situation has dramatically changed and there is a possibility that some of the larger military powers in the global system (and in the UN), notably Russia, China and the USA, may engage in aggressive, reckless unilateral military actions at sea and land, towards states nearby to them. This could be in the Baltic, Taiwan or Greenland. Any larger scale great power conflict at sea would likely pose COVID19 like disruptions to shipping, trade and global supply chains. Ireland is very vulnerable to such disruption that would come from a big inter-state war in the global system. Ireland has therefore a strong interest in upholding a legal rules based order at sea. At a minimum there should be detailed simulations and wargaming to explore how we could be impacted and how we could respond. Strategic stockpiles of essential materials, fuels, medicines and other critical supplies may seem like a rather drastic and old fashioned response. Yet we already have such provisions for oil and gas, and a dedicated National Oil Reserves Agency. Arguably a wider stratgeic stockpile management planning capacity should be developed in close partnership with our port companies, the leading industrial and consumer importers and exporters, as well at the obvious state agencies (HSE, etc.)

CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL AND WILL BECOME A MARITIME SECURITY PROBLEM

The second threat used to be considered a long-term one: climate change. However, it is increasingly observable that the more worrying climate change scenarios are becoming less implausible. The possibility that by the 2050s Ireland faces abrupt and sudden climate and weather change has to be taken seriously. This could include variations in Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC) which would further extreme weather events. Some would object this is not a maritime security threat at all. How could it reinforce or drive security problems at sea? One example is a growing possibility that there will be resource conflicts between states over valuable resources-for example if fish populations migrate northwards because of temperature change. Such 'fisheries conflicts' with nearby states are not fanciful. There is a long history of fisheries disputes and conflict in the wider North and West Atlantic.

[redacted]

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

We should not have a narrow or small vision of just securing our own little patch of water-we should be part of global coalitions of the willing who uphold a rules based order at sea based on the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea.

We forget that our EEZ is huge: it stretches far out into the Atlantic-over 200km from the Aran Islands to encompass an area 10 times the size of our land territory. Threats can also manifest in our less extensive territorial seas which extend out to 22km.

There is a need to communicate clearly to ordinary citizens and stakeholders that our legal powers vary between these two zones. In our territorial seas our Naval Service predominantly, and other agencies such as the Gardai, the Revenue Commissioners, etc. have signficant legal powers and discretion, for example to board a suspcious vessel. Once vessels are beyond territorial waters, and in our EEZ, those power are much less. The EEZ confers permiting powers over extraction, use of the seabed, and notably fishing (on behalf of the EU). Yet the general legal right to control marine traffic and activity beyond territorial waters is actually very limited. This was revealed during the saga of threaten Russian Naval exercise in our EEZ before the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

We also forget that we are connected to a wider ocean. Instability and threats that are emerging in the Baltic of the Southern Atlantic (for example narco subs coming from Latin America) will eventually spread instabillity to our waters, either directly or indirectly. A sabotage of a windfarm off the coast of Denmark will increase insurance premiums for offshore wind developers in Ireland. Attacks by non-state actors in the Red Sea or in the Persian Gulf would increase shipping costs and disrupt inventories in Dublin port. If there are states that are evading sanctions by employing 'shadow fleets' of oid oil tankers with no proper flag-state status or inadeqaute insurance, then these could be ecological time bombs passing our waters. If an oil spill accident occurs who will pay and who will be held responsible?

The implication is we need a layered maritime security. We need policies and capabilities for the 22km territorial sea. We need the same but more expansive for our EEZ, and then a wider capability to be part of a partnership approach for the global oceans. For example, our Naval Service could be deployed from time to time with the Canadian Navy in the mid-Atlantic to detect organised illegal fishing on the high seas, or the Air Corps may deploy their maritime patrol aircraft to Cape Verde to help intercept narco submarines, whose cargoes eventually end up in Ireland. Currently one reason why this does not happen is we simply have too few crew and struggle to have enough ships and the number of maritime patrol aircraft are just two. The other reason is a cautious mindset, tradition and low level of ambition.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

INVEST IN PEOPLE
The most important strategic investment should be in people and in human institutions. The most credible maritime security institution of the state is the Naval Service. No other service or agency has the capability, experience or presence that they have demonstrated. Unfortunately we risk reaching a tipping point where personnel recruitment and retention problems threaten this institutional capability. Its urgent that the personnel problems of the Naval Service be resolved-a task that all navies are finding difficult and not something that can be fixed in a short time. There is no silver bullet to solve this problem but flexible thinking is required about how to structure pay, benefits, and work-life balance.

INVEST IN POOLING (DRONES)
Technology is always evolving but Ireland is quite limited in terms of the technological base it can bring to effect security. Our patrol vessels lack advanced sensors-although some improvements have emerged with towed sonar and small drones that can be deployed in the water. These improvements are nonetheless far too few, too slow and cautious. Much greater investment in aerial drones, surface drones and underwater drones should be undertaken. Ireland could show leadership here by initiating a pooling system with other EU states, perhaps as a PESCO project. The idea here is that because drones are expensive and risky in terms of technology maturity, a pooling approach could work to lower costs and risks. It would allow greater numbers of sensors to be acquired offering economies of scale. The scope for sharing repair cycles and operational lesson learning would also be greater. To be clear what is advocated here are monitoring drones-not drones for carrying weapons or naval warfare.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes this is obvious.

There are many private or quasi-private maritime bodies, and some of these are commercial and some are charities or voluntary (e.g. RNLI). There are also private firms that have expertise in maritime technology, sensors, data analytics.

There is a need for a Maritime Security Consultative Forum which allows regular structured dialogue between state-semi-state-private and other groups-such as NGOs (Coastwatch) and academia.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring

countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Maritime security cannot be delivered in isolation and because Ireland has limited resources it needs good partnership relationships with its neighbours. These partnerships are about exchanging information, at times intelligence, and also access to joint training, doctrine, technical standards and technology. In an emergency we may urgently need specific technical help from a nearby state. I'm thinking of the horrific possibility of a fire on a nuclear submarine in our EEZ for example. Our capabilities for dealing with a high level CBRN incident at sea are limited-we would need help from the UK, possibly US and/or France in that scenario. Irish participation in multi-national naval or coastguard exercises would be very useful here, as long as they are focused on relevant maritime threats (i.e not naval warfighting scenarios).

Unfortunately, there is a mix and match of EU and NATO memberships among our neighbours which is confusing and creates gaps in our co-operation space. For example, Iceland, the UK and Norway are not EU members, but they are full NATO members. We participate in maritime security discussions and policies at EU level without those countries at the table-which is a problems for them and us. Ireland is not a NATO member and it should be respected and understood that NATO membership is unlikely in the future. Ireland is not like Sweden and Finland who have recently joined NATO after long periods of neutrality. Ireland will likely remain neutral for the near future. Its arguably a settled policy and popular. There is no obvious political campaign for joining NATO, few senior political leaders or parties advocate for it and public opinion surveys show little support.

However, we do have a partnership agreement (NATO has these with many diverse states, including non-European states like New Zealand and neutral European states like Austria and Switzerland). It needs to be repeated that this is not a slippery slope to NATO membership but actually a functional way of co-operation without the costs of membership. Its gives use benefits without membership. Therefore the partnership structure with NATO should be embraced and not shied away from. In particular NATO is developing and responding to hybrid threats at sea in general and to threats to subsea cables or marine based energy infrastructure in particular. The EU is doing similar and it would be important to avoid duplication and make sure both organisations are 'adding value'. Both the EU and NATO need a co-operative relationship.

Specific partnerships on maritime security should also be explored with Canada, who share our values in upholding a rules based order at sea and for whom we could collaborate on initiatives on maritime security and fisheries on the high seas, and maritime security and climate change. Of note here is that Canada and the EU have signed a recent Security and Defence dialogue which includes scope for maritime security co-operation.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Without an action or implementation plan, any strategy is pretty worthless.

The key elements of any action plan can be sumarised as follows:

HOW will the strategy be produced-as a top down or bottom up exercise? Relatedly, will it be seen as legitimate and supported by the main stakeholders (e.g. Naval Service, DoD, Coastguard, Ports, etc.). As important would be cross-party senior political leadership-do they have buy in, support and understand the startegy? Finally, the general public-how will it be communicated to them?

WHO will "own" the strategy and have leadership to carry it out-will this be a clear agency or body and will there be continuity over time for specific leadership on delivery? It's no use appointing a person for a short period who is devoid of an institutional base-a type of weak facilitator. The identified person(s) and institutions must be sufficently senior and have standing to lead the strategy for several years.

HOW will the strategy be resourced? This is primarily a question of budget and funding, but it also relates to issue like sufficient personnel and staffing. Will a special once off capital allowance be made, and how to factor in recuring costs-for example these would be central to resolving Naval Service personnel issues.

WHAT will be the level of ambition and the core priorities? If a strategy is a timid and aspirational "to do list" then its a failure by definition. Equally an overaly ambitious plan is pointless. Ireland as a small state has limited resources and realism is required. Strategy requires hard choices-a small state cannot do everything and face every threat. If a maritime strategy becomes a laundry list of issues, all equally ranked, then its not a strategy in the real sense of that word. Ireland needs to prioritise based on a balanced analysis of the most likely/most harmful scenarios and threats. This means focusing above all on a few things and getting them right, while developing some contingency capacities for the long list of other threats that are either less likely or less serious.

WHEN will the strategy be agreed, and commenced? When will it be reviewed and asessed? Will there be delivery mile-stones to measure progress or delay?

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

[redacted]

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Illegal fishing and drug smuggling.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Unconventional or grey warfare targeting our EEZ, particularly underwater data and comms cables.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

West and southwest.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

The ability to crew and deploy sufficient aircraft and vessels, and improved capacity in satellite, cyber and electronic surveillance, acoustic monitoring and radar.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

No opinion.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

International cooperation is vital and should reflect Europe's vulnerability to attack on the western seaboard, and the fact that so many assets of international importance lie in our maritime domain. Equally, Ireland must recognise our own vulnerability as a nation in the context of our relatively small military force and large area to secure. Cooperation with NATO through the ITTP and with European agencies and States through the CISE are sensible initiatives.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

An Action Plan outlining the steps, timelines and budget to achieve improved maritime security should accompany the Strategy.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

[redacted] the recent awarding of a contract to Thales DMS for towed naval sonar for the Irish Naval Service. The importance of monitoring the subsea domain is obvious and the need to enhance maritime security is agreed. However, Mid-frequency Active Sonar (MFAS) has been implicated in many mass strandings of cetacean species; deep-diving species such as beaked whales, which inhabit the canyons off our continental shelf, are particularly vulnerable.

The Naval Service does not currently have MFAS capability, but other navies operating in the Atlantic do. Mass stranding events of deep-diving species have occurred in 2008, 2014/15, 2018 and 2020 on North-east Atlantic shores including Ireland, with Cuvier's and Sowerby's beaked whales, northern bottlenose whales and others found dead. While advanced decomposition and lack of access to post-mortem facilities did not allow a definitive link, the timing of events points to MFAS. In other jurisdictions the connection between MFAS and mass strandings has been with more certainty (e.g. de Quiros et al., 2019; Simonis et al., 2020), and the Spanish Government has had a ban on the use of MFAS around the Canary Islands since (2004) to protect beaked whales following mass stranding events. Cuvier's beaked whales stranded in the Canaries were exposed to MFAS and displayed epidemiological and pathological findings consistent with sonar (Fernandez et al., 2012).

Beaked whales are not the only species group which are susceptible, blue whales and fin whales have been shown to exhibit behavioural responses to simulated MFAS sound in tagging studies (Goldbogen et al., 2013; Southall et al., 2023). Fin whales are regular visitors to Irish waters, and blue whales have also been recorded. MFAS has also been implicated in pilot whale strandings (Dolman et al., 2010).

[redacted] approached the Naval Service offering our expertise in developing a suitable protocol for the use of MFAS in Irish waters that will minimise potential trauma to cetacean species. We believe that with care, the two objectives of protecting the Irish maritime domain while preventing injury to cetacean species protected under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC); under the Wildlife Act (1976) as amended; and within the Irish Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary declared in 1991, are possible.

References (links only for brevity)
Dolman et al (2010) doi: 10.1017/S175526720999114X.
Fernández et al (2012) doi: 10.4172/2155-9910.1000107
Goldbogen et al (2013) http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2013.0657
Simonis et al (2020) http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2020.0070
Southall et al (2023) https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.231775

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland’s maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

The UK leaving the EU, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the expansion of NATO as well as the century of underinvestment in maritime security in the state.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland’s maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Apathy about defence strategy is the biggest challenge to maritime security. One such example of apathy towards defence is that the Department of Defence has opened a public consultation on defence strategy with narrowly defined questions that would be better asked of experts in developing defence strategy.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

This question would be better asked of experts in defence strategy and based on analysis of the best available intelligence rather than being asked through a public consultation.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Strategic investment is required in building the competence to develop and action a coherent defence strategy within the Department of Defence.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

The private sector should play no role in maritime security strategy. Defence is a public good and should be planned for and executed in the public interest rather than involving the private sector in decision making.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Not necessarily in the short term. We have to develop our own strategy that upholds Ireland maritime security in the first instance. Thereafter there may be opportunities to increase co-operation with our EU neighbours in the future.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

No, as the Department of Defence little track record of successfully carrying out action plans. An action plan will only further delay action.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

I am very curios to find out why a public consultation on this process is considered a good use of time and resources. Surely the development of defence strategy, including a maritime security strategy, should be carried out by the divisions under the Assistance Secretary, Defence & Security Policy and not by asking a short series of questions of the public.

Contact

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Primary is communication infrastructure and readiness.
Under sea cables carry multiple terabytes of data daily.

Protect from he potential of data spying, data collection with specialized machinery.

Ireland Detect capabilities if that is happening and how ireland will responde in such cyber situations.

Physical damage of the cables by unintentional scenarios vs nation state attack.
How are protected, maintained, monitored.

Secondary is the energy sector.
We should have a tactical and strategic plan that enables ireland to.self sustain. We have limited sun, probably solar is an option but not the main one, we have a lot if waves and wind, let's promote and expand such technologies, making ireland appealing for investors on such, run specialized programs at the university for prepare our future students on the energy, sustainability and emerging technologies for energy.
We need to draft a plan that will span iteration building block at 1, 3, 6, 9 years horizons.
Ireland is uniquely positioned to be the frontier of wind and ocean waves energy, we can even imagine to export our energy to other countries if correctly implemented.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Technologies readiness.
Is ireland ready, skills set wide, to design, plan, implement, operate new energy technologies?
Let's add advanced university program, courses to prepare the future students.

Military protection
We have large coastal area to defend.
To be ready, we need to have proper suppoet units, adequate number of personnel and equipped with proper gear, proper military boats, radars, and so on.. so, we need increase our position from defense forces

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Priority should go in areas where we have the under sea cables.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

To have supremacy we nees to have Advanced military technologies. Investment should focus on technology and skills for the personnel that will operate such technologies

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, but only if the private sector will be properly skilled and accountable on the deliverables and actions.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

We cannot do it alone. We need to have partners and partnerships with other countries, when reasonable and relevant. Yes.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, having a strategy without good implementation plan is not doing much.
Detailed implementation plan, how it will be operated, tested, maintained.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

Contact Form

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

From [redacted] perspective as a developer of national fibre infrastructure, both terrestrial and future submarine systems one of the most significant vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security is the exposure of submarine fibre optic cables that carry the overwhelming majority of Ireland's digital traffic.

Ireland is uniquely positioned as a strategic transatlantic gateway for global internet and data flows, with over 20 active and planned subsea cables traversing Irish territorial waters. These routes connect Ireland directly to North America, the UK, and mainland Europe. As an island nation, 97–99% of Ireland's international data traffic is transmitted via submarine fibre, meaning that our economic stability, data sovereignty, and national security are entirely dependent on the integrity of these cable systems.

Despite this, there is currently minimal capability for persistent monitoring or defence of this infrastructure. Specific vulnerabilities include:

Lack of dedicated radar coverage along subsea cable corridors.
Limited deployment of maritime patrol vessels, particularly in regions of high-density cable traffic.
Infrequent reconnaissance or surveillance patrols (airborne or marine) to monitor surface activity over critical routes.
No submerged monitoring infrastructure or seabed surveillance to detect tampering or subsea activity near critical cable landing zones.
Absence of real-time tracking or alerts for vessel anchoring or fishing gear interference in sensitive areas.
While the commercial sector, [redacted], builds and maintains cable infrastructure to high technical standards, the strategic and economic importance of this infrastructure now exceeds the level of protection afforded to it. Additionally, the increasing geopolitical importance of fibre corridors, particularly with the growth of AI-driven compute, global cloud infrastructure, and critical data flows makes these systems a potential target for both state and non-state actors.

