NARRATOR
The Patagonian Toothfish, one of the most valuable fish in the world.

Found in the cruel seas of the Antarctic – it’s being fished to extinction by a lucratively backed consortium of pirate boats.

In Part One, we showed how Alistair Graham and his pressure group ISOFISH backed by law abiding fishing interests in Australia together with Greenpeace were prepared to track pirate vessels half way across the Southern Ocean.

And in this episode we show how the French Navy has decided on the ultimate way to get rid of captured pirate boats – by sinking them.

Ugly though it may look – the Patagonian Toothfish plundered in Southern Oceans finds its way into fashionable European and Japanese restaurants under acceptable names like Californian Sea Bass and Antarctic Sea Bass. The problem is this white fish is so valuable – it’s being wiped out by pirates.

Alistair Graham, Isofish Project
The fish is called white gold for very good reasons. And at the moment it’s fetching prices of $10 per kilogram landed. Which is an awful lot of money.

NARRATOR
In just two weeks an illegal vessel can land a million dollars’ worth of fish.

In Part One we showed how the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean has become the port where Norwegian and Spanish pirates land Toothfish. Another member of Alistair Graham’s ISOFISH group is Australian Jeff Williamson. He’s investigating pirate boats that catch fish inside the territorial waters of some French islands.

Jeff Williamson, Isofish Project
It’s quite obvious the illegal trade here has some cover. They move in and out of the port quite freely. The boats are disguised. Their registrations are illegal. There is quite a police presence throughout the wharves and the gates. They have a very practical approach to this trade. It generates money for the economy of Mauritius.

NARRATOR
200 nautical miles from Mauritius is the French Island of Reunion

In Reunion is an entire squadron of the French Navy monitoring suspect vessels. Pirate vessels caught fishing illegally in French waters are detained in Reunion Harbour. Five, mostly Spanish owned are held here, under the noses of the Navy boats.

Francisco Rodriguez, Spanish captain of the long liner, Vierasa Doce won’t be going anywhere today. The only fish his boat is likely to catch is from the cook’s hand-line in the harbour. The Vieirasa Doce was arrested by the French Navy, 18 months ago, charged with poaching Toothfish inside the French territorial waters of the Kerguelen islands. The boat has been in Reunion harbour ever since.
100 meters away, is Captain Rodriguez’ adversary, Lt. Commander Michel Leclerc. He commands the French navy squadron in Reunion and is captain of the patrol boat Albatross.

Lt. Cdr Leclerc, Captain – “Albatros”
In 1998 we have captured 10 ships and brought them to Reunion and in 1999 only one.

NARRATOR
For allegedly fishing illegally, the Vieirasa Doce is waiting judgment from a French court in Reunion.

Francisco ‘Paco’ Rodriguez, Captain – “Vieirasa Doce”
We cannot leave

Jeff Williamson Q:
You cannot leave the port. You must stay here?

Francisco ‘Paco’ Rodriguez
The penalty for leaving is 45m FF

Jeff Williamson Q:
45Mff if you leave this port? You have not been proved guilty by any court. And you have been kept in this port for more than one year?

Francisco ‘Paco’ Rodriguez
Yes

Jeff Williamson Q:
Tell us how do you find these illegal fishing vessels?

Lt. Cdr Leclerc
We can see a buoy

Jeff Williamson Q:
Sometimes you just see a marker buoy for fishing lines in the ocean. Then you investigate.

Lt. Cdr Leclerc
When we see a fishing buoy we stay around this buoy to wait the illegal fishing vessel coming back. Sometimes we are waiting for one or two days.

Jeff Williamson Q:
Do you get a good price for this fish?

Francisco ‘Paco’ Rodriguez
Yes

Jeff Williamson Q:
So it’s worthwhile to go to those very cold waters and work under very hard conditions?
Francisco ‘Paco’ Rodriguez
Risk. It’s my risk. Ten vessels maybe 7 can work 3 are arrested. Bad luck!

Jeff Williamson Q:
Can you tell us about the technical capability of your radar as compared to the radar on these illegal fishing boats?

Lt. Cdr Leclerc
The radar is about the same on each ship. As the Albatross is a little bigger than the other ships – the smaller illegal ship can detect us.

Jeff Williamson Q:
The fishing boat might find you on its radar because you are much larger. So they may have an advantage?

Jeff Williamson Q:
What is the range of your radar? How far may you plot out?

