Last year as part of The Outlaw Ocean series, we reported on the murder of four men at sea. You can read the story here. At root, the questions begged were these: Who shot and killed these men on camera and then posed for selfies? Why has this crime never been solved or even sufficiently investigated? These questions remain unanswered.

I’ve found that readers like to see the raw materials behind investigations. This slideshow is meant as an update to our investigation. It is also a document archive so that readers can explore the topic for themselves. Maybe if these materials are made public, interested parties will push the story further.

If you aren’t familiar with the story, this document archive will make little sense. It’s probably wise to skim the story first. Much of the information provided here comes verbatim from sources.
WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE VESSEL THAT THE TIMES IDENTIFIED AT THE CRIME SCENE?

The one identifiable vessel at the shooting scene was named the Chun I 217. The person who fired the weapon was not on this ship.

The Chun I 217 was among the vessels in the background witnessing the incident. Many security experts said they believe there is a decent chance that the Chun I 217 is tied somehow to the other ships -- perhaps they share an owner. The call sign for the Chun I 217 is BI2353. There are seven vessels in the Chun I group. All are more or less of the same size, between 53-59 meters. Five are flagged to Seychelles (Chun I No. 307, 316, 318, 326 and 628) and two to Taiwan (Chun I No. 217 and 236).

A firm that specializes in maritime investigations looked at the footage. Analysts focussed on trying to identify the vessel with the shooter. The following slides offer various distinct characteristics that might help identify the shooter vessel.
WHAT MORE DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE POSSIBLE LOCATION OF THIS INCIDENT?

Roughly a year ago, the Times provided Interpol and other law enforcement agencies details concerning the one known vessel -- the Taiwanese-flagged tuna longliner called the Chun I 217 -- at the scene of this crime. The Times also interviewed the CEO from the fishing company that owns the Chun I 217. He confirmed that the ship had a locational transponder -- known as VMS -- transmitting data to fishery authorities in Taiwan. Authorities in Seychelles are also likely in possession of this transponder data. This data is one thing that could turn this case around because it would indicate where the Chun I 217 was throughout the year. It would also indicate what other ships were near the Chun I 217 during this period, including the tuna longliner that conducted this killing. If Taiwan or Seychelles were willing to publicly release this data, investigators could most likely begin to find the culprits because all of these vessels have crew lists.

In the absence of cooperation from these governments, the Times teamed up with Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) to assess where the shooting most likely took place in the Indian Ocean. The image above, provided by OBP, shows likely areas in the waters between Seychelles and Somalia, based on fishing data drawn from the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) that related specifically to Taiwanese longline fishing ships. The data is weighted based on concentration of fishing activity. The size of the bubbles indicates the level of fishing effort, measured by the number of hooks reported for a given area.
According to British authorities, the Chun I 217 entered the British Indian Ocean Territories on April 13, 2013 after its Seychelles fishing permit expired in April 2013. The vessel was reported to have had three armed guards on board.

The IOC have confirmed that Chun I 217 was fishing in the Seychelles April 17-26, 2014, with a Seychelles fishing license. The IOC verified this through the regional VMS – and they have this information available for investigating authorities. They cannot see tracks much before this date, however, because their regional VMS only became operational in March 2014. The Seychelles is expected to have new as well as historic VMS data.

From other reporting by the Times, several other tuna longline vessels had been identified as potential culprits at the scene of this crime. Among those vessels are the Chun I 236 and Jiin Horng 106 both of which are currently authorized by IOTC to operate in the Indian Ocean.

In one frame of the video there appears a picture of a flag from one of the vessels that has been run over and sunk by the longliners is visible. The colors appear to be green, white, and red, which match the colors of the Somaliland flag.
WHAT MORE CAN BE DISCERNED BASED ON THE WRECKAGE SHOWN IN THE VIDEO?

The short answer is that the wreckage is most likely from an Iranian fishing dhow, not a pirate skiff. (A dhow is a traditional sailing vessels with one or more masts with lateen sails used in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean region.) This is significant because it goes against what the Times was told when we interviewed the Taiwanese fishery authorities and Lin Yu-chih, who is the CEO of the Taiwanese fishing company that owns the Chun I 217, the one vessel known to have been at the crime scene. Both speculated that the shooting most likely just involved rebuffed pirates.

The flotsam in the water appears to be of wooden construction, not fiberglass, and decking appears to be present. Also evident is what appears to be a long flagpole (estimated to be between 15-20 feet in length, based on comparison to the figure in the water) which is topped with a green white and red flag (inset) which could indicate Iran or Somaliland. This would suggest that the ship was a small dhow – most likely of the Shu’ai or Yemeni type, according to analysts at OBP. These vessels are frequently 5-15 meters long, constructed of wood, and have long, radio antennas and flagpoles, as seen in the image (left).
WHAT CAN BE SAID ABOUT THE MEN BEING SHOT IN THE VIDEO?