Finally, the lack of coordinated situational awareness or response protocol between government, commercial infrastructure owners, and defence entities leaves a critical gap in Ireland's maritime security landscape.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Looking ahead, one of the most significant emerging threats to Ireland's maritime security will be targeted interference with submarine fibre optic infrastructure, both from state-sponsored actors and sophisticated criminal or activist groups. As global dependence on cloud services, AI compute, and digital connectivity intensifies, submarine fibre cables are rapidly becoming high-value strategic assets and potential attack vectors.

Several future challenges can be anticipated:

State-level espionage, disruption, or sabotage of subsea cables, either through physical tampering (e.g. subsea drones, cable tapping) or indirect disruption (e.g. vessel interference near critical nodes).
Geopolitical tension zones impacting cable security—not only at landing points but across shared international waters, where Ireland's ability to monitor or intervene is currently limited.

Technological surveillance gaps — Ireland currently lacks persistent maritime domain awareness over subsea infrastructure. This includes the absence of:
Subsea monitoring sensors or smart buoy arrays
Real-time vessel tracking in sensitive zones
Autonomous or remotely operated marine surveillance systems
Integrated civil-military-commercial data sharing protocols
Over-centralisation of traffic through a limited number of routes and landing points, creating potential single points of failure in Ireland's digital economy.
Increased targeting of digital infrastructure during cyber-physical hybrid campaigns, where physical disruption of cable networks could be paired with cyberattacks on data centres or telecom nodes.

To prepare, Ireland must take a strategic approach that recognises digital infrastructure as critical national infrastructure. Specific actions should include:

Designation of submarine fibre corridors and landing zones as protected zones, with layered monitoring and alerting systems.

Deployment of subsea and surface monitoring technologies, including sonar buoys, smart cables, or seabed surveillance in high-risk areas.

Expansion of maritime patrol and reconnaissance operations—airborne and seaborne—focused specifically on infrastructure protection.

Formalised coordination frameworks between commercial operators, defence, and maritime authorities, allowing for early warning, information sharing, and rapid response to anomalies or threats.
Development of a national redundancy strategy, including diverse terrestrial backhaul, multi-route connectivity, and future satellite integration, to ensure continuity in the event of disruption.

[redacted] recognise the need to embed resilience and strategic alignment into both terrestrial and future submarine designs. As these systems underpin Ireland's role in the global digital economy, maritime security must evolve to match the value and vulnerability of the infrastructure beneath our waters.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes. From the perspective of national fibre infrastructure and maritime resilience, the Strategy should prioritise key zones where submarine cables land, intersect with international corridors, or are most vulnerable to interference. These areas are critical not only to Ireland's digital economy but also to broader European and transatlantic connectivity.

Priority areas should include:

Dublin Bay / East Coast Corridor
Ireland's highest concentration of data centre infrastructure and submarine cable landings.
Proximity to shipping routes and heavy marine traffic increases the risk of accidental damage or covert interference.
[redacted] national network and hyperscale operators converge here, Dublin represents a digital gateway requiring active protection.

South Coast – Cork / Youghal / Waterford
This region hosts multiple high-capacity transatlantic cables connecting to North America and is earmarked for further development.
Cork is a future endpoint for [redacted] dark fibre express route and a likely location for submarine cable backhaul into the national network.
As demand for compute and AI infrastructure grows, protecting this zone will be vital.

West Coast – Galway / Killala Bay / Mayo
An area of growing interest for diverse cable routes and redundancy.
Lower population density makes it more difficult to monitor but no less strategically important.
Infrastructure here offers vital route diversity from over-concentrated eastern hubs.

Landing Zones with Legacy Infrastructure
Cables over 15–20 years old remain in operation and could be more susceptible to degradation, interference, or exploitation.

These may not have the same embedded monitoring or security controls as newer systems and should be mapped and prioritised for oversight.

Strategic Intersections with Energy Infrastructure
Locations where fibre routes run near offshore energy assets (e.g. wind farms, interconnectors) should also be flagged, as dual-purpose sabotage or disruption becomes more likely in hybrid threat environments.
Targeting protection and surveillance resources at these critical locations and coordinating with commercial operators already active there would significantly enhance Ireland's maritime and digital resilience.

[redacted] view is that national infrastructure security must begin with visibility and deterrence at these strategic points, supported by both civil and defence coordination frameworks. A multi cable landing station should also be considered in strategic locations in the West and South of Ireland to facilitate a more strategic approach to licensing, cable routes and security.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

From the standpoint of digital infrastructure and national fibre networks, the most effective way to safeguard Ireland's maritime interests is to prioritise investments that enhance persistent visibility, resilience, and rapid response capability across subsea and coastal zones, particularly around critical infrastructure.

The following strategic investments should be prioritised:

1. Subsea Infrastructure Monitoring & Surveillance
Deploy seabed sensors and smart cable systems that can detect physical disturbances, tapping attempts, or subsea tampering in real time.
Install passive acoustic monitoring buoys near critical landing zones to detect anomalous vessel behaviour.
Develop integrated fibre-cable monitoring technology, allowing for pressure, strain, or signal integrity anomalies to trigger alerts.

2. Real-Time Marine Traffic Analytics
Invest in AI-enabled marine domain awareness systems that combine AIS (Automatic Identification System) data with satellite and radar feeds to flag unusual patterns of behaviour near cable routes.
Prioritise real-time alerts for anchoring, trawling, or loitering in cable protection zones.

3. Multi-Layered Surveillance and Patrol Capabilities
Expand Ireland's capacity for aerial, surface, and autonomous maritime patrols, especially in key cable corridors off the East and South coasts.
Introduce ROVs (remotely operated vehicles) and AUVs (autonomous underwater vehicles) that can be deployed for seabed inspection and response operations in the event of disruption or suspected tampering.

4. National Infrastructure Redundancy and Hardening
Co-invest in redundant terrestrial fibre backhaul and regional interconnects to prevent single points of failure in data flows.
Incentivise the deployment of diverse landing stations and distributed data infrastructure to reduce concentration risk in Dublin and eastern corridors.

5. Civil-Military-Commercial Coordination
Establish a National Maritime Infrastructure Security Centre, modelled on best practice from Nordic and Baltic states, to coordinate intelligence and monitoring of undersea assets.
Develop clear frameworks for real-time collaboration between fibre operators, the Navy, the Department of Defence, and communications regulators.

6. Legal and Regulatory Modernisation
Designate submarine cable corridors and landing sites as critical national infrastructure zones, protected by national law and international maritime frameworks.
Expand the use of exclusive zones or cable protection areas, where commercial activity is limited and surveillance is intensified.
Ireland's status as a transatlantic data hub, combined with its island geography, means that any maritime disruption to fibre infrastructure could have outsized national and economic consequences.

Strategic investment in the above capabilities will not only safeguard subsea infrastructure but reinforce Ireland's role as a secure and resilient node in the global digital network.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

The private sector must be directly involved in the National Maritime Security Strategy, particularly where it owns, operates, or relies on critical maritime infrastructure such as submarine fibre optic cables, data landing stations, ports, or coastal energy assets.

Private sector operators [redacted] bring valuable, real-time knowledge of physical assets, operational risk, infrastructure usage patterns, and technological limitations. As fibre network developers, we are often the first to identify unusual activity, whether through signal loss, pressure anomalies, or cable disruption, but currently lack formal mechanisms to escalate this intelligence to defence or state authorities.

The role of private sector participants should include:

1. Intelligence Sharing & Early Warning
Provide access to non-sensitive telemetry, fault reports, or monitoring data that may indicate potential interference or tampering.
Serve as first-response informants in the event of disruption, damage, or anomalies on the seabed.

2. Infrastructure Visibility & Mapping
Contribute to a national maritime infrastructure register, mapping cable corridors, landing zones, and operational dependencies.
Help identify zones requiring enhanced protection due to multi-tenant use, ageing assets, or redundancy constraints.

3. Security Design & Redundancy Planning
Collaborate in the design of hardened systems and shared access points with security considerations in mind.
Partner with the State on the deployment of dual-route redundancy, ensuring national resilience in the event of failure or attack.

The maritime security of Ireland cannot be effectively protected without private sector involvement, especially in areas where infrastructure ownership is decentralised or operated through PPP models. A collaborative model built on trust, shared responsibility, and timely information flow will be essential to safeguarding Ireland's sovereignty and digital economy.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Maritime threats, especially those targeting subsea infrastructure, do not respect territorial boundaries, and Ireland's submarine fibre routes are physically and economically integrated with European, UK, and transatlantic networks.

International alignment on surveillance, resilience planning, and response capability is not optional—it is essential. Ireland is both a data transit hub and a digital endpoint for Europe and the U.S., and any disruption could have cascading effects across the wider region.

Key areas where international cooperation should be prioritised include:

1. Shared Threat Intelligence & Infrastructure Mapping
Work with EU partners, the UK, and transatlantic stakeholders to maintain a shared registry of critical submarine cable corridors, including risk assessments and historical interference data.
Join EU and NATO information-sharing frameworks to detect and respond to threats, whether cyber-physical, accidental, or deliberate in real time.

2. Joint Monitoring & Maritime Domain Awareness
Collaborate on joint maritime surveillance operations, including the use of satellite tracking, autonomous patrols, and undersea sensor networks.
Participate in shared monitoring platforms, such as those being piloted under the EU's Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) or through partnerships with NATO's Maritime Command (MARCOM).

3. Redundancy & Infrastructure Resilience Planning
Co-design pan-European fibre redundancy strategies, ensuring that Ireland's routes are embedded into a wider network of protected digital corridors.
Work with EU institutions on funding support for diverse landing sites, regional interconnects, and critical infrastructure protection.

4. Joint Exercises & Response Protocols
Actively engage in multi-country simulation exercises related to subsea infrastructure sabotage, hybrid attacks, or marine disruption.
Develop common legal and operational frameworks with NATO and EU neighbours for rapid response and coordinated investigation in international waters.

5. Integration of Ireland's Defence and Commercial Capabilities into EU/NATO Structures
Through the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) with NATO, Ireland can remain non-aligned militarily while still benefiting from intelligence, best practices, and technology-sharing frameworks.
Establish clear pathways for commercial operators [redacted] to engage with state defence and international maritime agencies when infrastructure risks are identified.
In a geopolitical landscape where undersea infrastructure is increasingly viewed as a strategic asset and potential target, Ireland's neutrality must not translate into isolation. A strong national security posture will depend not only on domestic readiness but also on structured, proactive cooperation with allies and neighbours who share the same cables, corridors, and risks.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

To ensure Ireland's National Maritime Security Strategy delivers real-world impact, particularly in protecting critical digital infrastructure, it must be accompanied by a clear, resourced, and accountable Action Plan.

[redacted] perspective the most effective Action Plan would include:

1. Defined Roles & Points of Contact

Designation of clear leads across government, defence, transport, and communications for each strand of the strategy.
Defined engagement protocols for commercial operators to escalate risks or participate in coordination mechanisms.

2. Critical Infrastructure Mapping & Zoning
Completion and publication (at appropriate security levels) of a national submarine cable and landing station risk map, with tiered zoning for protection.
Establishment of protected maritime infrastructure corridors, with formal operating guidelines for commercial and fishing activity.

3. Deployment Timelines for Monitoring Capability
Roadmap for the deployment of subsea sensors, smart buoys, and surface surveillance at priority landing zones and high-risk corridors.
Investment timeline for real-time AIS/marine traffic monitoring systems, integrated with defence and civil systems.

4. Redundancy & Resilience Targets
Milestones for increasing redundancy in fibre routes and terrestrial backhaul, particularly outside the Dublin metro area.
Support for developing diverse landing points to reduce over concentration and enhance recovery in the event of disruption.

5. Legislative & Regulatory Frameworks
Timeline for formal designation of submarine cable infrastructure as Critical National Infrastructure (CNI).
Legal protections for cable corridors, enforcement tools for deterrence, and protocols for prosecuting interference or sabotage.

6. Cross-Government & Industry Exercises
Regular national and cross-border simulation drills involving defence, coast guard, infrastructure operators, and regulators, testing response readiness and communication lines.

7. Funding & Partnership Models
Outline of available state co-funding, EU security grants, or public-private investment structures to support infrastructure protection.
Incentive mechanisms to align commercial deployment ([redacted]) with national security objectives.

An Action Plan of this nature would ensure that Ireland's maritime security is not only planned but measurably improved. For private operators, it would also provide the certainty and structure required to align infrastructure development with national security priorities.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

[redacted], one of the most important principles underpinning maritime security in the coming decade will be the recognition of digital infrastructure, particularly submarine fibre, as a core component of national resilience.

Ireland's economic model, global connectivity, and leadership in data and cloud services are entirely reliant on undersea and terrestrial fibre networks. As this infrastructure becomes more valuable geopolitically, it also becomes more vulnerable.

We encourage the State to:

Formalise a permanent working group between defence, regulators, and key private infrastructure operators to ensure early warning, operational coordination, and shared planning.

Move beyond reactive response models, and take a deterrence-oriented posture, making it clear that Ireland actively monitors and protects its digital borders—not just its physical coastline.

Engage younger maritime nations like Ireland in shaping best practice globally for digital maritime protection, learning from countries like Sweden, Finland, and Estonia who have developed advanced hybrid threat response frameworks.

Explore dual-use infrastructure investment—where commercial deployments (e.g. cable landing stations, fibre corridors, or microduct access) are designed from the outset with secure access, monitoring, and defence use cases in mind.

[redacted] welcomes this engagement and is always available and motivated to collaborate in building not only a modern national backbone but also a security-aware infrastructure landscape that supports Ireland's sovereignty and global leadership in digital services.

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

Contact Form

Please answer the below questions in the boxes provided. There is a 3,000 character limit per question. When you have completed your answers please hit the submit button at the bottom of the page.

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

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In terms of state actors, the greatest threat to our national security is currently the Russian Federation. The argument is often made that because Ireland poses no threat to Russia that they would have no reason to attack. However, the argument to equally be made that since they currently have nothing to fear from us, that they have no reason NOT to attack. Ireland has a number of strategically important characteristics that in terms of infrastructure, such as communications, energy and shipping, the destruction or disruption of which would potentially cause significant damage to friendly states. In the future it is therefore possible that Russia may seek to strike against targets in Irish territory to indirectly harm another opponent without triggering a direct confrontation. A state such as Russia may even use asymmetrical forces to carry out these attacks, providing them with plausible deniability. This strategy would be easier to carry out against Ireland due to our limited capability to surveille our surface maritime territory, and our complete inability the subsurface, which increases the likelihood of such an attack.

With regard to non-state actors, Ireland, due to its lackadaisical attitude towards it's own security, has been used as a staging point for terrorist attacks against our neighbours. Khuram Shazad Butt and Rachid Redouane, two of the perpetrators of the London Bridge attack in 2017, had originally planned a similar attack in Dublin, but became convinced that Ireland was too valuable a logistics hub and so switched their target to London. A lack of ability to monitor our maritime territory increases the risk that such terrorist groups would seek to first smuggle arms or explosives into Ireland, to then take advantage of the common travel area agreement with Britain, or the EU, to then more easily move said arms to their intended targets. Drug and people smuggling is also of grave concern to the general public, no matter their attitudes towards other areas of defence or neutrality.

The ability to track and intercept civilian vessels used for such purposes, and to if necessary, board and take control of said ships should be high on Department's the list of priorities. The recent operation involving the MV Matthew, while ultimately successful, uncovered a number of deficiencies, particularly the lack of sufficient helicopters to transport and provide overwatch for, the ARW personnel tasked with boarding the vessel. That the Rangers successfully took control of the ship without any casualties on either side speaks to their professionalism, however, Michael Martin's comments in the aftermath, namely that the operation proved that it's "not all about equipment", were disappointing to say the least. This was, in this citizens opinion, not the correct lesson to take away.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

I will divide what I believe are some of the biggest emerging threats into three levels: Low, Moderate or High.

High:
* Cyber Security:
Modern vessels are highly digitised especially with regard to communications and navigation, making them susceptible to hacking. Port Infrastucture is also very reliant on digital systems making them vulnerable to economic warfare and ransomware attacks.

