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Recent News in Global Maritime Affairs

[1] Climate Change and Blue Carbon Economy [1]

[Researchers Lock Up Carbon By Turning Seaweed Into Biocoal](#)

June 25 - *The Maritime Executive*
[North Atlantic]

Researchers in Norway are currently testing a new method for carbon capture and storage involving the conversion of cultivated, dried coastal seaweeds into biocoal using pyrolysis; a process involving heating the seaweeds to about 600 degrees in an oxygen-free atmosphere. The biocoal, which is “resistant to degradation by fungi and microorganisms,” can improve soil quality and porosity.

[‘Beyond extreme’ ocean heat wave in North Atlantic is worst in 170 years](#)

June 23 - *The Washington Post* [Paywall]
[Atlantic Ocean]

In the waters of the North Atlantic Ocean around Europe, sea surface temperatures are hitting as high as 9 degrees Fahrenheit (5 degrees Celsius) above normal, marking the warmest temperatures for the region in more than 170 years. These waters do not typically hit these temperatures until August and September, when the waters are typically the warmest.

[Scientists made a frightening discovery when they measured sharks worldwide](#)

June 15 - *The Washington Post* [Paywall]
[Global]

After a comprehensive survey of nearly 400 coral reefs worldwide, researchers found that five common reef shark species have experienced dramatic decreases of between 60 to 73 percent over the past 50 years. The decline is mainly accredited to rampant overfishing, which not only directly threatens the sharks but also the marine ecosystems that they rely on.

[Norway Aims to Open Arctic Waters to Deep-Sea Mining](#)

June 13 - *Arctic Today*

[Arctic]

In response to the growing demand for important minerals, Norway is planning to open a large area in the Arctic and sub-Arctic to deep-sea mining. The proposed mining area is rich in valuable metals—including copper and nickel—that are crucial to the global energy transition towards batteries and electric vehicles.

[Scientists hold US nuclear tests responsible for South China Sea radioactivity](#)

June 13 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[South China Sea]

A group of Chinese scientists has accredited the U.S. Cold War-era nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands for contemporary radioactivity in the South China Sea. A study suggests that plutonium samples from the waters must have drifted into the sea from the Western Pacific along the North Equatorial Current.

[New tanker to feature CO2 capture technology](#)

June 7 - *Sea Technology*

[Europe]

Spanish engineering and technology company Sener said it has completed the design of a new biofuel tanker to balance costs, energy efficiency and emission reduction goals. The new type of tanker will feature a carbon dioxide capture and storage system to manage greenhouse gas release.

[New EU project launched to evaluate mechanisms for using the ocean to remove atmospheric CO2](#)

June 6 - National Oceanography Centre

[Europe]

The four-year SEA02-CDR project, funded by Horizon Europe, aims to assess the feasibility and benefits of ocean-based carbon dioxide removal (OCDR) as a method to combat climate change. With the urgency to limit global warming, this project will address critical gaps in our technical understanding regarding the use of the ocean in carbon removal.

[Arctic Summer Could Be Practically Sea-Ice-Free by the 2030s](#)

June 6 - *The New York Times* [Paywall]

[Arctic]

A peer-reviewed research study predicts that the first summer that melts “practically all” of the Arctic’s floating sea ice could happen in the 2030s—a decade sooner than previously had been predicted—even if nations curb greenhouse gas emissions more efficiently than they already are.

[Ocean microplastics found to be rife by teams sailing around the world](#)

June 2 - National Oceanography Centre

[Global]

The National Oceanography Centre identified microplastics with concentrations of nearly up to 1,900 per cubic meter. The study began in Mindelo, Cabo Verde and ended in Cape Town, South Africa. The total data of the microplastics ranged from 92-1,884 particles per cubic meter.

[A Plan to Avert a Vast Oil Spill Off Yemen Finally Moves Ahead](#)

May 30 - *The New York Times* [Paywall]

[Red Sea, Africa, Middle East]

The FSO *Safer*, a long-decaying supertanker situated off the coast of Yemen in the Red Sea, has been holding more than 1 million barrels of oil since its near-abandonment after war broke out in 2015. The United Nations-led plan to avert a vast oil spill is finally moving ahead, with inspections of the rusting tanker now underway in preparation of safely transferring the oil to a seaworthy tanker.

