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

3000 character(s) maximum

Russia/China and lack of up to date defensive systems, like navy and air force.

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

Inaptitude of Ireland to patrol and defend our waters. Overhaul the navy with new provisions for technology and staffing.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

No. All Irish waters should be universally protected.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Detection and projection of force coupled with tight and strict cooperation with NATO.
Navy designed similarly to the Swedish Navy/Air Force.

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 operators should be, if ever allowed to be private operators, subordinated to the State operations. In case of conflicting interests the State 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

There is no security without strict and close cooperation with our neighbours. Joining NATO is a must, even Sweden joined for a good reason. Success is only possible when we are together in a group.
The way EU proved reliable and valuable at the time of Brexit, the NATO is proving a must during turmoil with USA/Russia/China shenanigans.

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.
1. Research/goal setting.
2. Road map.
3. Implementation.
4. Review/adjustment.
5. Implementation.
6. Review/adjustment.
7. Implementation.
8. Etc.

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 does not have to be in the NATO but to be safe it needs to be able to control it's area, sea, cyber, and land/sky. Looking at the best practice and copying what's working is the shortest way. It will not be cheap but it's the only way to remain independent and sovereign.
Targeting misinformation, being able to deter and control external players is a must.
Finland/Sweden are great examples, but even those countries decided to join NATO, it speaks volumes.
It's time to end the nonsense of triple lock and Russian propaganda of neutrality, we are Europe, that means we have rights but also duties. The very same way each citizen has it's rights and duties. The freeloading must stop.

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

Headline threat: Entry into terretorial waters by malign actors to test response times, surveillance ability and appetite to deter, for the purposes of building an intelligence picture to inform future planning.

Effects: Realisation by international community that the State cannot effectively deter such threats and is unwilling to take our responsibilities seriously especially when it comes to international data connectivity, and the exposure of their own economic interests to this. Being rightly seen as a weak link with accompanying reduction in good will, manifesting in lower inward investment, trust and social capital and influence.

Other threats: Use of terretorial waters for malign purposes. Drug, goods or people through trafficking. Illegal maritime activity.

Effects: Increased risk of ecological disaster. Increased demands by international partners to police our part of the international picture. Loss of economic assets / activity and control over the resources in our EEZ.

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

Current and future challenges: Lack of credible ability to detect, surveil and interdict malign actors. Threat to personnel in the agencies responsible because of lact of resources / exposing them to risks that could be minimised through correct resourcing. Inability to react to incidents / calls for assistance by international partners, leading to a decline in desire of partners to assist the State. Lack of ability to escalate our response in line with the threat.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Primary focus for strategic assets is western seaboard. Secondary (surveillance and monitoring) North west and South west. Secondary assets to east coast in cooperation with the UK.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Ability to see over the horizon.
Centralised intelligence picture of all domains.
Ability to respond / central decision making process.
Strategic maritime assets footprint in west and north west.
Secondary maritime assets footprint in north east.
Subsurface monitoring.
Fast Jet response.
Credible strike capability within EEZ.

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

Primacy of intelligence picture and tactical response decision making to be centralised in Defence Forces. Combined intelligence gathering with private sector. National defence strategy which incorporates a whole of society responsibility.

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

Increased international cooperation. But this can only credibly be entered into if the State can display a credible maritime security strategy in its own right. Entering into partnerships as an equal partner.

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.
Definition of threats and pre threat activities that will be given priority surveillance.
Trigger thresholds that require actions to be taken.
Escalation paths for decision taking.
Defined minimum asset allocations to defined operations.

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

We need to mature as a society and understand the requirement to plan and prepare for threats that however remote, their effects on an unprepared State could be catastrophic.

Maritime security requires investment. It cannot be seen as a standalone. All investment must be within a national defence framework incorporating all domains. Rather than considering a maritime intelligence picture we should see it as just one part of a total defence intelligence picture and develop a layered national defence and security strategy.

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

Foreign ships entering our waters with bad intentions

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 treats come from surface ships and from sub-surface vessels and in order to combat these, Ireland needs a combination of better equipped larger ships to make these bad actors think twice a proper airforce equipped with jet fights and possibly a submarine or 2 so we can actually chase these sub-surface ships away and not rely on other nations to do it for us.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

More ships with better equipment and better weapons are required to patrol our vast waters while sporadic patrols should be carried out but specific focus on areas with sub-sea cables is important

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Sonar equipment and new bigger ships equipped with sonar and possibly a submarine to chase these foreign vessels away

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 believe the military should purchase this equipment as we cannot rely on private companies especially if they are in situations that may involve enemy ships that may or may not fire upon a ship monitoring them

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

I believe other countries may have the experience to train our military and assist us while we get our equipment up to date and our personel numbers up

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 military should focus on what it does well now and look to build capabilities over the lifetime of the action plan this action plan should cover replacing old out dated equipment and purchasing new equipment to increase our military capability massive recruitment both here and abroad to bring our military up to the standards of other similar sized countries

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 crucial that we spend more money on our defence and we should be purchasing more ships with better capabilities and better weapons we should also be recruiting both in Ireland and abroad to bring the talent to us.

This probably is to do with security but the navy need new uniforms because the old ones look ridiculous. The grey cammo ones the American navy wear would be preferable which may also be good for recruitment if potential new recruits see a sailor wearing new style grey cammo uniform it be appealing to them rather than the old ones

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

Lack of even the most basic awareness. Under and over our seas we are blind and deaf. Layered sensors and defences per Denmark's announcement this week now a minimum for 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

Russia. China. Drugs traffickers. Climate refugees will be arriving soon. We need wide area sensors and the ability to respond in security and humanitarian terms.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes. Too often we work towards a perfect all encompassing answer. Ports must be protected from mines first, then work out way around the coast via the same strategic inlets as in the 1900s i.e. Castletownbere, Foyle etc. Then the cables, interconnecters and wind farms. Imperfect good enough solutions now are better than perfect answers in 2 years time.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Sonar and aviation assets. Leverage Infomar (GSI) and AI to help spread thin resources as far as we can using drones. Offer to base EU aviation assets out of Shannon on rotation, exercise using all runways regularly e.g. Donegal, Waterford, Kerry etc. Similar for ports EU naval assets should be visiting our smaller ports regularly. Capability to move fuel from Whiddy around the coast (or a pipeline to shore). People to man the ships and planes we have etc..

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. You have left it so late, you must engage every possible resource (see EI backed companies as well).

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 the above now.

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

Let's fight the next war, not the last. Have the ARW and similar 'attack' our maritime domain annually and form the action plan from that (as we already do with cyber). If political will is there have other friendly nations do the same, maybe for once Ireland can lead in this as Estonia has in cyber.

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

Speed. Can we pls see DoD move faster than any other Dept? You have the people (see DF) and the imperative for the last several years. But slow pace of change since my submission to CoD is frankly astounding.

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 maritime vulnerabilities are structural and strategic. It faces a uniquely asymmetric challenge: vast jurisdiction, rising exposure, and limited enforcement capacity. Its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)—among the largest in Europe—contains high-value assets including the densest concentration of transatlantic subsea cables, a rapidly expanding offshore energy sector, and ecologically sensitive fisheries zones.

The primary threats are not conventional but grey-zone in nature: covert cable mapping, AIS spoofing, cyber-physical sabotage, and state-linked incursions that remain below the threshold of armed conflict. These are actions designed to evade attribution, exploit legal ambiguity, and test state responses without triggering open confrontation.

Ireland's current architecture is not equipped to meet these challenges. Surveillance is fragmented, with no dedicated maritime patrol aircraft, no seabed monitoring, and no unified command structure. Civilian agencies are under-resourced and lack coordination capacity. The Naval Service and Air Corps suffer from recruitment shortfalls and aging platforms, limiting persistent presence or deterrent visibility.

Critically, these vulnerabilities are exacerbated by Ireland's inherited model of neutrality. Political tradition has equated capability with alignment, fostering a posture of strategic absence. This has led to inaction being mistaken for prudence, and underinvestment being conflated with principle. In the context of grey-zone threats, such passivity creates permissive conditions for interference, not protection.

The state lacks a legally structured escalation framework, has no dedicated capability for attribution or calibrated response, and relies heavily on reputational or legal protest in place of real-time enforcement. In effect, Ireland cannot consistently detect, attribute, or disrupt hostile maritime acts below the threshold of war.

This is not a hypothetical scenario. Documented vessel activity, cable proximity, and cyber-physical mapping attempts in Irish waters demonstrate ongoing threat activity. Without a shift toward structured, proportionate, and lawful enforcement capacity, Ireland remains exposed—not because of its neutrality, but because of a failure to update neutrality for a contested maritime domain.

The most pressing vulnerabilities are thus not just technical, but conceptual: an absence of strategic consensus, a lack of defined posture, and the continued under-recognition of grey-zone interference as a live and escalating 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

The primary emerging threat is the intensification of grey-zone activity—state-linked interference that is legally ambiguous, operationally deniable, and below the threshold of armed conflict. Documented threat vectors include covert cable mapping, cyber-physical attacks on subsea infrastructure, GPS spoofing, unflagged surveillance vessels, and hybrid disruptions to offshore energy and data systems. These will grow in scale and complexity over the coming decade.

Ireland's challenge is compound: not one vulnerability, but the convergence of exposure, strategic ambiguity, and institutional under-preparedness. With no persistent maritime surveillance, no seabed monitoring, and no escalation framework, Ireland risks becoming strategically irrelevant in its own waters.

Five challenge areas stand out:

Persistent grey-zone incursions near infrastructure, requiring real-time attribution and sovereign presence.

Cyber-physical sabotage of cables and critical systems, requiring layered monitoring and pre-emptive contingency planning.

Jurisdictional probing by state-linked vessels using flag ambiguity, requiring calibrated response and legal framing.

Legal ambiguity in EEZ enforcement, demanding stronger coordination and escalation protocols.

Strategic interdependence with EU systems, where Irish vulnerabilities create wider regional risk, requiring credible capacity without alliance entanglement.

The appropriate preparation is not military expansion, which would exceed political and institutional tolerance, but phased escalation: a structured, civilian-led enhancement of enforcement capacity and lawful denial tools.

Three priorities follow:

Sovereign Sensing Infrastructure: Deploy UAVs, USVs, seabed sensors, and acoustic arrays to ensure layered, persistent awareness of cable corridors and energy zones. These systems enable early attribution without militarisation.

Escalation and Legal Response Architecture: Create a triage protocol for grey-zone incidents anchored in civilian command. A structured escalation ladder—ranging from surveillance and legal protest to non-military escorts—can deter through visibility and consequence

Dual-Use Resilience Systems: Expand the Maritime Resilience Reserve (MRR) to support surveillance, infrastructure protection, and incident response. Based on Nordic civil defence models, this reserve can scale without triggering political resistance

Ireland must shift from symbolic neutrality to functional resilience. This means building a posture that is legally bounded, politically sustainable, and operationally ready—not to project force, but to assert sovereignty

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes. Ireland's maritime exposure is not evenly distributed, and the Strategy should prioritise zones where strategic value, threat activity, and enforcement gaps intersect. Three areas merit specific focus.

First, subsea cable corridors in the South and Southwest EEZ contain the densest cluster of transatlantic cables in Europe. These routes support global data and financial flows but are physically vulnerable and strategically exposed. They have already been subject to covert mapping and proximity incursions by foreign vessels. Persistent monitoring here is essential to safeguard national and allied infrastructure.

Second, offshore renewable energy zones, including those in the Celtic and Irish Seas, are emerging critical infrastructure nodes. As Ireland becomes a key EU energy supplier, these installations will face grey-zone interest: surveillance, sabotage probes, and regulatory mapping by state-linked actors. Their economic and political importance makes them priority protection sites.

Third, the Northwest EEZ contains fisheries zones with recurring IUU fishing activity and jurisdictional friction. These areas are under-monitored and split across agencies. They require clearer operational control, legal enforcement protocols, and interagency surveillance coordination.

These zones are not only where threats are most likely, but where passive governance could do the most damage. The Strategy should allocate resources accordingly.

To respond without escalating, Ireland can adopt a targeted model: deploy dual-use sensors (UAVs, seabed arrays) in high-risk corridors; integrate surveillance feeds into a single civilian maritime coordination centre; and define escalation protocols based on zone sensitivity. For example, cable proximity in the South EEZ should trigger rapid attribution and legal protest. In fisheries zones, the focus should be enforcement visibility and reputational deterrence.

The Maritime Resilience Reserve (MRR) can support this model through deployable civilian teams trained for infrastructure inspection, pollution response, and cable monitoring. These units can provide surge capability without signalling militarisation.

Geographic prioritisation is not just efficient—it is necessary. It ensures Ireland's limited resources are used to protect high-value assets, enforce sovereignty, and deter hybrid threats. Without it, the Strategy risks being declarative rather than functional.

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 system is fragmented and underpowered relative to its threat environment. Strategic investment must focus on three areas: surveillance infrastructure, escalation capability, and institutional coordination. These are essential to building a posture that is lawful, proportionate, and politically sustainable.

First, Ireland needs sovereign surveillance capacity. The current lack of maritime patrol aircraft, seabed sensors, and persistent monitoring leaves key zones vulnerable. Priority should be given to dual-use systems that support both environmental and security functions. These include UAVs, USVs, seabed acoustic sensors along cable corridors, and wide-area tracking tools that combine radar, AIS, and satellite data.

Second, there must be capacity to escalate in a proportionate, lawful manner. This does not require force projection but does require visible consequences. Key investments include a rapid-response naval unit for presence and interdiction, RHIBs for non-military shadowing, and mobile denial tools such as ISR drones, loudhailers, and visible surveillance. These provide friction and deterrence without breaching neutrality or signalling militarisation.

Third, institutional integration is critical. Responsibility for maritime security is dispersed across agencies, producing gaps in authority and response. A Maritime Coordination Centre should be established to integrate civilian and military inputs, fuse surveillance data, and coordinate responses to grey-zone activity. Without this structure, surveillance tools cannot deliver strategic effect.

Legal frameworks must also be updated. Ireland's EEZ enforcement powers require review, and new legislation should be introduced to address coercive interference with subsea infrastructure. This includes protocols for coordinated protest and attribution through EU and international forums.

Finally, surge capacity should be built into a civilian Maritime Resilience Reserve. This reserve—composed of trained volunteers and maritime professionals—could support infrastructure inspection, search and rescue, and cable protection during periods of heightened risk. It provides scalable response without signalling militarisation or triggering legal constraints.

Strategic investment is not about maximising hardware. It is about aligning tools with strategic credibility—building the capacity to monitor, deter, and respond effectively within legal and political constraints.

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 must be formally integrated into Ireland's maritime security strategy. Many of the most critical maritime assets—subsea cables, offshore energy installations, port facilities—are owned or operated by private entities. This creates both a strategic dependency and an opportunity: resilience cannot be delivered by the state alone, but must be co-produced with those who manage key infrastructure.

At present, the role of private actors is underdefined. There is limited clarity on reporting obligations, incident escalation protocols, or coordination mechanisms during hybrid threats such as cable interference or surveillance vessel proximity. A new model of structured partnership is required—one that preserves civilian authority and legal accountability, but treats private operators as core contributors to national resilience.

There are three key roles the private sector can play.

First, situational awareness. Infrastructure operators are often the first to detect anomalies—such as cable pressure changes, data latency spikes, or unauthorised vessel activity near installations. Clear channels for real-time reporting to a national Maritime Coordination Centre must be established. This would allow private detection to trigger state response in a structured, triaged way.

Second, infrastructure hardening and contingency planning. Private operators should be required, through regulation or public-private partnership, to meet baseline standards for redundancy, physical resilience, and post-incident continuity. This is especially urgent for offshore energy and communications providers whose systems are interdependent with EU and global networks.

Third, response integration. In scenarios such as cable sabotage or platform interference, operators must be included in the planning and execution of joint responses. This includes participating in table-top exercises, contributing to the Maritime Resilience Reserve, and supporting asset access or logistics during real-world events.

To ensure these roles are effective, a governance framework is needed. This should define rights and responsibilities, clarify liability protections, and establish standard operating procedures for information-sharing and coordinated action. Participation must be mandated where critical infrastructure is involved.

In short, the private sector is not a stakeholder—it is a vector of both risk and response. A credible maritime security strategy must reflect this reality. The goal is not to privatise enforcement, but to mobilise the insight, reach, and capacity of infrastructure operators under a unified, state-led framework.

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 but carefully bounded role in Ireland's maritime security strategy. As a neutral state, Ireland does not participate in military alliances—but it is deeply embedded in the European regulatory, economic, and infrastructure space. The Strategy must reflect this dual position: cooperating where sovereignty is reinforced, but avoiding commitments that would compromise neutrality or constitutional constraints.

The rationale for cooperation is clear. Many of Ireland's vulnerabilities—subsea cable interference, offshore sabotage, grey-zone incursions—have spillover effects across EU systems. Shared threat awareness, common situational monitoring, and coordinated legal protest all enhance deterrence without requiring hard alignment. Ireland's deterrent value increases when its sovereignty is seen as interoperable with wider regional stability.

Three domains of international cooperation are particularly relevant.

First, information-sharing and surveillance interoperability. Ireland should deepen cooperation with EU partners and relevant maritime organisations to share real-time data on vessel movements, AIS anomalies, and cable zone intrusions. Participation in non-binding information networks, such as the European Coast Guard Functions Forum or regional ISR coalitions, can raise Ireland's maritime awareness without violating neutrality.

Second, legal and diplomatic coordination. When hostile maritime activity affects multiple jurisdictions—as is common with subsea cables or flagged vessels—joint legal action is more effective than unilateral protest. Ireland should strengthen its capacity to bring cases or diplomatic protests in concert with EU partners through UNCLOS and other mechanisms. Coordinated protest raises reputational cost and strategic isolation for the actor involved.

Third, resilience partnerships with non-aligned EU states. Countries such as Austria, Finland (pre-NATO), and Sweden (historically neutral) have developed robust maritime resilience postures without compromising non-alignment. Ireland should collaborate with these states on training, resilience planning, and institutional design. These partnerships can support doctrine development, civilian reserve training, and escalation planning.