* Unmanned Systems and Drones:
Aerial and surface/subsurface being used for surveillance, smuggling or carrying explosive payloads.
Drone swarms being used to disrupt shipping or overwhelm defenses to destroy vessels and Infrastructure.

* State Sponsored Hybrid Attacks:
States using fishing fleets or militia vessels (like China) to assert territorial control while avoiding direct military confrontations.
Using spoofing and GPS jamming to disorient vessels navigation systems, as seen being employed by Russia.

Moderate:
* Climate Change and Environmental Factors:
Extreme weather events disrupting maritime and port operations.
Melting arctic ice opening new shipping routes, stretching naval resources and creating a more complex security environment.

* Autonomous vessels:
The increase in technology to reduce or eliminate ship manning will create problems for boarding and controlling vessels and also in vulnerability of navigational AI.

* Supply Chain Disruptions:
Choke points in global shipping are of moderate but growing concern to Ireland. Given Ireland's heavy reliance on maritime shipping for it's exports, and the import of components for manufacturing, state or non-state attacks on these choke points (like Suez or Panama) are a threat to our economic survival.

Low:

* Illegal and Unregulated Fishing:
Declining global fish stocks will likely create an increase in such activities, and as the fish stocks dwindle, conflicts between private operators, or even nations may occur.
Economic pressures may also lead to fishing vessel owners turning to organised crime and smuggling as their livelihood is eroded.

*Piracy and Armed Robbery:
Piracy, such as has been seen in the Gulf of Aden in recent decades is of a generally low threat in Irish waters, but may become a concern in the future, especially in regard to global shipping.

The Measures and Investments to protect against the threats I will detail in Question 4 below.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

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Logically the Western and Southern coasts would require the greatest attention and investment for maritime security. Our nations EEZ is 10 times our landmass and the majority of this territory is located primarily to the West, and secondarily to the South. These are the regions with the most infrastructure for energy and communications, as well as the Naval headquarters being located in Haulbowline in Cork. The West and South are also the most likely directions for any threatening action by a state actor such as Russia.

The East coast does have some critical energy infrastructure in the shape of undersea gas pipelines, and also vital shipping lanes for both cargo and civilian traffic, however the narrower maritime territory and proximity to Britain would make any approach by an adversary in this area more risky and likely to be detected. Any potential threat coming into the Irish Sea from the North would be detected and monitored by the Royal Navy who the Irish Naval Service could liase with, while a threat coming from the south would pass through the Celtic Sea and would be a priority for defence assets in the Southern Control Sector. Maritime security on the East coast would lean more towards onshore port security, with a more limited ship based interdiction capability.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

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Some of the technologies that should be acquired for protecting against the threats listed above are:

Maritime-specific Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS): Monitor vessel networks for anomalies or unauthorized access.

AI-driven threat detection platforms: Predict and flag suspicious behavior in operational tech environments (e.g., Darktrace, Nozomi Networks).

End-to-end encryption for ship-to-shore and inter-vessel communications.

Isolated operational networks (air-gapping critical systems from the internet).

GPS independent navigational systems such as Inertial Navigation Systems (INS), as backups in the event of GPS disruption or spoofing.

Counter-UAS (C-UAS) systems: Use radar, RF sensors, and electro-optical systems to detect, track, and neutralize drones.

Anti-drone jammers & spoofers: Disable control signals or GPS navigation.

Underwater drone detection sonar: Passive and active sonar networks to identify unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs).

High-frequency surface wave radar (HFSWR): Monitors vessel approach well beyond coastal radar range.

Shipborne radar + thermal imaging: For night-time detection of small skiffs.

Maritime domain awareness (MDA) platforms: Use satellite imagery (e.g., SAR), AIS fusion, and machine learning to monitor grey zone activity.

Automatic Identification System (AIS) anomaly detection: Detect spoofing or "dark ships" by comparing AIS with radar or satellite imagery.

Space-based maritime surveillance: Investment in electro-optical and Synthetic Aperture Radar satellite surveillance systems.

Vessel monitoring systems (VMS): Track legal fishing vessels and detect anomalies.

Autonomous surface vessels (ASVs): Deployed by coast guards for patrol and evidence collection.

With respect to the composition of a future Navy and the types of vessels that should be employed, there are a number of existing and emerging designs that would be perfect for the security needs of the Irish state. The French FDI Frigate programme offers a highly capable multirole vessel, with air, surface and subsurface sensors and weapons, and a robust SIGINT capability. It would also be highly beneficial for Ireland to consider developing a small submarine force. The upcoming Swedish A26 Diesel-Electric submarine has a number of design features to combat emerging threats. Namely the multi-mission portal at the bow of the ship, which can be used to deploy UUV's and special forces teams to monitor and defend subsurface infrastructure. As for the future Multi-role Vessel (MRV), it is my opinion that the Italian Improved San Giorgio class vessel would be an excellent choice. At a modest 8,800 tonnes displacement it has the ability to transport 440 soldiers along with their vehicles, 3 super medium helicopters, and also has a 60 bed medical facility with surgical bay. Also, with it's EMPAR AESA Radar System, and VLS cells it has the ability to contribute to it's own air defence.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

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Yes, it is vital that private industry be brought in to collaborate with DoD and the Defence Forces to aid in Ireland's Maritime Security. As modern threats are becoming more hybrid in nature, the civil sector and Defence Forces can not be solely responsible for planning and implementing security strategies.

Sub-Sea Cable operators should be brought on board to help with threat detection by monitoring cables for disturbances, and also coordinating with the Naval Service in the positioning of sub-surface sensors, and also resilience planning to reduce any possible impact from damage in the aftermath of an attack. Other measures that could be taken are:

* National Maritime Security Forum: A joint state–industry platform for intelligence-sharing and crisis coordination.

*Information Sharing Agreements (ISAs): Voluntary arrangements between the state and critical operators for real-time cyber or physical threat alerts.

*Joint Exercises: Simulated scenarios involving industry, Navy, Gardaí, Coast Guard, and local authorities (e.g., cable sabotage, cyberattack on a port, drone intrusion).

* Public-Private Innovation: Develop maritime AI analytics, autonomous surveillance drones, or counter-UAS solutions tailored to Ireland’s needs.

* Cyber Services: Offer penetration testing, cyber wargaming, and incident response services for both military and civilian maritime assets.

* Integrated Command Systems: Link port operations centers with Gardaí, Naval Service, and Coast Guard for real-time threat response.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

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There are a number of ways cooperation with other EU members and NATO could be employed to help Ireland develop and strengthen it's maritime defence.

* Participation in EU Maritime Surveillance (MARSUR) network for shared real-time vessel tracking and incident data.

* Integration into NATO's Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA) mechanisms on an opt-in basis.

* Bilateral arrangements for intelligence sharing with NATO members (e.g., UK, France, Germany) regarding undersea cable threats or state actor activity near Irish waters.

* Further participation in PESCO projects

* Participation in PfP maritime security exercises

* Access to NATO maritime doctrine and best practices, particularly in asymmetric threat scenarios and cyber-military defense.

* Co-funding opportunities via the European Defence Fund (EDF) for maritime innovation (e.g., autonomous drones, hybrid threat detection systems).

* Collaborative R&D with European defense companies on cyber-physical maritime infrastructure resilience.

* Exposure to interoperability standards for future-proofing Irish maritime technology acquisitions.

* Joint cable protection planning with France, Spain, and the Netherlands, especially for transatlantic data infrastructure.

* Increased budget efficiency through joint procurement agreements with other EU member states.

* Development of shared protocols for protecting critical undersea infrastructure, drawing on lessons from Baltic and North Sea allies.

* Hosting of joint wargames or tabletop exercises on sabotage or hybrid threats to telecom/energy infrastructure.

* Option for logistical or technical support from nearby NATO states during naval incidents or environmental disasters.

Both the EU and NATO's partnership for peace program provide frameworks through which Ireland can advance a new Maritime Security Strategy. Our country can negotiate and sign Bi-Lateral Agreements with NATO without the need to enter into a formal military alliance. NATO has in the past shown openness to this type of cooperation. Likewise, the EU through it's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is a perfect framework for international security cooperation.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

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Yes, the publication of an accompanying Action Plan is absolutely essential. The key elements should of course include, Strategic Objectives, Threat and Risk Assessments, Governance and Coordination Mechanisms as well as Capability Development and Asset Modernisation.

However, the areas of greatest concern are Governing Legal Frameworks and Public Awareness and Industry Engagement. For too long, Irish Defence & Security has been plagued by a lack of engagement with the population in explaining the nature and level of risks facing the state, and therefore explaining the need for investment in this area. Likewise, the opaqueness of the Department of Defence's procurement practices can no longer continue. Shortlists of potential systems, their costs, the quantities of systems sought, and the timelines from first signing of contract to production and end delivery dates must be made public. The failure to make available such information leads to wild speculation from certain political quarters, and a collapse in morale of service men and women who don't believe that these procurement promises will ever be fulfilled. A lack of clear and consistent governance of maritime security has in the past led to obscenely absurd situations, such as the security of sub-sea cables becoming the remit of An Garda Siochana. A full assesment , and where appropriate, modification of the legal frameworks for the governance and coordination of our maritime security assets must be part of any action plan.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

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A future Maritime Defence Strategy must involve all three branches of the Defence Forces. The Air Corps, through the operation of Maritime Patrol Aircraft and Helicopters provides an essential component of this defence. The C295 MPA's in their current configuration are insufficient to the task at hand. These aircraft should immediately be upgraded to their more advanced Anti Submarine Warfare (ASW) variant, complete with sonobuoy launchers, Magnetic Anomaly Detectors (MAD) and air launched surface and subsurface weapons, such as Anti-Ship Missiles and Air Deployable Torpedoes. The fleet should also be expanded to no less than four units. Future helicopters should also be capable of deploying dipping sonar units. The upcoming C295 transport aircraft in unsuited for the air lift task. An aircraft like the KC390, while also providing greater strategic reach for air lift, can provide air to air refueling capabilities for helos and ASW aircraft, both extending range and time on station.

Modern multirole fighters, while discussed recently as necessary for air intercept capability, can also contribute to maritime defence through the employment of targeting pods and anti-ship missile technology, and as communication and sensor nodes as part of an integrated radar picture. It would also be of great benefit for the Army to develop a specialist Marine Battallion, to assist the Naval Service with domestic coastal defence tasks, and also for potential foreign deployment with a future MRV to provide port security and evacuation tasks in dangerous regions.

The current OPV's operated by the Naval Service are also not fit for purpose. It is beyond time for Ireland to invest in modern multirole frigates, that possess the full range of defensive, offensive and ELINT/SIGINT capabilities for the current and future threat environment. Attempting to update the OPV's with modern sensors and weapons would likely result in significant stability and seaworthiness problems, and provide little more than a mediocre increase in capability. The capital used on such upgrades would be better spent on new build designs that, while costing more in the short term, would yield superior cost/benefit outcomes in the long term.

Contact

Contact Form

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

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I think the illegal drugs trade is the foremost issue that maritime security faces. It's quite possible that there is importation of illegal drugs on an almost weekly basis. Quite honestly we have no real way of knowing. Illegal drugs cause absolute havoc in the country, and cost the state an absolute fortune in the health sector, criminal justice system, not to mention the devastation it causes families and communities in Ireland. We need to be much better prepared to meet this threat. To my mind we would certainly be seen as a soft touch to these global criminal gangs, who have resources to possibly match the state. These gangs know what resources each country have to counter their evil trade, and sadly Ireland is lacking in this regard, in a big way.

The next challenge I feel we face is the threat to our under sea cables and other infrastructure. It is well documented that Russian ships have been active in areas where cables are said to be located. Any interference with these communication cables could cause absolute chaos in not just Ireland, but in Europe and the USA also. An interference with gas or other subsea infrastructure would cause huge difficulties to Irish citizens and businesses. It would look extremely bad on Ireland if this happened, and dare I say a lot of red faces for people in authority.

To a lesser extent the possibly of a terrorist attack on a ferry or cargo ship cannot be ruled out. This scenario would probably need to utilise the use of air assets also, but it would be primarily a Naval Service operation in my opinion.

These to me are the main issues we have to face. If we were in a position to deal with these main threats, then I think other lesser threats could also be dealt with.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

The world is in a very unstable situation at the moment, Russian aggression in Ukraine has made Europe especially, sit up and take notice. Personally I think Russia is looking to expand itself, and I would be very sceptical that if Russia defeats Ukraine that it will stop there. The chances are that Russia may decide to invade another country and this time I think Nato or the European Union may decide to take action.
If this was the case Ireland would certainly be involved. We could not allow our waters to be used as a means by which Russia could take hostile action against other European countries.

The drugs issue will not be going away any time soon, and the amount of importations and seizures seem to be on the increase.

Another challenge is the retention and recruitment of personell into the Defence Forces, especially the Naval Service. There is no point in having ships worth hundreds of millions tied up for the sake of tens of thousands of euros in salaries. Specialist people in the Defence Forces should be paid what their equivalent in the civilian world are paid. Even if, for example, in the Naval Service, an engineer has to be paid as much as the captain of the ship, so be it. Systems could be put in place so that people who are in these specialised positions are tied into a specific contract that prevents them from leaving the service for a particular length of time. Defence doesn't come cheap, and we need to invest in the people every bit as much as the ships and systems.

I think this citizens of the country are badly informed regarding the maritime aspect of our country.
Most people would have no notion of the importance of the maritime sphere to the state, or that our area of responsibility is seven times the size of our landmass. If the public were properly educated about the importance of our seas to our every day life, the traditional reluctance to the investment in our defence, and in this case, maritime security could be somewhat less. This is especially important when people see housing and health, rightly, as being more urgent.
But its not an either or, we can have both.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

I would feel, and I'm certainly not expert, that the south and west of the country are where the use of our assets would be best utilised. Most drug shipments seem to come from a southerly direction direction, while the undersea cables seem to be stemming from our west and south coasts.

A terrorist attack is most likely to occur in the Irish sea and we would certainly need a presence there too, but I think the biggest threat would be in the sea areas off the south and west coasts.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

I was pleased to hear that the government is to invest in a sonar capability for the Navy. This, together with a military radar for the Defence Forces, is a big step in the right direction.
An area where I feel we can improve on in technology is in the use of UAVs and drones. These assets can loiter for long periods of time, perhaps on a surveillance mission, in a much more cost effective way than helicopters or fixed wing aircraft.
Our Naval ships, and the new maritime patrol aircraft, should have the most up to date technology, updated when required.

I feel regarding infrastructure, that there would be three Naval bases, Cobh, Galway and Dun Laoire. I would seriously think of moving the entire Air Corps, or at least the maritime squadron, to Shannon airport. This would give us a much quicker reaction time and a better geographical spread of our assets.
This would be quite an undertaking, especially with planning and construction restraints, but the ideal scenario in my opinion.

As regards capability, firstly I would go along with the commission of defence recommendation of a 12 ship Navy. I would think of something like 8 patrol ships, something like we have now, and 4 larger and more heavily armed ships. I would look at 2 patrol ships on the east coast, 6 in Cobh including 2 of the larger ships and 4 in Galway including 2 of the larger ships. Perhaps 2 of the ships could have a helicopter embarked.

The two new patrol aircraft could possibly be joined by a third dedicated maritime patrol aircraft.
As mentioned I would utilise UAVs and drones, and each ship would have this capability.

There is also a recommendation that there would be a maratime special forces unit established. I would think of this unit being based at Shannon airport with a dedicated helicopter asset.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes I think this would be a good idea. I think it would be in their interest to buy into the idea.
I would not really know what role they would play, except to advise perhaps the technical details of the infrastructure itself.
They would probably be a big help with regard to communications, cooperation and systems to put in place in the event of an event. This could be tested regularly with exercises.

I would also mention the fishing community at this point. They can be a huge asset as regards eyes and ears on the sea, and in our harbours and coastal areas.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Firstly I would like to see Ireland remain as a neutral country, although with a much better defence posture
Having said that, we are a small country, and I think we have to be realistic and know that it's impossible for us to cover the maritime security threats entirely on our own.
I also think cooperation with the less "militaristic" European countries would go down better with the population. Perhaps countries like Portugal, Spain or Denmark.

The anti drugs area is where I think there is good cooperation with our European neighbours.
We just need to make sure we have the wherewithal to respond to the intelligence they supply to us.

If we are to cooperate on a more regular and visible basis with other countries, the authorities need to be honest and transparent with the people to prevent all the inevitable negative commentary that will follow. I think it would be important to tell the public before we would embark on such a scenario, rather than after the fact.