[2] Maritime Economy and Shipping [2]

[Shipping emissions could be halved without damaging trade, research finds](#)

June 26 - *The Guardian*

[Global]

New research published by consultancy firm CE Delft defends that the amount of carbon dioxide emissions from shipping could be cut between one-third and one-half this decade, simply by using already available techniques like optimizing speeds and applying innovative technologies like biofuel.

[Countries Push for CO2 Shipping Levy as Crunch Talks Loom](#)

June 26 - *Reuters*

[Global]

Maritime trade nations including Denmark and the Marshall Islands have begun to advocate for new global carbon dioxide emissions levies on shipping in preparation for the upcoming International Maritime Organization meeting in July 2023.

[Low water hampers Rhine river shipping in Germany](#)

June 19 - *Reuters*

[Europe]

Low water levels have severely hampered the German shipping industry's usage of the Rhine river, which is a commonly used thoroughfare for regional freight transportation. In response, companies have begun to increase their surcharges on usual freight rates, according to commodity traders.

[Russian officials say Black Sea grain deal can't be extended](#)

June 16 - Reuters

[Black Sea]

Senior Russian officials announced that the Black Sea Grain Initiative previously brokered by the United Nations and Turkey in July 2022, which allowed Ukraine to continue sea-borne exports of grain to support the global food crisis, "is impossible to update, and...also impossible to extend" due to the exhaustion of Russia's "patience and desire to implement it."

[U.S. floats 30-nation Arctic drill as melting ice opens trade routes](#)

June 12 - Nikkei Asia [Paywall]

[Arctic, Global]

A top U.S. Navy official proposed that the U.S. hosted a joint Arctic maritime exercise with allies and partners in the like of the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC). According to the official, the Arctic has become "an area of competition" to "think more deeply about" as the erosion of the polar ice cap opens up possibilities of trade routes in the region.

[OneWeb Launches Connectivity for Maritime Sector](#)

June 7 - Hellenic Shipping News

[Global]

OneWeb, a global low Earth orbit (LEO) communications firm, recently launched a 'Try Before You Buy' Service, enabling maritime industry stakeholders to use the OneWeb satellite network with a low barrier-to-entry for any geolocation and communication needs at sea.

[China's first home-grown large cruise liner undocks in Shanghai in breakthrough for shipbuilding, high-end manufacturing](#)

June 6 - South China Morning Post [Paywall]

[China]

Adora Magic City, a 135,500-tonne cruise ship, has left its dock in Shanghai as the cruise liner's construction came closer to completion, with delivery planned by the end of the year. According to the shipbuilder, the cruise liner is the first large cruise ship built in China and indicates a breakthrough of the country's shipbuilding capabilities.

[Exxon to supply biofuel for Hapag-Lloyd Containerships](#)

June 5 - Sea Technology

[United States, Europe]

U.S. oil and gas company Exxon has finalized a deal with German shipping company Hapag-Lloyd to provide Hapag-Lloyd ships with fuel blends that contain 30% biofuel. Exxon said the biofuel

arrangement will support the reduction of greenhouse gas in line with the International Maritime Organization's stated commitments.

[Container Shipping Rate Collapse Continues](#)

May 31 - *Marine Link*

[Global]

In May, the contracted cost of shipping containers fell drastically by 27.5%, marking the ninth consecutive month of drops and the largest ever monthly fall recorded by Xeneta's Shipping Index. "Monthly declines have become the 'new normal' at present, but this is a collapse," said Xeneta CEO.

[3] Ocean Governance and Maritime Cooperation [3]

[Crucial two weeks underway at IMO](#)

June 26 - *Seatrade Maritime News*

[Global]

Starting on June 26, the International Maritime Organization will have two back-to-back meetings to discuss the framework for decarbonization of the shipping industry. The 15th session of the Intersessional Working Group on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships (ISWG GHG) will be followed directly by the 80th meeting of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 80).

[Titanic sub suffered 'catastrophic implosion,' all five aboard dead](#)

June 22 - *Reuters*

[Pacific Ocean]

After a five-day, international search of more than 10,000 square miles in the North Atlantic Ocean for the deep-sea submersible the *Titan*, debris was found from a "catastrophic implosion" that killed all five people onboard.