Francisco ‘Paco’ Rodriguez
The range is maybe 120 miles.

Jeff Williamson Q:
About 120 miles? Can you tell the difference between a fishing vessel and a naval vessel on this radar?

Francisco ‘Paco’ Rodriguez
You can deduce it from his speed. If you see a vessel approaching at 30 knots, then maybe?

Jeff Williamson Q:
Tell us a little about happens when you find one of these vessels you think is illegally fishing?

Lt. Cdr Leclerc
We call him by radio, international radio. We say to him, ‘stop ‘ and we send a group to the ship of 10 or 12 persons.

We question somebody on board, perhaps somebody says, ‘yes two days ago we were fishing’. Another one would say, ‘yes three days ago we were there.’

Then afterwards we go to the captain and we say, ‘this person says, you were fishing two days ago.’

Jeff Williamson Q:
When the French authorities boarded this vessel to arrest it what did they do? Sent on some soldiers?

Francisco ‘Paco’ Rodriguez
Yes with guns

**Jeff Williamson Q:**
Did they come on with guns?

**Francisco ‘Paco’ Rodriguez**
Everybody went on deck and the captain was arrested.

**Jeff Williamson Q:**
There have been less arrests this year by the French Navy and you are pleased with the results. But maybe they have better information. Maybe the illegal boats now know when the navy patrol vessels leave port?

**Lt. Cdr Leclerc**
Oh Yes. The movement of Albatross when it leaves the harbour is no secret. I cannot forbid anybody phoning an illegal captain and saying, ‘Albatross has gone from Reunion – Take care!’

**NARRATOR**
Perhaps less boats were arrested last year because of the tough line the French are taking here. In Reunion harbour there are 4 other captured fishing boats. Interestingly the Spaniard who owns the Vieirasa Doce, also owns the Antonio Lorenzo whose time is now up. Stripped of its engine and valuable electronics, it’s being towed out to sea to be scuppered by the French Navy.

The Antonio Lorenzo is valued today at 4m FF. So the French imposed a larger sum as a fine, 6mFF, on the vessel. The owner refused to pay.

The Antonio Lorenzo was seized by the patrol boat “Albatross” in Autumn 1998 for fishing illegally round the French Kerguelen Islands.

Back in Mauritius – stories of boats being sunk by the French at nearby Reunion are beginning to have an effect. And with pressure from ISOFISH, Alistair Graham’s organisation, the Mauritius government have become aware of the damaging publicity of allowing pirates to dock with their illegal catch. Environmentally minded tourists could be put off visiting the Indian Ocean island.

After the fleet of boats that had been fishing round Crozet, docked and unloaded before Christmas – we had assumed the dealers would have plenty of Toothfish to sell. But things were changing.

**Jeff Williamson**
There seem to be quite a few Mauritian companies directly involved with the Patagonian Toothfish trade. The most obvious of these is the very old colonial company, Ireland Blythe Ltd. It has a direct involvement with the Toothfish trade in unloading the fish, transhipping the fish for the owners and providing services for the boats.

**NARRATOR**
Posing as fish buyers Earth Report went round trying to buy Toothfish from companies that had been seen unloading from ships in the past and had also been named by the French government. First we asked Ireland Blythe to sell us some.

Man at Ireland Blythe
Unfortunately, Mr. Beckham, We were handling previously. But since then there have been problems, we are not handling anything.

NARRATOR
We were sent to Adam and Company, an Ireland Blythe subsidiary on the port, that deals directly with vessels as they unload.

Mike Beckham Q:
Is there much Toothfish around?

Man at Adam and Company
This year there are less vessels coming for Toothfish. Someone was campaigning against the government about the Toothfish is a protected fish. Last year we got more vessels, but this year there is a bit less vessels.

Mike Beckham Q:
I was told there were some Spanish ships in last week with Toothfish. Did you hear about that?

Man at Adam and Company
I heard about this. Yes, yes.

Jeff Williamson Q:
Another company that has a very strong involvement in the trade is Happy World Marine Group. This company has acted directly as agents for some of the boats and has been involved in the unloading and transshipping of fish into the South East Asian markets.

Man at Happy World Marine Group
Toothfish? No. It's not available here. It's not available.

Mike Beckham Q:
They told me there were some boats in last week? Spanish boats.

Man at Happy World Marine Group
We have Butterfish. Not Toothfish.

NARRATOR
Happy World Marine Group told me to try another company.