NATO participation should remain limited. Ireland can benefit from thematic cooperation (e.g. cyberdefence, infrastructure protection) through its Individually Tailored Partnership Programme, but any engagement must remain strictly non-operational and avoid entanglement in joint military planning. Transparency and civilian control must be maintained.

International cooperation is not incompatible with neutrality. It is a tool to enhance sovereign capacity. The key is to structure it around information, law, and resilience—not power projection. Ireland's posture should be one of engaged independence: reinforcing neutrality by making it functionally credible through lawful 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

Yes. The National Maritime Security Strategy should be accompanied by a clear, sequenced Action Plan. Without implementation detail, strategic goals risk becoming declarative rather than operational. The Action Plan must reflect institutional capacity, legal constraints, and political realities. It should be phased, civilian-led, and designed to deliver credible presence and lawful response without breaching neutrality.

A three-phase structure is recommended:

Phase 1: Immediate Term (0–2 years)
This phase should focus on building surveillance and coordination capacity using existing institutions. Key actions include: expanding MARA's remit as the national integrator for maritime domain awareness; deploying commercial or leased UAVs, USVs, and seabed sensors in high-risk zones; establishing a Maritime Coordination Centre to triage incidents and advise on escalation; and forming a civilian inter-agency task force including the Coast Guard, SFPA, Naval Service, and Defence.

Legal foundations must also be laid: a review of EEZ enforcement powers under UNCLOS, preparation of legislation to criminalise coercive interference with subsea infrastructure, and diplomatic coordination frameworks for joint EU protest or ITLOS escalation.

Phase 2: Medium Term (2–5 years)
This phase should introduce narrowly scoped denial and enforcement capability under civilian control. Recommended actions include: acquiring maritime patrol aircraft or long-range drones; installing fixed seabed acoustic sensors along cable chokepoints; creating a rapid-response naval unit with neutrality-compliant rules of engagement; codifying a legal and operational escalation ladder for sub-threshold incidents; and finalising a standard protocol for strategic attribution and legal protest.

International cooperation should be formalised through data-sharing arrangements with neutral EU partners, and through training exchanges on maritime resilience. The Maritime Resilience Reserve should be activated to support infrastructure protection, search and rescue, and environmental response.

Phase 3: Long Term (5+ years)
The final phase should focus on institutional consolidation and public legitimacy. This includes: formalising review cycles for ISR technology, escalation protocols, and governance oversight; embedding a routine process for democratic accountability and public reporting; and positioning Ireland as a credible, neutral model for sovereignty-based maritime resilience within the EU and international system.

A viable Action Plan does not demand military transformation. It requires coherence, legal scaffolding, and sequencing. Ireland can build a lawful, sustainable posture through phased civilian leadership, calibrated tools, and structured response. A credible maritime strategy must be implementable—not just principled.

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 maritime security cannot be reformed through symbolism or slogans. What is needed is a strategic architecture that functions under the real conditions Ireland faces—jurisdictional exposure, institutional constraint, political neutrality, and grey-zone threat. The debate must move beyond abstract declarations of sovereignty and address the mechanics of how it is upheld in a contested environment.

Three principles should anchor the Strategy.

First, neutrality is not the absence of capability. International law permits neutral states to maintain defensive tools, assert jurisdiction, and respond proportionally to hostile acts—provided they avoid offensive alignments. Ireland's tradition of neutrality must be updated to reflect this. In the current context, neutrality without capacity becomes permissive, not protective. A failure to detect, respond, or deter is not neutrality—it is drift.

Second, civilian leadership must remain central. Ireland's strategic culture, legal system, and political institutions are calibrated for civilian primacy. That principle should be protected—but not used to justify inaction. Civilian-led surveillance, interagency coordination, and legally grounded escalation tools must be developed to preserve both sovereignty and legitimacy. A Maritime Coordination Centre and a civilian-led Maritime Resilience Reserve would reinforce this model.

Third, strategy must be stress-tested, not assumed. The hybrid strategy proposed in this submission performs across all critical tests: it is implementable within Ireland's fiscal and legal limits, it enables lawful and calibrated response to real-world grey-zone threats, and it is politically sustainable. It avoids the extremes of militarisation and passivity. Its components—surveillance infrastructure, legal frameworks, non-military denial tools, and phased escalation—are grounded in existing institutions and capable of growth.

Above all, the Strategy must move beyond aspiration. Without a lawful escalation ladder, Ireland cannot respond to grey-zone coercion. Without persistent awareness, it cannot detect hostile acts. Without institutional coordination, it cannot act with speed or authority. These are not distant risks—they are present realities.

This consultation presents an opportunity to shift the debate: from whether Ireland should act, to how it can act credibly, lawfully, and independently. The proposed hybrid model is not a compromise. It is a sovereign strategy designed for a neutral state facing real threats. It deserves serious consideration not because it avoids difficulty—but because it confronts it directly, and within the constraints Ireland cannot ignore.

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

Cable cutting econom8c and communications disaster if damaged.

Illegal drug imports...leading to social destruction

Lack of navy and airforce personnel, decent equipment, due to years of neglect. This is the core vulnerability.

Fishing was poor relation compared to agriculture for last 50 years....this is a maintality that has taken eye off maritime security.

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

Lack of personnel and technology to monitor goings on at sea

Develop and invest in these.

How about a civil defence for marine or include marine skills
In civil defence already 3stablished.

Look at the RNLI....trying of volunteers to handle sea emergencies.

Ultimately the engagement of the public, all sectors of society in knowing signs of crime.
A big ask....but coastal communities may be a resource.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

To start with focus on certain geographic areas might be necessary. But the whole coast line is clearly a great national resource. Let the government develop a pride and attachment to this publicly owned national treasure.

Developing a credible well paid marine service and air force is the core requirement.

Personnel, technology and training...and agreements with UK ...
We have to realise how dependent on UK for military support in case of crisis.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Building navy and air force.....payback in terms of smuggling of drugs , economic protection of fisheries, energy generation,

No expertise on the relevant technology.

Don't know the sector, but having helicopters, planes to use in emergencies instead of looking for lifts from Finland etc etc would be nice.

Given the disastrous record in relation to IT projects....
I think we need to make sure technology 'EXPERTS' don't take us for a ride.

Not easy

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

Wow...is it inevitable that private sector technology has to be part of the package.
In an ideal world a competent public service is better.

But public private partnerships for house building, ...can we handle them well.

Like the IT projects....lots of room for improvement.

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

It's a no trainer.....we have to grow up and realise , as beautiful, desirable neutrality is we need to corporate internationally.

Am i correct....all the world's military training is done by major US, UK training centres.

It's not possible for a small country like Ireland to be self sufficient.

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

Why bother doing NMSS, if not accompanied by 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?

3000 character(s) maximum

Since thr foundation of the state, all governments have ignored the sea.....time to change.

Go for it

Include a citizen dimension....just as the garda rely on public to fight crime. To thing about crime prevention.

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

Underwater cables/foreign access and foreign ships cruising the coastline.

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

Interruption of our underwater cables/pipes, potentially leaving us without electricity, internet, fuel, etc. and blocked off from the rest of the world.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

I am really not sure how to answer this question. Perhaps you can inform us--should we prioritize specific regions? And if so, why?

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

3000 character(s) maximum

This is best left to the experts!

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

What do other countries do? If it keeps the country safer, bring private sector people on boards into government offices, boards and committees.

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 EU partners. Not so sure about NATO now with Trump on/off board, but would not have stated whit a few weeks ago. There is so uch in doubt now, knowing who to trust, and who not to.

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, definitely!

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

No, not that I can think of at the moment. But, why has this taken so long, and why, all of a sudden, now?

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

The current threat to our maritime security is significant underinvestment in our navy personnel. The recruitment and retention crisis in the defence forces not only undermines our security, but due to that lack of capability also stops us from participating in search and rescue and humanitarian functions.
The highest level of recruitment we saw in the navy in many years was when we were doing search and rescue in the Mediterranean. It meant we could keep our boats staffed and performing.
As well as that the low pay and poor conditions for many defence forces memebers have not been addressed. If we don't treat our sailors right, we continue to be understaffed, and that is a huge threat to our maritime security which goes unmentioned.

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

Focus on overseas deployment outside UN missions, which will further diminish the ability of our overstretched navy to monitor and patrol our waters.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

I think ti should focus on all our waters, partucularly in respect of policing overfishing, and drug smuggling.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Investment in our defence forces personel, our boats, and achieving LOA 2 should be prioiritised. We need to be able to man our boats, which is not as flashy as shiny new kit, but is significantly more useful.

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

We should not be supporting the deployment of a vast amount of state resources to protect private infrastructure. If infrastructure is critical to such a degfree as to threaten our national secuirty, it should be in state ownership. It is vital that our defence forces do not become reduced to free security for some of the wealthiest countries in the world while we cannot protect our state assets and 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

I think when it comes to our national maritime secuirty the focus should be on our territorial waters, and not being pulled into defence arrangements with other states whose interests are not necessarily aligned with our own, and who will in turn expect reciprocity which may undermine our status as a neutral country. It is also importnant to note that our neutrality in times of conflict provides us with a layer of protection only if we are not militarily tied to other navies for defence arrangements. Our focus should be on our own capacity and building up our navy so that we do not need to rely on external actors who do not have our interests at heart.

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 should be the resourcing of defence forces personel, getting all irish ships back in the water. I think there should also be stakeholder engagement on overfishing and maritime crimes, as they have often been neglected in these conversations

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

Only that we need to ensure we're not allowing vested interests lead us on policy. Arms and security associations, those who get paid to deploy, and companies who own maritime infrastructure are obviously going to want us to protect and support their interests. It is vital to ensure there is balanced stakeholder engagement and prioritisation in the strategy.

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

Use of Irish waters to bring illegal immigrants to Ireland .
Unauthorised use of our waters by Russian and others for questionable activities
Illegal narcotics transported to our shores for Irish and others consumption.

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 forsee the current aforementioned threats as the future challenge especially as the Middle East and Africa become more unstable .

Regular patrol of our waters as deterrents.

Huge fines and penaltiesfor those who are illegally present in our waters.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Possibly the most vulnerable areas currently so to put a strategy in place to continue to monitor all areas because as soon as they become fortresses , transgressors will go elsewhere.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

All that yield positive outcomes esp technology .

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 may have useful knowledge to impart and may contribute in other ways too ie financially but check their credentials fully .

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

Focused firstly on the EU & UK - they are our nearest & most important partners in business and we must remember this .
For illegal drugs a different focused/approaching may be necessary ?

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

I don't know .

Sometimes organisations get too caught up in planning, meetings, action plans etc and consequently nothing or very little is achieved- there should be a stress on positive , sustained action to bring about the required security .

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

Ba chóir go mbainfear leas as an nGaeilge ag na páirtí uilig sa phróiseas!

Contact

Contact Form

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

Vulnerability 1: Undersea Cables
Ireland is a critical hub for transatlantic undersea cables that carry the vast majority of internet and financial traffic between North America and Europe. These cables are highly strategic yet vulnerable.

Threats to Undersea Cable Threats and Vulnerabilities:
State-sponsored sabotage: Adversary naval or research vessels covertly map or tamper with cables.
Espionage/tapping: Advanced persistent threats (APTs) seek to intercept traffic via splicing or repeater compromise.
Grey-zone operations: Foreign vessels operating under civilian guise to probe or sabotage infrastructure.

Vulnerabilities to Undersea Cable Threats:
Limited seabed surveillance therefore no persistent sonar or UUV patrols.
Private ownership with uneven security standards at landing stations.
Dependency on a small number of cables without robust redundancy plans.
Impact: Disruption could severely degrade Ireland's connectivity, financial services, and data centre operations, while espionage could compromise government, business, and personal communications.

***

Vulnerability 2: Shipping.
Irish shipping is vital for trade, energy supply and connectivity to Europe. Modern ships rely heavily on Operational Technology (OT) systems (ECDIS, GPS, data loggers etc).

Threats to ships entering Irish waters:
GPS spoofing and jamming: Alters navigation data, causing groundings or collisions.
AIS manipulation: False vessel positions or identities in Irish waters.
Malware targeting ECDIS and engine control systems: Loss of navigational control or forced shutdowns.
Supply-chain attacks: Compromise of software or hardware used in shipboard systems.

Vulnerabilities to Shipping:
Many ships use outdated OT systems lacking encryption or modern security controls.
Little oversight of foreign-flagged vessels entering Irish ports.
Port IT and VTS systems may lack robust cybersecurity audits or drills.
Impact: A successful cyberattack on shipping could block critical ferry and cargo routes, disrupt cargo logistics. A successful cyberattack on a ship's OT systems may cause a pollution catastrophe (e.g. oil tanker grounding by mis-routing the ship), injury and death onboard the ship or in proximity to the ship.
Example Maritime Cyber attack: 2017 NotPetya on Maersk, Denmark. The same may occur to an Irish port or Irish ferry operator (e.g. Irish Ferries / Stena Line / DFDS).

***

Vulnerability 3: Espionage and Grey-Zone Threats
Ireland’s geopolitical position makes it a potential target for state-backed espionage and hybrid threats.

Threats:
Foreign naval or research vessels conducting covert seabed mapping.
Surveillance of cable landing stations, ports, and shipping movements.
Electronic surveillance of AIS and VTS systems.

Vulnerabilities:
Absence of Maritime Security Unit minimise communication between NCSC, defence forces and government.

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 and future threats to Ireland's maritime cybersecurity:

Emerging / Future Threat 1:
Advanced Undersea Cable Sabotage and Tapping
Adversaries deploying sophisticated submersibles (manned or unmanned) to splice, tap, or physically damage cables.
Tapping repeaters or regenerators on cables near Ireland's EEZ to exfiltrate data.
Planting dormant malware in landing station equipment or network management systems.
Potential attack scenario: A covert submarine mission that lays listening devices on Atlantic cables between Ireland and US / Americas.

Emerging / Future Threat 2:
Hybrid Campaigns Targeting Cable Landing Stations
Blended cyber-physical attacks against shore-based infrastructure.
Ransomware or supply-chain attacks on companies operating landing stations.
Coordinated disinformation campaigns to sow panic about alleged sabotage or outages.
Potential attack scenario: Simultaneous cyberattack and physical breach at Dublin cable landing facility or less-populated areas e.g. Killala, Lecanvey or Ballinesker.

Emerging / Future Threat 3:
Cyberattacks on Shipping's Digital Systems
Evolving malware designed to target maritime OT (e.g. ECDIS, AIS, propulsion systems).
AI-driven GPS spoofing or jamming attacks in port approaches.
Hijacking of shipboard satellite communications (SATCOM).
Potential attack scenario: An attacker compromises a ship's Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS), injecting false chart data re-routing the vessel into shallow waters, risking grounding (consequently pollution) near the Irish coast.

Emerging / Future Threat 4:
Energy Infrastructure Integration
Ireland's future offshore wind farms will rely on subsea cables for power export and control systems.
Pipelines for gas/hydrogen may use seabed sensor networks.
These networks introduce new attack surfaces.
Possible attack scenario: Compromised control signals causing grid instability.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

1) Irish Sea:
Ireland's busiest port is Dublin with regular ferry routes to/from UK and France and regular shipping routes to / from elsewhere.
Cable Landing Stations (e.g. Loughshinny, Portrane, Clonshaugh).

Threats:

GPS spoofing affecting ferries and shipping
Cable landing station sabotage / espionage

2) Celtic Sea:
Cork Harbour (per Irish Sea above) - in addition the Celtic sea a has major hydrocarbon offshore structure.
Heavy shipping passing Ireland's south coast.
Cargo shipping
Regular ferry routes from Ringaskiddy to/from France (formerly Spain also), hence passenger traffic also.

Threats:
As per Irish Sea (as above)
Cyber-physical attacks on energy stations in Celtic Sea and Cork Harbour.

3) Corrib Gas Infrastructure
Offshore gas field with pipeline making contact with the shore in County Mayo.

Threats:
Cyber-attack on pipeline SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) systems.

4) West Coast / Atlantic Coast:
Many cable landing facilities in less-populated areas with routing from Ireland (thereby EU / Europe) to US.
Ongoing offshore renewable energy projects (wind turbines).

Threats:
The west coast is more liable to cable tapping by submarine activity than the Celtic Sea and Irish Sea as foreign forces will likely decide that detection is more unlikely.

5) Remaining Irish shipping ports:
The ports of Waterford, Foynes, Rosslare and Galway are critical for all consumer exports as between them they handle containers, bulk transport (grain, fertiliser etc), hydro-carbon shipping and RoRo cargo. Rosslare handles passenger traffic also.

Threats:
Disruption of VTS (vessel traffic services) systems managing ship movements.
Cyberattacks on port IT systems.
Cyberattacks on port OT systems (affecting container operations particularly).

6) European Economic Zone (EEZ) and surrounding continental shelf:
EEZ is roughly 900,000 square kilometres (≈ 263,000 nautical miles square)
Undersea cables and pipelines. Potentially offshore energy. For example: In the North Sea, hydrocarbons are being discovered further from the coast in consequent deeper waters (depths exceed 100 metres), when only a number of years ago extraction was not deemed viable but today extraction and production flourishes. In time, Ireland may discover energy resources to be viable further to sea than envisaged today so security preparation may be required sooner rather than later.

Threats:

Illegal mapping of the surface by foreign naval vessels or vessels appearing as civilian vessels.

Example threat: The Yantar (Russian oceanographic research vessel) seen in the Celtic Sea on Monday 11th November 2024 and Tuesday 12th November 2024 and later in the Irish Sea on Thursday 14th Nov. 2024. Not escorted out of Irish waters until the vessel had entered the rather enclosed Irish Sea.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Acquiring and augmenting Anti-Submarine Warfare frigates with hull-mounted seabed surveillance sonar systems (Cooperation with Naval Forces)

Ireland's Navy has no dedicated anti-submarine warfare (ASW) ships, hence Ireland may have difficulty detecting submarines and other submersibles including Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUV) and Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUV) tampering with offshore cables and energy pipelines.