[Philippines' Marcos Jnr hails 'progress' on South China Sea fishing ban talks with Beijing](#)

June 21 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[South China Sea]

Philippine President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. said that the government is making "progress" in negotiations with China about a fishery ban that Beijing imposed in the South China Sea. China has said the fishery restrictions are meant to promote sustainable fishing, whereas the Philippines argued that the ban covers areas that should fall into the Philippine's exclusive economic zone.

[UN adopts first treaty governing the high seas](#)

July 19 - *The Hill*

[Global]

On June 19, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced that the UN had adopted the first global treaty to protect the high seas and preserve marine biodiversity in international waters. The legally-binding agreement will take effect after it is ratified by 60 countries and will be open for signature in New York for two years beginning September 20.

[Russia says one of its warships rescued 68 passengers from boat in Mediterranean](#)

July 19 - *Reuters*

[Mediterranean Sea, Russia]

Russia's Defence Ministry announced that one of its warships and a cargo ship worked to rescue 68 people overnight from the *Avalon*, a "yacht-type vessel" flying the Greek and German flags, after the vessel sent a distress call from the Mediterranean Sea.

[U.N. human rights chief urges clamp-down on people smugglers after shipwreck](#)

June 16 - *Reuters*

[Mediterranean Sea]

After a fishing boat carrying 400-750 people capsized about 50 miles off the southern coast of Greece, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for countries to clamp down on human smuggling. He specifically reiterated a call to "open up more regular migration channels and enhance responsibility sharing, ensure arrangements for the safe and timely disembarkation of all people rescued at sea, and the establishment of independent monitoring and oversight of migration related policies and practices."

[Palau leader calls on U.S. for help over Chinese ships in its waters](#)

June 15 - *Nikkei Asia* [Paywall]

[Pacific Ocean]

On June 15, President Surangel Whipps Jr. of Palau called upon Japan, the U.S. and other allies to help with "uninvited" Chinese vessels entering its waters. His call follows a research vessel being spotted in Palau's exclusive economic zone near the place where undersea fiber-optic cables are laid, causing Palau to have "concerns about what their intent is."

[Malaysia PM Anwar defends maritime border agreements with Indonesia](#)

June 13 - *Channel News Asia*

[Southeast Asia]

On June 13, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said in a parliamentary session that the two treaties he had signed with Indonesian President Joko Widodo on June 8, which demarcated parts of

the two nations' maritime borders, were "based on...international law , especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982." Mr. Anwar also emphasized that nothing was signed before consultations were held with several government agencies and ministries.

Government seeks fishing industry's understanding over nuclear plant water release

June 11 - *The Japan Times* [Paywall]

[Japan]

Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Nishimura Yasutoshi spoke with representatives from the Ibaraki Prefecture's fisheries industry to discuss the planned release into the sea of treated water from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. A local representative said they are "absolutely opposed to the release" over concerns about fishing operations while Nishimura ensured the government would "make all-out efforts to prevent reputational damage."

US, Japanese, Philippine coast guard ships stage law enforcement drills near South China Sea

June 6 - AP

[South China Sea]

In the South China Sea, the U.S., Japanese and Philippine coast guards conducted joint law enforcement drills in the West Philippine Sea, including one that staged the boarding of a vessel suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction.

[4] Maritime Security and Defense [4]

U.S To transform India Into Naval Logistics Hub For Indo-Pacific Region

June 24 - *Marine Insight*

[United States, India, Indo-Pacific]

During Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Washington, the U.S. announced plans to help develop India's maritime infrastructure through a new India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X). The goal of this initiative is to develop India as a hub of naval repair and maintenance which could be used by the U.S. and its allies in the Indo-Pacific.

Indonesia moves site of ASEAN military drills away from South China Sea

June 22 - *Reuters*

[South China Sea, Southeast Asia]

As Indonesia plans for the first Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) joint military exercise, the country decided to move the drill away from the contested waters of the South China Sea and into Indonesian waters instead.

[Taiwan reports Chinese aircraft carrier sailed through strait](#)

June 21 - Reuters

[East Asia]

On June 21, Taiwan's Ministry of Defense said that a Chinese aircraft carrier group led by the *Shandong* sailed through the western section of the Taiwan Strait in a southerly direction. Taiwan's ministry said it had dispatched “appropriate forces” to monitor the activities.

[India to Give Vietnam Warship as the Two Countries Tighten Defense Ties](#)

June 20 - Voice of America

[India, Southeast Asia]

Following a meeting between Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh and his Vietnamese counterpart, General Phan Van Gang, India announced that it will be delivering the INS *Kirpan*, a corvette, to the Vietnamese navy.