The very word NATO causes consternation in Ireland, so I would think it would be much better to use the EU rather than the NATO partnership.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

This question is well above my abilities, however there would definitely need to be an action plan.

Depending on what is decided, I think whatever plan comes into place needs to be driven from the very highest level, the Taoiseachs office.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

I think as an Island nation, we have ignored our defence in general, and our maritime defence in particular since the foundation of the state.

We are playing catch up now and to be honest we are struggling.
In general I think there needs to be a really robust debate in Ireland with regard to our defence needs, and our maritime defence in particular. The public need to know what goes on, beyond the horizon, and the work our maritime people do on a daily basis.

I think all actors need to buy into this, and work together in a constructive fashion. There seems like in the past there are issues between different agencies and departments which prevented important work getting done.

That is why I would say that this maritime security programme, along with the general review of the countries defence, needs to be driven from the very highest level.

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Lack of Naval capacity. Ireland should be able to independently secure its EEZ without support from other EU countries.

Need to respond to intelligence gathering by foreign states I. Irish waters.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Biggest threat will be an increased use of Irish waters by hostile states and an inability to respond to this. Need to increase naval capacity but while remaining neutral

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Atlantic coast

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Our navy is far too small for a rich country, is embarrassing we should have a major Navy as we have the largest zone in Europe

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Russia cutting cables, we must build more ships we must have radar and underwater monitoring even as far as a submarine force

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Where the cables and major fishing grounds are.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Radar
Ships
Fighter jets
Submarine
Underwater monitoring systems
A Navy seal prgrom

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

No state only no Dennis O'Brien please

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

EU yes but NATO is dead

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

Contact Form

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Illegal trade and unprotected com lines.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Submarine lines/ undersea cabling/ illegal fishery/ contraband imports.
Hugely increased funding for Maritime Patrol with detection capabilities.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

No, but more so on North, West and South Coasts.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Shared international intelligence. Detection methods. Recourses for a constant presence on Irish waters. .

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, support with expertise on their product and contributions(financial) to safety and security for their future.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

International collaboration is vital. No one can do it on their own. Given that 70% of the earths surface is water, there is a vast area to be considered, and a huge area to mitigate against.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

An action plan is vital. The biggest single thing in any Strategic National Plan and Implementation is continuous funding for recourses. Something Ireland are not good at.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

It is clear at present, we do not have a presence in our own waters.International assistance seems to be a priority. Funding, Staff retention combined with Infrastructure and lack of Assets are all to often, the repeated reasons. Showing a presence would be a leap forward.

Contact

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Please answer the below questions in the boxes provided. There is a 3,000 character limit per question. When you have completed your answers please hit the submit button at the bottom of the page.

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland's maritime domain faces evolving threats requiring integrated intelligence approaches rather than traditional isolated monitoring. The most significant current vulnerabilities include:

-Critical Infrastructure Protection Gaps: Ireland's submarine cable infrastructure carries 95% of international communications yet lacks comprehensive real-time monitoring. Cable damage incidents cost €50M+ in repairs while creating substantial economic disruption. Current periodic vessel inspections cannot provide the continuous oversight required for proactive threat prevention.
-Offshore Wind Security Challenges: Ireland's expanding offshore wind capacity (targeting 7GW by 2030) represents billions in infrastructure requiring sophisticated protection. Traditional surveillance approaches cannot adequately monitor construction activities, coordinate security across multiple contractors, or provide the rapid response capabilities that major infrastructure projects require.
-Fragmented Maritime Domain Awareness: Existing surveillance capabilities operate in silos, creating intelligence gaps that sophisticated threats exploit. The lack of integrated data fusion means that patterns invisible to individual agencies remain undetected until incidents occur.
-Evolving Threat Sophistication: Modern maritime threats utilize advanced planning and coordination that traditional surveillance struggles to detect. Effective response requires predictive intelligence capabilities that identify threats before they develop into incidents, rather than simply documenting activities after they occur.
-Government Resource Optimization: Naval Service and Air Corps resources are most effectively deployed in response and intervention roles rather than continuous monitoring. Private maritime intelligence providers can deliver comprehensive domain awareness that enables government forces to focus their limited resources on high-value activities where their specialized capabilities are essential, rather than routine surveillance tasks.
-Solution Integration Opportunity: Ireland would benefit from maritime intelligence platforms that combine multiple data sources—satellite imagery, vessel tracking, and environmental analysis—with artificial intelligence to provide comprehensive domain awareness. This approach transforms reactive surveillance into proactive threat prevention through integrated intelligence capabilities that exceed what individual agencies can achieve independently.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Future maritime security challenges will require predictive intelligence capabilities and technological integration that current approaches cannot provide:

-Hybrid Warfare and Infrastructure Targeting: Emerging threats increasingly target critical maritime infrastructure through sophisticated coordination that appears legitimate until patterns reveal hostile intent. Traditional surveillance cannot distinguish between normal commercial activity and coordinated infrastructure reconnaissance without advanced pattern analysis and behavioral modeling.
-Climate-Driven Operational Changes: Changing weather patterns will alter maritime traffic flows and create new operational challenges. Arctic route opening and storm pattern changes require predictive analytics to anticipate security implications before they manifest as operational problems.
-Autonomous Systems and Unmanned Threats: Future threats will increasingly utilize autonomous underwater vehicles and unmanned surface vessels that traditional detection methods struggle to identify and track. Defending against these requires advanced sensor integration and automated threat recognition capabilities.
-Economic Warfare Through Supply Chain Disruption: Future threats may target Ireland's maritime supply chains through coordinated disruption that appears accidental. Detecting such threats requires comprehensive pattern analysis across multiple maritime activities and economic indicators.
-Preparation Through Intelligence Integration: Ireland should invest in maritime intelligence platforms that combine historical pattern analysis with predictive modeling to identify emerging threats before they develop. This includes artificial intelligence systems that analyze vessel behavior patterns, environmental conditions, and economic factors to predict threat development with sufficient advance warning for effective response.
-Technology Platform Development: Future preparedness requires platforms that integrate multiple intelligence sources with automated analysis capabilities, enabling rapid threat identification and coordinated response across multiple agencies and stakeholders.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland's maritime security strategy should prioritize geographical areas based on critical infrastructure density and economic importance while maintaining comprehensive domain awareness:

-Shannon Estuary and Western Approaches: This region contains critical infrastructure including Shannon Foynes Port, proposed offshore wind developments, and submarine cable landing points. The strategic location relative to transatlantic communications and energy infrastructure warrants priority attention with enhanced surveillance capabilities.
-Dublin Bay and Irish Sea Corridor: High-density commercial traffic combined with critical infrastructure creates concentrated vulnerability requiring sophisticated monitoring. The proximity to population centers and economic activity amplifies the impact of potential incidents.
-Southwest Approaches: Major shipping lanes and submarine cable routes converge in this area, creating strategic importance for both commercial and communications security. The geographic position relative to European and transatlantic traffic flows requires continuous monitoring capabilities.
-Offshore Wind Development Areas: Designated offshore renewable energy zones require specialized security attention during construction and operational phases. These areas represent billions in infrastructure investment requiring protection strategies that traditional maritime security approaches cannot adequately provide.
-Integrated Approach Recommendation: Rather than treating these areas separately, Ireland should implement an integrated maritime intelligence system that provides comprehensive coverage while enabling resource concentration based on dynamic threat assessment. Modern technology platforms can provide baseline monitoring across the entire domain while automatically escalating attention to specific areas when threats emerge.
-Technology-Enabled Prioritization: Advanced analytics can enable dynamic geographical prioritization based on real-time threat assessment, ensuring resources focus on areas of highest current risk while maintaining awareness across the broader maritime domain.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland's maritime security requires strategic technology investments that enable intelligence-driven rather than resource-driven capabilities:

-Force Multiplication Through Partnership: Strategic investment should prioritize platforms that enable seamless integration between private sector maritime intelligence capabilities and government response forces. This approach allows Naval Service and Air Corps to concentrate their specialized resources on intervention and response activities while leveraging private sector efficiency for comprehensive domain awareness and initial threat assessment.
-Integrated Maritime Intelligence Platforms: Priority investment should focus on comprehensive platforms that combine satellite imagery, vessel tracking, environmental data, and artificial intelligence analytics. These systems provide force multiplication by enabling few personnel to monitor large areas effectively while automatically identifying situations requiring attention.
-Advanced Analytics and Predictive Capabilities: Investment in artificial intelligence and machine learning systems enables pattern recognition and threat prediction that traditional surveillance cannot achieve. These capabilities transform reactive monitoring into proactive threat prevention through early warning systems.
-Multi-Source Data Fusion Infrastructure: Modern maritime security requires combining information from multiple sources—satellite imagery, automatic identification systems, weather data, and commercial databases—into unified intelligence pictures. Investment in data fusion capabilities enables comprehensive understanding that individual sources cannot provide.
-Rapid Response and Coordination Systems: Technology investments should enable real-time coordination between multiple agencies and rapid deployment of appropriate response resources. This includes communication systems that facilitate immediate information sharing and response coordination.
-Private Sector Integration Capabilities: Strategic infrastructure should enable seamless integration with private sector maritime intelligence capabilities, creating comprehensive coverage through public-private partnerships rather than requiring government to develop all capabilities independently.
-Aircraft and Sensor Integration: Ireland should invest in advanced maritime patrol capabilities that integrate multiple sensors with real-time data processing. Modern aircraft platforms enable rapid response across large areas while providing high-quality intelligence for threat assessment and response coordination.
-Technology Partnership Approach: Rather than developing all capabilities internally, Ireland should invest in platforms that enable integration with cutting-edge commercial technologies, ensuring access to continuous innovation while controlling costs.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Private sector integration is essential for effective maritime security, particularly given the substantial private ownership of critical maritime infrastructure:

-Infrastructure Owner Collaboration: Major infrastructure operators—offshore wind developers, submarine cable operators, port authorities—possess detailed operational knowledge and resources that government agencies cannot replicate. Their integration into maritime security strategy multiplies government capabilities while ensuring protection of critical assets.
-Operational Efficiency and Cost Effectiveness: Private maritime intelligence providers offer government agencies access to sophisticated capabilities without the capital investment and operational costs of developing these capabilities internally. This enables Naval Service and Air Corps to focus their budgets on core response capabilities while accessing world-class intelligence support through partnership arrangements.
-Technology and Innovation Partnership: Private sector organizations often develop cutting-edge maritime technologies that government procurement processes cannot access quickly. Strategic partnerships enable government access to advanced capabilities while encouraging private sector investment in maritime security technologies.
-Information Sharing and Intelligence Integration: Private infrastructure operators observe maritime activities continuously through their operational requirements. Integrating their observations with government intelligence creates comprehensive maritime domain awareness exceeding what either sector can achieve independently
-Coordinated Response Capabilities: Private sector operators possess response resources—vessels, personnel, equipment—that can supplement government capabilities during emergencies. Proper integration ensures rapid response coordination while maintaining appropriate government oversight and control.
-Economic Incentive Alignment: Private infrastructure protection requires economic incentives that align private sector investment with national security objectives. This includes insurance premium reductions, regulatory streamlining, and cost-sharing arrangements for security investments.
-Platform-Based Integration: Effective private sector integration requires technology platforms that enable secure information sharing while protecting commercially sensitive information. Modern maritime intelligence platforms can provide appropriate access controls and data segregation.
-Partnership Framework Development: Ireland should establish formal frameworks for private sector maritime security partnerships, including clear roles, responsibilities, liability protections, and information sharing protocols that encourage participation while maintaining security standards.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

International cooperation should form a cornerstone of Ireland's maritime security strategy, leveraging both bilateral relationships and multilateral frameworks:

-EU Maritime Security Integration: Ireland should pursue deep integration with EU maritime security initiatives, particularly given the cross-border nature of maritime threats and the substantial EU investment in Irish offshore renewable energy. EU-level coordination enables resource sharing and intelligence integration that individual nations cannot achieve independently.
-Bilateral Cooperation with Neighboring Countries: Maritime threats often transit multiple national jurisdictions, requiring coordinated response capabilities with the UK, France, and other neighboring nations. Bilateral agreements should enable real-time intelligence sharing and coordinated response protocols.
-NATO Partnership Programme Enhancement: Ireland's NATO partnership (PfP) should include maritime domain awareness initiatives that provide access to advanced intelligence capabilities and coordination systems while maintaining Ireland's neutrality commitments. This enables threat intelligence access without requiring full military alliance participation.
-Technology and Intelligence Sharing: International cooperation should focus on sharing advanced maritime intelligence technologies and analytical capabilities. Modern threats require sophisticated detection and analysis that benefits from international collaboration and shared development costs.
-Commercial Partnership Integration: International cooperation should include commercial maritime intelligence providers who operate across multiple jurisdictions. These partnerships enable comprehensive intelligence coverage while sharing costs across multiple nations and private sector participants.
-Academic and Research Collaboration: International maritime security research partnerships enable access to cutting-edge technologies and analytical capabilities while fostering innovation in maritime security solutions.
-Standardization and Interoperability: International cooperation should emphasize common standards and interoperable systems that enable seamless intelligence sharing and coordinated response across national boundaries.
-Crisis Response Coordination: International partnerships should include protocols for coordinated crisis response, resource sharing, and mutual assistance during major maritime security incidents.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

A comprehensive Action Plan is essential for translating maritime security strategy into operational capabilities:

-Technology Implementation Roadmap: The Action Plan should establish clear timelines for deploying integrated maritime intelligence capabilities, including specific milestones for technology procurement, system integration, and operational deployment. This roadmap should prioritize capabilities that provide immediate operational enhancement while building toward comprehensive maritime domain awareness.
-Capability Development Phases: Implementation should follow logical phases that build capabilities systematically—initial domain awareness, enhanced intelligence integration, advanced predictive capabilities, and full crisis response coordination. Each phase should provide operational value while enabling subsequent capability development.
-Partnership Development Timeline: The Action Plan should establish specific timelines for developing private sector partnerships, international cooperation agreements, and technology integration frameworks. This includes clear milestones for information sharing protocols and coordinated response capabilities.
-Funding and Resource Allocation: Clear funding commitments and resource allocation timelines enable realistic capability development while ensuring adequate investment in critical technologies and infrastructure. The Action Plan should identify funding sources and allocation priorities.
-Performance Metrics and Assessment: The Action Plan should establish specific metrics for assessing maritime security capability development and threat response effectiveness. Regular assessment enables course correction and capability optimization.
-Training and Personnel Development: Implementation requires comprehensive training programs and personnel development to ensure effective utilization of new technologies and capabilities.
-Crisis Response and Contingency Planning: The Action Plan should include detailed crisis response protocols and contingency plans that enable coordinated response to various threat scenarios.
-Continuous Improvement Framework: The Action Plan should establish mechanisms for continuous capability enhancement based on operational experience and evolving threat environments.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland has a unique opportunity to become a European leader in maritime intelligence and security through strategic technology investment and innovative partnerships:
-Strategic Public-Private Partnership Model: Ireland should consider maritime intelligence partnerships that optimize government resource allocation by enabling Naval Service and Air Corps to concentrate on their core strengths—rapid response, intervention, and specialized operations—while leveraging private sector efficiency for comprehensive domain awareness. This model ensures government forces remain focused on activities requiring their unique authorities and capabilities while accessing sophisticated intelligence support through cost-effective partnership arrangements.
-Maritime Intelligence as a Service Model: Ireland should develop maritime intelligence capabilities that can be shared with international partners, creating both security benefits and economic opportunities. Advanced maritime intelligence platforms can serve multiple customers while reducing individual costs and enhancing overall security.
-Innovation Hub Development: Ireland's strategic location and technology expertise position it well to become a European maritime security innovation hub, fostering development of cutting-edge maritime technologies while attracting international investment.
-Economic Security Integration: Maritime security strategy should explicitly address economic security aspects, including protection of offshore renewable energy investments, commercial shipping, and fishing industry assets. Modern threats increasingly target economic activities rather than traditional military objectives.
Climate Adaptation and Maritime Security: Ireland's maritime security strategy should anticipate climate-driven changes in maritime activities and threat patterns, including new shipping routes and changed weather patterns.
-Technology Export Opportunities: Advanced maritime security capabilities developed for Irish requirements can become export opportunities, creating economic benefits while enhancing international partnerships.
-Next-Generation Threat Preparation: The strategy should anticipate emerging technologies and threat vectors, ensuring Ireland remains ahead of evolving challenges rather than merely responding to current threats.
Ireland's maritime security strategy should emphasize intelligence integration, technology innovation, and strategic partnerships to create comprehensive domain awareness and rapid response capabilities that protect critical infrastructure while supporting economic development and international cooperation.