The video is of very poor quality. So, it is extremely difficult to say much about the men being killed. The fishing and maritime security experts asked to review the footage speculated that the boat that was destroyed may have been an Iranian fishing dhow with Somali guards.

This type of arrangement was quite common in 2013, according to the Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG). A report from that organization states, for example, cited an “increasing use of unregulated and untrained Somali security guards to provide armed protection aboard vessels involved in regional trade and/or fishing activities, in potential violation of the arms embargo. For example, in Mogadishu, local authorities, such as the Mogadishu Port Authority (harbor master’s office) and the police, are in control of this business. They provide the guards, the weapons and the licenses. Shipping companies are charged US$ 500 per armed guard per month and are provided with one-year licenses. In ‘Puntland’, the enterprise is controlled by private businessmen and linked to illicit maritime activities such as smuggling, illegal fishing and piracy, posing a potential threat to regional safety and security.” Another section from a report by that group says, “Puntland officials estimate up to 180 illegal Iranian, and up to 300 illegal Yemeni vessels are fishing Puntland waters, but also allege a small number of Chinese, Taiwanese and Korean vessels, as well as some European-owned vessels, are engaged in illegal fishing. International naval sources corroborate the prevalence of Iranian and Yemeni vessels amongst unlicensed vessels. On 23 April 2013, Puntland authorities detained five Iranian vessels fishing illegally off the coast of Somalia, and arrested approximately 80 Iranian crew members and 12 armed Somali security guards.”
HAVE THERE BEEN ANY OTHER POTENTIALLY RELATED INCIDENTS THAT MIGHT SHED LIGHT ON THIS MURDER?

Another incident in the western Indian Ocean that may or may not be related occurred on October 11, 2014 during an Indian Ocean Commission-sponsored fisheries patrol in the West Indian Ocean. Patrol vessel approached the Seychelles flagged longliner Jiin Horng 106 for inspection. Armed individual aboard the vessel appeared carrying what appeared to be an AK-47. The weapon was aimed at the patrol vessel, and the crew warned off the inspection team, according to analysts. In the interest of crew safety the patrol vessel backed off and did not force the inspection. The individual and weapon can be seen in the photo of the vessel, taken during the patrol. Other incidental reports of armed guards on fishing vessels threatening other vessels.

The Jiin Horng 106 is significant because it is likely an International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) blacklisted vessel, originally listed under the name No. 2 Choyu. On the ICCAT IUU vessel list there is a No. 2 Choyu and a No. 3 Choyu, with no other information on the two vessels provided. The vessels were listed in 2006 after having been seen fishing in the Mediterranean in the closed season. An ICCAT list of vessels from 1999 establishes that the Choyu No. 3 is owned by Armadora Pesquera Choyu S de RL. This list also identifies the Pesquera 68 as a vessel suspected of IUU fishing for tuna and the owner to be Choyu Fishery. Based on the above there is a strong reason to assume that the JIIN HORNG NO. 106, formerly Choyu No. 2, IMO 8429991, (currently on the IOTC licensed vessel list) is the same as the No 2 Choyu on the ICCAT IUU vessel list.
IDENTIFYING THE SHIP IN THE VIDEO

BOW

A. The railing around the vessel's mid and bow section has one bar between the hull and top railing.

B. On starboard side, the chock is separated (i.e. the railing, bars are not welded to it) from the railing.

C. A structure separates the mid and front section of the bow, painted in a light blue-green color.
IDENTIFYING THE SHIP IN THE VIDEO

MID SECTION

D. Chinese characters translating to “Safety First”

E. Structure on back end of bow section

(Photo made up for 4 joint frames)
IDENTIFYING THE SHIP IN THE VIDEO

BRIDGE

F. There are eleven (11) windows across the front of the bridge (NB side windows not seen). The bridge also has red trim.

G. Roof railing has one (1) bar between top and hull.

H. Bridge railing has two (2) bars between top and hull.

(Photo made up of 3 joint frames)
WAS THE CHUN I 236 THE SHOOTER SHIP?

The investigative firm reviewed around 3000 photos of around 300 relevant vessels, comparing them against the identified characteristics. Two potential candidates for the vessel in the video, one stronger than the other. One was the Chun I 236, whose IMO number is 8748854 and is flagged to Taiwan. The other ship was the Ping Shin 101, whose IMO number is 8746947 and is also flagged to Taiwan.

A. Same
B. Not the correct chock in front to the bollard
C. Same structure, color unclear
D. Not possible to identify
E. Not possible to identify
F. Same number of windows, but trim is different color
G. Same
H. Same.
Ping Shin 101 is the stronger candidate, meeting many of the characteristics that can be found on the vessel in the video. However some differences, including the life rings on the bridge appear to have the vessel’s name on them; this writing is not on the rings in the video.