[U.S. nuclear sub arrives in South Korea after North sends missiles into Japan EEZ](#)

June 16 - *The Japan Times* [Paywall]

[East Asia, United States]

On June 16, a U.S. nuclear-powered guided-missile submarine docked at a naval base in South Korea for the first time in almost six years. The USS *Michigan* arrived at a naval base in Busan a day after North Korea sent two ballistic missiles into Japan's exclusive economic zone off the coast of Ishikawa Prefecture.

[Carrier USS Gerald R. Ford Enters Mediterranean Sea](#)

June 15 - USNI News

[United States, Mediterranean Sea]

On June 15, the USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78) passed through the Strait of Gibraltar and began operating in the Mediterranean Sea, marking the third time that a U.S. carrier has entered the Mediterranean since Russia invaded Ukraine, following the USS *Bush* and USS *Harry S. Truman*.

[Indian, U.S. and Japanese Big Decks Drill in the Indo-Pacific](#)

June 14 - USNI News

[Indo-Pacific, United States, Global]

The United States, Japan, Canada and France conducted maritime exercises in the Philippine Sea as part of the Indo-Pacific Command's Large Scale Global Exercise (LSGE) 2023. Two U.S. carriers and one Japanese helicopter destroyer participated in the exercise.

[US Submarine Damaged in South China Sea Won't Return Until 2026 as Shipyards Are Clogged](#)

June 14 - Bloomberg [Paywall]
[United States, South China Sea]

The U.S. Navy announced that the USS *Connecticut* submarine, which struck an underwater seamount in the South China Sea in October 2021, will not return to service until at least early 2026 amidst a backlog of maintenance overhauls. The announcement raised questions about U.S. naval readiness amidst a growing Chinese fleet.

[Chinese navy ship pays port call to Philippines in goodwill tour of region](#)

June 14 - AP
[Asia-Pacific, China]

On June 14 in Manila, the Philippines, a Chinese training ship carrying 476 naval cadets and officers made its fourth and last stop on a 40-day goodwill tour. The *Qi Jiguang*, China's largest training ship, previously made port calls in Vietnam, Thailand and Brunei before briefly docking in the Philippines.

[China is building the most powerful warship radar on record: scientists](#)

June 7 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]
[China]

A recent peer-reviewed study in China has revealed proof of concept for the most powerful radar system in the world. The radar being developed could account for the earth's curve and detect incoming missiles from up to 4,500km (2,800 miles) away.

[Russian, Chinese Bombers Fly Joint Mission Near Japan, Korea as Russian Fleet Holds Major Drills in the Pacific](#)

June 6 - *USNI News*
[Russia, China, East Asia]

On June 6, two Chinese H-6 bombers and two Russian Tu-95 bombers flew a joint mission over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea; their first such flight since November. Japan's Air Self-Defense Force scrambled to intercept the formation after two more Chinese fighters joined the flight, as South Korea also scrambled fighters in response to eight total Chinese and Russian military aircraft.

[China to join Indonesia's multilateral naval drills despite rising tension](#)

May 31 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]
[South China Sea]

China has accepted Indonesia's invitation to its multilateral exercise and will send its *Zhangjiang* destroyer and *Xuchang* frigate. Indonesia invited the navies of 47 different nations.