Contact

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Please answer the below questions in the boxes provided. There is a 3,000 character limit per question. When you have completed your answers please hit the submit button at the bottom of the page.

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

As the Department has been directed to prepare this Strategy in cooperation with National and International stakeholders, we see little value in us also attempting to list all the known current threats to our maritime security. We would however make a number of points as below.
What do we mean by Maritime Security? The term can encompass (correctly) a spectrum from conventional Maritime Defence through Maritime Law Enforcement/Regulation/resource protection through to Maritime Safety and environmental protection. In Irelands context what is encompassed has always been an issue, the answer depending on who was asked. Ireland as an EU member has endorsed the Unions Maritime Security Strategy and thus defacto accepted the definition therein.

The EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) was published in 2014 and accepted by all Member States including Ireland. It has been revised several times, most recently in 2023. It defines Maritime Security as

Maritime security is understood as a state of affairs of the global maritime domain, in which international law and national law are enforced, freedom of navigation is guaranteed and citizens, infrastructure, transport, the environment and marine resources are protected.

This encompasses three political objectives

-Enforcement
-Freedom of Navigation
-Protection

It also recognises that Maritime Security by the very nature of the maritime environment must be seen in a holistic and global context.

The Strategy lists

- eight EU Maritime Security Interests at Part IV and

-nine Risks and Threats at Part V *

All of the Security Interests listed and all of the Risks and Threats listed are current and are relevant to, and shared by Ireland.

The Summary. It is our view in response to this question,

The definition of Maritime Security in the EUMSS is succinct, comprehensive and entirely relevant to Irelands situation.

The EU Maritime Security Strategy, and the Interests, Risks and Theats listed therein reflect the significant current threats to Irelands Maritime Security.

As per EUMSS, maritime security vulnerabilities and risks to the EU and Ireland can arise in the “global maritime domain.”

*These have been updated in the Joint Communication to the EU Parliament and Council (JOIN (2023) 8 Final) dated 10/3/2023.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Trade. The White Paper on Defence 2015 stated" The high reliance on these (sea) transport links presents a potential vulnerability that could be exploited. "85% of the worlds trade volume is ocean freight. In Irelands case 99% of our goods by volume and 95% by value travel in and out of Ireland by sea, including all our oil products. Disrupt that trade and potentially you shut down Ireland. While currently there may be a limited threat to the close sea routes, we need to recognise the severe nature of the effect of any issue, and where feasible have the capacity to deal with any reasonable threat that may arise. This could be from a variety of sources varying from industrial disputes to accidents to kinetic attacks to cyber attacks. All of these have already happened across the globe.Brexit has now highlighted Irelands dependence on these Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), including the short sea routes to the UK and the increased importance of routes directly to continental ports. Maintenance of freedom of navigation on the High Seas and Territorial Waters is a vital national interest, and it should be stated rather than implied role of the Defence Forces to contribute to protecting that interest.
The EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and evolving threats. In March 2023 the EU Published "EU Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan: An enhanced EU Maritime Security Strategy for evolving maritime threats". That title speaks for itself and provides much of the answer to the question posed. The nature of emerging Risks and Threats envisaged in the EUMSS is thorough and is entirely relevant to Ireland. It is a substantial and credible strategy as is the associated Action Plan. We feel that there is no need for the Department to attempt to reinvent this particular wheel.
The Commission on the Defence Forces recommended a deepening engagement with EUMSS as well as the development of a National Maritime Security Strategy. This should be an integrated and complimentary approach. Summary. It is our view in response to this question,

The maintenance of Sea Lines of Communication for trade is a vital national interest. Freedom of navigation on the High Seas and Territorial Waters is a vital national interest. It should be a stated rather than implied role of the Defence Forces to contribute to protecting that interest.

Emerging threats and future challenges are comprehensively dealt with in the latest iteration of the EUMSS and its Action Plan. The emerging Risks and Threats envisaged in the EUMSS is a thorough review and entirely relevant to Ireland. There should be continuing and deepening engagement with EUMSS and the Action Plan as part of any National Maritime Security Stategy. The Strategy should be complementary to and integrated with the EUMSS.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

A National Strategy should not focus on any geographical area, or to “Irelands maritime domain”. Our maritime has zones where both the State and others have varying rights and responsibilities. This includes on land /Internal waters/Territorial Seas/Contiguous Zone/Exclusive Economic Zone/High Seas and the Territorial Seas of other States.

In international maritime law all States and all actors have varying rights and responsibilities in all areas. There are NO notional “Irish Waters” over which the State has full authority and responsibility and where therefore any maritime security risks and effort can be confined to. A case may be made that some areas are more vulnerable, having more shipping lanes, interconnectors, wind installations etc. This may be true now, but can change over time or at short notice. We feel that the allocation of resources to any area is a matter for the Operational level and is not appropriate to a National Strategy. Maritime security threats that directly affect us will arise outside our immediate area. Accidents to kinetic attacks have caused serious disruption to maritime activity and trade. As a committed UN and EU Member State we should be prepared to contribute to address maritime security issues that threaten the security of the EU (and therefore ourselves). That Ireland need only be concerned about threats or issues that arise within our own maritime area would be myoptic and unrealistic. That notion wouldn’t sit well with the States long history of actively engaging with international peace and security issues beyond this island. Sub Bases/ Forward Operating Bases. [redacted] would urge caution about establishing further NS bases. There may be some recruiting and visibility positives, but we suspect that the real driver is that it would be politically attractive. This must be balanced against the financial, logistical and HRM costs v operational need.

Summary

Irelands maritime area is a complex, layed mix of geographic areas with varying levels of rights and responsibilities for the State, and for others. This is not conducive to simple prioritising of some geographical areas over others.

it would be a wrong to establish a National Maritime Security Strategy on a basis that there are some notional “Irish Waters” over which the State has full authority and responsibility and therefore any consideration of maritime security risks and effort can be confined to those geographical areas.

We would feel that the disposition and allocation of resources and effort to geographical areas is a matter for the Operational level and is not appropriate to or necessary in a National Strategy.

Ireland principally in its own interest and as an international actor needs to be prepared to contribute to countering Maritime Security threats and issues that may arise outside our own immediate maritime area.

The establishing of additional bases for the Naval Service should be to meet a real operational need.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

It is not possible to provide any sort of reasoned answer to this question in 3000 characters. The following summary is what we are forced to submit

Full investment, engagement and cooperation with the various EU strategys, policies and programs is the most effective way to safeguard our maritime interests.

The move to the CODF LOA2 is welcome. To provide a true National Security capability, a further move to LOA3 is necessary.

Increasing Domain awareness is an essential early step. This must span across the Surface, Sub surface, Airspace and Cyber realms. It is likely that this will show further capability gaps.

Putting Maritime Security structures/governance/coordination measures in place will be a challenge. At the operational level, perhaps the successful JTF model can be used where appropriate.

Changes to the Maritime Security Act 2004 and Maritime Safety Act 2005 as recommended by CODF should proceed.

The Principal Agency Concept and Marginal Cost model for the NS is still relevant and the concept should be retained and consistently applied.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, private owners and operators will need to contribute to their own security. All will already do so in order to …

-Meet statutory requirements- e.g. Ports must already comply with the International Ship and Port Facility Code (ISPS), and all enterprises must comply with Health, Safety & Welfare at work legislation, and planning and environmental regulation.

-to protect their own business interests.

Roles to Play. The private sector can be expected to provide

-Resiliance of systems i.e redundancy and alternatives

-Physical security measures- manning, remote monitoring.

-An intervention/crisis response capability

-Financial Insurance.

-Expert advice to the relevant authorities

-Access to data and sensors.

There will be a need for agreements with such operators to cover these matters while respecting their commercial interests.

Summary. It is our view in response to this question;

Yes, private owners and operators will need to contribute to their own security. All will already do so to some extent.

They will need to play a variety of roles depending on the nature of their enterprise

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Our previous responses addressed these questions in part.

The Rules Based International Order (RBIO) and International Engagement: Ireland is an enthusiastic supporter of RBIO. This includes the UN Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which underpins most of the governance and regulation of maritime activity. As such, the rule of law (via UNCLOS) is essential to our Maritime Security. At a time when RBIO is under pressure in many other areas we need to support the existing laws and structures at every opportunity but be prepared that it is a growing likelihood that they may be ignored by others.

Investment and Engagment with EU: Full investment, engagement and cooperation with the various EU strategys, policies and programs is perhaps the most effective way to safeguard our maritime interests, and other security interests. The CSDP, the Strategic Compass, SAFE, PESCO and in the maritime EUMSS are all relevant to Irelands national security and provide vehicles to enhance capabilities, both our own and shared. Deepening engagement with the EU is perhaps the most important investment we could make to our national maritime security.
The Commission on the Defence Forces recommended a deepening engagement with EUMSS as well as the development of a National Maritime Security Strategy. This should be an integrated and complimentary approach.
The UK. The UK is our closest maritime neighbour and we share significant interests in that domain, and our most extensive maritime borders. We are a member of the EU but the UK is not. The UK is a member of NATO but we are not. It is essential to our security (including maritime) that there is continued cooperation with the UK who are a significant regional maritime power. This cannot now be through mutual interests and shared responsibilities in the EU (via CSDP, EUMSS etc.). However, engagement and cooperation with the UK is clearly required into the future and will have to be put in place either via EU/UK or bilaterally.

NATO Individually Tailored Partnership (ITP): The principal benefit of ITP is the access to expertise and training to reach interoperability standards. In reality most of our EU partners and the UK, who we most likely will need to cooperate with are NATO members, so being able to operate/cooperate to their standards is highly desirable.

Summary. It is our view in response to this question;

Ireland needs to continue to support the RBIO at every forum and opportunity.

Full investment, engagement and cooperation with the various EU strategys, policies and programs is perhaps the most effective way to safeguard our maritime interests, and also our other security interests.

Engagement and cooperation with the UK on (inter alia) Maritime Security is essential. This may need to be put on a more formal basis.

Continuing engagement with NATOs ITP is in our interest.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes a Strategy without an action/implementation plan remains only an aspiration. Any action plan should encompass inter alia:

- Objectives and timeline
- A Legislative program
- Resource implications and plan
- Departmental, State Agency and bodies engagement framework,
- Private Sector and NGO engagement framework
- International engagement framework
- Governance, monitoring and review mechanism

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

A National Security Strategy. While it is recognised that the Defence Policy Review set out that the Department of Defence will coordinate and deliver this National Maritime Security Strategy, it would be [redacted] view that the first step should have been the preparation of a National Security Strategy by the government as would be the practice in other States.
National Security is a basic and primal responsibility for any State. From a strategic perspective, a National Security Strategy would provide for the Government's usage of all instruments of power, including economic, diplomatic, informational, justice and military, in order to secure national security objectives. These instruments are complementary. Universally, nations employ them in varying combinations as components within National Security Strategies.

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

Contact Form

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland’s maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Chronic underspending on defense and defence capability along with severe understaffing of the defence forces.
We lack the capability of detecting and deterring maritime threats, thus inviting aggression for States, namely Russia, who do not respect our sovereignty.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland’s maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

A comprehensive recruitment scheme for the Defence Forces needs to be established with real pay and benefits to aid retention. The lack of skills and man power can't be fixed overnight or by throwing money at it. It takes 3 to 4 years to train Navigation and Engineering officers, and longer still for them to gain experience.
More vessels and aircraft are needed to patrol our maritime boundaries. We should learn from the war in Ukraine and invest and development maritime drones for defensive and offensive operations.
Tackle miss information about neutrality, NATO and our overall defence. I believe the majority of Irish citizens would welcome increased defence spending and a growing number would support joining NATO. While I don't believe there is yet a majority for Ireland joining NATO I think it's Ireland's only real hope for peace. Efforts should be undertaken to counter Russian disinformation operations that turn the public against defence spending.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

I think this could be a useful approach in beginning while capability and experience is being built. Protect the most critical first so resources are not overstretched and when resources allow then expand on less critical areas.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Manpower including specialist skills.
Capability including sonars, radars and specialist sensors.
Maritime Drones and Anti Ship
Integrated operations with the Aircorp
Working with European Partners, up to and including NATO membership

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

In my experience, public private partnership in Ireland have never been good for the state and end up costing the taxpayer more. Also private sector companies have their own agendas which do not always align with the national interests

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes I believe we should work closely with our EU and UK partners. Personally I would advocate for NATO membership although I do not yet think there is an overall majority in favour or NATO membership. However this number is growing.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

This is a good idea, I don't believe I know enough about an action plan to comment further. But any action plan should be based on similar plans already drafted by our EU and UK partners.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

The time to start this was 5 years ago, we should not waste another minute. An investment will spare us a dark future and ensure deterrence.

Contact

Contact Form

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland's most significant current vulnerability lies in the monitoring and protection of its critical subsea infrastructure, particularly in the context of growing geopolitical tensions and state-sponsored hybrid threats. As the only specialist ROV service provider in the country, [redacted]. is acutely aware of the limited domestic capability for rapid subsea response in the event of suspicious activity or damage to vital infrastructure such as fibre-optic cables, gas pipelines, and offshore energy installations.

Our extensive sea area poses a unique surveillance and response challenge. Much of this domain remains under-monitored, especially below the surface, where hostile actors may operate undetected. The events in the Nord Stream pipeline sabotage demonstrated the feasibility and impact of targeted attacks on subsea assets, and Ireland, with its critical data infrastructure, is not immune.

In addition, reliance on naval assets alone - which are limited in number and may be far from the location of an incident—introduces delays. As a commercial operator, we routinely observe the benefits of vessel-of-opportunity approaches that enable a faster response by deploying ROVs and sensor packages from local vessels.

Another pressing vulnerability is the absence of a coordinated subsea inspection and threat assessment programme. There is currently no mechanism to ensure proactive investigation of anomalies, unknown objects, or degradation on the seabed in areas near critical infrastructure. This results in a largely reactive posture that increases the risk of missing the early warning signs of sabotage or system failure.

To summarise, the most significant current threats include:

Subsea sabotage or interference, particularly by state or non-state actors;

Delayed response times due to geographic dispersion and limited naval mobility;

Gaps in persistent underwater surveillance and anomaly detection;

Lack of integration with agile, private-sector capabilities that could dramatically improve situational awareness and resilience.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

One of the most pressing future challenges to Ireland's maritime security is the growing sophistication of subsea threats - especially those targeting undersea infrastructure through non-traditional and covert means. As adversaries increasingly shift toward grey zone tactics which fall below the threshold of armed conflict, we expect to see greater use of uncrewed or semi-autonomous underwater systems designed to map, monitor, and potentially disrupt vital infrastructure.

Given Ireland's location and extensive EEZ, we host a disproportionately large number of transatlantic subsea cables that underpin global internet and data traffic. We foresee a continued rise in cyber-physical hybrid threats, where cyber attacks are paired with physical tampering or damage to seabed infrastructure. These actions may come from state-sponsored actors or well-resourced criminal entities and could remain undetected without sustained subsea monitoring capability.

Climate-related changes will also introduce future risks. More frequent and severe storm events, shifting currents, and seabed erosion can lead to the exposure or damage of infrastructure previously considered secure. A strategy that accounts for environmental as well as human threats will be increasingly important.

To prepare for these emerging challenges, Ireland must:

Invest in persistent subsea monitoring using a mix of autonomous systems, ROV inspections, and seabed sensors, ideally supported by data fusion platforms that can flag anomalies for investigation.

Develop rapid response capabilities that do not depend solely on Navy assets. Partnerships with specialist operators like [redacted], using vessels of opportunity, can dramatically improve response speed and agility.

Expand the use of non-permanent, contractor-operated services for surveillance and inspection, allowing flexible, scalable, and cost-effective access to modern technologies without long-term ownership burdens.

Create a classified national seabed asset map, continuously updated and reviewed to detect unauthorized changes or intrusions.

Enhance public-private coordination mechanisms, so that companies who own or maintain subsea assets (e.g., telecoms and energy providers) can collaborate on threat identification and response planning.

In short, future threats will be harder to detect, less attributable, and more technically complex. Ireland's best preparation lies in building a distributed, agile, and intelligence-led subsea capability, leveraging both national assets and the expertise of domestic industry.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, we believe the Strategy should prioritise certain high-risk and high-value geographical areas within Ireland's maritime domain, particularly where critical subsea infrastructure intersects with heightened geopolitical interest or physical vulnerability.

