

Name: _____

Class Notes

Chapter 10 Defending our boundaries

The sea separates us from our neighbours, the United States of America (USA) and Cuba. The governments of The Bahamas and these countries have each agreed that their **territorial boundaries** will extend to 19 kilometres from their coastlines. This means that The Bahamas has a right to project all the waters within 19 km of those islands that lie furthest north, south, east and west. These are our **territorial waters**. The Bahamas defends its boundaries for several reasons. These include:

- to prevent poaching
- to keep out drug smugglers
- to stop illegal immigrants
- to prevent the smuggling of weapons.
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The Royal Bahamas Defence Force patrols the waters within our territorial boundaries. It apprehends poachers of marine life, smugglers of drugs and aliens. It also intercepts ships found polluting the waters. The Defence Force also assists in the enforcement of order along with relief in times of disaster.

Poaching

Our waters are rich in fish and shellfish, which are important sources of food in The Bahamas. Fishermen from other countries often try to catch fish in Bahamian waters. They are poachers. Ships from the Defence Force such as HMBS Marlin and HMBS Flamingo patrol the waters around the Great and Little Bahamas Banks to prevent poaching. If foreign fishermen are caught in our waters, they are arrested and taken to Nassau. Their catch is taken away from them, or **confiscated**. They are put on trial and, if they are found guilty of poaching, they must pay a **fine** and may spend time in prison.

Drug smuggling

Only about 100 kilometres of water separate the northern Bahamas from the USA, and many drug smugglers try to send drugs from South America through The Bahamas to Florida. On the Family Islands there are many small airports which can be used by small planes to land the drugs. It is difficult for the police and other law enforcement officers in The Bahamas to protect all our boundaries. The USA helps The Bahamas by providing helicopters, fast boats, and people from the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), who works with the Bahamian police and Defence Force. Together they try to stop the drug smugglers.

A new system has been developed to try to stop the smugglers. Two special balloons, called **radar** balloons, have been floated 450 metres in the air at High Rock on Grand Bahama, and George Town in Exuma. These balloons carry special instruments which enable people on the ground to detect boats or planes up to 300 kilometres away. If any boat is suspected of drug smuggling, it can be tracked, chased and caught. Anyone who is found guilty of drug smuggling faces a heavy fine, and is usually imprisoned.

Illegal immigrants

Sometimes people from other countries try to enter The Bahamas without official permission. Some are trying to reach the USA, others are looking for work in The Bahamas. Most of these illegal immigrants come to our island by boat. If any such boats are found in our waters, they are stopped and the passengers are sent back to sea, beyond our boundaries. If the boats are in too poor a condition to put back to sea they are brought in to Nassau. The people on board are **deported** to their own country - as soon as possible.

Many illegal immigrants in The Bahamas come from nearby Haiti. It is important that all Bahamians help to defend our boundaries. We want our country to be a safe place, and one that tourists will enjoy visiting.