

BENEFICIAL OWNER CASE STUDY: JOSÉ MARTÍ PEIX

José Martí Peix SA was a Spanish fishing company and seafood group, founded in 1982. Official and unofficial sources link the company, directly and indirectly, to more than thirty vessels, flagged in Spain, Portugal and a number of African countries, including Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco, Cameroon, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon^{1,2}.

José Martí Peix SA requested voluntary bankruptcy in 2014 and is currently undergoing liquidation³, with sources reporting that some assets have been sold to the Peruvian company Grupo Costa del Sol, though no indication that this includes the vessels⁴. Presumably because of the bankruptcy proceedings, many of the vessels previously linked to the company are currently inactive (in port), have recently been deregistered with current status and flag State unknown, or have been sold; although some, such as the Senegal-based HISPASEN fleet, remain active. It is unclear whether the company's beneficial owners retain a stake in any of the vessels referenced in this report. Nevertheless, they represent a good example of how a beneficial owner in a major distant-water fishing nation can operate vessels in overseas jurisdictions, subject to varying levels of oversight and flag State control.



PEIX MAR VEINTICINCO – one of the company's Spanish-flagged vessels, operating in Mauritanian waters in 2010. Copyright: Christian Åslund / Greenpeace

¹ This figure includes all vessels linked directly to JMP or its known subsidiaries that are not listed as sunk or broken up; however several of these have not been documented in any sources in recent years and are 40+ years old so it is presumed some are no longer active – based on data contained in TMT's database FACT, including SeaWeb and national sources, as well as open-source data

² <https://www.heconomia.es/activos.asp?o=710151449>

³ Eg. https://sevilla.abc.es/economia/sevi-subasta-suelos-y-fabrica-26-millones-euros-grupo-pesquero-onubense-marti-peix-202103242249_noticia.html

⁴ <https://sevilla.abc.es/economia/costa-adjudica-millones-activos-grupo-pesquero-onubense-20221102112001-nts.html>

Company links

Eleven companies registered outside Spain have been identified that are confirmed, likely or potentially linked to José Martí Peix, based on available company information, cross-referencing of contact details, vessel histories and photographic evidence. These are outlined in the table below. With the exception of Portugal, none of the countries where these companies are registered have publicly accessible company registries providing beneficial ownership information, so it is challenging to confirm the existence and exact nature of these companies' connections to the José Martí Peix group and beneficial ownership. The transparency of the potential connection with José Martí Peix varies between companies, as indicated below. It should be noted that many of these companies are not linked to any confirmed active vessels, so their legal and operational status is unknown, but it is assumed some may no longer be operational.

Nb. a key source used for the identification of vessels potentially linked to José Martí Peix was a company presentation available online⁵. Since this was originally accessed by TMT in 2017, the presentation has been edited online and no longer includes the names of vessels flagged outside of Spain. However, as many of the non-Spanish flagged vessels referenced on the original version have other links to José Martí Peix⁶ the original source has been used in this case study to indicate potential links between vessels and José Martí Peix. A copy of the presentation as it appeared online in 2017 is available on request.

Table: Companies registered outside Spain with confirmed, suspected or potential (unknown) links to José Martí Peix SA

Name	Country of registration	Founded	Link to José Martí Peix SA	Verification status of link to JMP SA
Tanger Peche SA	Morocco	1992	SeaWeb lists this company as the owner of VILLE DE TANGER – included on the JMP company presentation referenced above, and owned by Mobydick Fisheries as of 2013 ⁷ . May be another company in the group or may be genuine previous owner	Unknown
JMP Maroc SA	Morocco	1998	SeaWeb identifies this as a subsidiary of José Martí Peix SA	Confirmed

⁵ <https://www.emaze.com/@ALWCOLRW/JOSE-MARTI-PEIX>

⁶ For example Jose Marti Peix was previous owner whilst under the Spanish flag, photos show Jose Marti Peix logo on the hull, etc.