Key focus areas should include:

The South Coast and South-West Approaches
This region is home to numerous transatlantic subsea data cables, many of which make landfall in Cork and Kerry. Given their importance to global communications and Ireland's digital economy, these routes represent a strategic vulnerability and warrant sustained surveillance and inspection efforts.

The Irish Sea
As a heavily trafficked corridor with significant infrastructure and proximity to the UK, the Irish Sea presents both operational challenges and heightened exposure to espionage, interference, or accidental damage. It is also a likely region for offshore wind development, increasing its strategic significance in the near term.

Continental Shelf Regions with Infrastructure
Ireland's economic exclusion zone (EEZ) encompasses a large area with undersea energy infrastructure, These are essential for energy security and could become targets or suffer damage from environmental conditions or maritime activity.

Unmonitored Offshore Areas
Areas that are geographically remote or rarely patrolled—such as parts of the Atlantic margin—may be vulnerable simply due to the absence of persistent surveillance. These spaces may be used by hostile actors to stage or conduct activities beyond the reach of traditional monitoring assets.

In our operational experience, prioritisation does not necessarily mean permanent presence. Rather, we advocate for a risk-based and scalable monitoring approach, using ROVs and autonomous platforms deployed opportunistically from local vessels as needed. This enables surveillance and inspection of specific locations without requiring dedicated military resources to be stationed there at all times.

Ultimately, the prioritisation of certain regions will allow for more efficient allocation of resources, clearer tasking of private-sector support like [redacted], and more targeted deterrence against actors who may seek to exploit Ireland's maritime vulnerabilities.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, the State should prioritise strategic investment in service access, not asset ownership.

Rather than investing in its own ROVs, survey vessels, or subsea systems - which would require long-term staffing, maintenance, and capital budgets - the State should focus on building rapid access pathways to specialist, end-to-end commercial services, many of which are already available in Ireland from the stymied offshore wind energy marine survey supply chain.

For example, [redacted] already operates full-service subsea operations, including vessel charter with crew, equipment, and data delivery. We work regularly with specialist survey and support vessels, meaning the State does not need to acquire, operate, or coordinate any hardware or platforms. We bring the full solution to the table.

To support this approach, we recommend investment in the following areas:

Standing Service Agreements
The State should establish framework contracts or service-level agreements with providers like [redacted] enabling rapid mobilisation of subsea services without going through lengthy procurement cycles for ever changing hardware technology. This avoids obsolescence.

Outcome-Based Procurement Models
Investment should shift from hardware procurement to results-based contracting - for example, commissioning "inspection of X km of subsea cable" or "detection and analysis of anomaly Y." This ensures the State gets timely, decision-ready data without the burden of managing or maintaining the systems that collect it.

Dedicated Funding for On-Demand Tasking
Ireland should create a ring-fenced budget for immediate activation of private-sector subsea services, especially in the event of suspected infrastructure interference or natural damage. With this approach, the State can act rapidly without waiting for internal resource availability.

Integrated Planning and Intelligence Interfaces
Instead of duplicating technical capacity, the State should invest in integration mechanisms: Secure portals, data standards, and operational planning tools that allow information gathered by service providers to feed directly into Defence and infrastructure decision-making.

Support for Innovation Through Operational Trials
The State could incentivise innovation by supporting trial deployments of new service models, such as persistent seabed monitoring using mobile assets or autonomous sensors, delivered entirely through industry. This enables experimentation without committing to long-term ownership.

In summary, the State should not procure boats, ROVs, and sensors. It should buy results, insights, and readiness, from providers who already have the assets and expertise in place. This model ensures faster mobilisation, lower cost, reduced obsolesce, and more modern capability, delivered without the logistical complexity of state-run operations.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the National Maritime Security Strategy should actively involve the private sector, particularly those who own, operate, or maintain critical maritime infrastructure - such as telecom companies, energy providers, offshore renewables developers, and subsea service providers [redacted]

These private-sector stakeholders are not just adjacent to maritime security - they are central to it. In many cases, they are the first to detect anomalies, observe degradation or interference, and possess the specialised expertise needed to investigate or remediate threats. Excluding them from security planning would leave significant blind spots in both capability and awareness.

We see three vital roles for the private sector:

First Responders and Technical Investigators
Service providers [redacted] are often best positioned to respond quickly to suspected threats or damage. We already operate in sensitive areas, can deploy ROVs and sensors rapidly, and have existing relationships with vessel owners and infrastructure stakeholders. We can function as first responders on behalf of the State, delivering verified subsea imagery and actionable findings faster than government-owned platforms could.

Infrastructure Intelligence Contributors
Private companies maintain detailed knowledge of subsea layouts, condition assessments, and installation histories. This information is critical for identifying new threats or understanding vulnerabilities. With appropriate security safeguards, a national coordination framework could enable classified information sharing, helping both State and industry respond in a unified way.

Security by Design and Resilience Planning
Owners of maritime infrastructure should be involved in discussions on hardening assets, diversifying routes, and pre-planning responses. The strategy should support mechanisms where private operators can align with State resilience goals, without needing to retrofit solutions after a crisis. This could include shared risk assessments, joint scenario planning, and agreed protocols for coordinated response.

In addition, involving private operators ensures the strategy reflects practical realities on the ground (or seabed). Service providers like us know what's technically feasible, how fast we can mobilise, and where new threats are emerging in operational contexts. That kind of insight should inform both policy and investment decisions.

Ultimately, a resilient maritime security posture is only possible through public-private cooperation. By involving industry, not just as stakeholders, but as partners, the State can expand its reach, capability, and situational awareness without having to build everything in-house.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

International cooperation must be a cornerstone of Ireland's maritime security strategy, particularly given our exposed position on the western edge of Europe, our dependence on subsea infrastructure, and our limited sovereign capabilities for persistent underwater surveillance.

We support increased cooperation with:

NATO and the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP)
Ireland's partnership with NATO through the ITPP offers access to best practices, innovation programmes, and practical cooperation mechanisms that can improve national resilience without requiring full NATO membership. NATO's Project X aims to put the most modern tools into the hands of NATO members including a data as a service model. NATO's Rapid Adoption Action Plan (published . For the latest technologies, NATO' s growing focus on contractor-owned, contractor-operated (COCO) models, rapid procurement pathways, and multi-nation ISR sharing align have informed [redacted] response to this survey.

EU Partners and Agencies
Ireland should work closely with EU member states and agencies like EMSA (European Maritime Safety Agency) and EU NAVFOR to share threat intelligence, align monitoring efforts, and access pooled technical capabilities. Joint exercises, shared training, and mutual access to commercial support (such as ROV inspections or infrastructure repair services) would all improve collective resilience.

Neighbouring Countries – Especially the UK
Given the interconnected nature of Irish and UK subsea infrastructure, including data cables and energy interconnectors, we believe Ireland and the UK should maintain structured, operationally focused dialogue, especially on shared response protocols. Threats or anomalies rarely respect maritime boundaries; our detection and response strategies shouldn't either.

Global Maritime Organisations
Ireland should also continue engaging with organisations like the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) and IMO, helping ensure that security policies reflect the needs of infrastructure owners and service providers operating in shared waters.

We caution, however, that international cooperation should not become overly bureaucratic. It must be action-oriented, focused on outcomes, and leave space for Ireland to move quickly when needed. Cooperation should respect our neutrality while maximising operational interoperability.

From our perspective as a specialist subsea services provider, we also believe international cooperation should include frameworks for cross-border service mobilisation - so that companies like [redacted] can be contracted by or contribute to allied operations when the threat environment demands it.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the Strategy must be accompanied by a detailed, time-bound Action Plan, or it will risk remaining a strategic aspiration rather than a functional capability.

Ireland's maritime security challenges-particularly those in the subsea domain require not just vision but operational readiness, and that demands a clear delivery mechanism with defined outcomes.

From [redacted] as a non-traditional, specialist provider of subsea services, the Action Plan should reflect the principles and structure of NATO's Rapid Adoption Action Plan. In particular, it should recognise that the State's fastest route to enhanced capability is through services, not assets.

We recommend the following key elements:
1. 24-Month Adoption Target for New Service Models
Ireland should commit to NATO's goal of acquiring and integrating new capabilities within 24 months, including contractor-operated services. This would signal political intent to modernise procurement processes and engage with non-traditional suppliers many of whom already operate at the required technical level.

2. Pre-Qualified Rapid Response Service Frameworks
The Action Plan should establish standing contractual frameworks with certified providers for key capabilities such as:
Subsea threat investigation and anomaly resolution;
Critical infrastructure inspection and verification;
Rapid mobilisation using vessels of opportunity.

This would allow activation of services in days, not months, with clear outcome-based tasking.

3. Pilot Programmes and Test Ranges for Maritime Security Services
As NATO proposes with "Innovation Ranges" and Task Force X, Ireland should fund pilot projects that test and validate contractor-delivered services in real-world conditions. [redacted] could be tasked to simulate a rapid inspection response to a subsea cable anomaly under operational constraints. These pilots would both demonstrate capability and help build trust in alternative delivery models.

4. NATO-Compatible Validation and Certification
To de-risk adoption of private-sector services, Ireland should participate in a mutual certification or "Innovation Badge" system, whether through NATO, DIANA, or a national equivalent. This would help government buyers identify tested and reliable non-traditional suppliers, accelerating trust and uptake.

5. Training and Cultural Shift for Procurement Officials
Procurement officers must be equipped to embrace flexible, problem-based contracting. Ireland should adopt NATO's model of:
Training for procurement professionals in rapid adoption practices;
Innovation-focused briefings for decision-makers to shift the mindset from ownership to outcomes.

6. Creation of a National 'Front Door' for Industry Engagement
Mirroring NATO's upcoming Front Door for Industry, Ireland should create a single, accessible entry point where defence and infrastructure agencies can engage directly with private-sector providers.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

A huge body of work has already been advanced by NATO's Project X. Their Rapid Adoption Plan was published on the 25 June 2025. A summary of that is available on NATO's website here: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_236539.htm

It is a forward thinking plan which aims to raise NATO's capabilities without the procurement burdens and timeframes of traditional state owned and operated assets. Please consider adopted this approach in any state led plan.

I have provided my contact details below for any follow up questions.

[redacted]

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

Contact Form

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Russian (or possible future Chinese) sabotage to sub sea cable infrastructure and turbine facilities. Also the possible deployment of military drone containers in the Irish maritime area targeting cross Atlantic trade /transport to be used in the event of conflict with the west.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Sub-sea drone attacks on sub sea cables. This could be countered by investing in more advanced naval sub-sea observation and detection capability by the Naval service and the Air Corps.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

The western and southern seaboard area are the most vulnerable.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

The naval service should have advanced undersea monitoring capability in their ships.

The deployment of static/ marine drone monitors with advanced sensors could augment the naval service manned vessels.

Additional maritime patrol aircraft would assist the air corps in patrolling the large sea area.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes they are key stakeholders. Their level of influence on decisions should be guided by an assessment of their overseas connections, particularly to bad actors.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Our EU and UK partners are crucial in safeguarding our maritime interests. They also possess superior capability from an aerial and naval point of view which we could access or request assistance of.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

A strategy must have a plan. A level of ambition statement designed to tie in with the defence force LOA statement should be published.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

Contact Form

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Drug shipments, not so called Russian scaremongering.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

We have a small naval fleet, concentrate on policing for drugs. There isnt a chance we could take on russian navy, so its pointless that way. They may be mapping the seabed but so is other foreign vessels to possibly blame the russians or push ireland to spend more on defense, so arms companies win with more purchases.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

south west, west to north west as irish and celtic seas are been monitored by the UK and the Atlantic is a greater mass the seas on the east coast.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Less reliance on believing the scaremongering from people that have a financial interest in ireland to spend on defence .

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

No as they cannot be trusted with information, whether to other individuals or unfriendly governments. Their reliance and prices will increase, privatisation rarely has positives.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

We shouldnt get involved with any of these organisations as that makes us become a target if anything did occur.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Aircraft can be monitoring incoming ships that might be transporting drugs and relay that info for navy to search. If ye are thinking about russians or chinese vessels, what chance has irish navy or any navy got at finding against a submarine or drone submarine in the atlantic, minimals chance.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

Dont jump on the NATO bandwagon o reducing the triple lock, we have done well this far. concentrate on the palestine question and getting their land back that they deserve.The zionists are the problem, nobody else.

Contact

Contact Form

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Bad actors & rogue states such as Russia are in my opinion the greatest threat to our maritime security

Our lack of adequate defence infrastructure is impeding our ability to security our maritime space

By not committing to ANY deterrence, we are inviting bad actors & rogue states to harm us & our European partners.

It is also of paramount importance that the threats to the state are highlighted regularly to the public to keep them aware. Disinformation through social media & other means should be challenged too. A poorly informed public only has negative impacts.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Russia now & later China will be the largest threats regarding any kinetic or hybrid actions that will harm ireland.

A adequately equipped naval service & air corps with modern systems, including specific weapons & defences to deal with undersea, surface & air threats, are critical in offering a real deterrence any to any attacker.

Ireland cannot do this alone. It should do this in tandem with its neighbours. Britain & continental Europe need to be involved. But primarily this message needs to be reinforced by government to the public.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland should consider protecting its EEZ adequately.
Prioritising undersea infrastructure.
The east coast should also have a full time naval port to ensure it is adequately served with personnel & logistics.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Warships, Fast Jets, Radar, air & sea Anti-submarine systems. Drone technology & anti-drone technology. These are the key deterrents in my opinion.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

The Private sector should be involved with design, testing, training & productions of systems, but ONLY state bodies such as the defence forces should be operating the equipment. Contracted surveillance systems could be examined.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland cannot do this alone. Neutrality is impossible for ireland. Neighbour & partner states should be involved. Shared responsibilities & even shared procurement should be examined.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes. An ambitious plan needs to be implemented ASAP. European military intelligence consistently suggests Europe has a 5 year window to deter Russia from a significant kinetic action that will test NATO & ultimately the EU.

A porcupine defence infrastructure, such as Finland has, should be examined if we choose to go at defence alone.

Otherwise we should be realistic in working with our European partners.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland is NOT a “small island”

Its the 3rd largest island in Europe

Globally, it's ranked the 20th largest Island

It’s maritime area is 7 times the size of its landmass

With 7,500km of coastline, its longer than most EU countries

Just 12% of the world’s population live in a liberal democracy such as ireland.
Democracy itself is seriously under threat from rogue states & bad actors.

There appears to be NO slow down in the threats facing us in Europe. We ultimately need to prepare for the worst, & hope for the best.

Our future survival may depend on what we do tomorrow.

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

1. Subsea Infrastructure Vulnerability:
Ireland's reliance on undersea cables for internet and financial data transmission is a major strategic vulnerability. The growing risk of sabotage or espionage by foreign actors—whether state-sponsored or criminal—poses a serious threat to national security, economic stability, and communications resilience.

2. Illicit Maritime Activity:
Drug trafficking, human smuggling, and illegal fishing continue to exploit Ireland's vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Limited naval and aerial surveillance capacity means large areas of the maritime domain remain under-monitored, creating opportunities for transnational crime.

3. Geopolitical Tensions & Hybrid Threats:
Tensions in the North Atlantic, increased Russian naval activity, and hybrid threats such as cyber attacks on ports or shipping systems underscore the importance of enhancing maritime domain awareness. Ireland's non-aligned status does not exempt it from strategic interest by larger global powers.

4. Environmental and Climate-Related Risks:
Maritime pollution, offshore oil and gas hazards, and climate change-related weather extremes (e.g., increased storm surges, coastal erosion) can all jeopardise maritime safety and security. These risks also have implications for emergency response capacity and infrastructure resilience.

5. Energy Security & Offshore Assets:
With the growth of offshore renewable energy infrastructure, particularly wind farms, there is a new layer of critical national infrastructure that must be protected from both physical and cyber threats. Securing these assets is vital for Ireland's energy transition and supply stability.

6. Limited Resources & Capabilities:
The Defence Forces and Naval Service have faced significant resourcing and staffing challenges. This limits their ability to effectively monitor, deter, and respond to maritime incidents or threats. The need for investment in personnel, surveillance technology, and strategic partnerships is critical.