Were Ireland to acquire ASW frigates (e.g. Type 23 frigates used by the Royal Navy or Fridtjof Nansen class frigates used by the Royal Norwegian Navy), these ASW frigates could be adapted to conduct inspections of underwater cables. This would be very useful in the event of suspected sabotage.

Other purposes of using augmented ASW ships that would assist the Maritime Security Unit:
Using the ASW's sonar to detect submarines or other UUVs in the vicinity of submarine cables.
Using the ASW vessel to operate towed sonar arrays (widely used for petroleum exploration in the North Sea). ASW frigates are equipped for towed sonar arrays - a military example of a towed sonar array is Sonar 2087 (S2087 manufactured by Thales).
ASW frigates should have the capability to deploy military standard UUWs to inspect the underwater cables.
ASW frigates with their abilities to "listen" for submarines may be adapted to listen for monitoring activity by subversive vessels that may be posing as merchant vessels (e.g. posing as a research vessel or even as a fishing vessel).
ASW frigates could target their operations towards the vicinity of the underwater cables "listening" to all sonar activity taking place in proximity of the cable.

Whether or not ASW vessels are acquired, the proposed Maritime Security Unit should posses the following technologies:
Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs): Patrol and inspect cables/pipelines for tampering or damage.
Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUVs): Conduct covert surveillance, seabed mapping, and deploy sensors.
Seabed sensor networks: Permanently monitor cable routes for disturbances.
Towed sonar arrays and hull-mounted sonars: For patrol vessels to detect submersibles or seabed anomalies.
Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) Platform: Fuses sonar, radar, AIS, satellite, and cyber threat data into a single picture.
Secure, encrypted communications systems linking Defence Forces, Naval Service, Coast Guard, and NCSC.
AI/ML (artificial intelligence / machine learning) enhanced analytics to detect anomalies in maritime and cyberdata.
Digital Twin models of critical infrastructure for Maritime Threat Awareness and Maritime Response Awareness.

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 own and operate the majority of Ireland's underwater telephony cables, ports and harbours, shipping companies and ferry operators and energy stations. Militaries often cooperate with the private sector - not least to practice boarding ships and yachts (I have been part of such exercises) not belonging to the military.

Invest in cybersecurity controls for Operational Technology (OT) systems.
Conduct regular cyber risk assessments and share results with MSU.
Upgrade physical security at critical maritime sites (e.g. CCTV, access control).
Implement GNSS anti-spoofing solutions in port approaches.

Cyberthreat information sharing:
Share cyber threat indicators and incident reports with the MSU and NCSC.
Participate in national threat intelligence exchanges.
Contribute to building a common operating picture of maritime cyber threats.

In the event of an attack or sabotage:
Coordinate with MSU for joint physical–cyber incident response.
Provide technical staff and resources to support restoration.
Participate in joint training exercises with Defence Forces.
In extremis: requisition of towed sonar arrays and vessels capaple of towing towed sonar arrays from companies that possess this equipment.

Maritime operations rely on many contractors and vendors:
Enforce cybersecurity requirements in contracts.
Vet vendors and service providers.
Monitor and audit third-party access to critical systems.

Ireland’s tech sector and universities are innovation leaders:
Collaborate with Defence Forces on new surveillance, UUV, and cybersecurity technologies.
Contribute to pilot projects (e.g. seabed monitoring systems, AI anomaly detection).
Help train the next generation of cybersecurity talent for both civil and military needs.

Underlying reasons why the MSU should be in partnership with the private sector:
The vast majority of critical maritime infrastructure is privately owned.
Threat actors often target private operators as entry points for hybrid attacks.
Infeasibility for Defence Forces to monitor and defend all assets without cooperation.

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 being a small nation with an undersized military cannot defend itself on its own. Threat actors operate across borders be it by using civilian shipping, UUVs / AUVs to execute espionage or sabotage.

Cooperation Activities:
Exchange maritime surveillance data (e.g. AIS, sonar tracks, satellite imagery).
Share cyber threat intelligence on malware, intrusion attempts, and tactics.
Coordinate grey-zone activity reporting (e.g. suspicious foreign “research” vessels).

Key Partners:
EU and EEA Member States (including former EU member UK).
NATO (for collective defence planning even as a Partner nation).

Joint Exercises and Training:

Cooperation Activities:
Participate in EU, NATO, and bilateral maritime security exercises.
Conduct joint cyber-physical drills simulating sabotage of cables or ports.
Share best practices on incident response and maritime domain awareness.

Key Partners:
Nordic countries with experience countering grey-zone threats.
UK Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC).
EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects.

Cybersecurity Standards and Information Sharing:

Why: Attacks on ports, shipping companies, and cable landing stations often use the same malware and tactics worldwide.

Cooperation Activities:
Participate in EU-level cybersecurity coordination (e.g. NIS2 Directive implementation).
Share Indicators of Compromise (IOCs) via EU, NATO, and industry networks.
Align OT cybersecurity standards for ports and energy terminals with European partners.

Key Partners:
EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA).
European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).
NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) (as a Partner).

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 following are suggested for the MSU Action Plan:

Establish the MSU's mission statement and goals.
Conduct formal assessment focusing on undersea cables, shipping, ports and grey-zone threats.
Define relationship with the existing three arms of the Defence Forces (Navy, Army, Air Corps).
Legal and policy frameworks to be drafted to ensure the powers of the MSU are understood.
Develop core divisions (cable and pipeline security, maritime cyber security, etc).
Decide on roles for defence services personnel and civilian personnel.
Identify training requirements.
Formalise data sharing agreements (e.g. EU armed forces and UK) and NCSC.
Develop communication channels with private sector (incident reporting etc).
Obtain assets (UUV / AUV) and deploy in cooperation with allied forces.

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 faces rapidly evolving cyber threats that span traditional military domains, critical national infrastructure, and maritime security. The country's strategic location at the western edge of Europe makes it both a gateway for transatlantic communications and a strategic vulnerability for aggressor state-sponsored cyber-attack operations.

Undersea cables, shipping OT systems, ports, and energy infrastructure are increasingly targeted in the grey zone of geopolitical competition. Cyber-enabled sabotage, espionage and disruption of maritime logistics would have severe consequences for Ireland's economy, security, and sovereignty.

Norway provides an instructive model through its Cyberforsvaret (Norwegian Cyber Defence Force). By consolidating cyber-defence capabilities under one military command, Norway has achieved:

Unified command and control for cyber operations.
Integration of defensive and offensive cyber capabilities.
Coordination with civilian agencies for national critical infrastructure protection.
Close alignment with NATO's collective cyber-defence framework.
Specific focus on maritime infrastructure, including undersea cables and energy installations.

Ireland lacks a dedicated military cyber command. Cyber responsibilities are fragmented across civilian agencies and Defence Forces IT support functions, leaving gaps in readiness, response coordination, and strategic deterrence.

Establishing a dedicated Cyber Defence Command within the Defence Forces is essential. Such a command would:

Centralise Ireland's defensive and (where mandated) offensive cyber capabilities.
Build joint-service integration across Army, Naval Service and Air Corps.
Provide a single point of coordination with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and civilian critical infrastructure operators.
Develop cyber talent pipelines, training regimes, and secure sovereign capabilities.
Enhance Ireland's ability to meet EU and NATO cyber-defence expectations.
Within this proposed command, a Maritime Cybersecurity Unit should be a core, mission-focused division.

Envisaged role for Ireland's Maritime Security Unit (MSU):

Protect Ireland's undersea cables which are a vital transatlantic link for European data and commerce.
Defend port and shipping OT systems from cyber attacks that could disrupt food, fuel, and trade supply chains.
Monitor, detect, and respond to seabed surveillance and sabotage operations by adversaries using civilian vessels as cover.
Integrate seabed domain awareness (e.g., UUV deployments) with cyber threat intelligence to counter grey-zone hybrid attacks.
Coordinate with Naval Service and Coast Guard for joint responses to physical-cyber threats.

Conclusion:

By following Norway's example, Ireland can build a credible, unified cyber-defence capability with a maritime cybersecurity component tailored to its strategic needs as an island nation, data gateway and modern European economy.

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

As a renewable energy company operating in Irish waters, we view Ireland's maritime security landscape through the lens of safeguarding people, infrastructure, and the environment. The most significant current threats and vulnerabilities can be grouped into three key areas: health and safety risks, security of critical infrastructure, and emergency response readiness.

1. Health and Safety Risks in Offshore Operations

The expansion of offshore renewable energy installations (OREIs), particularly wind farms, introduces complex operational environments. Workers face hazards such as:

- Adverse weather conditions and rough seas, which increase the risk of accidents during construction and maintenance.
- Limited access to emergency medical care, especially in remote offshore locations.
- Gaps in aviation safety protocols, particularly around offshore helicopter landing zones and winching procedures.

Although Ireland's legal framework aligns with 90% of UK benchmark standards, a recent gap analysis identified the need for a dedicated national health and safety guideline tailored to offshore renewable energy. Without this, inconsistencies in safety practices could jeopardize worker welfare and project timelines.

2. Security of Critical Maritime Infrastructure

Ireland's maritime domain is vast—seven times its landmass—and hosts vital infrastructure including:

- Undersea data cables, which carry global internet and financial traffic.
- Gas pipelines, responsible for importing approximately 75% of Ireland's natural gas.

These assets are increasingly vulnerable to state and non-state actors, including surveillance by foreign vessels. The lack of a fully operational naval fleet—due to staffing shortages—limits Ireland's ability to monitor and respond to suspicious activity. For renewable energy developers, this raises concerns about the physical and cyber security of offshore installations and grid connections.

3. Emergency Response and Navigational Safety

The Department of Transport and Irish Coast Guard recently published new Maritime Navigation Safety and Emergency Response Guidance for OREIs. These documents are a welcome step, outlining:

- Navigational Risk Assessment (NRA) methodologies.
- Search and rescue protocols tailored to offshore energy projects.
- Pollution response strategies.

However, the effectiveness of these measures depends on inter-agency coordination, training, and resource availability. Delays in implementing Ireland's National Maritime Security Strategy and limited surveillance capabilities could hinder timely responses to emergencies.

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

1. Climate-Driven Operational Hazards
Threat: Climate change is intensifying extreme weather events, increasing the frequency of high seas, storms, and unpredictable wind patterns. These conditions pose serious risks to offshore personnel, vessels, and infrastructure.
Preparation:
- Invest in real-time weather analytics and predictive modeling to optimize scheduling and reduce exposure.
- Design ORE installations with climate resilience in mind—e.g., corrosion-resistant materials, elevated platforms, and modular components.
- Enhance training for offshore crews in emergency evacuation and survival in extreme conditions.

2. Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities
Threat: As offshore wind farms become more digitized—relying on remote monitoring, autonomous systems, and smart grid integration—they become attractive targets for cyberattacks.
Preparation:
- Implement multi-layered cybersecurity protocols, including endpoint protection, network segmentation, and intrusion detection systems.
- Conduct regular penetration testing and collaborate with national cybersecurity agencies.
- Develop incident response plans that integrate both IT and operational technology (OT) systems.

3. Undersea Infrastructure Sabotage
Threat: Ireland's seabed hosts critical infrastructure—data cables, pipelines, and soon, high-voltage export cables from wind farms. These are vulnerable to sabotage or espionage by hostile actors.
Preparation:
- Collaborate with government and naval authorities to map and monitor critical infrastructure.
- Deploy underwater surveillance technologies, such as sonar buoys and autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs).
- Advocate for legislative protections and insurance frameworks specific to subsea energy assets.

4. Gaps in Offshore Health & Safety Regulation
Threat: While recent guidance has improved safety standards for OREIs, Ireland still lacks a comprehensive national offshore health and safety framework tailored to the sector.
Preparation:
- Support the development of a dedicated offshore safety authority or task force.
- Align internal protocols with international best practices (e.g., G+ Global Offshore Wind Health and Safety Organisation).
- Promote cross-sector training programs to build a skilled, safety-conscious offshore workforce.

5. Search and Rescue (SAR) and Emergency Response Gaps
Threat: As offshore activity expands, so does the risk of incidents requiring rapid SAR or pollution response. Current capabilities may be stretched thin.
Preparation:
- Integrate SAR planning into project design, including helidecks, muster points, and emergency shelters.
- Participate in joint exercises with the Irish Coast Guard and Marine Survey Office.
- Fund dedicated emergency response assets (e.g., standby vessels) for high-risk construction phases.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Why Prioritisation Matters
Ireland's maritime area is seven times its landmass, encompassing critical infrastructure, rich biodiversity, and expanding offshore energy zones. A one-size-fits-all approach risks diluting resources and overlooking region-specific vulnerabilities. Prioritisation allows for targeted surveillance, tailored emergency response, and focused investment in areas of highest strategic value.

Key Areas That Warrant Strategic Focus
1. Southwest Coast (Cork to Kerry)
- Why it matters: Home to Ireland's only naval base at Haulbowline and a hub for offshore wind development.
- Risks: High vessel traffic, exposure to Atlantic storms, and proximity to subsea cables and pipelines.
- Action: Enhance naval presence, SAR capabilities, and cyber-physical security for offshore installations.
2. West Coast (Galway and Shannon Estuary)
- Why it matters: Proposed site for new naval infrastructure and future offshore wind zones.
- Risks: Limited current surveillance, rough sea conditions, and ecological sensitivity.
- Action: Develop a west coast naval base, invest in weather-resilient infrastructure, and conduct environmental impact assessments.
3. Irish Sea (East Coast: Dublin to Dundalk)
- Why it matters: Dense shipping lanes, data cable landings, and proximity to population centres.
- Risks: Maritime congestion, cyber threats to smart ports, and potential for sabotage.
- Action: Strengthen port security, monitor subsea infrastructure, and coordinate with UK authorities on shared risks.
4. Northwest Approaches (Donegal and Sligo)
- Why it matters: Gateway to transatlantic routes and under-monitored deepwater zones.
- Risks: Surveillance gaps, illegal fishing, and potential covert activity.
- Action: Deploy sonar systems (like those recently contracted) and autonomous surveillance platforms.

Strategic Benefits of a Geographical Focus
- Efficient resource allocation: Directs limited naval and coast guard assets to high-risk zones.
- Improved emergency response: Enables faster SAR and pollution control where offshore activity is densest.
- Enhanced stakeholder coordination: Facilitates regional partnerships between developers, regulators, and local communities.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

- Under-Water Domain Awareness
• Towed Sonar & AUV Swarms – Fast-track the Thales towed-sonar roll-out (2027) and pair it with autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) equipped with side-scan sonar and fibre-optic intrusion sensors. This “pattern of life” tracking around export cables and pipelines will detect hostile submarines, divers or seabed tampering before damage occurs.
• Seabed Sensor Networks – Deploy low-power nodes along cable corridors to catch even minor vibrations or pressure changes, feeding real-time alerts into a central command center.
- Expanded Surface Surveillance & Deterrence
• High-Visibility Naval Patrols – Invest in two new Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) dedicated to EEZ patrols, with unmanned surface vessels (USVs) acting as “quadrant sentinels.” High-visibility presence alone deters bad actors, as Ireland’s defence expert has stressed.
• Coastal Radar & Satellite AIS – Fill the “blind spots” in the Northwest Approaches and around Shannon Estuary with high-resolution radar, augmented by satellite-AIS feeds, to build a continuous maritime picture.
- Strategic Naval Infrastructure
• West-Coast Base(s) – Accelerate plans for a second naval hub at Galway (and explore a smaller support facility in Dún Laoghaire). These bases slash transit times, beef up crew rotations, and enable surge capacity during construction or crisis peaks.
• Dedicated Offshore Safety Posts – Install turnkey sea-mount platforms for medevac helicopters, rapid-response boats and pollution-control vessels adjacent to major ORE zones.
- Cyber-Physical Security Fusion
• Maritime Cyber-Ops Centre – Stand up a joint cyber-physical security cell that merges IT-SOC analysts with OT experts. Regular red-team exercises on wind-farm SCADA and grid-export systems will harden them against intrusion.
• Secure Comms Backbone – Build an encrypted, redundant communications network (satellite-backhauled mesh plus coastal microwave links) to guarantee control even under jamming or cyber-attack.
- Enhanced Search-and-Rescue & MedEvac
• Dedicated SAR Assets – Charter or co-own a steel hulled “standby vessel” during high-risk phases of turbine installation, equipped with hyperbaric rescue gear and oil-spill booms.
• Offshore Telemedicine – Equip each platform and vessel with real-time tele-health kits and satellite-linked diagnostic tools, cutting critical-care response times when miles offshore.
- Integrated Information Sharing
• Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) – Leverage Ireland’s entry into the EU’s CISE to fuse civil, military and energy-sector maritime data in one secure portal, enabling rapid threat validation and coordinated response across agencies and private operators.

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 – engaging the private sector isn't optional, it's essential. Industry not only owns and operates the vast majority of subsea cables, pipelines, offshore wind farms and port facilities, but also sits on the front-line of risk-detection, incident-response and resilience-building. Here's how operators of critical maritime infrastructure can be fully integrated into Ireland's National Maritime Security Strategy:

- Shared Situational Awareness

• Real-time data feeds – private operators can stream vessel-traffic (AIS), sensor and SCADA data into a common picture. Offshore wind companies, for example, already collect metocean and subsea-scour readings that could flag incursions or sabotage.

• Threat-intelligence exchange – set up secure portals for industry to report suspicious ship movements, cyber-probes or undersea anomalies directly to Navy, Coast Guard and national cyber-centres.

- Co-development of Risk & Resilience Frameworks

• Joint risk assessments – require system-wide HAZID/HAZOP studies that cover seabed-assets, export cables and inter-connector corridors.

• Shared standards and playbooks – co-author sector-specific guidance (e.g. offshore-wind H&S codes) under a formal "Offshore Resilience Forum" hosted by the State.

- Investment in Collective Capabilities

• Sensor-and-platform pooling – subsidise a "blue-light" fleet of unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) and sonobuoys that service both public and private seabed-monitoring needs.