⁷ Based on 2013 EU DG Sanco list – available from TMT

Mobydick Fisheries Ltd	Morocco	n/k	This company appears on a list of Spanish-owned companies in Morocco, with the JMP Maroc (see above) email given as contact details ⁸	Suspected
Peix Cameroon SA	Cameroon	1997	Cameroon-based joint enterprise, referenced in the 2003 judgement of José Martí Peix SA vs the European Commission ⁹	Confirmed
Togo Peix SARL	Togo	1998	Subsequent owner of a JMP vessel after reflagging from Spain to Togo	Unknown
Hispasen SARL	Senegal	1998	Hispasen vessels included on the presentation referenced above. JMP connection also reported in media source ¹⁰ .	Suspected
Eurorim Industries SEM	Mauritania	2001	A Spanish employment case heard in 2006 identifies Eurorim Industries as a joint venture owned by Expoferrer SA and Pesqueras Marsierra SA, with José Martí Peix SA also named as a co-defendant / employer of the individual alongside those three companies ¹¹ . Expoferrer SA and Pesqueras Marsierra shared the same Director with José Martí Peix ¹² , and these two companies were	Confirmed

⁸ <https://dokumen.tips/documents/listado-de-empresas-espanolas-en-marruecos.html?page=10>

⁹ <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=48131&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=2005358>

¹⁰ <https://www.dn.no/fiske/liberia/brownie-samukai/vest-afrika/tar-opp-kampen-mot-piratfiske-i-liberia/2-1-39828>

¹¹ <https://www.iberley.es/print/sentencias/4942841>

¹² <https://www.datoscif.es/empresa/distribuidora-marti-peix-sa>

			absorbed into JMP in 2013 ¹³ .	
Transafrica de Peche Hauturiere	Cameroon	2009	SeaWeb lists this as the registered owner of the vessel MAYI SEIS – included on the presentation referenced above. The company uses contact details associated with the industry association ANAMAR and otherwise no information could be found on it	Unknown
Formoso & Fernandez Lda	Portugal	2015	Photos of FIUZA, taken in 2020 when under the registered ownership of this company, show the vessel with the JMP logo still clearly displayed on the hull ¹⁴	Unknown
Pescrul	Portugal	n/k ¹⁵	A photo of CIDADE DE PORTIMAO and CIDADE DE TAVIRA, taken in 2013 whilst both vessels were listed as owned by Pescrul, clearly shows the JMP logo on the hull ¹⁶	Unknown
Gamarit	Gabon	n/k	Very little information is available on this company, however a 2013 report on Gabonese fisheries names it as a major vessel owner and lists three Gabonese-flagged and two foreign-flagged	Unknown

¹³ https://www.boe.es/diario_borme/txt.php?id=BORME-C-2013-12534

¹⁴ www.marinetraffic.com/en/photos/of/ships/shipid:318140

¹⁵ SeaWeb has two entries for this company (very similar name, same address) – one founded in 2018, but the other was listed as a vessel owner prior to 2018. Note also that one source was identified describing this as a ‘cooperative of Algarve fishermen’ founded in 1962, raising the possibility that Pescrul is/was a cooperative including vessels owned by JMP rather than part of the company group – although SeaWeb does list it as a vessel owner – see

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=s-xbsiU17Q8C&pg=PA110-IA255&dq=pescrul&hl=xx-bork&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjqjY3iquz7AhXFilwKHZobB7IQ6AF6BAgKEAI#v=onepage&q=pescrul&f=false>

¹⁶ <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lueske/10511735293>

			vessels that are associated – four of the five are linked to JMP through other stages in their ownership history ¹⁷	
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Non-compliance history

Several vessels owned by Hispasen SARL – the Senegalese company with suspected links to José Martí Peix – have a history of non-compliance with fisheries or other regulations. The Senegal-flagged trawler HISPASEN 7 was detained in February 2017 by the Liberian Coastguard, working in cooperation with the NGO Sea Shepherd. It was reported to have committed 25 violations of national and international law and was found with catch onboard that had been transhipped from sistership SORAYA I in the EEZ of Côte d’Ivoire, in violation of that country’s ban on transhipment at sea¹⁸. Another vessel in this fleet, the Senegalese flagged trawler MOHAMED, was detained by Gambian authorities in 2019 (again supported in a joint patrol with Sea Shepherd). It was charged with 15 counts of fishing in the Special Management Area reserved for artisanal fishers during the previous month¹⁹.

In addition to fisheries violations, there are also indications of labour and other human rights issues in the Hispasen fleet. It is reported that the HISPASEN 7 had undocumented workers onboard at the time of its detention in 2017²⁰. The Association for Professional Observers reports the unexplained death of a fisheries observer onboard its sistership HISPASEN V (also flagged to Senegal) in December 2021²¹.