Conclusion:
A comprehensive, forward-looking maritime security strategy should address these threats holistically—balancing defence, civil, environmental, and technological dimensions. Enhanced coordination with EU partners, improved inter-agency response frameworks, and investment in maritime domain awareness are essential to safeguarding Ireland's interests at sea.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Emerging Threats and Future Challenges to Ireland's Maritime Security:

As global dynamics evolve, Ireland's maritime security will face several emerging and complex challenges over the coming decades. These will require a proactive, multi-sectoral approach to ensure long-term resilience. The key future threats include:

1. Cybersecurity Threats to Maritime Infrastructure:
The digitalisation of port operations, shipping logistics, offshore renewable energy platforms, and naval systems makes them increasingly vulnerable to cyberattacks. A hostile cyber intrusion on a critical system (e.g., port logistics or offshore wind control systems) could cause significant economic disruption or environmental harm.
Preparation:

- Invest in robust maritime cybersecurity standards and threat monitoring systems.
- Establish cyber-resilience protocols across all maritime assets, including drills and inter-agency response plans.
- Create secure data-sharing platforms between public and private maritime operators.

2. Geopolitical Instability and Strategic Competition in the North Atlantic:
The Arctic's changing geography, increased NATO activity, and potential interference from non-EU actors such as Russia or China may spill into Irish waters, either through surveillance, espionage, or disruptive naval presence.
Preparation:

- Strengthen collaboration and intelligence-sharing with EU and like-minded partners.
- Enhance Ireland's maritime situational awareness and domain monitoring capabilities through satellite, drone, and radar technologies.
- Ensure Ireland's neutrality is underpinned by credible defence deterrence and non-alignment is not equated with vulnerability.

3. Expansion of the Blue Economy and Critical Infrastructure at Sea:
With increasing investment in offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, and undersea data cables, Ireland's maritime space will become increasingly crowded and strategically important. These assets may be physically or digitally targeted.
Preparation:

- Map and classify all maritime critical infrastructure and establish physical and cyber protection zones.
- Introduce legislative and regulatory frameworks for infrastructure protection in Irish waters.
- Foster public-private partnerships to coordinate emergency response capabilities.

4. Climate Change and Maritime Disaster Response:
Rising sea levels, more severe storms, and unpredictable weather patterns will threaten coastal communities, offshore installations, and shipping routes. These could trigger mass evacuations, oil or chemical spills, and increased search and rescue demands.
Preparation:

- Integrate climate adaptation into national maritime security planning.
- Expand the Irish Coast Guard's resources and disaster response capability.
- Invest in dual-use maritime assets (civil and defence) that can be rapidly deployed in emergencies.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the Strategy should prioritise specific geographical areas within Ireland's maritime domain, based on strategic value, vulnerability, and potential impact. A targeted approach allows for efficient allocation of limited resources and ensures the most critical areas receive appropriate protection and oversight.

1. Atlantic Seaboard – Western Approaches

This region includes the vast expanse of Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and is home to critical undersea infrastructure such as transatlantic data cables. It also represents the frontline of Ireland's engagement with the wider North Atlantic.

Strategic Importance:

- Major international subsea communications cables land here, which are vital to global finance and internet infrastructure.
- Proximity to contested areas in the North Atlantic heightens its strategic relevance amid increased geopolitical tensions.
- Vulnerable to covert surveillance, sabotage, or hybrid threats from state and non-state actors.

Recommended Focus:

- Enhanced maritime surveillance and patrol presence.
- Protection zones around subsea infrastructure.
- Collaboration with EU and NATO partners for situational awareness.

2. Irish Sea and East Coast

This corridor is heavily trafficked and economically vital, serving as a conduit for trade, energy supply, and ferry routes.

Strategic Importance:

- Densely populated coastal regions with major ports such as Dublin, Rosslare, and Drogheda.
- High volumes of shipping traffic increase risks of smuggling, piracy, or port-based cyberattacks.
- Potential target for disruption of cross-border movement post-Brexit.

Recommended Focus:

- Investment in port cybersecurity and monitoring.
- Enhanced customs and naval coordination to counter illicit activity.
- Inter-agency coordination with the UK on shared security risks.

3. South and Southwest Coast – Cork & Shannon Estuaries

Home to Ireland's largest natural harbours, key naval infrastructure, and emerging offshore wind projects.

Strategic Importance:

- Naval base in Haulbowline and major oil/gas terminals are located here.
- Anticipated expansion of floating offshore wind energy projects in the Celtic Sea.
- Key logistics and shipping nodes.

Recommended Focus:

- Protection of naval, energy, and commercial infrastructure.
- Support for sustainable development of maritime industry while safeguarding security.
- Maritime traffic monitoring and emergency response preparedness.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

To effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, strategic investment is required in technology, infrastructure, and capabilities that reflect evolving risks and the growing value of Ireland's maritime domain. Key priorities include:

1. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):
Ireland's vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is under-monitored. Investment in real-time surveillance is essential.

- Deploy satellite, radar, and autonomous drone technologies to monitor vessel movements and offshore activity.
- Develop integrated data-sharing platforms across Defence, Coast Guard, Customs, and other relevant agencies.

2. Naval Service Capability:
Sustained underinvestment in Ireland's Naval Service limits operational readiness.

- Prioritise acquisition of multi-role vessels with advanced surveillance and interdiction capabilities.
- Modernise communication and navigation systems.
- Address staffing and retention issues through long-term recruitment and career support strategies.

3. Cybersecurity for Maritime Infrastructure:
Digital systems in ports, offshore renewables, and shipping are increasingly targeted.

- Establish minimum cybersecurity standards for port and offshore operations.
- Invest in threat detection systems and cybersecurity training across public and private sectors.
- Protect subsea data cables and port logistics systems from cyber disruption or espionage.

4. Protection of Critical Offshore Assets:
Ireland's future energy security relies on offshore wind and subsea infrastructure.

- Designate key maritime infrastructure as critical national assets.
- Develop security frameworks to protect wind farms, subsea cables, and terminals from both physical and cyber threats.
- Enhance emergency response capacity in remote offshore zones.

5. Port Security and Resilience:
Ports are central to trade and vulnerable to illicit activity or disruption.

- Improve surveillance (CCTV, access controls) and cargo inspection capabilities.
- Build resilience against climate risks, such as storm surges and flooding.
- Modernise port infrastructure to enable faster response to emergencies or security breaches.

6. Inter-agency and International Coordination:
Maritime security is cross-cutting and requires cooperation.

- Strengthen coordination between the Defence Forces, Coast Guard, Customs, and Gardaí.
- Engage more deeply with EU and regional partners on maritime surveillance and joint response exercises.
- Develop joint training and simulation programmes for hybrid and environmental threats.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the National Maritime Security Strategy should actively involve the private sector, especially those who

own or operate critical maritime infrastructure such as ports, offshore wind farms, subsea cables, shipping fleets, and fuel terminals. These entities play a vital role in the daily functioning and resilience of Ireland's maritime domain and are essential partners in both risk prevention and incident response.

1. Shared Responsibility for Security

Much of Ireland's maritime critical infrastructure is privately owned or operated. Ensuring its protection cannot rest solely with the state. A public-private partnership model would promote shared responsibility and enable more effective prevention, preparedness, and recovery from security incidents.

2. Threat Detection and Intelligence Sharing

Private operators have access to operational data, monitoring tools, and early indicators of disruptions or cyber threats.
Their role could include:

- Reporting suspicious activity, cyber anomalies, or unauthorised access attempts.
- Participating in joint intelligence-sharing platforms with state agencies.
- Engaging in training and scenario planning to align on protocols for threat response.

3. Cybersecurity Resilience

Given increasing digitisation, private sector systems are often the first line of defence against cyberattacks.
They should:

- Implement national minimum cybersecurity standards for maritime operations.
- Participate in regular audits, penetration testing, and staff training.
- Co-develop rapid response plans in coordination with state cyber agencies.

4. Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Planning

Operators of ports, energy infrastructure, and transport systems should be closely involved in contingency planning.
Their role could include:

- Developing physical security plans in line with national guidelines.
- Coordinating with emergency services for disaster response or evacuation.
- Contributing to critical infrastructure mapping and vulnerability assessments.

5. Investment and Innovation

The private sector can also drive innovation in maritime security.
They could:

- Invest in surveillance technologies, AI-based threat detection, and secure communications.

- Partner with government in co-funding resilience projects and infrastructure upgrades.
- Collaborate with academia and research bodies on maritime security solutions.

6. Compliance and Regulation

Private sector engagement helps ensure that regulations are realistic and implementable.
They can:

- Provide feedback during policy development to enhance practicality and efficiency.
- Assist in piloting new standards and technologies.
- Support compliance through sector-led governance frameworks.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

International cooperation should play a central role in the new National Maritime Security Strategy. Ireland's maritime domain is deeply connected to global trade, security, communications, and environmental systems. As threats such as cyberattacks, hybrid warfare, illicit trafficking, and infrastructure sabotage grow more complex and transnational, no single state can respond in isolation. Stronger partnerships will enhance Ireland's maritime domain awareness, response capacity, and long-term resilience.

1. EU Cooperation

The EU provides vital frameworks, funding, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms that Ireland can leverage.

- Ireland should actively engage in EU maritime surveillance programmes such as EUCISE (Common Information Sharing Environment) and support the European Maritime Security Strategy.
- Joint operations, capacity-building, and shared risk assessments can strengthen border protection and environmental response.

2. Neighbouring Country Collaboration

Ireland shares significant maritime interests with the UK and nearby coastal states.

- Continued cross-border coordination on customs, fisheries protection, SAR (Search and Rescue), and counter-smuggling efforts is essential.
- Shared protocols for incidents affecting shared waters, such as oil spills or vessel interceptions, will reduce response times and confusion.

3. NATO and the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP)

Although Ireland is militarily neutral, cooperation with NATO through the ITPP allows for targeted engagement without compromising sovereignty.

- Participation in NATO maritime exercises, cyber resilience initiatives, and disaster response planning enhances Ireland's preparedness.
- The partnership also offers access to valuable threat intelligence and training opportunities.

4. International Maritime Organisations

Ireland should remain an active participant in organisations such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Interpol (for maritime crime), and the North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO).

- These bodies support regulatory harmonisation, training, and coordinated responses to piracy, illegal fishing, and marine pollution.
- Engagement ensures Ireland's interests are represented and aligned with global best practices.

5. Practical Benefits of Cooperation

- Enhanced situational awareness via shared surveillance and vessel tracking.
- Improved legal and operational alignment for dealing with hybrid or non-traditional threats.
- Access to technical support, capacity-building funds, and shared innovation in maritime security technologies.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by a detailed Action Plan to ensure it is more than a high-level policy document. An Action Plan provides structure, accountability, and measurable outcomes. It bridges the gap between vision and implementation by outlining who will do what, how, and by when.

Without a clear implementation framework, even the most comprehensive strategy risks limited impact. Given the cross-sectoral nature of maritime security—spanning defence, transport, energy, environment, customs, and industry—an Action Plan is essential for coordination and progress tracking.

Key Elements the Action Plan Should Include:

1. Clear Objectives and Priority Areas

The Plan should break the strategy into specific, actionable goals with timelines.

- Examples: "Establish a National Maritime Coordination Centre by Q2 2026" or "Introduce a cybersecurity baseline for port infrastructure by end of 2025".

2. Defined Roles and Responsibilities
Identify the lead and supporting agencies for each action item.

- Defence Forces, Coast Guard, Department of Transport, port authorities, energy regulators, and private sector partners should all have clear mandates.
- This clarity reduces overlap and ensures efficient use of resources.

3. Timeline and Milestones
Include a realistic timeframe for short-, medium-, and long-term goals.

- Milestones allow for regular progress checks and course correction if needed.

4. Resource Planning
Each action should be aligned with the necessary funding, staffing, and technology resources.

- Where relevant, identify opportunities for EU or international funding (e.g., Horizon Europe, European Defence Fund).

5. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
Include performance indicators to track progress and impact.

- Examples: number of joint exercises conducted, reduction in response time to maritime incidents, % of critical infrastructure covered by surveillance.
- Annual progress reviews should be built in, with results published to promote transparency.

6. Stakeholder Engagement Mechanisms
Create forums for regular consultation with key stakeholders, including:

- Government agencies
- Maritime and energy industries
- Research institutions
- NGOs and coastal communities

This ensures the strategy remains dynamic and responsive to real-world developments.

7. Risk Assessment and Adaptability
The Plan should include a process for regular threat reassessment and strategy updates.

- The maritime security landscape evolves rapidly due to geopolitical, technological, and environmental changes.
- A living Action Plan allows for agility and long-term relevance.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

N/A

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Russian interference, drug , weapons & people smuggling.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Bad actors interfering , smuggling, Fishery policing. Communications, energy supply & trade.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes including air support.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Radar, a navy & airforce fully equipped with ships, weapons & sonar. We also require jet interceptors & planes equipped with radar, say Saab AWACS.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the EU & NATO.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Getting the Navy & Airforce up & running ASAP. Order the assets now & get the personal on training course so they are qualified as soon as the assets arrive. Our EU partners can train our people.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

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Questions

Please answer the below questions in the boxes provided. There is a 3,000 character limit per question. When you have completed your answers please hit the submit button at the bottom of the page.

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

As an island nation, Ireland is heavily reliant on submarine fibre optic cables, which carry approximately 99% of the country's internet and voice communications. Although damage to these cables is relatively rare, it remains a significant vulnerability. Breaks can occur accidentally due to marine vessel activity or environmental conditions. However, a growing concern is the threat posed by malicious actors who may deliberately target these critical infrastructures, highlighting a pressing risk to Ireland's maritime and national security.

Our recent public procurement experience has demonstrated that there is very limited supply of new sea cable infrastructure coming onto the market. This finding is informed by recent public procurements where sea cable connectivity to mainland Europe is short in supply. This leaves Ireland, as an island nation, overtly dependent on incumbent providers and ageing sea cable infrastructure. This being a concern when seeking to address improved topologies and diverse routing out of Ireland.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

One of the most significant emerging threats to Ireland's maritime security is the risk of multiple simultaneous submarine fibre optic cable failures. These disruptions could result from deliberate attacks or increasingly severe weather events driven by climate change. Harsh weather can delay cable repairs for weeks or even months. For example, recent repair efforts in the Red Sea were hindered not only by environmental conditions but also by threats from terrorist groups.

To mitigate such risks, proactive monitoring of fibre optic cables is essential. Advancements in fibre optic sensing technologies now make it possible to detect maritime vessels operating near critical cable routes. This enables real-time alerts to be issued, allowing vessels to take corrective action and avoid damaging the cables. Additionally, fibre optic sensing can identify when buried cables have become exposed on the seabed, helping to prevent potential breaks before they occur.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

The maritime strategy should prioritise the protection of fibre optic landing stations on the Irish coast and all fibre optic cables in Irish waters whether they land in Ireland or not. A lack of sea cable connectivity supply to mainland Europe from Ireland is a particular concern as this leaves Ireland with an overt dependency, and associated geopolitical risk, on sea cable routes to the UK, relying on a non-EU member to reach our fellow EU-members across Europe.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

A two fold approach should be pursed to safeguard Ireland's fibre optic maritime interests. Firstly, a strategy to encourage improved supply of new sea cable infrastructure between Ireland and routes to the rest of the world should be pursued.
Secondly, a strategic investment should focus on deploying advanced fibre optic sensing technologies to monitor existing submarine cables. Two key technologies currently available are Distributed Acoustic Sensing (DAS) and State of Polarisation (SOP) sensing. Both can be applied to existing submarine fibre optic infrastructure and offer relatively low-cost hardware options. However, the primary challenge is gaining access to either an unused fibre pair (dark fibre) or a dedicated wavelength on the submarine cable system.
To address this, the State should consider funding the leasing of dark fibre or spectrum capacity across all submarine cables landing in Ireland. This would enable national implementation of fibre optic sensing across multiple routes. The benefits of such a system would extend well beyond security, supporting vessel detection, environmental and climate monitoring, and enhancing overall maritime situational awareness. These investments would represent a cost-effective and multi-purpose enhancement to Ireland's maritime domain capabilities.
Lesser dependency on sea cable connectivity across the Irish Sea to the UK, a non-EU member, should be a stated strategic objective, from network topology, resiliency, market competitiveness, and geopolitical risk perspectives.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the National Maritime Security Strategy should actively involve the private sector, particularly the owners and operators of submarine fibre optic cables, as well as the Irish research community.

A strong example of this collaboration is [redacted] ongoing work over the past two years with several telecom operators and research groups from Trinity College Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, the Tyndall Institute, and Technological University Dublin. These partnerships have focused on both terrestrial and submarine fibre optic sensing projects. On 26 June, a workshop at [redacted] offices showcased the outcomes of various research initiatives from the past year, highlighting the growing capability and interest in this area.