• Standby response assets – through PPP contracts, have industry-funded SAR vessels and pollution-control rigs on call during high-risk construction or storm seasons.

- Cyber-Physical Security Partnerships

• Joint cyber-ops cell – colocate OT/ICS experts from ports, wind-farm operators and Defence Forces in a single Maritime Cyber Hub that runs regular red-team exercises.

• Secure comms backbone – extend industry-grade, encrypted mesh networks (already used on turbine platforms) to key naval stations and Coast Guard units.

- Training, Exercises & Surge Capacity

• Cross-sector drills – include private-sector staff (e.g. turbine technicians, subsea engineers) in national SAR and CBRN exercises.

• Certification pathways – industry can sponsor fast-track maritime safety and security courses at GMIT/UCC, boosting the talent pool for both civil and military responders.

- Regulatory & Governance Roles

• Private-sector seats on advisory bodies – ensure Dr Margaret Stanley's new Maritime Security Unit formally includes energy-sector, port and cable-operator representatives in strategy development and oversight.

• Performance-linked licences – tie operational permits to demonstrable security-resilience investments (e.g. subsea surveillance, cyber-hardening).

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-Centric Collaboration
• Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE): Building on Ireland's recent entry into CISE, we should fully integrate private-sector sensor feeds (e.g. wind-farm metocean and subsea-scour data) and Defence Forces maritime surveillance into a single, secure portal. This real-time fusion across civil, military and industry partners will improve domain awareness and speed decision-making.
• Joint EU Missions & Exercises: Participation in EU naval operations (e.g. Operation IRINI) and regular tabletop /C-Vessel exercises with Frontex and EMSA will hone our tactics for counter-smuggling, sabotage interdiction and pollution response while strengthening relationships with key capitals.
- Bilateral & Regional Partnerships
• United Kingdom & France: Given shared subsea interconnectors and pipeline corridors in the Celtic Sea, formalise a bilateral MOU for data-linking coastal radars, co-funding AUV patrols, and cross-border SAR contingencies. Ireland should also explore co-location of Unmanned Surface Vessel bases in southwest France or southwest UK to extend our effective patrol range.
• Neighbouring Coast Guards: Establish a "North Atlantic Coastguard Forum" with Ireland, UK, France, Spain and Portugal for quarterly threat-assessment workshops, joint HAZIDs on subsea cables and pipelines, and interoperable HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service) evacuation protocols.
- NATO & Other International Bodies
• Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP): Leverage NATO's standards for cyber-physical hardening of Critical Maritime Infrastructure (CMI) and invite NATO sea-surveillance detachments to train with Irish OPVs—accelerating our sonar-to-AUV "pattern of life" build-out and crew proficiency ahead of 2027 sonar delivery.
• UNCLOS & IMO Engagement: Advocate in IMO fora for stronger rules protecting CMI and for routine "exercises of passage" alongside other flag states, underscoring Ireland's commitment to freedom of navigation and the rule-book that governs it.
• Industry-Government Liaison in International Working Groups: Push for offshore-wind and subsea-cable operators to join ISO and IEC working groups on maritime-sector resilience—ensuring best-practice H&S and security standards flow into Ireland's strategy.

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

- Clear Governance, Roles & Accountability
• Define a lead authority (e.g. the Maritime Security Unit) and designate inter-departmental champions for each pillar (Domain Awareness, Critical Infrastructure Protection, Health & Safety, Cyber-Physical Security, Emergency Response, Private-Sector Engagement).
• Assign specific timelines, milestones and budget lines. Embed “security by design” into project approvals for new offshore wind farms and grid interconnectors.
• Set up a bi-annual Security Steering Group—bringing together government, Defence Forces, Coast Guard, industry and academia—to track progress against the Action Plan.
- Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) Upgrade
• Roll out a national sensor network: surface radars, coastal AIS, subsea acoustic/vibration nodes and autonomous platforms (AUVs/USVs).
• Integrate private-sector data streams (wind-farm SCADA, metocean buoys, subsea-scour monitors) via the EU Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) for a unified tactical picture.
• Establish a 24/7 Joint Operations Centre with real-time dashboards, automated alerts and AI-driven anomaly detection.
- Critical Infrastructure Protection
• Map all subsea cables, pipelines and export-cable corridors; designate them as “Protected Zones” with legal penalties for unauthorised activity.
• Mandate subsea-cable owners and offshore operators to deploy leak-detection, fibre-optic intrusion sensors and periodic ROV/AUV inspections.
• Develop cross-sector Response Playbooks for cable-strike, pipeline-leak or turbine-founda-tion sabotage events.
- Health & Safety Standardisation
• Publish a bespoke Offshore Renewables Health & Safety Code, harmonising global best practices (G+ standards) with Irish law.
• Require every new installation to complete an Independent Navigational Risk Assessment (NRA), medical-evacuation plan and offshore Tele-medicine integration before construction licencing.
• Fund a national Offshore Emergency Training Centre to certify 500+ technicians, mariners and rescue personnel annually.
- Cyber-Physical Security Fusion
• Stand up a Maritime Cyber Fusion Cell co-locating IT-SOC and OT/ICS experts from energy operators, ports, Defence Forces and the National Cyber Security Centre.
• Mandate annual red-team/blue-team exercises on wind-farm SCADA and shore-grid interfaces.
• Deploy an encrypted, multi-layered comms backbone—combining coastal microwave links with satellite mesh—to ensure resilience under jamming or cyber-attack.
- Search & Rescue (SAR) and Pollution Response
• Charter dedicated “Standby Vessels” and helidecks on major ORE construction sites, equipped for hyperbaric rescue, oil-spill containment and mass-casualty evacuation.
• Integrate private standby assets into Coast Guard SAR tasking via a single-call dispatch system.
• Schedule quarterly multi-agency drills—including industry crews—to validate response chains and close interoperability gaps.
- Private-Sector Partnership Mechanisms

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

- Private-Sector Partnership Mechanisms
• Form an Offshore Resilience Forum—co-chaired by government and industry—to co-develop risk assessments, resilience standards and shared-capability contracts.
• Tie operational licences to security KPIs (e.g. subsea-surveillance coverage, cyber-hardening maturity).
• Offer matched-funding incentives for companies that co-invest in national MDA or SAR assets.
- International & Regional Cooperation
• Leverage CISE and the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO for sonar-AUV integration, bi-lateral AUV patrols and cyber-drills.
• Negotiate memoranda of understanding with UK, France and EU neighbours for shared radar/AIS feeds, cross-border SAR protocols and joint cable-protection patrols.
- Monitoring, Evaluation & Continuous Improvement
• Define KPIs across each pillar (e.g. % subsea-corridor under surveillance; average SAR response time; number of H&S audits completed).
• Produce an annual “Maritime Security Scorecard” for public and parliamentary scrutiny.
• Conduct a mid-term review at year 3 to recalibrate priorities based on evolving threats—climate, cyber, geopolitical.

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

Three different threats or vulnerabilities to Ireland's maritime security may be identified: (i) environmental degradation (e.g., climate change, over-fishing, marine pollution), which can threaten Irish coastal communities and the sustainability of economic activities (e.g., the fishing industry); (ii) non-state actors, in particular criminal groups involved in drug-smuggling; and (iii) Russia, which should be understood as a malign actor in the seas and airspace surrounding Ireland and, in certain circumstances, might threaten or attack subsea infrastructures (seabed cables, pipelines and electricity interconnectors) or interfere with or threaten civilian vessels or Irish Naval Service vessels. With regards to Russia, it would be helpful if the Irish government and politicians would engage in a more open public discussions of the challenges posed by Russia in the seas and airspace surrounding Ireland and how best to respond to these challenges.

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

See my answer to question 1.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Rather than focusing on specific geographical areas (or subareas) in Ireland's maritime domain, it may make sense to think in terms of (i) differing legal roles/rights/responsibilities under UNCLOS (Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone, EEZ, Continental Shelf and High Seas); (ii) differing functional challenges and how best to address them (e.g., fisheries, environment, non-state actors, state actors); and (iii) cooperation with partners (-see my answers to other questions).

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

3000 character(s) maximum

More detailed comparative analysis of the scale and type of capabilities, infrastructure and technology maintained or planned by other small maritime states would be useful in developing a comprehensive answer to this question (e.g., Norway, Denmark, Portugal, etc).

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 Security Strategy should absolutely involve private sector owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure - it makes no sense to consider maritime security and related policy and investment without engaging key private sector actors. Division of roles and responsibilities and cooperation may not be straightforward, but dialogue and engagement has to be the starting point.

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

Cooperation with the EU, NATO and other Atlantic coastal states is the only sensible way to address Ireland's maritime security challenges. Ireland's maritime domain is large, indeed very large depending exactly how it is defined. There is simply no way that Ireland can address security challenges in this domain or protect its legitimate interests without cooperation with like-minded partners. Even if Ireland were to move to the larger Naval Service envisaged in Level of Ambition 3 of the Commission on the Defence Forces Report (which would be challenging), it would remain the case that Ireland cannot address its maritime security challenges or protect its maritime interests without cooperation with partners. The Government should engage in a more open to discussion with the Irish people on this issue. Flexible cooperation is needed with the EU, NATO, the UK and other relevant states (e.g., France, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, etc). One relevant model is Nordic-Baltic air defence cooperation: the Nordic states recognize that it makes no sense to think primarily in terms of national air defence and have effectively moved towards an increasingly integrated Nordic air defence zone. Something similar may be appropriate for the Irish Sea and the Atlantic coastal area, in terms of both naval forces and air defence 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

Such an Action Plan would make sense, in particular to help ensure that the National Maritime Security Strategy does not become simply a paper document sitting on a shelf.

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

No.

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

The most significant current threats have been various-sized vessels being able to gain access into Irish waters without being detected, which one can only presume could be carrying drugs, weapons, etc. This situation has become an uncontrolled threat to our country and a danger that goes unchallenged due to the lack of resources to tackle these individuals and organisations. It has already been proven with the incident in Cork in September 2023, when a large cargo vessel was intercepted by a joint operation involving the Army Ranger Wing, the Naval Service, and members of the Garda Síochána. Although the operation was successful regarding the seizure, the operation and its logistics were a disaster. There was only one helicopter available, the HEMS helicopter from Athlone, to transport the assault team with no additional top cover. Only one naval vessel, which lacked the capabilities to engage in a full-on confrontation due to not having its full complement of sailors to operate the ship's resources effectively.
We cannot monitor other naval ships within our waters, as previously seen with the Russian vessels that have been gathering intelligence of the coasts of Cork and Kerry and further northern areas of Donegal.

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

It has become nationally known that Ireland is an easy target, posing no threat to a foreign state or any crime organisation. This has become an intelligence hub for the last 15/20 years for other countries to gather intelligence on the UK and other Nato countries, as Ireland has been seen as a country that does not have proper defence and intelligence organisations and capabilities. The threats we face will further impact the fishing industry, as larger vessels continue to intimidate smaller Irish ships due to the lack of policing in our waters and the absence of a visual deterrent such as a coast guard or naval service.

How do we prepare for this? I have been reading and watching media discussions about the defence problems in Ireland for the past seven or eight years, and the lack of interest in recruitment into the Defence Forces, with more personnel leaving than joining, particularly in the Naval Service, where the staffing gap is most significant. Listening to all of these discussions over the years, and now with the commitment of the government to invest appropriately in the Defence Forces, the main topic has been the Army!...the Army, the Army? We are living on an Island that every organisation has easy access to, our priority needs to be the Naval Service.
So what do we do? If the Army had one base in Cork, the Air Corps had one base in Cork and CHC, now Bristow Helicopters, were all based in Cork, you would not have half the people you have right now serving. Why? Because the Army and CHC are strategically based around the country, they can respond to geographical areas in a short period. Second, people who live within these counties find it appealing because they can live in their home counties and commit to working in these essential services. We need to approach this in the same way and establish four Naval Bases around the country, allowing for greater daily coverage. This would eliminate the lack of interest in recruitment into the Naval Service, as young people can live within their home counties and proudly contribute to protecting their shorelines. For example, Naval Service personnel could share and operate out of Finner Camp in Donegal, home of the 28th Infantry Battalion and have two small patrol vessels which have were previously purchased from the New Zealand Navy recently and have them moured at Killybegs which would give an operational patroling perimeter of all of Donegal, Sligo, Mayo right down to Galway. Have another base out of Galway covering Clare, Kerry and then Cork, covering Waterford, Wexford and Dublin, covering Wicklow, Dublin up to Drogheda. This would provide greater interest for people joining, and additionally, allow the establishment of Slua Muire (Naval Reserve) units in each region, which could give coastal protection on weekends. It would be a massive boost to the protection of our coastal areas and would allow a greater overlap with regional organisations for cross-training and policing.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

As mentioned in Q2, the geographical area for maritime protection covers a greater region than that of Cork and the east coast. We need to strategically place our services to cover the areas that have been left unprotected since the eighties. We need to establish a proper maritime force, whether that solution involves amalgamating the services into one national coast guard or establishing four naval bases around the country, including reserve units. We need to invest in longer-range transport helicopters with a medium lift capability that can support these resources along the coastline. Establishing separate bases can be very cost-effective if the right approach is taken. Still, the bigger picture should be the provision of security for this country and its maritime domain. We need the resources, the bases, and then a local recruitment campaign for each region, making it appealing to work within your area and contribute locally to the defence of our country.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

1) We need to establish proper infrastructure by establishing four operational Naval Bases.
2) There needs to be an investment in a smaller patrol vessel with a capacity of 15 - 20 crew.
3) We need to establish local recruitment for regional units.
4) There needs to be reserve units established that have the capabilities to function on weekends and can provide patrolling duties, rescue and fishery protection.
5) There needs to be proper air cover and facilities to provide security from the air, as well as logistic supplies with winch capabilities.
6) More advanced sonar technology needs to be invested in.

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 believe that involving private sector owners and operators would be a valuable addition to maritime protection and security. This would likely be a natural occurrence if each regional area had its reserve, as these individuals would be employed in numerous local private companies that could bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the maritime infrastructure, such as technical, IT, engineering, and medical fields.

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, international cooperation is crucial, considering that we do not have the resources (at the moment) to protect our country in the air and sea. Increased collaboration is essential for gaining information and intelligence, as proven by the seizure of the vessel from Colombia in Cork in September 2023. We also need collaboration to facilitate cross-training with other maritime services and to leverage the expertise of countries that have already tested and proven the most reliable and appropriate equipment.

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

1) There needs to be an exact timeline of implementation
2) What the action plan is going to be.
3) What the result will be and how this will be achieved.
4) Who is accountable and who will oversee its implementation?

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

We need to focus on expanding our naval service to a minimum of 3,000 personnel. There needs to be a complete overhaul of the service, focusing on making it more like a Coast Guard with operational bases strategically placed around the country. We can not continue having one base that only appeals to people living within the vicinity of Haulbowline in Cork.

Change the options, and you will get the numbers to join. Focus on establishing regional reserve units that have the potential to bring a wealth of experience and skills to the service.

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?

3000 character(s) maximum

CONTRAVENTION OF INTERNATIONAL LAWS WITHOUT ACCOUNTABILITY.
Certain nations are allowed contravene international laws with impunity e.g. Israel's unlawful attacks at sea to prevent delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. When the Nordstream pipeline was blown up several countries, including USA/UK, prevented an international inquiry taking place. Regardless of any measures Ireland takes, we couldn't stop a foreign super power attacking us at sea. If there are no consequences for offenders there is no deterrent.

FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES IN IRISH WATERS/ EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone)
As Ireland is a neutral nation no foreign military vessels should be allowed enter Irish waters/EEZ unless on a humanitarian mission approved by the UN, the Irish Government and Parliament, or on a rescue mission.

All foreign naval exercises should cease in Irish waters/ EEZ. Foreign forces currently use Irish waters for their war rehearsal exercises. Such war play is insulting as it flies in the face of Irish sovereign neutrality. In times of increased global insecurity and division, such exercises increase international tensions by design or by accident.

NUCLEAR THREATS
Ireland is nuclear free, and involved at the heart of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Doomsday clock is now set at 90 seconds to midnight (The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists). We must heed this warning by reducing risks of a nuclear disaster on or close to Irish shores. No nuclear weapons should be carried in Irish waters or through Irish airspace. The deployed use of such weapons, or an accident involving crafts carrying same, would be catastrophic for people, wildlife and environment.

UNSUSTAINABILITY..
Use of Irish waters by foreign naval war vessels, aircraft, submarines, military sonar, and live fire endanger our marine life, affect marine diversity in the region, and pollute waters. Ireland is improving sonar capabilities for security use. To reduce harmful effects, no other country's military sonar should be in use in our waters.

Foreign naval exercises within Ireland’s EEZ pose threats to Ireland's fish stocks, to the livelihoods of Irish fishing communities and the prosperity of fishing industries here. Current policies in respect of such exercises in Irish waters are failing to protect our interests. Permission should not be granted..

The EU needs to review the policies on fishing with regard to methods and quotas in the territorial waters/ EEZs of individual members states. Ireland's stocks are being depleted by current irresponsible super trawlers.

UNDERSEA INFRASTRUCTURE
Foreign naval exercises have the potential to damage undersea infrastructure which is of major concern . It is known that anchors commonly cause much of the damage to undersea cables. Remove foreign military vessels and reduce potential damage to our undersea infrastructure.

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

EROSION OF IRISH NEUTRALITY
Neutrality and diplomacy have served us well during the turbulent times in Europe and globally throughout the last century and for the first quarter of this century, proving this strategy to be our best means of defence. If we are neutral we don't favour any side but work for world peace Promoting the UN's New Agenda for Peace and such initiatives portrays Ireland as a trustworthy nation rather than a potential enemy.
We need to take more responsible action- promoting Ireland, including her waters, as a true symbol of peace and an ecological preservation zone.
If we take the militarisation route, Ireland could never compete with a nuclear superpower. We have to rely on peaceful negotiation instead

EU MILITARISATION
The EU is promoting a massive arms drive. Similar has happened in Europe before. We do not want another world war. Arms spending by Eurozone member states is not to be counted in national budget deficits but the same has not been facilitated for the building of residential units or removing education fees. This shows where the EU priority lies: militarisation and spending on military capabilities, over people's needs for housing, improved healthcare, public transport, free education while the cost of living crisis affects many and there is climate chaos. More weapons will make us less safe.