HISPASEN V, 2016

¹⁷ <https://theses.hal.science/tel-00840968/document>

¹⁸ <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/2016news/liberia-coast-guards-bust-tons-of-fish-caught-in-liberian-waters/> and <https://www.seashepherdglobal.org/latest-news/sea-shepherd-launches-operation-sola-stella-with-t/>

¹⁹ <https://www.seashepherdglobal.org/latest-news/patrol-another-trawler/>

²⁰ <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/2016news/liberia-coast-guards-bust-tons-of-fish-caught-in-liberian-waters/>

²¹ <https://www.apo-observers.org/observer-safety/misses>

Identification challenges

There are some notable differences in the risk profile of the company-linked vessels flagged to Spain and Portugal compared with those flagged to non-EU countries. While all the European flagged vessels have IMO numbers, in line with EU IMO number requirements, seven out of the 24 vessels that were identified as potentially linked to José Martí Peix and flagged outside Europe do not have IMO numbers. This contributes to a lack of clarity regarding the identity and flagging of vessels, which in turn makes it challenging to track the full footprint of this company.

For example, national license lists, AIS and the ITU Ship Station database clearly indicate that the vessel SORAYA I is flagged to Senegal, with both license lists and ITU confirming that the vessel is owned by Hispasen SARL – José Martí Peix’s suspected subsidiary or joint venture in Senegal. However, the company presentation referenced above (2017 version) includes a vessel of this name flagged to Mauritania. It is unclear if this is an error, refers to a different vessel or if the Senegalese-flagged SORAYA I was previously flagged to Mauritania. The fact that the vessel has no IMO number and is not active in RFMO fisheries means that there is no information regarding its identity history or place of build in any publicly available sources.

At least three other vessels have been identified with potential links to José Martí Peix for which sources give unclear or contradictory information regarding their identities.

The VASK 12, flagged to Senegal, is included in the vessel list from the 2017 company presentation, however a vessel of this name could not be found in any other publicly available sources or on AIS. A Government report on risk activity in the Liberian EEZ during 2011 referred to a number of vessels seen fishing illegally in Liberian waters, including a ‘Spanish vessel name 12, which is the sister vessel to VASK 11’, (the VASK 11 was conducting licensed fishing in the Liberian EEZ at the time). This could presumably refer to the VASK 12²².

The company presentation also refers to a vessel PEIX 5, which is known from AIS and national sources, with no associated IMO number. This name was transmitted over MMSI 242190100 (in the series assigned to Morocco) until August 2018. From September 2018, the identity transmitted over this MMSI changed to ALUMAR 3, with callsign CNA2146, corresponding to a Moroccan flagged vessel with IMO 8576055. The SeaWeb database of vessels with IMO numbers indicates that ALUMAR 3 was previously named PEIX DEL MAR NUEVE, with the name change occurring in 2021.

It is unclear whether the MMSI was transferred from one vessel to another (standard practice in some flag States), or whether PEIX 5 was renamed ALUMAR 3, and the name history in SeaWeb is incorrect. The latter explanation may be indicated by the fact that PEIX DEL MAR NUEVE is also listed as the previous name of another Moroccan flagged vessel in the José Martí Peix fleet – PEIX 9. However, national sources also indicate that PEIX 5 was licensed to fish in 2020, two years after this identity ceased to be transmitted on AIS. Based on the information available, the current status and identity of the vessel that was named PEIX 5 is unclear.

It should also be noted that while the majority of the company’s Moroccan flagged vessels were owned through JMP Maroc SA, ALUMAR 3 has, since 2021, been owned by a

²² Source confidential

different Moroccan company – Marofish SARL. Whether this vessel was previously named PEIX 5 or PEIX DEL MAR NUEVE (or both), the name structure indicates that it was previously part of the JMP fleet. It is possible that it has been sold, possibly as part of the company’s bankruptcy proceedings, and is no longer beneficially owned by José Martí Peix.

There is also confusion regarding the identity of the vessel MOHAMED, flagged to Senegal, another vessel with no known IMO – known only from AIS, vessel photos, and reports of its 2019 detention by the Gambia. For a brief period during 2022, the MMSI associated with this vessel transmitted the IMO and callsign (alongside the name MOHAMED) of PEIX MAR VEINTICINCO, a Spanish-flagged vessel with suspected links to José Martí Peix²³. Whilst PEIX MAR VEINTICINCO has also transmitted over a Spanish MMSI, there are no periods since 2018 during which AIS indicates that both vessels were actively fishing in different locations. There have however been periods when both vessels were transmitting on AIS from close but distinct locations in Dakar port, indicating that the transmissions do likely come from two separate vessels. On this basis, the rationale for MOHAMED temporarily switching to transmitting the IMO and callsign of PEIX MAR VEINTICINCO is unclear. Whilst photos indicate that both vessels are of very similar build, a previous name visible under paintwork on the MOHAMED seems to include the characters ‘DE’ suggesting that it was not previously in the PEIX MAR name series.