There is clear momentum from both industry and academia in advancing fibre sensing technology, with applications spanning seismic monitoring, climate research, and maritime security. Ireland has a unique opportunity to become a leader in this field. The National Maritime Security Strategy should therefore support and formalise this collaboration by facilitating controlled access to submarine fibre optic infrastructure for research and monitoring purposes. Doing so would foster innovation while strengthening national maritime resilience.
EC and State supports for intervention supports and subsidy of commercial sea cable providers should be encouraged.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

International cooperation should be a key pillar of the new National Maritime Security Strategy. Ireland's maritime security challenges such as submarine cable protection, climate change impacts, and seismic monitoring are global in nature and best addressed through collaboration with international partners.

The strategy should support and enable Irish research groups to engage more with national and international counterparts on maritime security, climate resilience, and seismic sensing research. Several Irish research teams are already participating in EU-funded fibre sensing initiatives, and [redacted] is currently in discussions about potential Irish involvement in the next phase of the EU-funded SUBMERSE (https://submerse.eu/) project .

By fostering deeper ties with EU partners, neighbouring countries, and other international maritime organisations, Ireland can both contribute to and benefit from shared expertise, infrastructure, and early-warning capabilities. The strategy should explicitly encourage and facilitate these collaborations to ensure that Ireland remains at the forefront of maritime security innovation and resilience.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by a detailed Action Plan to ensure its effective implementation. This plan should include clear, actionable steps and timelines to translate strategic goals into measurable outcomes with assigned owners.

Key elements of the Action Plan should include:

- Facilitating greater supply of diverse sea cable routes to/from Ireland

- Formalise access for Irish research groups to submarine cables:

Encourage all operators of submarine fibre optic cables landing in Ireland to provide access either through dark fibre or allocated spectrum to Irish research groups. This would support the development and deployment of fibre sensing technologies for climate, environmental monitoring, as week as cable security.

- Establishing a national fibre sensing data centre:

Support the creation of a centralised national facility to collect, store and process fibre sensing data from both terrestrial and submarine cables. Fibre sensing generates high volumes of data that require near real-time processing to enable functions such as early warning systems for maritime vessels operating near cable routes. Centralising this data would benefit multiple disciplines such as seismology, climatology, and cable protection by enabling shared access to the same data. This model has already been implemented in the EU-funded SUBMERSE project, which established similar data collection hubs across Europe (submerse.eu/data-

collection-sites).

-Recommend that all future submarine fibre optic cables are “Smart Cables” which include built in sensors when they are installed.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

Submarine fibre optic cables in Irish waters represent critical infrastructure not only for Ireland, but for the global internet and communications network. The strategic importance of these assets, and Ireland’s responsibility in safeguarding them, cannot be overstated.

The Irish research community is actively developing innovative fibre sensing technologies to protect submarine cables and to harness the resulting data for multiple applications, including environmental monitoring, seismic activity detection, climate research, fisheries management, protection of utilities infrastructure (e.g. energy interconnectors), as well as maritime security.

The National Maritime Security Strategy presents a valuable opportunity to support and advance this work by fostering collaboration between government, industry, and academia. With the right investment and coordination, Ireland can position itself as a leader in submarine cable security and in the global effort to ensure the resilience of undersea communications infrastructure.

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

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Please answer the below questions in the boxes provided. There is a 3,000 character limit per question. When you have completed your answers please hit the submit button at the bottom of the page.

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

I concur with the emerging consensus that Ireland's key vulnerability is to hostile state action against critical infrastructure in the maritime domain, including the data and power cables, gas pipelines and offshore energy platforms/wind turbines. Traditional threats of illegal fishing, marine pollution, narcotics trafficking, human smuggling and damage to ports also remain relevant. I also consider hostile power projection into the EEZ (Russian shows of force) a current threat.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

While under-protected maritime infrastructure has already become a current vulnerability, future challenges are likely to include innovative ways of attacking this infrastructure, especially attacks which are hard to detect. These challenges of course fall under the heading of hybrid warfare. Attacks are ordered by states such as Russia but may be carried out by proxies. On preparedness we should build public awareness to the threat, invest in Maritime Domain Awareness (to detect attacks), boost the Naval Service capability to deter attacks, build international alliances for synergy and invest in national resilience including by building redundancy into critical infrastructure.

However, there is such volatility in the international situation and rapid change in both technology and environment that we should also prepare for "unknown unknowns" – the state should invest in expertise to track the next round of emerging threats which are still below the horizon.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Along with upgrading the INS, we should acquire a broad range of capabilities in Maritime Domain Awareness, to enable surveillance of seabed, water body and surface. Technologies should including radar, sonar, satellite, and other sensor technologies. They should be deployed on the full range of platforms, including drones and buoys & seabed sensors and supported by AI for detection of anomalies and targets.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Private sector infrastructure operators should retain first level responsibility for physical integrity of their assets and situational awareness. The state should provide deterrence, full spectrum surveillance, set standards, lead in learning and coordinate response. The state should also have emergency powers to expand its role in case of deteriorating international situation and raised threat level.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

International cooperation should be key because of the sheer scale of the area to be protected compared to the meagre resources Ireland devotes to security, plus because of the interconnectedness of Irish and European /North American maritime security. We should be open to any format of cooperation which offers synergy and access to capabilities. In practice close cooperation with UK is likely to offer most tangible benefits and should be prioritised for this reason. This of course should be complemented by participation in EU formats under the new EUMSS, the second priority. The NATO formats and international maritime organisations should be a lower order of priority, subject to available capacity.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

The model adopted by the EU of combining the EUMSS with an action plan and pre-scheduled review is a good template. The action plan should cover (1) Maritime Domain Awareness, (2) Surface & underwater capabilities, (3) Awareness/preparedness/resilience, (4) Skills, capacity building & training, (5) Coordination & institutions, (6) Coalitions & international cooperation, (7) Cross-cutting issues and inter-sectoral cooperation, (8) Strategic intelligence

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

I am in favour of increased public debate and awareness of the challenges facing Ireland in this new era of strategic competition. I believe that we still have a long way to go to adjust to the threats arising from Russian aggression in Europe, proliferation of hybrid warfare and the US-China dynamics. Having the public on board is key.

I also believe that the global challenges are interrelated. Climate change poses the other existential threat to the state. The IMSS should provide for measures which build on complementarity with environmental protection and climate action. The maritime domain is obviously affected by both security and environmental threats. Security investment which also contributes to environmental mitigation/resilience – for example improved marine environment data collection - will be more likely to enjoy support and will be a better use of resources than security which is siloed.

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland's greatest maritime vulnerability lies in the exposure of subsea infrastructure — including telecommunications cables, gas pipelines, and current and future offshore renewable infrastructure — to state and non-state actors operating in the grey zone. The Naval Service Diving Section (NSDS) is currently the only Defence Forces capability trained and equipped to operate in this domain, yet it remains underdeveloped and understaffed.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Emerging threats include uncrewed underwater vehicles (UUVs), covert diver operations, and hybrid interference with critical infrastructure. These require persistent subsea situational awareness, which demands a modernised and permanent diving capability. Establishing a Defence Forces School of Diving is a foundational step.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes. The South Coast — especially around Cork Harbour and Bantry Bay — and the East Coast, particularly the Irish Sea, must be prioritised. The Irish Sea hosts critical energy infrastructure (e.g., gas pipelines) essential for electricity. Disruption could lead to national blackout. Dublin Port is also a key vulnerability. It handles the bulk of containerised trade between UK and Europe and a large proportion of ferry and cruise passengers (approx. 500,000 p/a). One malign phone call could disrupt Ireland's critical trade hub for weeks/months. The NSDS must be capable of responding in both regions.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

Delivering on the NSDS specific work packages in the detailed implementation plan are essential enablers in safeguarding Irelands maritime interests. Three priorities: (1) People – creating a Naval Diver career path and modernised CS4, (2) Infrastructure – building a joint facility for NSDS and SOMTU in the Cork area, and (3) Education – founding and staffing the Defence Forces School of Diving to train and retain subsea capability.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes. The private sector can share infrastructure data, support emergency response, and co-invest in training environments. A public-private coordination framework would enhance capability. Given the inherent redundancy in fibre optic data cables, new legislation pinning security of data cables on owners should be introduced/enforced. Unfortunately there is no redundancy in the two gas interconnectors in the Irish Sea, close civilian military engagement in this matter should be prioritised.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

International cooperation is vital. NSDS already partners with the several international counterparts including the RN, RCN, and BAF. Formalising these ties through joint training and shared standards will raise capability. Engagement through NATO ITPP and EU PESCO should emphasise subsea security.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes. The Action Plan should include capability targets (e.g., NSDS at LOA 2 by 2028), the joint NSDS/SOMTU facility on the South Coast, establishment of the DF School of Diving, public-private response protocol, and international partnerships. Implementation must be urgent.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland's credibility in maritime security depends on its ability to act below the surface. A modernised NSDS and established Defence Forces School of Diving are the foundational reforms needed to secure subsea sovereignty.

Contact

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

1) Narco Terrorism.
Ireland is the weak link in European fight against illegal drug importation. This is a huge international criminal enterprise and probably involves state sponsors of terrorism and terrorist groups in addition to the huge trans national criminal enterprises that are recognised players. It threatens stability of Western society. I prefer to call it Narco Terrorism. I strongly oppose moves to legalise and decriminalise illegal drugs in Ireland, this would hand victory to the drug gangs.The unfortunate drug addicts, the victims, need medical help but there can be no let up in combatting drug importation. It requires a Europe wide approach especially the maritime nations, Portugal, Spain, France, UK and Ireland. Our navy and intelligence services have to be part of a combined European shield against drugs. We need to use sophisticated technological surveillance such as satellites to detect surface shipments approaching Western Europe. Drone technology could help to identify suspicious activity around our coast. Problem is that we have a large coastline to patrol. Our Navy and defence forces and Gardai have had recent successes and these must be recognised and acknowledged, but the reality is that it is likely that these represent a small number, perhaps 10-15%, of drug importations. These successes have been achieved with an undrerstrength Navy and reduced fleet at sea and should serve to indicate what could be achieved with a full strength Navy.

2) Subseas Cables and Communications
Our geography means that a large number of vital subsea cables and communication pass through the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone off the west and south coast.The EEZ is a vast area.These cables are of importance not just to Ireland but to Western and International Commerce and Security.. It would be difficult for our Navy to patrol and protect these assets even if we had a full strentgth Navy. We dont have submarines. Sonar technology is urgently needed to detect threats under the sea surface and this is being pursued at present. Because of the international significance of the subsea cables we need to enter into European network of naval services protecting the subsea cables. This obviously raises questions of sovereignty but we need to arrive at mature, imaginative, practical and effective co-operation with fellow European maritime services in our mutual interest.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Answereed largely in Q1

Narco terrorism and Subsea cables

Recruitment and Retention of Sailors:
A Navy career must be attractive and adventurous and interesting especially at a time of near full employment. Pay and Conditions must not be a reason for poor recruitment and retention of sailors.
In my answers to Q1 I have raised the concept of increased co-operation with other European Naval services and this could help recruitment. The Army has been involved in UN Peacekeeping since the 1950s and large numbers of soldiers have served overseas. The only equivalent in the Navy was the involvement of our service along with other European navies in rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean. Co-operation with other navies would make a Navy career more interesting.
Skills learned during time in Navy should be useful in finding employment in civilian life but only after a reasonable period of service.
A Naval Reserve of former Navy members should be built up and former sailors should be able to spend time on active service every year. This should be formalised with employers.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland's maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

The Navy Headquarters has always been in Haulbowline and this is a historical legacy since the British times and the need to guard the West Approaches to Great Britain. Sailors have settled in the Cobh area. It has been argued that this presents difficulties to sailors whose homes and families live in the Dublin area. There is an argument that a naval base on East Coast would help recruitment. It would give the Navy a visual presence on the East Coast whereas at present the Navy is very much based in Cork Harbour.
Likewise it has been suggested that a base in the Gaway area would help recruitment in the West of Ireland. Building extra bases would be costly and would dilute an already understrength navy.
However It should probably be explored in case of the East Coast.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland's maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

As mentioned above Sonar is essential for subsea tracking and the commitment to develop Sonar must be pursued urgently. It is essential that we know what activity is happenening under the surface of our seas.

The Ukraine war has seen the emergence of Drone technology in warfare and we have have to delop a drone capability in our Defence Forces including the Navy.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

The National Maritime College in Ringaskiddy is part of Munster Technological University and provides nautical training for the Naval Service and is a good example of private sector inter action with the Navy.

There may be opportunies for private sector involved in electronics and communications to develop synergies with the navy.

Cyber technology applications should be explored.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

This has been answered above.
It is the only realistic way we can defend our EEZ.
We dont have submarines and cannot inspect and protect the subsea cables.
We need shared intelligence with European partners to detect drug shipments and carry our drug interdiction.
I would favour co-operation with European partners in first instance and would include Royal Navy in this.
Partnership with NATO might evolve over time.
I would hope that co-operation with other naval services would have a spinoff on recruitment as it would make a Navy career more exciting.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Need a full time Minister for Defence.
Need to incease Defence spending above 0.2 % GDP.
Need to be seen to play our part, along with European partmers, in defending Western Europe.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

Think I have exhaused alll my ideas !

Finally, it may be old fashioned but we need to rediscover our national pride and practical patriotism.

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

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Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

The maritime environment provides the opportunity to land and to access our country by either criminal or other bad actors (espionage or sabotage) on a 365 basis and thus requires monitoring and control measures.

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

The potential for bad actors to use the maritime environment to gain access and entry to our country for either criminal or other illegal activities against the people and authorities of the state.

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes - the focus should be on the large ports and on the capacity to secure the ports and in addition the capacity to monitor and control shipping en route to those ports.

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

To safeguard Ireland’s interests it is essential to secure and protect our port infrastructure. There should be a priority on developing security forces to monitor and protect the port by a combination of people, surveillance technology and inshore and offshore transportation - including drones, fixed wing and helicopter aircraft.

Q5. Should the National Maritime Security Strategy involve the private sector who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure? What role could they play?

3000 character(s) maximum

The private and public sector must work together to ensure the security and safety of the maritime environment. As the operators of the various services they are an essential component to enable the integration of security and resilience measures across their industry. For example - ferry companies work with Defence Forces to ensure the capability to deliver security response on board ships at sea by enabling planning and exercise of capabilities at regular periods throughout the year.

Q6. What role do you think international cooperation should play in the new National Maritime Security Strategy? Should this increased cooperation include a focus on our partners in the EU, with neighbouring countries and through our Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO or other international maritime organisations?

3000 character(s) maximum

Essential to have international cooperation as traffic entering territorial waters will have travelled from an other state. It is necessary to use all means possible to ensure a whole of government approach to the security challenges that may impact negatively on the state. There should be coordination and cooperation with all relevant international organisations.

Q7. Do you think the National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by an Action Plan that will detail how the strategy will be implemented? What do you think the key elements of this Action Plan should be?

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes with all strategies there is a need for an Action Plan. The plan will establish specific roles and responsibilities for public and private bodies. It will establish standards and ensure compliance. There is a requirement for legislation to provide authority for the plan.

Q8. If there is anything additional you would like to propose or any general thoughts you have on maritime security, please let us know?

3000 character(s) maximum

The maritime security plan should not be developed in isolation. It should be subordinate to the national security strategy and should be contingent on providing the necessary components to deliver on the maritime aspects of that strategy - not as a standalone document. I would be happy to provide more input if requested.

Contact

Contact Form

Q1. What do you see as the most significant current threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security?

3000 character(s) maximum

Not having sufficient Navy to police our Waters

Q2. What do you foresee will be the biggest emerging threats/future challenges to Ireland's maritime security and how would you best prepare for them?

3000 character(s) maximum

Need to increase fleet radar etc so we do not have to rely on other countries I think the changing world at the moment is very volatile and Ireland needs to be reliant on its own security

Q3. Should the Strategy prioritise its focus on specific geographical areas in Ireland’s maritime domain?

3000 character(s) maximum

No we should be concentrating on the whole

Q4. To most effectively safeguard Ireland’s maritime interests, what strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, or capabilities should be prioritised?

3000 character(s) maximum

I am not an expert on this but I assume we would need better radar be able to at least mount some sort of patrol of our seas that's proper patrol not what we do at the moment no fault to the Navy we should be able to see above and a below water and be able to have a deterrent if vessels are approaching Ireland