MANUFACTURED CONSENT
There is constant scaremongering regarding hypothetical military threats and misleading narratives that fail to reveal full facts. This is perpetuated and amplified by mainstream media without government correction. This is creating tension, ramping up an atmosphere of fear within Ireland, the EU, and the Western world. This leads to a justification for tightening defence and security by prioritising a military economy.
Irish military exercises Cathal & Puca were White PsyOps simulations of attacks on gas lines and a hybrid attack on data cables.
Ireland has not been threatened by any country- despite imposing sanctions on some countries yet refusing or being reluctant to impose justifiable sanctions on others.
Many foreign countries conduct naval exercises off the coast of Ireland in our EEZ but it is only when Russia does so that this is highlighted, with unfounded sinister undertones. In fact, Russian vessels relocated on the one occasion that the Irish Government made such a request to them with no hostilities.

POLLUTION/CATASTROPHE
Proposed importation and storage of LNG from the USA is hazardous.
Nuclear waste being dumped or leaking from our neighbouring nuclear nation Britain could increase to contamination level of our food chain. Traces have been found even on our West coast.
Accidents at, or attacks on, Britain's nuclear facilities would have devastating effects on Ireland's maritime environment. There must be stricter, evenly enforced international controls of nations' nuclear facilities and eventual cessation of mass nuclear processing for energy and weapons.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Every mile of coastline, stretch of sea, and all the EEZ needs attention and protection, specific to each area such as fishing grounds used by fishers, and identified Marine Protection 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

.
URGENT RESPONSE TO RESCUE IRISH CITIZENS
As the government talks of evacuating citizens from crisis situations abroad, we can not ignore the need to improve Ireland's search and rescue services for the safety of individuals and vessels and for the security of all using Irish waters.
Downgrading of the service by contracting providers using less effective and reduced capability rescue helicopters is not in the best interests of Irish citizens, or anyone.

The National Lifeboat Institute should not have to rely on fund raising in order to function. It should be fully recognised as a national institution providing an essential emergency service and receive proper funding through Government.

CLIMATE CRISIS MEASURES
Our sea levels are increasing as are sea temperatures. It is time to take the environment emergency seriously and make investments to deal with coastal erosion and flooding and other critical matters to save lifes and livelihoods.

ENERGY SECURITY
More research, development and investment in wind and tidal energy production.

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 only be considered as a last option.
Those in the private sector with vested interests may well intend shaping policies to suit their own gains and precautions must be taken to prevent this. Which private sector owners and operators are allowed to be involved and on what basis must depend on a strict process of vetting and selecting. The processing would need to be conducted responsibly with full transparency and accountability to the appropriate Oireachtas committees.
All private sector players must satisfy an agreed ethical code.

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 an important role once Ireland has addressed issues to determine what is the best strategy for the nation. International co-operation must be on a non-military basis, otherwise our neutrality would be compromised, our constitution contravened if we joined military alliances. There are also very important national/global issues that are not being dealt with adequately nor will they be if the military agenda is prioritised.

UK
We obviously would need to cooperate with UK as our nearest neighbours and with their continued administration in Northern Ireland- if agreement could be reached on non-military missions and projects such as search and rescue; improving durability of undersea cables and their repair; environmental and ecological maritime research; monitoring and reduction of maritime pollution; addressing climate change; nuclear decommissioning.

EU
Co-operation with partners in the EU should also be on a non-military basis. A sharing of knowledge, information, joint working on research and projects of a civilian nature would be for the mutual benefit of all.

Our international role as peacekeepers and our neutrality is being weakened by the Irish Defence Forces participation in EU battlegroups, which is akin to being in an EU Army. We need to move our troops away from such exercises and concentrate on staffing the UN peacekeeping missions instead. Ireland recently agreed to participate in a PESCO undersea infrastructure initiative. The public were never asked if we agreed with PESCO. The Irish Government signed Ireland up to PESCO, thus deepening defence cooperation between EU states and committing so much of our national purse to military spending. We must resist the rush to militarisation and warfare being promoted by the EU.

NATO
As Ireland has already signed a deal with NATO on the protection against potential threats to our underground infrastructure and cybersecurity, it would be a further undermining of Irish neutrality if we were to increase the level of co-operation with NATO. It would become impossible for Ireland to engage in effective diplomacy on the basis of being a neutral non-aligned nation.
To co-operate with NATO is not taking a neutral position, and does not provide guaranteed protection from all attacks. It could even make Ireland appear to be a legitimate target to some.
It would damage our neutral status if NATO patrolled Irish coasts or if Irish naval ships patrolled with them if the Government removes the current Triple Lock- which is a danger in itself.
We need to co-operate with all nations - not with a specific divisive military organisation. We need to move away from joining NATO in all but name.

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 need a full common, ecological and social Maritime Security Strategy for Ireland. This must be scrutinised by the public and debated in full in the Houses of the Oireachtas.
An Action Plan on an agreed National Maritime Security Strategy will then provide more information to the public on how Ireland plans to deal with the real threats to our lives, our seas, our coasts, our air and our future of climate chaos, environmental destruction, and extinction.

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

We need an independent policy of peace and this must be the upmost priority in all strategies and plans.
We need a foreign policy of peace and ensure this is respected throughout the EU and internationally.
We must invest in caring for our nation, our land and our seas- not in the means of destruction and the killing of all.
There needs to be global collaboration to deal with the planetary crises we are facing. We must prioritise peace and co-operation between all nations if we are to survive as a species and for a future of life on earth.

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

Contact Form

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

[1] Ireland's position on the edge of Europe makes it a key gateway for transatlantic cables and offshore energy, and its critical maritime infrastructure must be protected. Subsea telecommunications and power cables support everything from global commerce to electricity supply.

[2] Most cable faults arise from commercial fishing, vessel anchoring, or natural seabed movements - and it is vital to ensure that the Irish National Maritime Security Strategy clearly considers overall resilience and 'business as usual' operations as well as addressing concerns over security and defence. Industry data from the International Cable Protection Committee shows that around 70 to 80 percent of global cable faults are caused by anchoring or fishing, with the remainder being natural hazards (underwater landslides or seismic activity) as well as equipment failure or abrasion. Reducing the predominant causes of faults can assist in improving detection and attribution in the event of potential acts of sabotage.

[3] Ireland has historically experienced relatively few cable faults than some other jurisdictions. However, future resilience cannot rely on past trends. Resilience is inherently linked to how quickly faults can be repaired.

[4] Subsea cable repairs have taken place in Ireland for decades with minimal administrative delay. It is not possible to avoid all cable faults, and disruption is minimised and mitigated by ensuring repair vessels are not subject to lengthy delays in licencing. However the new Maritime Area Planning framework processes currently remain untested in the context of cable repairs, and it is imperative to ensure that such repairs are not subject to newly imposed regulatory barriers. Without clarity and appropriate exemptions, delays to repairs could pose a risk not only to infrastructure but also to Ireland's wider economy and security – and indeed more widely across other EU and neighbouring countries.

[5] There is growing international concern about activity near Irish subsea infrastructure. Press coverage in The Irish Times, for example, has reported unusual behaviour by Russian vessels such as Yantar in the vicinity of subsea cables. This highlights ongoing activity in the vicinity of cables and subsea infrastructure - and requires cooperation between industry and government to ensure that there is planned, structured and in built resilience in the ability to respond to 'business as usual' type cable faults, as well as those that could be undertaken as a 'grey zone' tactic - or equally in terms of a state threat.

[6] Ireland should formally classify cable repair as an emergency activity, essential to maintaining national resilience. Other countries have done this effectively, recognising that damage - whether accidental or deliberate - must be responded to without delay. As threats evolve, Ireland needs a system that is ready to respond at pace without any regulatory barriers to deployment and repair.

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

[7] One of the most pressing emerging challenges is the management of competing demands on the maritime space. Ireland's offshore waters are becoming increasingly busy with marine industries and activities as well as a need to meet EU targets in protecting and restoring the marine environment. Without a clear, long-term approach to marine spatial planning, the risk of conflict and unintended consequences grows. The establishment of MARA takes steps towards this – but currently, the cable industry has seen more challenges arising for current development, than it has seen benefits in terms of future strategy, and this poses a significant risk to national resilience and security in Ireland.

[8] This is not just about space but about preparedness. Subsea power and telecoms/data cables will become more important as Ireland expands offshore wind generation and develops its digital economy. But the capacity to repair or maintain these systems quickly must be built into the planning framework. Delays due to licensing or regulatory confusion risk undermining Ireland's reputation as a secure place to land and operate vital infrastructure.

[9] Regulatory barriers that are uncertain, lengthy and cause confusion can result in future cables avoiding Irish waters altogether. This will result in reduced future resilience for Ireland but will also lead to the unintended consequence of bottlenecks of congested areas for cables that lessens overall geographic diversity of routing. Recovery and removal of subsea cables at end of life are also a consideration alongside installation and repair. Industry engagement is essential to ensure that decommissioning is planned strategically and not inadvertently hindered by regulatory or spatial barriers.

[10] Spatial planning must be coordinated across sectors and national borders. It is essential that Ireland works closely with neighbouring countries, especially the UK and EU partners, to avoid conflicting processes and ensure that planning and coordination works effectively – both for development and defence cooperation. Strategic planning must focus on outcomes and be coherent across policy areas - not impose a prioritisation in one area the undermines security in another.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

[11] Ireland’s maritime security cannot be viewed in isolation, must look outward to other jurisdictions and countries in maritime cooperation, and must not look inward just at domestic policies.

[12] Ireland’s role in European and transatlantic connectivity means that its waters serve broader regional interests. The UK - Ireland Summit in March 2025 recognised this, setting out joint priorities for energy security and marine planning. It is vital to work collaboratively with close neighbouring countries on topics relating to marine sptial planning, regulation, and resilience.

[13] Similarly, the recent concerns raised by the Japanese Prime Minister about subsea cable security in Irish waters show that global partners see Ireland as central to wider resilience even in jurisdictions that are geographically further away. This highlights that subsea cables form a global ecosystem and require an outward facing cooperative approach. https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2025/07/02/japan-expresses-concern-over-security-of-subsea-cables-off-the-irish-coast/

[14] The Strategy should reflect this by focusing on areas of strategic overlap - places where telecoms, energy, and economic interests converge. Particular attention is needed in the Irish Sea and Celtic Sea, where cable routes, interconnectors and offshore energy infrastructure meet.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

[15] The foundation of maritime resilience is a clear, supportive regulatory environment. Ensure that the new structures through MARA are fit for purpose and do not inadvertently pose a risk to Irish resilience and security.

[16] The most immediate investment in capability Ireland can make requires little investment, and is to ensure through focussed policy that emergency cable repairs are not held up by uncertainty in the new MARA framework. This is a no cost solution, and there are good practices clearly demonstrated around the world that show this to be effective and improve response times. Subsea cable repair need to be clearly recognised as essential work and exempt from time consuming permits. There are a limited number of specialist cable repair vessels, therefore approval can be done in advance, or through notification processes, or by specific legislative exemptions - making this a relatively straightforward proposition.

[17] Fast repair times around the world are not a matter of geography, but of enabling policy - especially in Ireland, which is well served by strategically located repair vessels. Strategic positioning, clear notification processes, and established industry - government coordination channels all help ensure that faults can be addressed without delay. However, resilience alone is not sufficient.

[18] Furthermore, improving and creating certainty within the regulatory processes for new cable installations is vital to support timely deployment of new systems – both to maintain Ireland's current connectivity, but also to build in resilience and future security. Streamlining these processes will help attract investment and increase the likelihood of building a more diverse and resilient subsea cable network.

[19] To ensure resilience, a suite of capabilities that deliver a detect and deter effect is needed to ensure protection of Critical Undersea Infrastructure (CUI). These have different functions and responsibilities between industry, government and defence. It is not sufficient to focus on equipment and technology – regulatory, policy and legislative processes all build into the wider picture for a maritime security strategy. Safeguarding critical infrastructure requires a broader, integrated approach - a "system of systems" combining wider government activity, defence and security capabilities, and industry expertise. No single element can deliver the necessary protection on its own. Together, these components create a credible deterrence effect, helping to prevent hostile actions and ensuring rapid response capacity when disruptions occur. Ireland should aim to replicate not only the operational conditions seen elsewhere, but also this integrated framework, recognising that infrastructure resilience is a central pillar of national and economic security.

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

[20] Yes. The private sector is already responsible for maintaining Ireland's maritime infrastructure, and its involvement in the Strategy must be structured and meaningful, not symbolic. The Strategy must be delivered 'with', and not 'to', the industry.

[21] Operators of subsea cables and offshore energy systems hold technical expertise, and operational insights. Their inclusion is essential for early warning, effective response, and forward planning. Engagement should be formalised through regular dialogue and joint planning structures and scenario planning - not just ad hoc consultation. These processes are already well developed or in development in some EU member states and the UK.

[22] ESCA and the ICPC (International Cable Protection Committee) have engaged with Irish government departments to encourage them to join these established organisations to facilitate dialogue and cooperation with the industry and between other government members. This informal setting enables the sharing of knowledge and best practices. Encouragement to participate in these forums is reiterated in this consultation response. It is vital to participate in these long standing organisations that promote and have tested and established strategies for the protection of subsea cables.

[23] A such, The Strategy should ensure that cooperation is built in from the outset, which also supports enhanced development of joint exercises, shared situational awareness, and co-developed risk assessments.

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

[24] International cooperation should be central to the Strategy. Ireland cannot secure its maritime infrastructure in isolation. Subsea cables and interconnectors cross borders, and risks to them are shared between nations.

[25] The 2025 UK - Ireland Joint Statement confirmed a renewed commitment to cross-border cooperation on energy and connectivity. Ireland should build on this through structured engagement with the UK, EU partners, and via the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO. This includes jointly working on aligned regulatory frameworks to ensure fast, coordinated action during emergencies.

[26] There are also unresolved issues around consistency with international law, particularly UNCLOS. Concerns raised by industry to MARA about Irelands obligations under UNCLOS remain outstanding. If not addressed, these create an uncertain environment for future investment and risk pushing critical infrastructure routes away from Irish waters – with further likely unintended consequences.

[27] International alignment matters not just for resilience, but for reputation. Ireland's ability to attract and retain strategic infrastructure investment depends on being seen as having a reliable, transparent regulatory regime which provides developers with certainty of timescales and costs – as well as the ability to repair cables when damage occurs.

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

[28] An Action Plan is essential and must include a structured plan for delivery. The Plan should focus on practical steps that support resilience and clarify roles, taking into account the ICPC best practices for submarine cable protection and resilience https://www.iscpc.org/publications/icpc-best-practices/ .

[29] Key elements should include:

• A regulatory review to ensure that cable repairs are unimpeded by regulatory processes and can commence without delay. This needs regulatory certainty and published guidance.
• Establish formal engagement frameworks with industry and other governments, including through ESCA and ICPC.
• Ensure Ireland has a single point of contact for subsea cable policy in Government – both for power and telecoms/data – or jointly though a department with responsibility for subsea infrastructure.
• A national capability review including through engagement with industry.
• Improved AIS enforcement and data access to support threat detection.
• Alignment of spatial planning with resilience priorities, ensuring that strategic infrastructure has the access and protection it needs.

[30] Such an Action Plan can lead to meaningful improvements to Irish cable protection, overall resilience, and in turn – National Maritime Security in Ireland.

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

[31] Three principles should guide the Strategy: Cooperation, coordination, collaboration.

[32] Resilience must be seen as a national security issue, not solely a technical one. The ability to repair cables quickly is arguably more important than the ability to protect them against all forms of damage – as some cable faults are unavoidable, and will always require repair.

[33] Coordination must be embedded across government departments; and with the industry; and internationally.

[34] Clarity in regulation and planning is vital. Without clear processes, Ireland risks its standing as a secure and efficient place for strategic infrastructure investment.

[35] Ireland has the opportunity to lead by example in the protection of critical subsea systems – and this requires a cross-government response that aligns different policy areas. This Strategy is a chance to set the direction for the decade ahead to ensure that Ireland mitigates and minimises the risk of disruption to connectivity and energy security that could occur from disruption to undersea infrastructure – whilst supporting robust economic stability and growth and energy security.

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

Russia.
A Russian submarine which positioned itself directly outside the entrance to Cork Harbour was "chased off" by a British helicopter and warship because our depleted navy doesn't have the equipment to detect potential underwater threats. The submarine was just outside the 12-mile limit, so it didn't break any international laws, but military sources have indicated that such events around the Irish coast are becoming more common.

https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/munster/arid-41288176.html#:~:text=A%20Russian%20submarine%20which%20positioned,to%20detect%20potential%20underwater%20threats.

We cannot pretend anymore Ireland is not of interest to other nations who have an interest in invading other countries such as the Ukraine and engaging in acts of sabotage.

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

Providing a credible deterrent is key to any defense.
Considering Ireland limited resources in terms of personnel and ability to attract suitable candidates into the Defense Forces Ireland should look at options that involve lower personnel usage and allows maximum flexibility to deploy resources. Consideration should be given to Naval resources that require small numbers but can monitor large areas as currently Ireland lacks ability to deploy any of it's ships due to lack of resources. Small combat boats can be acquired relatively quickly due to their size and speed of construction and can perform a multitude of tasks such as patrol, defense and offer a credible deterrent for drug smugglers looking to use Irish waters as an easy point of access to Europe due to Ireland's inability to monitor and patrol it's economic zone.