While the vessel is identified in IOTC images as the Ping Shin 101, other sources indicate that the vessel with the same IMO number 8746947 is sometimes identified as Ping Chieh 101.
WHAT CAN BE ESTABLISHED BASED ON CORPORATE TIES?

Fishing and shipping companies are complicated. Often, they are shell companies overlaid by shell companies listed by P.O. Boxes overlaid by companies that don’t exist. This complexity is by design. It’s also one of the reasons that criminal investigations in the maritime space are distinctly difficult. That and the fact that few countries have motivation to investigate in the first place since the crimes are transnational and the victims (crews) typically are people with limited political clout. This image (below) illustrates research by a firm that requested to remain anonymous. It is an attempt to diagram the institutional ties between the Chun I 217 and other related ships and companies.

The Chun I 217 is identified in light blue; Linked companies in green; Linked vessels in dark blue; Linking features (including company names, common addresses, phone numbers and other links) are indicated in red. The vessels Jiin Horng 106, Ping Chieh 101 (Ping Shin 101) and Chun I 236 are circled in red; Solid lines show strong links, such as proof of ownership, while dotted lines show less confirmed (but often indicative) links, such as a common company address.
Several of the companies identified were involved in recent cases of forged Tanzanian licenses. Extremely complicated ownership structures set up to manage and operate the Taiwanese owned longline fleet. Often a single company owns one vessel only, with strong links between companies able to be made by common (or very close) addresses, and/or common phone numbers. For example: The owner of the Ping Chieh No. 101 / Ping Shin No. 101 is the Ping Chieh Fishery Co. Ltd., with an address at Room 307, 3 Yugang E 2nd Road, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. The owner of the Chun I 217, Tching Ye Fishery Co. Ltd., shares the exact same address. The owner of the Chun I 236, Tching Fuh Fishery Co. Ltd., also shares the same address.

Less strong links can be made through connections such as crewing agencies. For example, the company Rachman Assistance in Indonesia has been crewing the Chun I 217, 236, 326 and 307 during the same period. (All vessels are marked as operating in the Indian Ocean, and further indicate location and that the vessels operate together). A number of companies linked with identified vessels, all associated with one address in the Seychelles.
WHO MIGHT THE SHOOTER HAVE BEEN?

Most indications suggest that the shooter (who never appears on camera) may have been a private security guard provided to the tuna longliner by Avant Garde Maritime Services (AGMS), which is a Sri Lankan company that provides onboard guards for vessels. The company is known to supply security for fishing vessels operating in the Western Indian Ocean. Headquartered in Sri Lanka, AGMS has branches in the Seychelles, Mauritius and a number of other locations. Allegations have been reported in Sri Lankan media regarding this company’s involvement in arms and drugs smuggling. Sources indicate that the guards are mostly recruited among ex-Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. As with virtually of this information, this analysis comes from the maritime investigative firm that looked into the shooting.
HAS THERE BEEN ANY FALLOUT FROM THIS CRIME?

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is the body that oversees licensing of tuna fishing in the waters where the murder is thought to have occurred. After the Times investigation was published, the executive secretary of that commission, Randolph Payet, resigned. Reasons provided by sources for his resignation vary. One thing that became clear, however, was that a conflict of interest existed. Here is how a confidential report described that conflict as it discusses the Chun I 217 (the one ship known to be at the murder scene): "The main shareholder in this company is the wife of Rondolph Payet, current Executive Secretary of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. (This will require a politically sensitive approach). Sources indicate that this company facilitates the internal licenses procedures on the Seychelles. The actual agent and operator of the vessels is identified as Richard Tan Kay-Hwee, a Taiwanese national resident in the Seychelles (IOTC)."
What more do we know about Mr. Richard Tan Kay-Hwee?

Richard Tan Kay-Hwee is a Taiwanese national residing at least some of the year in the Seychelles. Documents indicate he is the agent and operator of the vessels is identified as Richard Tan Kay-Hwee, a Taiwanese national resident in the Seychelles (IOTC). He also has complicated ties to apparent problem vessels, companies and maritime actors. Here is what investigators found: The ownership of the Jiin Horng 106 is based at the address Suite 12, Oliaji Trade Centre, Francis Rachel Street, Victoria, Mahe Island, Seychelles. This is the same address as Marina Marine Limited, the company that owns the vessel Hsiang FA 26 which was the first vessel identified in the forged fishing licenses case in Tanzania of that investigation. A total of 8 Seychelles flagged vessels with forged Tanzanian licenses were identified. They were all issued to licensee Ahmed Hussein Al-Shaibany, a known Richard Tan associate, who has now been stripped of his Tanzanian passport (he also hold a Omani passport). All the vessels have different owners according to IOTC. All of them with the same address: No. 12 Oliaji Trade Centre, P.O. Box 1377, Victoria, Mahé.