Woman at Happy World Marine Group
Scott and Co
Mike Beckham Q:
Scott and Co. Where about are they?

Woman at Happy World Marine Group
At Richterre

Mike Beckham Q:
This is Patagonian Toothfish.

Man at Scott and Co
We don’t have the right to bring Toothfish. We used to do it in the past but we had to stop it.

NARRATOR
He volunteered to help us by ringing a friend at Ireland Blythe again.

Man at Scott and Co
It’s banned. We can’t do anything here.

NARRATOR
What was going on suddenly? In November of last year French President Jaques Chirac flew to a meeting with the Prime Minister of Mauritius. One of the things they discussed was the Patagonian Toothfish. It was proposed that in return for the tiny French island of Tromelin, north of Reunion, to be passed to Mauritius – the Mauritian authorities would close their port to illegal catch. Political pressure was beginning to work. Discussions are still going on and the pirates may have to go elsewhere.

Until Recently Norway was also a base for unscrupulous Toothfish poachers. Renegade owners were mainly situated round the fishing port of Bergen. But pressure from Alistair Graham’s organisation has almost closed down Norway’s illegal operators.

This man, Magna Hisdal, is a rich man in the port of Bergen. Not so long ago he had a fleet of 4 boats operating in the Southern Ocean. He bought this hotel, the ‘Terminus’, in Bergen. He also owns a fine yacht, the ‘Andrea’, moored in a fjord near the port.

Hisdal’s boats like this one, the Alizia Glacial, were secretly fishing in the Southern Ocean in the territorial waters of Australia and France. Then they were photographed by ISOFISH unloading Toothfish in Mauritius harbour. Alistair Graham used information from contacts in Norway to highlight the scandal.

Alistair Graham
We were able to create a climate of public opinion that simply made it very hard for these people to continue. By simply providing the information to people in Norway, in government, through banks, insurance companies, the fishing industry, through newspapers.

NARRATOR
In particular, Alistair Graham persuaded Norway’s newspapers to write about the country’s role in poaching Toothfish. Per Ellingsen of the popular daily Dagbladet.

Per Ellingsen, Dagbladet Newspaper
When they build the boats in Norway the state give some million Kronen to each boat. This is the Alizia Glacial it took 7.5 million Kronen from the state just to build this boat.

Mike Beckham Q:
That’s half a million pounds?

Per Ellingsen
Yes that’s right.

NARRATOR
Then the Alizia Glacial was arrested by the Australian Navy for poaching inside Australian waters. There was a scandal.

Alistair Graham
The Norwegian community as a whole was not comfortable with some of its members engaging in activities that were against the law of friendly countries like Australia and South Africa and behaving in a way that genuinely undermines Norway’s reputation as a reputable and responsible country.

Per Ellingsen
We wrote about this in my newspaper and in some other newspapers. My newspaper had 50 reports about this. They told the government to clean up. It’s not good for the Norwegians. I think it was the next day the Foreign Department came up. They put someone to work on this.

Mike Beckham Q:
And that resulted in legislation?

Per Ellingsen
Yes. That’s right.

NARRATOR
Public pressure and embarrassment, forced Norway to come up with tough new laws. A black list system has virtually wiped out the Norwegian pirates. Peter Gullestad is Norway’s Director of Fishing.

Peter Gullestad, Director of Fishing – Norway
We have developed quite an effective legislation to solve this problem and that is vessels that have conducted illegal or unregulated fishing. Unregulated fishing in the CCAMLAR area or other areas, can be denied a license to fish in Norwegian waters.

The legislation goes after both the owner of the vessel who can be denied a licence but it also goes after the physical vessel that participated in that unregulated fishing. It has been a success in the sense the second –hand value of vessels who are on the blacklist is very low and investors who want to buy second-hand vessels won’t touch these vessels.

NARRATOR
The Rita, once called the Cindy, is thought to be the only known Norwegian owned boat that is prepared to risk piracy.
For 3 months it had tried to get a licence to fish legally for Toothfish. Because of the Cindy’s past history of piracy, this was refused. Then it changed its name to the Rita and crew members told us they were setting sail for the French Kerguelen Islands, supposedly to pirate Toothfish.

Mike Beckham Q:
Is the captain here? Can I come on board?

NARRATOR
Posing as fish buyers, Earth Report went on board to ask about the boat’s intentions.

Mike Beckham Q:
The captain. Where is the captain?