Example of such boats that could be acquired, https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2022/06/u-s-navys-new-40-foot-defiant-patrol-boat/

A fleet of 10 – 20 of these would costs significantly less than larger Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) and could be deployed with small crew based around the island of Ireland and not all based out of Cork and/or Dublin. Use of Navy reserves could assist in the staffing shortage to ensure sufficient crew to staff such combat boats. These boats could be equipped with sonar and depending on size surface to air battery packs to offer an air police capability not currently available on any of the navy ships.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, our wider economic area is Ireland's primary responsibility. Ireland cannot simply request UN recognition of a large economic area and then look for provide security for the 12-mile limit.

With regards reconnaissance use of drones based out of civilian airports should be considered as deploying aircraft from Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell, based in the east of the country to travel to the west coast before beginning operations seems a waste of time and fuel when such aircraft could be based at under utilized airports such as Cork, Shannon, Waterford etc. Drones require small staffing requirements, cost less than a manned aircraft, and can spend considerable time in the air providing surveillance for Ireland strategic 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

As noted above use of smaller combat boats, drone aircraft all based at various locations around the country will provide maximum coverage. Using drone aircraft and combat boats these could be based at existing infrastructure and not require new military bases to house so allowing deployment in short time period.

Ireland has being considering the purchase of a Multi Role Vessel (MRV) for some time now. Ireland should look at other counties and leverage where possible on any existing models and save time designing their own. Again platforms that allow drone launch, troop carrying, medical facilities etc should be prioritized. An example which would be within the mentioned budget for a MRV could be Damen shipyard in Romania building a drone aircraft carrier for Portugal. Ireland could for example order a second such vessel be built and save allot of time and resources on designing their own which in effect will have similar capabilities.

Link for your reference https://www.romania-insider.com/damen-shipyard-romania-drone-aircraft-carrier-portugal-2024

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,

Maximum use of any private sector assistance who may be owners or operators of critical maritime infrastructure should be exploded. Similar to the Coast Guard aircraft does not necessarily need to be owned by the Irish State. Ireland could lease military aircraft for reconnaissance of 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

Yes.
Ireland has experienced in recent times outside monitoring of the undersea cables which resulted in Ireland demonstrating a clear lack of ability to monitor and defend such infrastructure to the extent that Ireland had to rely on NATO countries to protect and defend it's key interests. This is of concern for a country that describes itself as "neutral" when in fact should you have to rely on others to perform key tasks you are not only compromising your independent but becoming a de facto member of such military alliances. This has been caused by successive Irish governments not putting the Department of Defense on the same priority as other departments such as Health, Education, Welfare and Justice. Ireland has commonly being referred to as a "Freeloader", a term that cannot be disputed as it simply relies on others to police Ireland's skies, waterways and economic zones. Ireland spends significantly less than other similar neutral countries on defense, per below, source https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41574028.html

- Ireland's defence budget in 2024 (€1.29 billion) equates to 0.24% of its GDP;
- Average of 38 European countries is 1.74%;
- Malta, also neutral, is second lowest, spending €90 million or 0.38%;
- Austria's defence budget in 2024 (€5.1bn) represents 0.99% of GDP;
- Switzerland spent €6.24bn on defence in 2024 or 0.69% of GDP

At present Ireland is a member of the EU and so needs to ensure we support and defend our partners. Hiding behind neutrality is simply not longer acceptable when Ireland wishes to participate in a common market for trade and then "cherry pick" defense of our partners.

Either way, neutrality is separate to adequately funding the defense forces and use of partnerships should be explored where allowed considering current neutral status.

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

Ability to monitor all areas of interest to Ireland
Adequate funding and budget to allow the defense forces purchase enough equipment to fulfil their jobs
Ensuring staff pay levels are sufficient to attract, suggestion below on possible staffing issue currently faced by all branches of the defense forces.

Personnel shortage. Consideration should be given to the significant Ukrainian population in Ireland, over 100,000. The government should consider offering resident visas for all those whom sign up to the defense forces and remain an employee for at least 3-5 years. Such a "Ukrainian Guards" could be staffed by all individuals that speak that language and so would not have to depend on having English as a fluent language.

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

Every year the greatest threat to subsea cable systems is still the working sea itself. Fishing trawls that can snag on a cable, a cargo ship that drags its anchor, or a subsea geological event can all lead to cable faults and breaks. Because such everyday mishaps account for the overwhelming share of cable faults worldwide, keeping them in check does more than cut repair bills: it clears the background noise, making any deliberate interference far easier to spot and prove.

When there is a subsea fault, what matters most is the time between a fault and its repair. The moment a cable fails, financial traffic detours, data latency rises and alternative paths begin to strain. If a repair ship must wait while licences or approvals are processed, damage that could have been routine can turn into an outage felt far beyond Ireland's shores.

The new Maritime Area Planning system has not yet been tested under the pressure of a true emergency. MARA needs clear, automatic provisions so that a master can start repairs as soon as the vessel is alongside. Other coastal states already treat cable work as an emergency activity; Ireland should do the same, providing fast track consent and, where needed, naval or coastguard escort to keep the site secure.

Surveillance is the other half of the equation. Reports of unusual manoeuvres by foreign research ships in Irish waters have underlined how easily grey zone tactics can hide behind legitimate science or fishing. A joined up effort - combining coastal radar, real time satellite tracking, acoustic sensors, SMART cables and real time alerts from the cable owners—would give the State enough visibility to detect potential interference and enough proof to call out malicious acts when they occur.

Finally, no regulation or sensors can replace skilled hands to carry out repairs. The international pool of qualified jointers, fibre testers, ROV pilots and cable handling specialists is small and ageing. Strengthening links and enhancing the capabilities of the Irish Marine sector such as NMCI, the Marine institute, the Commissioners of Irish Lights etc and creating local depots of critical spares such as cable, splicing kits and joints, and rehearsing joint repair drills with neighbouring countries will ensure that when a major cable security incident occurs, Ireland has the people and the kit on hand to respond immediately without needing to rely on others..

By blending practical surveillance, monitoring and prevention with swift emergency authorisations, constant awareness and locally trained repair resources, Ireland can keep its seabed lifelines secure—whatever the North Atlantic chooses to throw at them.

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 most immediate challenge for subsea cables is spatial: Ireland's seabed is becoming densely populated with offshore renewables, aquaculture sites, shipping traffic and legally protected habitats. Marine spatial planning must reconcile these demands in a manner that preserves unobstructed access for cable installation and maintenance without confining the sector to rigid, long-term corridors. Flexible, risk-based safeguards—such as temporary safety zones during critical works—can limit inadvertent damage while still allowing future routing innovation. While establishment of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) is a welcome step toward more coherent governance, operators continue to encounter significant barriers including fragmented licensing and extended decision timelines, undermining confidence in Ireland as a preferred cable landfall. These uncertainties relating to permitting and consents put Ireland at a major disadvantage as the timeline for deployment of critical new cable systems internationally is of paramount importance and at the moment, Ireland is performing very poorly compared to our competitors.

As discussed above, time to repair is also a decisive resilience metric. Any administrative delay once the repair vessel is mobilised amplifies economic loss and strategic vulnerability. Ireland should therefore confer statutory "emergency" status on cable repair, triggering deemed consent within strictly bounded environmental parameters, and publish pre cleared operational envelopes along all existing systems. Absent such certainty, future cable consortia may route away from Irish waters entirely, reducing geographic diversity for the wider European network. Delays to new cable installation or cable repairs due to licensing or regulatory confusion risk undermining Ireland's reputation as a secure place to land and operate vital infrastructure.

Close coordination and alignment on consents, spatial planning and monitoring with the United Kingdom and other EU coastal states is indispensable, given the transboundary nature of subsea cables.

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 must look beyond domestic waters. Every subsea telecommunications cable that lands here forms part of a global lattice, and a single break echoes far beyond the shoreline. At the British–Irish summit of 6 March 2025 seabed infrastructure was placed at the heart of a new bilateral energy-security pact. Japan’s Prime Minister underscored the point on 2 July 2025, seeking assurances on the safety of Irish routes that carry Japanese data traffic.

Prioritisation should follow functional risk.

Near-shore convergence zones in the Irish and Celtic Seas, where dense cable routes, anchorages, offshore renewables and future interconnectors coincide. These waters demand joint incident plans with London and Brussels, real-time traffic tracking and pre-cleared emergency repair consents.

Atlantic landfalls from Cork to Donegal, exposed to severe weather and limited harbour capacity. Local spare depots, focused outreach to fishing fleets and automatic safety zones during repairs can shorten outages.

Deep-water approaches beyond the continental shelf, where covert interference is likeliest and national patrol presence is more challenging. Smart sensors, satellite tracking and industry cable monitoring extend detection of interference.

None of these should be frozen into prescribed cable corridors dictated by fixed marine spatial plans; engineers and cable route planners must remain free in the future to choose the most favourable seabed conditions, reroute for environmental reasons or adapt for technological advances. Regulation should specify outcomes—continuous service, rapid repair access, environmental stewardship—while leaving operators discretion over the exact routes and landfalls chosen.

Accordingly, the Strategy ought not to ring-fence a handful of cable corridors and treat the remainder as secondary. It should identify cross-border risk, align with the EU, UK and international partners or a wider alliance mechanism, and create a clear, rapid repair authorisation pathway that activates the moment a fault is detected.

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 robust maritime-security posture begins not with ships or sensors but with law. Ireland's new Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) will shape every subsea decision for decades; if its procedures are overly complicated and decision making timelines sluggish, resilience will erode regardless of how much hardware is afloat. The foremost "investment", therefore, is to calibrate MARA so that its rules protect infrastructure rather than hinder it. Emergency cable repair must be classed as essential work and routed through a standing notification procedure or explicit statutory exemption. The global record is clear: where permits are automatic, outages last days; where paperwork lingers or there are uncertainties, they last weeks. Ireland is fortunate to lie within the routine patrol radius of several specialised repair vessels—delays here would be self-inflicted.

Speed, however, is only one half of the equation; predictability is the other. Operators and investors will not land new cable systems in Ireland unless they know in advance how route approval, environmental assessment and consenting for all stages of the project will unfold. Streamlined, time-bounded processes under MARA will encourage diverse landings, spreading risk and increasing overall capacity. Conversely, uncertainty will push future projects towards our competitors, narrowing Ireland's digital lifelines at the very moment its economy leans hardest on them.

Ireland should aim to replicate not only the operational conditions seen elsewhere, but also this integrated framework, recognising that infrastructure resilience is a central pillar of national and economic security.
In sum, the optimal investment is not a single headline technology but an integrated framework—clear laws, instant authorisations, coordinated surveillance and a trained repair resource. Together they form the deterrent that keeps data flowing and Ireland securely wired into the world.

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 Security Strategy must embed the private sector as a genuine partner, not a symbolic stakeholder. Sub-sea telecommunications cables and offshore-energy assets are developed and maintained mainly by commercial owners; their detailed knowledge of route design, fault patterns, repair logistics and threat vectors is indispensable. Excluding that expertise would deprive the State of the data required for credible prevention, detection and response.

Accordingly, industry participation should be institutionalised. A standing civil-industry forum—convened to a fixed schedule and governed by secure information-sharing protocols—ought to steer implementation and review. Joint scenario workshops, live exercises and co-authored risk registers would align public-sector enforcement powers with private-sector operational realities and investment cycles. Comparable models already operate, or are being refined, in several EU member states and the United Kingdom, demonstrating both feasibility and value.

The Strategy should also exploit established international mechanisms. The European Sub-sea Cables Association (ESCA) and the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) have repeatedly invited Irish departments and agencies to join. Active membership would give officials immediate access to global incident databases, proven mitigation measures and an experienced community of practice dedicated to sub-sea-cable resilience.

Structured co-operation of this kind yields tangible dividends: shared situational awareness, a common operating picture and mutually rehearsed escalation procedures. It converts parallel efforts into an integrated security posture—planning, exercising and, when necessary, acting together to safeguard the sub-sea lifelines that underpin Ireland’s digital economy and energy transition.

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 pillar of Ireland's forthcoming National Maritime Security Strategy, especially for subsea cables that route the nation's data and energy. A network spanning multiple jurisdictions and high seas regulated by UNCLOS cannot be safeguarded by any one state. Hazards—whether malicious or accidental—spread across borders; resilience therefore demands a collective approach.

The 2025 UK–Ireland Joint Statement on Energy and Connectivity provides a template. Ireland should embed structured dialogue with London, neighbouring EU coastal states and NATO partners through the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme, establishing common alert thresholds, compatible repair procedures and pre-authorised permits that allow cable-lay and repair vessels to mobilise without bureaucratic delay. NATO cooperation would also deliver advanced maritime-domain-awareness tools, fused intelligence feeds and joint exercises that rehearse multi-agency responses to cable disruption.

Legal coherence is equally urgent. Industry has identified gaps in Ireland's implementation of UNCLOS duties to protect and not impede subsea cables. Resolving these issues—along with clarifying MARA's licensing practice—will eliminate regulatory uncertainty that might otherwise divert future routes away from Irish waters.

Reputation is itself security. Investors in trans-Atlantic data highways rank landing sites by political stability, predictable timelines and assured repair access. A strategy that codifies transparent, interoperable processes with trusted neighbours—and demonstrably honours international obligations—will signal that Ireland is a reliable steward of critical infrastructure, capable of swift, coordinated action when crises strike.

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 essential and must include a structured plan for delivery. The Plan should focus on practical steps that support resilience and clarify roles, taking into account the ICPC best practices for submarine cable protection and resilience

Key elements should include:

- A regulatory review to ensure that cable repairs and development of new cable systems are unimpeded by lengthy regulatory processes and can commence without delay. This needs regulatory certainty and published guidance.
- Establish formal engagement frameworks with industry and other governments, including through ESCA and ICPC.
- Ensure Ireland has a single point of contact for subsea cable policy in Government – both for power and telecoms/data – or jointly though a department with responsibility for subsea infrastructure.
- A national capability review including through engagement with industry.
- Improved AIS enforcement and data access to support threat detection.
- Alignment of spatial planning with resilience priorities, ensuring that strategic infrastructure has the access and protection it needs.

Such an Action Plan can lead to meaningful improvements to Irish cable protection, overall resilience, and in turn – National Maritime Security in Ireland.

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

Resilience must be framed first and foremost as a matter of national security, not merely of engineering. Because certain faults are inevitable in the marine environment, a proven capacity to diagnose and repair subsea-cable breaks with speed and precision is ultimately more valuable than any aspiration to eliminate damage altogether.

That security imperative can only be met through systematic coordination—within and between government departments, with industry operators, and across international partners whose waters host shared routes and repair assets. Such collaboration yields common operational parameters, agreed procedures and interoperable legal authorities, all of which shorten response times when faults occur.

Regulatory clarity and streamlined planning are equally decisive. Investors judge prospective landing sites by the predictability of licence conditions, cable security and repair-vessel access. Ambiguity or delay erodes Ireland's reputation as a dependable gateway for strategic connectivity and will redirect future systems elsewhere.

In this context, an efficient, transparent consent regime for new subsea cables becomes critical. Fast, well-defined permitting—anchored in clear environmental standards, fixed statutory timelines and one-stop coordination among competent authorities—encourages early route selection through Irish waters and ensures that construction windows are met. By embedding security considerations into that consent process, Ireland can both attract essential digital infrastructure and guarantee that new systems are designed with resilience and rapid repair in mind from the outset.

Ireland therefore has a clear opportunity to lead by example in safeguarding vital subsea networks. A cross-government strategy that unites security policy, regulatory practice and international engagement will mitigate the risk of disruptive outages, underpin economic stability and growth, and reinforce the country's role as a secure nexus of global connectivity and energy exchange.

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

Irish Naval vessels currently have no sub surface capabilities. We have no idea who is in our waters or what they are doing nor do we have any deterrent to anyone who would do us harm.

Irish Naval Vessel's also have no Primary air search radar. Ships on patrol with primary air search radar would be able to assist the Air Corps in tracking threats and in the future when the new Primary Radar system is operational they can contribute to the overall air picture.

Irish Naval vessels are not equipped with any modern weaponry. Ireland should be equipped with 4 to 6 ships such as the new European Patrol Corvette (we have observes status) that can both counter and eliminate sub sea, surface and air threats.

Also the threat to biodiversity has been well documented and if we declared large areas of our waters as conservation areas the naval service can help secure it.

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 uncertainty in the USA means that they may not always be as friendly to Ireland as they have been.

Likewise in the UK with reform on the rise they hold a very nationalistic view and may not be willing to cooperate with Ireland.

Also Ireland is a member of the EU and while we may be neutral there are plenty of malign actors such as Russia or even the USA under Trump who would happily damage our undersea infrastructure to undermine the EU. If Ireland cannot defend our own waters from these threats we may find our EU allies will rapidly lose patience with us.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Ireland should have the ability to police, monitor and defend all its waters but areas where there are sub sea cables or other infrastructure should be given some level of priority. The rest of our waters should not be ignored as I said above we should have the ability to police, monitor and defend all its waters

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Investment should prioritise increasing the capacity and capabilities of the Naval Service and the Air Corps. Manpower issues have been highlighted but both the Naval Service and the Air Corps are still massively short on manpower. The capabilities of the Naval Service need to be drastically increased. Ireland should purchase 4 to 6 European Patrol Corvette's and ensure they have the ability to defend against AND combat sub surface threats (torpedos and sonar), surface threats (anti ship missiles and radar) and air threats (primary radar and anti air missiles) along with any defensive systems. The Beckett Class OPV's should also be enhanced to monitor using sonar, surface radar and primary radar. In the case of the Air Corps they should purchase two more CASA 295 Aircraft and consideration should be given to arming the 295 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

Yes it should involve the private sector in any way they can help.

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

Any international cooperation should mainly rely on our partners in the EU. Its time Ireland increased their defence spending to pay their fair share regarding EU defence. Secondly we should also partner with the UK. Until there is a unified Ireland events in the UK will continue to disproportionately effect Ireland. However any partnership with the UK must be done cautiously due to the continued rise of Reform UK

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 it should be accompanied by an action plan with clear targets that the Government are legally required to meet.

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

It's plain to see that our undersea infastructure is simply not defended, at all. We possess no ability to see whats under our waters, let alone be able to something about it.

