Got a pirate problem? There's even an app for that

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Alleged drug traffickers are arrested by Colombian naval forces in this still frame from a forward-looking infrared video camera from a US Navy helicopter assigned to the guided-missile frigate USS McClusky (FFG 41) during interdiction operations in the eastern Pacific coastal waters of Colombia. The helicopter maintained surveillance as the Colombian navy made the arrest. Credit: US Navy photo/Released

The Department of Defense will begin funding an Office of Naval Research (ONR)-sponsored project aimed at developing Web applications to help multinational navies police the world's oceans, officials announced May 14.

The International Collaborative Development for Enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness (ICODE MDA) was one of 14 projects selected by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics to receive $1 million awards beginning this

fall through the Coalition Warfare Program, which funds international collaborative research efforts.

The ICODE MDA project is a research alliance between ONR and Space and Naval Warfare (SPAWAR) Systems Center Pacific (SSC Pacific). ONR is partnering with scientists in Chile to build widgets, or Web-based applications, for use by sailors and maritime operators to analyze data and other information to combat pirates, drug smugglers, arms traffickers, illegal fishermen and other nefarious groups.

"A lot of maritime threats occur in developing parts of the world," said Dr. Augustus Vogel, associate director for Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa in ONR-Global's Chile office. "Our goal is to develop partnerships with countries that have maritime threats to help solve those problems."

ONR will tap researchers at the Technical University of Federico Santa Maria, one of Chile's top engineering schools, to create Web-based tools in an open source environment. The work will focus on producing software to improve automation, small-target detection and intent detection.

Ultimately, the software will be compatible with multiple maritime network systems so that navies around the world can use the tools and share information for global operations.

"We'll take those tools and integrate them into a widget framework that can be part of a coalition-accessible Web portal," said John Stastny, an engineer in the advanced analysis systems branch at SSC Pacific, who is helping to lead the ICODE MDA project.

The effort in Chile is part of a larger collaborative project that encompasses nations in Africa, where ICODE MDA has been underway

with researchers at the University of Ghana, University of Pretoria, University of Mauritius and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in South Africa.

More information: For more information about ICODE MDA, go to code.google.com/p/icode-mda/

Provided by Office of Naval Research