Along with the Seychelles, Richard Tan has been more widely linked to fishing companies in the Philippines, Taiwan, China, and Singapore. There are also indications that he is deeply connected to abuse of the ‘Letter of Permit’ system in India. In that system, Taiwanese vessels dual-register with the Indian flag with forged registration documents in order to gain access to the Indian exclusive economic zone, and wider IOTC area. Mr. Tan was further identified as the owner or manager of the Seychelles flagged longliner vessel Sea Grand which was found in Ghana at a time when Tan had informed the Seychelles authorities that the vessel was in Singapore for service. The vessel was found to have dual registry with the Gambia. Although it was later de-flagged by Seychelles, no additional enforcement action appears to have happened.
Mr. Tan is also involved with provision of armed security guards for fishing vessels through a company in Mauritius, Avant Garde Maritime Services (AGMS). Avant Garde Maritime Services operates smaller branches out of the Seychelles and Kenya. Sources indicate that the guards are mostly recruited among ex-Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, who would be fully knowledgeable in the type and usage of the firearms heard in the YouTube video and seen on board the Jiin Horng 106.

Other companies and individuals associated with Mr. Tan are Exim and Shipping Pte Ltd is also called Top Fortune Marine International Ltd. (Eastward Exim & Shipping Pte. Ltd.) It is registered as trading in Fish goods raw materials, Shipping agency and Fishery Cooperates. The Address is Room 13-E, Tze Wei Commercial Bldg., No 7. Tze Wei 4th Road, Lin-Ya District, Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Phone: 886-7-8150888. The company was formed in 1998. The legal representative/Business Owner is listed as Mr. Chen Qi Wei.

George Chen (possibly Chen Qi Wei) is listed as The CEO of Exim and Shipping Pte Ltd, Singapore. He was also the Managing Director of Sea Grand Pte Ltd, Singapore (1989 -2003), Managing Director of Myanmar Sea Global Co. Ltd, Union of Myanmar (1989 - 1998), Director Sea Global Co. Ltd, Indonesia (1995 - 1998) and Chief Executive Officer of ABC Gold (Pvt) Ltd. Karachi, Pakistan. Mr. Chen is on the Advisory Board of Avant Garde Maritime Services (Pvt) Ltd in Sri Lanka, providing infrastructure facilities for international maritime security services. Eastward Exim & Fishing Pte. Ltd. was the operator of tuna longliner Rwad 1, IMO 8655409 when the vessel was IUU listed by IOTC in 2009 for fishing without a license in the Indian Ocean. Rwad 1 was flagged to Oman and has very recently been de-registered in IOTC indicating the intention of de-flagging the vessel by Oman.

In 2006, Mr. Richard Tan of Eastward Exim and Shipping Pte Ltd was on the Seychelles delegation to the IOTC annual meetings and in 2009 he was listed as Managing Director Deep-Sea Fisheries Management Ltd both companies with the same address in Kaohsiung. In 2011 he was listed as Mr Tan Kay-Hwee of Deep Sea Fisheries Management on a business card. Together Top Fortune, Eastward Exim and Deep Sea Fisheries Management own 34.21% of the Indian Aquaculture company Coastal Corporation listed at the Bombay Stock Exchange. Other listed shareholders are G V V Satyanarayaan (2.28%), Ganta Lakshmi Anusha (1.85%), Ganta Sricharan (1.98%) and The Bank of Maharashtra (2.2%).
WHAT COULD HAPPEN NEXT WITH THIS MURDER?

1) A country or group of countries decide to open a formal investigation. Interpol has said they are ready to assist but it cannot take the lead because it does not conduct investigations.

2) Taiwan and Seychelles release the VMS (locational) data corresponding to the Chun I 217 and any other vessels that were near this vessel in the Indian Ocean during the 2012-2014 period.

3) Law enforcement gets the list of all crew who were on the Chun I 217 during the relevant time frame and interview each of them about what they witnessed.

4) Law enforcement interviews under oath the CEO of the company that owns the Chun I 217.

5) Law enforcement requires AGMS, the private security firm that most believe provided the guards on the shooter vessel, to hand over the records that pertain to what guards they put on Taiwanese tuna longliners during this period.

6) Law enforcement gets IOTC to hand over all documents and data related to the Chun I 217 and the other suspect vessels described in this archive.

7) Law enforcement interviews Richard Tan, Randolph Payet, and Mr. Payet’s wife about this incident.

8) The relevant parties keep me, Ian Urbina, at the New York Times in the loop (urbina@nytimes.com) so that I can write further on the matter or at minimum I can provide them with additional information that comes my way related to this murder.