The clear lack of a functioning Navy has obvious threats from drug smuggling to interdictions and general defence of our island from any and all foreign actors.

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

Undersea infastructure incredibly vulnerable aswell as general incursions from foreign vessels both on the surface and sub surface. We'd need proper sonar and an ability to not only detect but also protect and physically defend our waters and infastructure. This comes from both the Navy but also having appropriate Air force assets with ASW ability. We need to be able to detect threats but also have assets adequately armed to counter them if needed....this happens in every other country bar here.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

If needed but generally speaking having sonar and an ability to protect and defend by force if needed critical areas like subsurface cables or specific areas of our coast or waters should mean others areas are covered the same way too. Planing and resourcing for the most at risk areas has the benefit of being able to protect everything else too.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Sonar and ability to "see" under water. Anti submarine warfare capability on our ships and aircraft. Proper pay and incentives to have people available to actually man our ships and aircraft and build up a proper force. Also having the ability for our ships to be able to counter effectively threats from drones and missiles, as most other navies have..currently we effectively have a fleet of coast guard vessels. A single frigate from another country could wipe out our entire fleet in one go, thats just not acceptable. We need the assets we have to be able to deal with modern threats, a single naval gun will do nothing against most modern threats. Simply not fit for purpose unless we can counter below the sea, threats from the air including drones and missiles.

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

Maybe in some support role but as these are national strategic assets which our country depends on as much as anything else it should be the sate primarily responsable for ensuring they're secure. Outsourcing to contractors etc is a security risk and we end up paying multiples more in the long run instead of paying our own troops and sailors correctly to do the job they're trained for.

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

Absolutely, no nation can do everything alone but we need firstly the ability to credibly defend ourselves and then get assistance and cooperate with partners to ramp up that defence if needed. But we can't be in a position where we effectively can't do anything and then ceed control of our territory to other militaries. It costs us our sovereignty and gives control of the state to other countries. This simply cannot be allowed to happen and we need to spend everything we can on getting the right equipment and paying people properly to use it and defend the nation.

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 action plan should just be a shopping list woth government to government purchases to avoid procurement delays and a commitment to pay our people properly, with immediate effect to stem the retention crisis in the military and help with recruitment. All the steps and recommendations are already in numerous reports including ramping up to LOA3 for defence spending...which is already outdated given whats happening around the world.

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

We simply can't waste time and need to spend. The defence of the nation is the single most important and fundamental job of any government and it's just report after action plan after report. Buy everything we can, and pay people properly and thats the best recruitment advert you can have. It's a national disgrace we can only launch one Navy ship, and our maritime patrol craft aren't even armed to deal with any threats. Our ships and remotely hold any sort of a credible defence against any other semi well equipped vessel.

The world is changing, fast and we're simply not reacting and it puts the state at huge risk. It's beyond neglect at this point. Government to government purchases of new frigates with missile defence, ASW capability, properly armed aircraft, drone defence and sonar all need to happen, about five years ago. Pay our troops and staff properly and stop relying on luck and the goodwill of our neighbours and allies to bail us out, it's time to grow up and do everything we can to defend ourselves and our state.

Get it done, and spend our hard earned tax euros on actually, properly defending us and our state. It's a basic requirement.

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

1. Criminal activities such as drug imports.
2. Illegal fishing, from both private and state sponsored trawlers.
3. Protecting national resources, including cables, energy infrastructure (wind, gas, oil), from state backed aggressors, be it surface vessels, submarines or aircraft.
4. There's probably a climate threat, excessive storms, sea rising etc.

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

Our resources need to be protected, whether its fishing, energy infrastructure (wind, gas, oil) or cables for electricity or information technology.
We need to invest in recognisance, security measure should include radar and drone technology such as aircraft and sea vessels (surface and submarine).
Backing these up with military capability to deter and strike if necessary, again this can be drone tech as well as manned operations.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

With drone technology we do not need to limit the scope on specific geographical areas.
An initial role out should prioritise appropriately, but wide coverage should be possible.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

We lack the ability to observe what is happening in our waters and air.
We need to prioritise our capability to observe, then we can expand to deter or intercept.
Without the intelligence data regarding what is in our waters, then how can we invest properly in security and prevention.

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

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME....
We need to build our own infrastructure, our own technologies, our own private sector with defense capabilities.
This should be a joint public/private investment, primarily through the 3rd-level education sector, giving our brightest students the opportunity to build companies that will engineer these solutions.
We should not be sending money to foreign countries/economies and foreign private entities to secure our national resources.
Israel have developed their own defense industry and are world leaders in certain technologies because of investing in their indigenous industries.
This should be our opportunity to develop an independent national resource for defense and security.

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

In general I agree with cooperating with our EU and UK neighbours in our common security interests, especially as we ramp up our own capabilities.
But we MUST NOT become dependent on our neighbours.
We MUST have our own industry and build our own capabilities to deter and protect. We need to be independent as we cannot depend on others as a conflict of interest will arise, and they will force us to accept something we should not accept.

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

Or course we should have an action plan, what's the point if we don't.
But for me to support this initiative, it MUST target building our indigenous industry.
No more outsourcing and sending money to foreign economies and foreign private companies.
We need to learn from countries like Israel, only in terms of how they have built one of the most successful technology industries, where they own the businesses, and developed the defensive technologies.
This investment MUST be in our 3rd-level institutions, to develop the expertise in our own 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

As I have pointed out in my comments above, we MUST make the investment in our 3rd-level institutions to develop the engineers and scientists, that will develop our own national industry for our own defense.
We need to develop expertise in our own people.

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

Danger to undersea cables and how vulnerable they are and the catastrophic consequences if they are attacked

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

Securing undersea cables
Protecting our waters for security and protect against submarines whose purpose is sinister.
Protect our waters for fish stocks - prevent overfishing and foreign boats in Irish waters.
Monitor drug and people trafficking.

Need to increase our surveillance capabilities with modern updated equipment.

Need to fully protect ourselves under our own steam.
Need to recruit staff and pay well for their expertise.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

No - if you prioritise and focus on certain areas the criminals will be everywhere else except there.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Modern equipment and decent pay for staff to keep them.

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

Not sure - maybe a mix if that was possible so they could keep each other in check.

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

Definitely need international cooperation with others - particularly our direct neighbours - maybe a tailored partnership with some partners in the EU - some of countries commitment to the EU in my opinion is dodgy - would stay independent from NATO.
Ireland needs to be able to take care of itself and not be depending on other countries - obviously cooperation is necessary but stop being dependent.

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

If an action plan is in place it nails down a definite course of action which has more chance of being put in place - get rid of any vagueness.

Key elements - get going asap - invest in modern equipment that can do the job - invest in staff.
Prioritise the needs - security being first.

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

Finance needs to be provided to get the job done - find it scary cables are so vulnerable and we have foreign submarines in our waters and are powerless to do anything about it..

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

The most significant threat is from state actors that wish to cause damage or interference. In particular, states that wish to cause damage or interference but less that war. Examples are damage to subsea cabling for telecomms, and damage to subsea cables for power generation (offshore wind) or transmission (interconnectors). Such subsea infrastructure is difficult to patrol, and damage can be difficult to detect. Furthermore, there are ways to damage cables by hiding among non-threatening normal maritime activites.

Ireland is a target for such action whether or not we want it to do. There are several malicious actors in the world that would be happy to abuse Irelanbd's traditional neurtrality to cause damage to third parties. Being nominally neutral is neither a deterrant nor a moral problem for such actors.

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 planned expansion of offshore wind energy, including both fixed-bottom and floating, means that a significant part of Ireland's future energy supply will come from offshore sources that are transmitted using inter-array cables (between turbines and offshore platforms) and export cables back to shore. If there is a surplus of energy then there is the possibility to export energy via interconnectors.

Ireland's economy is digital-rich and depends on reliable intercomms cables. If the telecomms cables connecting Ireland to the rest of the world are seen to be unreliable then it could have signifiant effects on the attractiveness of Ireland for continuing investment in digital companies e.g. data centres, software companies.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

The state should prioritise the protection of existing infrastructure to begin, while planning around infrastructure that is in the development stage. For example there are numerous telecomms cables already in operation that need to be prioritised while the offshore wind farms that are in planning need associated planning for future protection but with a lower priority.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Key investments are:
1. sensing technology for damage to infrastructre, allowing remote momnitoring
2. naval assets with the capability of performing long-duration patrols to act as deterrent
3. naval and aviation assest that can act as a rapid response to suspicious activity
4. capability for boarding and seizure of suspicious vessels and personnel e.g. seizure of ships of dubious origin that are near critical infrastructure

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 saector must be involved as priovate companies will be the operators of much of the planned critical maritime infrastructure thus a critical part of any plans. Private companies will the spources of maps and details of critical infrastructure, and will provide teh day-to-day monitoring. There should be familiarisation between the state and private sectors so that state security agencies are familiar with the critical infrastructure that they are maintaining, and so that the private sector knows what protection the state can reasonably provide.

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

The sea is open to all, which includes both the good actors and the bad ones. Unlike land-based activity, the sea is effectively international thus it international cooperation is essential. The new maritime strategy needs to include cooperation with EU partners and with (no-EU) neighbouring countries. Much of Ireland's maritime infrastructure also affects other countires e.g. telecomms and interconnector cables. Ireland could be an easy target for malicious actors who seek to tagret other countries to which we are connectected. Some of these countries will be NATO and a neighbour's membership of NATO should not be a reason to exclude 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?

3000 character(s) maximum

Strategy without action is merely a paper exercise. The action plan needs to be formulated either simultaneously or shortly afterwards.

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

Having worked in subsea infrastructure for a few decades, I am well aware of how vulnerable it can be. Subsea can be a "soft underbelly" for attack, particularly if a state wants "plausible denial" or even "implausible denial" while stopping short of agression that could be deemed to be war. Recent actions in the Baltic Sea emphasise how easily subsea infrastructure can be targeted.

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

The most realistic current threats are the presence of dark vessels with potentially nefarious intentions. This can be a significant threat considering the events in the Baltic Sea over the past couple of years. Examples of this threat around Ireland can be seen in November of 2024 when a suspicious vessel was tracked through the Irish Sea by Irish and UK authorities. More recently, just a few days before the writing of this answer, a sanctioned Russian cargo ship was monitored by an Irish Defence Forces patrol aircraft in the Celtic Sea. According to an RTE article, this vessel is known for turning off its transponder and has gone dark near the northwest coast of France before reappearing several hours later near the Irish south coast. As a neutral nation that does not spend significant amounts on defence, Ireland could be vulnerable to attacks on critical subsea infrastructure by shadow vessels of a hostile nation, similar to what we have seen in the Baltic 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

The biggest future challenge for Ireland's maritime security is related to the nation's energy plans. Ireland has one of the largest marine territories in Europe, and the government strategy is to make use of this while developing significant offshore renewable energy infrastructure. One of the stated goals is to reach at least 37 GW of offshore wind by 2050. This will involve many subsea cables including inter-array and export cables. All of this is in addition to our already existing reliance on energy through subsea infrastructure. This includes the likes of the gas interconnectors and a number of power cables in the Irish Sea, with more planned to be added over the next few years.

Given our current situation and future plans for the next few decades, maritime security with a focus on the protection of critical subsea infrastructure is crucial for Ireland. To prepare for this, Ireland should invest in increased capabilities for subsea surveying and monitoring. This can be enabled through further researcher and development, as well as capacity building in the area of marine robotics. Through robotics, inspection and monitoring can be performed remotely from shore, significantly reducing operational costs while allowing for more regular operations. This supports the NATO goal of "denying deniability", as these sabotage operations are carried out by dark vessels attempting to mask their intentions.

The Irish Defence Forces should be equipped with these capabilities, while developers in the research sector can continue to develop new methodology that will feed into the defence capabilities over time, with the potential to make Ireland a global leader in maritime security.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

In the more immediate timeframe, the strategy should have a focus on areas of critical national subsea infrastructure, of which there is a significant concentration in the Irish Sea at the moment. The strategy should however also focus on the areas where developments of offshore energy infrastructure is planned, which includes in the east, south and west coasts of the island. There is of course also a public, and perhaps international interest to give some focus to the many subsea data cables that also pass through or near Irish waters. Given that Ireland sits at the gateway to the Atlantic Ocean, the areas that could be most vulnerable could be the areas off the west and south coasts, in comparison to the east and north which are helped by their proximity to the UK.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

This was largely answered in Question 2, but to reiterate, strategic investments should be placed in marine robotics (subsea, sea surface, aerial) which will give Ireland the capability to inspect and monitor its offshore infrastructure. A priority should be enabling the Irish Defence Forces with these capabilities, while continuing to invest in research and development to expand these technologies. Implementing this strategy soon should place Ireland in a strong position in terms of maritime security in the future.

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

My understanding is that it is currently the sole responsibility of the owners and operators to monitor and protect their assets. It is however in the national interest to protect this infrastructure as it supports the daily functioning of society through the providing of energy and connectivity. The security strategy should therefore involve this private sector including the national and international owners/operators of the infrastructure. The role they could play is in providing real-time monitoring information of their infrastructure, including notification of disruptions. They can also provide historical data on their own routine geophysical inspections of the assets, and precise mapping of their locations. All of this information could feed into a central hub for Irish defense operators to monitor the ongoing Irish maritime situation.

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 of course play a role given the internationally interconnected society we currently live in. Many of the owners/operators of subsea infrastructure that connects directly into Ireland, or that passes nearby, are based in neighboring or more distant countries. As a member of the EU and a partner of NATO, we should cooperate in the security of subsea infrastructure that supports the continent and traverses across the Atlantic Ocean. Again, supporting the strategy of denying deniability of bad actors.

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

Implementing a strategy of this significance is not an easy task, so detailing the steps through an action plan is a good idea. I think the strategy should be closely tied to our energy strategy which has a heavy focus on offshore renewables. Some of the key elements of the actions plan should include an assessment of current maritime infrastructure and where the greatest vulnerabilities are, followed by an outline of the planned developments in our marine territory. These aspects should influence the focus of the security strategy. In terms of the implementation of the security, as answered in previous questions, this must involve the increase in marine robotics capabilities of the defence forces, where it is the naval service or otherwise, to give them the ability to monitor critical maritime infrastructure. In conjunction with this should be the plan for increased investment in the research and development for the expanding of these capabilities. Another aspect of the plan should be how national/international owners/operators of the assets around Ireland can feed into an overall system to allow for the easy communication and monitoring.

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

Thanks for considering the thoughts of the Irish public in this security strategy, hopefully my points above are useful in some way. If you have any questions, feels free to contact me.

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

Lack of investment. Lack of information. Putin.

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 actor attempts to disrupt the Global economy and geopolitical norms.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the 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

Monitoring technology and naval / air force capability. We should also forget to necessary alliances to optimally support our national 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

No private sector involvement in naval / air force. Private sector involvement should be in the wind and wave power sectors.

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

As big as role as possible. We cannot secure our maritime on our own.

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, absolutely. Specifically and detailed project plan with hard deadlines and personal responsibilities identified.

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

Let us get this done with no delay. We have left this very late already.

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

Lack of ships. planes and technical backup in conjunction with our European neighbours, is our current vulnerability. It took a fishing fleet to deter recent Russian submarines from our waters.so any current hostile nation can overrun us immediately.

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

Political unstability in Europe and further afield.
Terrorism.
Cyber attacks.
Island nation on edge of Europe easy target.
I do not think our maritime security is adequate. These are the main threats
We needs investment in sea and air security.
Official agreements and planning with E.U.countries to assist and help defend our borders .
Cyber security.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Yes.

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 be determined by government agencies defence forces, private sector,and those knowledgeable in security and cyber security here in Ireland and across Europe.

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.
Roles to be determined as needed.

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 to all of the above. Sranding alone is not an option.

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 it should be accompanied by an 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?

3000 character(s) maximum

Without maritime security we have no land security. And Europe is vulnerable also.

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 maritime security faces a growing range of threats - both traditional and hybrid, with implications for national sovereignty, economic resilience, and European strategic autonomy. The most immediate concern centres on the vulnerability of critical subsea infrastructure. These cables are potential targets for espionage and sabotage by hostile states and actors some of whose vessels—including the Russian surveillance ship Yantar—have been observed operating near Irish waters. The energy domain is similarly exposed, with undersea gas pipelines and the forthcoming Celtic Interconnector representing critical assets that are as yet effectively unsecured.

Ireland's limited maritime defense capability significantly heightens this vulnerability. The Naval Service has faced chronic staffing shortages, only recently offset, which continues to render fleet not fully deployed and reducing already limited patrol capacity without fully functional weapons systems. This makes monitoring territorial waters, let alone deterring or responding to undersea threats, effectively off the table. At the same time, Ireland as of yet lacks deep-sea sonar capabilities and that which is being ordered is very limited in scope with no capacity to address undersea threats once identified.

In addition to physical threats, Ireland's maritime space is increasingly exposed to hybrid and cyber attacks. Maritime infrastructure—from ports and ships to GPS navigation systems—is vulnerable to cyber intrusion, GPS spoofing, and ransomware attacks. A successful cyber operation might easily disrupt trade, hinder military coordination, or even trigger broader economic fallout. Exercises and research initiatives, such as those led by Munster Technological University and the National Maritime College of Ireland, are building awareness, but systemic cyber resilience remains underdeveloped.

Another dimension of the threat landscape involves "blue crimes," including drug smuggling, illegal fishing, and human trafficking. These illicit activities exploit the gaps in Ireland's maritime domain awareness, enabled by limited naval patrols and outdated monitoring technologies. Simultaneously, increased use of underwater drones and unmanned vehicles by state and non-state actors further complicates detection and attribution efforts, making Irish waters increasingly porous.

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

Ireland’s future maritime security faces a convergence of complex and evolving threats. These stem from geopolitical rivalry, climate change, technological disruption, and resource pressure.