Taken together, the information available on the VASK 12, PEIX 5, and MOHAMED highlights the challenge of confirming the historic and current identities of vessels without IMO numbers, particularly those that do not operate in RFMO fisheries so are not present on RFMO authorised vessel lists. This in turn makes it difficult for coastal, port, market, and flag States to accurately assess the risk associated with a vessel.

High-risk flagging practices

The flagging and operating practices of some of the non-EU flagged vessels with suspected links to José Martí Peix also demonstrate some risk behaviours that may enable them to operate with a reduced level of monitoring and control compared to the European flagged fleet. The company has had links with several vessels flagged to Cameroon in the past through its joint venture Peix Cameroon SA. One of these, MAYI SEIS (IMO 8803630) was owned by José Martí Peix SA while operating under the Spanish flag and was reflagged to Cameroon with registered owner changed to Peix Cameroon SA in 2000. This was identified as one of a number of vessels that did not appear on a list of Cameroon flagged fishing vessels provided to the European Commission by Cameroonian authorities, but was subsequently confirmed by authorities to be flagged to Cameroon²⁴. To add to the confusion, a vessel of this name is listed as flagged to Mauritania in the 2017 company presentation, although this flag does not appear on the vessel’s history in the SeaWeb database.

Cameroon was issued a yellow card in 2021 under the EU IUU Regulation, a decision that particularly referenced the country’s weaknesses as a flag State. This has been reflected in the significant number of high-risk fishing vessels, including several with a history of IUU operations, that have registered to this flag in recent years. This, combined with the lack of clarity in official documentation regarding the flag status of MAYI SEIS, highlights

²³ Owned by Expoferrer SA – see above – and included in the 2017 company presentation

²⁴ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021D0219\(02\)&rid=3](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021D0219(02)&rid=3)

the relative lack of flag State oversight that any company-linked vessels flagged to Cameroon will have received.

Another example of high-risk tactics in relation to vessel registration is presented by the CIDADE DE PORTIMAO (IMO 8748048). This vessel was originally flagged to Portugal under the ownership of Pescrul (see above), reflagging to Côte d'Ivoire in 2017, at which point information from official sources in Côte d'Ivoire identified the owner as an individual (a name match for the then CEO of José Martí Peix SA²⁵). Shortly after reflagging, the vessel departed Côte d'Ivoire for Dakar, Senegal, with the owners claiming it was going to that port to be refitted. The vessel did not return to Côte d'Ivoire and was presumed to have reflagged elsewhere without notifying its previous flag State²⁶.

One possible candidate that has been identified for the new identity of this vessel is the Senegalese-flagged MOHAMED (see above). The vessel MOHAMED is first known from AIS – where a signal with the vessel's identifiers was first received over a Senegalese MMSI in August 2019 from Dakar. Photo comparison suggests that the two vessels are of the same design, and a former name visible under paint on the hull of MOHAMED is unclear but appears to contain the letters 'C....DE...ORT...'. The last detected transmissions from the (Portuguese) MMSI that was used by CIDADE DE PORTIMAO were received from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in May and October 2019 (seven transmissions in total). However, the transmissions appear to have been sent from a location on dry land, approximately 500m from the nearest port area (specifically, from an auto-repair shop) suggesting that the AIS transponder was not on the vessel at the time – so the timeline of these transmissions is not inconsistent with MOHAMED being the CIDADE DE PORTIMAO.



Left: MOHAMED, from <https://www.vesselfinder.com/vessels/details/8733744> and Right: CIDADE DE PORTIMAO, from https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/details/ships/shipid:318141/mmsi:263403770/imo:8748048/vessel:CIDADE_DE_PORTIMAO.



Close-up on former name visible under paint on the MOHAMED (also showing a JM logo that provides further evidence for links with José Martí Peix or its beneficial owners)

²⁵https://www.seafood.media/fis/companies/details.asp?l=e&filterby=companies&letter=j&page=4&company_id=96701&country_id=es

²⁶ National sources