Hello I’m a fish trader. I’m trying to buy some Toothfish. They say you are sailing today.

Captain
Yes

Mike Beckham Q:
When will you be back?

Captain
About two months.

Mike Beckham Q:
Who do you sell to? Could I buy some from you?

Captain
Do you know Nash Ulen in Oslo? Nyman fishing in Oslo?

Mike Beckham Q:
Norman fishing?

Engineer
We sell to Japan.

Mike Beckham Q:
Could I buy Toothfish from you?

NARRATOR
They introduced me to this man, Mike Clarke, they claimed was the owner, but he then denied they were sailing to Kerguelen for Toothfish.

Mike Beckham Q:
Hello. I try to buy some Toothfish

Mike Clarke
We don't fish Toothfish. It's Butterfish we fish. Butterfish.
Mike Beckham Q:
They said you were going to Kerguelen.

Mike Clarke
Who said that?

Mike Beckham Q:
The crew, someone on the crew.

Mike Clarke
No. No. And who are you?

Mike Beckham Q:
I’m a fish trader from London

NARRATOR
So the Rita, formally the Cindy, set sail we believe for the Kerguelan Islands. However one thing is certain: If the Rita returns to Norway it will be blacklisted.

In Norway we filmed Terje Kirkeland until recently a shareholder in the Cindy before it became the Rita.

Mike Beckham Q:
Is it worth the risk fishing illegally there?

Terje Kirkeland
Yes. If you want to make money in a short time, yes. But I don’t want to go down there again.

Mike Beckham Q:
Did Cindy make a lot of money?

Terje Kirkeland
I’m not involved in Cindy anymore.

Mike Beckham Q:
You were once. You were a partner were you?

Terje Kirkeland
Yes I was.

Mike Beckham Q:
It’s too much of a risk to fish illegally?

Terje Kirkeland
It’s too much. The risk is too big.

Mike Beckham Q:
What is the risk? Can you explain?
Terje Kirkeland
If you get taken by the French for example or the Australians or New Zealand, they take the boat, they take everything. On that side the risk is too high.

Why the Norwegians disappeared from the area, the risk is too big. Plus the Norwegian government, they said to me for example, ‘If you don’t stop, we use same rules as they have in whale catching’.

If a Norwegian goes outside Norway start fishing or hunting whales illegally, then they can take everything away from you.

NARRATOR
In Norway, in the port of Haugesund, Earth Report approached the man thought to be the Cindy’s real owner, Oddva Vea. His boats have often been sighted fishing illegally.

Mike Beckham Q: Mr. Oddva Vea? Your boat, the Cindy, now called the Rita, was in Mauritius just before Christmas about to sail to collect illegal Toothfish?

Oddva Vea
Nothing with the Cindy. I sold the vessel

Mike Beckham Q: That’s not what the crew told us.

Oddva Vea
No, nothing.

Mike Beckham Q: They said you owned the Rita...

Oddva Vea
No, nothing with this thing.

Mike Beckham Q: So you don’t own it anymore?

Oddva Vea
Mike Clarke with Clarke Fishing in Cape Town. Nothing more.

Mike Beckham Q: So you don’t own the Rita and the Cindy anymore. When did you sell them?

Oddva Vea
I think one and half years ago.

NARRATOR
According to Lloyds Shipping Register, Mike Clarke doesn’t own the Rita. Although the boat is now registered with a different company, the ownership hasn’t changed.

It’s not surprising that Oddva Vea denies ownership of the Rita. Under Norwegian law, he stands to lose everything.

So how large are the pirate fleets today? Alistair Graham’s efforts and tough legislation have been responsible for largely freeing the seas of Norwegian pirates.

And a question mark still hangs over the port of Mauritius. Tough action from the French Navy and Alistair Graham’s ISOFISH group, means it’s no longer a safe haven for boats to unloading pirate catch.

Spain remains Alistair Graham’s chief concern for the illegal trade. In the port of Vigo, Europe’s largest for fish, there are as many as five big Spanish companies— which plunder the Southern Ocean.

Alistair Graham
The Spanish fishing industry is notoriously tough and inured against criticism from other countries and other fishing industries. It’s very embarrassing for Spain in general that one or more Spanish fishing companies should be involved in illegal and unregulated fishing round the world.

NARRATOR
Unless Spanish owned boats stop piracy, commercial stocks of Patagonian Toothfish are in danger of being wiped within the next three years.