A key future threat continues to lie in the strategic vulnerability of critical subsea infrastructure. These assets - and future planned developments - are highly susceptible to sabotage or interference, particularly through covert means such as autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) and uncrewed submersibles. As global competition intensifies—especially with Russia and China—these critical nodes will become prime targets in grey-zone or hybrid conflicts.

Climate change will significantly shape Ireland’s maritime risk environment. Rising sea levels, more frequent Atlantic storms, and coastal erosion will threaten ports, naval installations, and offshore platforms. Shifts in ocean temperatures may disrupt fish stocks, sparking potentially bitter disputes over fishing rights and increasing the likelihood of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Additionally, climate-induced displacement could push migration routes further north, leading to a rise in maritime border pressure and potential humanitarian challenges across the Irish Sea and on continental maritime routes.

Ireland’s strategic location near the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) gap further increases its exposure to future tensions. As the Arctic becomes more navigable, this corridor will see expanded naval operations, submarine patrols, and competition over shipping routes and marine resources. The militarisation of the North Atlantic could draw Ireland into broader geopolitical dynamics.

Cyber and electromagnetic threats are another fast-growing concern. Irish ports, logistics hubs, GPS systems, and offshore assets are increasingly digitised and networked—making them vulnerable to cyberattacks, spoofing, and data manipulation. Future adversaries may combine cyber disruption with physical acts of sabotage, creating cascading impacts across maritime trade and energy systems.

The competition for marine resources (e.g., rare earth minerals, fisheries, offshore energy) could spark disputes with other nations or non-state actors and as the blue economy expands, so will the temptation to overexploit or unlawfully access Irish maritime zones.

Investments in Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) are therefore essential. This includes expanding the use of satellite imagery, underwater sensors, sonar systems, autonomous surveillance drones, and artificial intelligence for real-time situational awareness. The Naval Service should evolve into a dual-use force, capable of addressing both traditional defence tasks and humanitarian, environmental, and disaster response roles.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

Given limited resources and mounting strategic pressures, Ireland must prioritise maritime security and defence based on a combination of vulnerability, critical infrastructure, geopolitical exposure, and environmental risk.

1. Southwest Approaches (Shannon–Celtic Shelf–Continental Shelf Edge)
This region includes one of the world's densest clusters of transatlantic submarine internet cables. It is a primary route for data between Europe and North America and hosts offshore energy infrastructure (Corrib gas field, Moneypoint generation, future wind farms). It also marks the edge of Ireland's continental shelf and is a surveillance blind spot.

Deploy seabed sensors, sonar, and maritime patrol assets to monitor undersea activity.
Establish a secure surveillance corridor from Mizen Head to Loop Head.
Cooperate with EU/NATO to detect and deter foreign underwater vessels.

2. Irish Sea (Dublin–Wicklow–Rosslare Corridor)
This area contains vital shipping lanes, ferry routes, and the upcoming Celtic Interconnector (a €1.6bn power cable linking Ireland to France). It is also a cyber-physical vulnerability point, with dense traffic and proximity to major ports and population centers.

Cyber-harden ports and marine energy infrastructure (Dublin Port, Rosslare Europort).
Enhance maritime situational awareness with radar, drone, and AIS (automatic identification system) coverage.
Strengthen search-and-rescue (SAR) and rapid naval response capacity.

3. Northwest Coast and GIUK Gap (Donegal–Mayo–Atlantic Frontier)
The waters off Donegal and Mayo lie along the GIUK gap—a critical naval chokepoint between Greenland, Iceland, and the UK. As Arctic shipping expands, this region will become a strategic transit zone for submarines and surveillance vessels.

Increase naval and aerial patrols using drone swarms or satellite data.
Establish bilateral surveillance coordination with NATO (without compromising neutrality).
Support deployment of underwater monitoring systems for submarine detection.

4. Celtic Sea (Cork–Waterford–Future Offshore Wind Zones)
The Celtic Sea is a designated zone for future large-scale offshore wind development, forming a cornerstone of Ireland's renewable energy transition. It also supports dense fishing activity and hosts key port infrastructure (.

A maritime energy protection zone with integrated air-sea monitoring.
Collaborate with marine energy companies to co-fund surveillance systems.
Enhance Marine Protected Area (MPA) enforcement to prevent IUU fishing.

5. Western Approaches (Beyond 200nm EEZ Limits)

Assert sovereign rights under UNCLOS through scientific presence and legal documentation.
Participate in EU-led deep-sea mapping and seabed governance efforts.
Monitor for unlicensed prospecting or sub-sea activity.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

1. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)
To maintain persistent surveillance and real-time situational awareness:
Invest in long-range coastal radar to expand coverage.
Deploy unmanned surface and underwater vehicles (USVs/UUVs) for surveillance and undersea infrastructure inspection.
Integrate satellite data (EU and commercial) and Automatic Identification System (AIS) feeds for vessel tracking and anomaly detection.

2. Naval Capacity & Patrol Capabilities
To enable credible presence, patrolling, and interdiction:
Expand and modernise the Naval Service fleet with multi-role offshore patrol vessels (OPVs).
Enable longer deployments through enhanced endurance capabilities and at-sea support.
Address personnel shortfalls by investing in specialist recruitment, retention, and training.

3. Protection of Subsea Infrastructure
Given the strategic and economic importance of undersea data cables:
Develop dedicated subsea monitoring capabilities using sonar systems and UUVs.
Improve cyber-physical security integration to counter hybrid threats.
Cooperate with EU and NATO to jointly monitor and protect shared infrastructure, especially transatlantic cable routes.

4. C4ISR and Command Integration
To ensure Ireland's maritime defence is digitally integrated and decision-ready:
Establish secure Maritime Operations Centres (MOCs) for command and control.
Adopt systems that ensure interoperability with EU CSDP and NATO platforms.
Integrate AI-enabled analysis tools to improve early warning and operational efficiency.

5. Dual-Use Infrastructure & Strategic Partnerships
To enhance resilience and reduce costs:
Upgrade ports and coastal facilities for civil-military dual use (logistics, SAR, maintenance).
Deepen involvement in EU security initiatives, especially via PESCO and Readiness 2030.
Strengthen collaboration with academic and industry partners for R&D in maritime technologies (e.g., autonomous systems, marine AI).

Conclusion
Ireland's maritime defence posture should prioritise intelligence, surveillance, resilience, and interoperability over high-end warfighting. This approach is best suited to protect critical national interests in a cost-effective and strategically aligned manner—especially amid growing undersea infrastructure threats and a more contested maritime environment. Aligning with EU frameworks and enhancing national capacity will be essential to ensuring Ireland's security in the maritime domain.

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

Ireland's vast maritime domain includes critical infrastructure such as undersea telecommunications cables, port facilities, energy terminals, fisheries, and offshore wind assets—many of which are owned, operated, or

serviced by private entities. The National Maritime Security Strategy (NMSS) must reflect this reality by embedding private sector roles in both the prevention and response frameworks for maritime security. A resilient maritime security strategy must treat private sector actors as strategic partners, not passive stakeholders.

1. Public–Private Coordination & Information Sharing: Private operators can act as the frontline sensors of unusual maritime activity:

Real-time information sharing protocols between government agencies (e.g., Naval Service, Defence Forces, Garda Síochána) and private operators of ports, cable landings, and offshore platforms.

Establishment of a Maritime Security Coordination Centre to act as a central hub for intelligence fusion between public authorities and private sector actors.

Sector-specific liaison officers or working groups (e.g. telecoms, energy, fisheries) to build trusted communication pathways and shared situational awareness.

2. Infrastructure Hardening & Surveillance Support: Private firms should be supported and, where appropriate, obliged to:

Conduct regular risk assessments and resilience planning for their assets (e.g., cable landing stations, port terminals).

Co-invest in physical and cyber surveillance systems, such as underwater monitoring or intrusion detection around sensitive assets.

Adopt minimum cyber-physical security standards aligned with EU directives (e.g., NIS2 for digital infrastructure).

3. Emergency Response and Business Continuity: The private sector plays a crucial role in incident response and recovery:

Critical operators should participate in joint training and simulation exercises with the Defence Forces and Coast Guard, especially for hybrid threats (e.g. sabotage, cyberattack, hostile reconnaissance).

Inclusion in a National Maritime Contingency Plan, ensuring roles are clearly defined during disruptions, including backup communications and redundancy protocols.

Companies with offshore assets (e.g., wind farms) may offer logistical support or vessel access in emergencies, coordinated under a predefined framework.

4. Innovation and Capability Development: Ireland's maritime industry and tech sector can be central to building indigenous capabilities:

Collaborations on R&D for autonomous maritime surveillance systems, AI-driven threat detection, and environmental monitoring.

Support for dual-use infrastructure, where private investments (e.g., in port facilities or monitoring platforms) can also serve national security interests.

Incentivised participation in EU maritime security programmes, such as Horizon Europe or PESCO projects, to

embed Irish industry in collective European resilience.

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

Given Ireland's limited naval and surveillance resources, international cooperation is essential for a credible and effective maritime security strategy.

1. Enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness through EU Cooperation
The EU provides key frameworks and tools for shared maritime situational awareness:

Ireland benefits from EU MARSUR, a network that enables real-time exchange of unclassified maritime surveillance data between member states.

Participation in Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) and EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) helps align Ireland's priorities with broader EU maritime threat assessments.

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) provides satellite-based vessel tracking and pollution detection, which should be further integrated into Irish monitoring systems.

To strengthen cooperation:

Ireland can deepen involvement in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects related to maritime surveillance, autonomous systems, and critical infrastructure protection.

Joint EU exercises and patrol coordination—especially in the Atlantic and Celtic Sea—should be pursued to increase operational readiness and interoperability.

2. Bilateral and Regional Collaboration with Neighbouring States
Ireland shares maritime security interests with the UK, France, Spain, and the Nordic states, especially regarding undersea cable protection, search and rescue, and transnational crime:

Bilateral intelligence-sharing and coordinated patrols with the UK and France should be formalised, focusing on grey zone threats and hybrid maritime risks.

Strengthened collaboration with the Atlantic Maritime Group and North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum would facilitate operational coordination and best practice exchange.

Shared response protocols for undersea infrastructure incidents could be developed with neighbouring states, especially given the growing importance of offshore wind and data cable resilience.

3. NATO: Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP)
Although Ireland is militarily neutral, its ITPP with NATO offers a structured way to engage in areas consistent with Irish policy:

Ireland can cooperate in maritime situational awareness, non-combat search and rescue, climate-related

maritime threats, and cyber defence of maritime systems.

Participation in NATO maritime exercises (as observer or contributor in non-lethal roles) can build interoperability without compromising neutrality.

The ITPP could facilitate access to NATO's Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation for technological development and data exchange.

Conclusion
Ireland's maritime security challenges are transnational in nature—no single state can address them alone. Through active engagement with EU mechanisms, trusted bilateral partnerships, and its NATO ITPP, Ireland can significantly enhance its maritime situational awareness, operational capacity, 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

To move from strategic intent to effective operational impact, Ireland's National Maritime Security Strategy (NMSS) must be supported by a well-structured Action Plan. This plan should translate high-level priorities into concrete, measurable actions across government, industry, and society.

At its core, the Action Plan should begin by clearly articulating the strategic objectives of the NMSS—such as enhancing maritime domain awareness, protecting critical infrastructure, deterring illegal activity, and strengthening crisis response capabilities. These objectives can be organised into thematic pillars, helping to group activities around shared challenges like cyber threats, surveillance, or international cooperation.

A critical early step is the assignment of clear roles and responsibilities. Lead agencies such as the Department of Defence, Naval Service, and Department of Transport must be identified, alongside supporting actors including An Garda Síochána, the Coast Guard, Customs, and the Marine Institute. The Action Plan should also formally recognise the role of the private sector, especially owners and operators of critical maritime infrastructure like ports, subsea cables, and offshore energy platforms.

The plan must also focus on capability development, setting out what technologies, assets, and skills are needed to meet the strategy's goals. This includes investments in surveillance systems (such as radar, drones, and satellite access), secure communications, port infrastructure, and personnel training. Associated funding streams—both national and EU-based—should be identified, with clear timelines for delivery.

To support implementation, the Action Plan should propose updates to the legal and regulatory framework, ensuring Ireland's laws support effective maritime security, enable inter-agency data sharing, and safeguard critical infrastructure in line with EU standards.

A central element of governance should be the creation of a Maritime Security Coordination Office or Taskforce—empowered to lead cross-sector coordination, drive implementation, and report on progress to government.

Accountability will require a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. This should include both qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess progress, as well as scheduled reviews to adapt the strategy to emerging threats and lessons learned.

Finally, the Action Plan should embed a strong commitment to stakeholder engagement—from industry to coastal communities—and lay out concrete steps for deepening international cooperation. This includes participation in EU maritime initiatives, bilateral arrangements with neighbouring countries, and operational engagement through Ireland's Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) with NATO.

In short, the NMSS Action Plan must provide the structure, resources, and coordination mechanisms needed to ensure that Ireland's maritime security goals are fully and effectively realised.

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

none

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Contact

Contact Form

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

Due to Irelands location, our EEZ and adjacent waters could be theatres for interstate conflict and geopolitical tensions. We have seen Russian Naval Exercises of the South West Coast in 2022. Twice a year NATO hold exercises in and around our EEZ. Exercise Joint Warrior and Strike Warrior usually take in the spring and autumn of each year. Whilst these pose no direct to Ireland the present of a large amount allied warships draws the attention of Russia and other like minded nations. Due to Irelands lack of military air & coastal radar, as well any ELINT or sonar capability we have no way of monitoring 'friendly' or foe activity.

70% of Irelands gas is imported via two gas pipelines in the Irish Sea, in November 2924, the Russian underwater 'research' Yantar position itself over one of these pipelines for a number of hours. Whilst this, I believe was just a posturing, probably meant for the UK more than for Ireland, it showed how reliable Ireland is on external sources of energy. If a gas pipeline was damaged the minimum timeline for repair is four months.

Since the invasion of Ukraine and the rise of the Shadow Fleet in the European waters, the likelihood of an crude oil spill has increased. The round of sanctions in November 2024 had a huge effect on the activity in Irish waters. Before this date, most Shadow Fleet tankers transited the English Channel routing from Ust-Luga to the Mediterranean, however it is now evident these ships are now using Irelands west coast. These ships are uninsured. An oil spill or breakdown would be a huge cost to the state. The state has no organic emergency towing capability. The Shadow Fleet, up to recently was made up tankers, however it is now recognised that this fleet is made up of general cargo and other ships.

Ireland does NOT operate a Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) or Maritime Fusion Centre. The control and jurisdiction of Irelands EEZ, its territorial waters (TTW), its borders and natural resources are scatters across many state agencies and bodies. If Ireland is to develop a modern maritime security strategy it must create a JMSC consisting of Navy, Coast Guard, Revenue, SFPA and AGS. In time Ireland must mature and begin to increase the powers and roles of the coastguard similar to other European Coastguards and allow the navy to proper defence and security roles.

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 challenges are always difficult predict or forecast. If this document was written five years ago, we would have not mentioned the shadow fleet or the invasion of Ukraine. Most submissions would have probably focused on climate change and the emergency of Offshore Renewable Energy.

Due to climate change the nature of resources (fish) with the EEZ is changing. This will bring challenges in the future as the traditional catches will change and the new species will attract difference fishers.

The rise of autonomous vehicles, including air, surface and sub surface will poses challenges in the future. These vehicles/ vessels will be competing for space and conflict may arise.

The phenomenon of 'conflict of users of the sea', I believe will be Irelands biggest challenge in the next 30 years. As Ireland now turns on the maritime domain for numerous activities, the 'traffic' in the EEZ will increase exponentially. Examples of such conflict include but are not limited to:

Fisheries vs. Tourism:
Industrial Development vs. Coastal Ecosystems:
Coastal Development vs. Recreational Use:
Territorial Claims:
Deep-sea Mining:
Aquaculture vs. Traditional Uses:
Artificial Structures and Traditional Uses:

These activities will need to be policed, thus a Coastguard more aligned with other European Coastguards should be created.

From a defence point of view, traditional patrolling of our waters will always be the best way to maintain sovereignty over of TTW and EEZ. However the navy must be able to see what's is below and above the water, not what's just on the water. It must be able to deal with autonomous vehicles as described above.

Ireland is heavily reliant on external energy resources and subsea cables, these along with the tier one ports (Cork, Dublin & Shannon) are critical to Irelands societal functions and prosperity.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

In general no, the strategy should focus on the domain as a whole, because we are never certain when 'dormant' areas of the domain may become vital areas in the future.

As mentioned, Ireland is heavily reliant on external energy resources and subsea cables, these along with the tier one ports (Cork, Dublin & Shannon) are critical to Irelands societal functions and prosperity. These areas deserve a special mention.

Logistically, Ireland is heavily reliant on the east and south east coast, with the development of an LNG terminal in the Shannon estuary it would be prudent to secure the sea lines of communication (SLOC) on the west coast.

Bantry Bay (Berehaven) , Lough Swilly and Cork Harbour were once seen as of vital strategic importance to the British Empire. Ireland, continues to recognise Cork as of strategic importance, however Berehaven and Lough Swilly have been neglected for decades. Infrastructure for naval ships/ aircraft/ and other military hardware should be built in these locations. I have no doubt berthage would be multi purpose. Cruise, pleasure and cargo.

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

3000 character(s) maximum

1. Development of a Joint Maritime Security Centre, with relevant enabling legislation.
2. Standing up of a Coastguard, doing traditional coastguard duties.
3. Removing the Navy from its constabulary role.
4. Coastal and air radar.
5. Investment in military spec drones.
6. Air defence and anti submarine frigates.

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.

For example. Onus should be placed on windfarm operators to provide, radar, cctv and AIS feeds from the their locations. these feeds are fed to the proposed JMSC.

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 should align ourselves closely with the UK because of the space we share, also 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

A national security plant should have been drafted first, it is difficult to answer about an action plan without seeing a published strategy first.

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 must recognise, that this plan i reactionary and should have been published decades ago. it is also very worrying that the body writing this plan has no navy, coastguard, or revenue staff attached to it.