Peer-Reviewed Research on Maritime Issues

- Government Release: U.S. Department of State - [“World Ocean Day”](#) [June 8]
- Government Release: India’s Minister of Earth Sciences via *The Economic Times* - [“India’s Blue Economy Sets Sail to Unlock a Sea of Opportunities!”](#) [June 8]
- Government Release: U.S. Congressional Research Service - [“U.S. Defense Infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific: Background and Issues for Congress”](#) [June 6]
- Government Release: Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China - [“Li Shangfu calls for vigilance against ‘hegemony of navigation’”](#) [June 4]
- Government Release: Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China - [“China slams US, Canadian warships’ transit through Taiwan Strait”](#) [June 3]
- Government Release: U.S. Department of State - [“U.S. Relationship with the Indian Ocean Rim Association and Commitment to the Indian Ocean Region”](#) [May 30]
- Report: Arup International Projects Limited - [“Canadian Green Shipping Corridors Preliminary Assessment Final Report”](#) [June 19]
- Report: International Institute for Strategic Studies - [“New Ambitions at Sea: Naval Modernisation in the Gulf States”](#) [June 5]
- Podcast: CIMSEC - [“Sea Control 438 - Small states and the law of the sea with Dr. Douglas Guilfoyle”](#) [June 22]
- Podcast: *The Economist* - [“Babbage - Why the future of fish farming lies on dry land”](#) [June 14]
- Podcast: CIMSEC - [“Sea Control 435 - The High Seas Treaty with Gabrielle Carmine”](#) [June 11]
- Podcast: CIMSEC - [“Sea Control 433 - Climate Change and Military Operations in the Arctic with Marisol Maddox”](#) [June 1]
- Opinion: [“ASEAN finds itself stuck between the U.S. and China”](#) [*The Japan Times* - June 23] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“China has its eyes on Okinawa”](#) [*The Economist* - June 22] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“A Key Moment to Advance Green Shipping”](#) [*Hellenic Shipping News* - June 20]
- Opinion: [“ASEAN Between the U.S. and China”](#) [*The Wire China* - June 18] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“What It Will Take to Deter China in the Taiwan Strait: Washington Must Take Difficult Steps to Prevent Catastrophe”](#) [*Foreign Affairs* - June 15] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“The Pacific Is Becoming a Testing Ground for Green Geopolitics”](#) [*Foreign Policy* - June 15] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Cyclone Biparjoy underscores climate threats facing India and Pakistan – and why they must work together”](#) [*The Third Pole* - June 15] [*In Urdu*] [*In Hindi*]
- Opinion: [“Taiwan’s Navy Caught Between Two Strategies to Counter Chinese Threat”](#) [*USNI News* - June 14]
- Opinion: [“Sunk Costs: The Difficulty of Using Sanctions to Deter China in a Taiwan Crisis”](#) [Center for Strategic & International Studies - June 12]
- Opinion: [“China Is Rewriting the Law of the Sea”](#) [*Foreign Policy* - June 10] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“China’s cruise liner breakthrough marks crowning glory, but ambition to climb high-value chain faces challenges”](#) [*South China Morning Post* - June 11] [Paywall]

- Opinion: [“Why Hong Kong’s taste for an endangered reef fish is a problem, and how to eat seafood sustainably”](#) [South China Morning Post - June 8] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Can ocean-based carbon dioxide removal be used to turn the tide on climate change?”](#) [Innovation News Network - June 26]
- Analysis: [“China targets sea change in global diplomacy race with West”](#) [Nikkei Asia - June 20] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Australia’s 2023 Defence Strategic Review: mobilizing all elements of national power to meet the challenges of the Indo-Pacific era”](#) [The Sasakawa Peace Foundation - June 19]
- Analysis: [“How the Pentagon thinks about America’s strategy in the Pacific”](#) [The Economist - June 15] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“How a Shady Chinese Firm’s Encryption Chips Got Inside the US Navy, NATO, and NASA”](#) [WIRED - June 15]
- Analysis: [“Strategic Upgrades in the Pacific”](#) [Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative - June 15]
- Analysis: [“China Creates a Coast Guard Like No Other, Seeking Supremacy in Asian Seas”](#) [The New York Times - June 13] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Cable Cutters”](#) [The Wire China - June 11] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Chinese general signals new strategy with Senkaku remarks”](#) [Nikkei Asia - June 8] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“The race to map the world’s seagrass — before it disappears”](#) [The Washington Post - June 8] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Analysis of the Air and Maritime Blockade Operations Against Taiwan by the People’s Liberation Army — What Can Be Inferred from Military Exercises, etc. —”](#) [The Sasakawa Peace Foundation - June 7]
- Analysis: [“China’s new Great Wall”](#) [The Economist - June 5] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“U.S. Vows to Continue Patrols Near China and Urges Nuclear Talks”](#) [The New York Times - June 3] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Visual Investigations - Fake Signals and American Insurance: How a Dark Fleet Moves Russian Oil”](#) [The New York Times - May 30] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Land around the U.S. is sinking. Here are some of the fastest areas.”](#) [The Washington Post - May 30] [Paywall]

Events on the Maritime Domain

- On May 25, 2023, the Center for Strategic & International Studies held a hybrid [conversation with Ely Ratner and Siddharth Mohandas on “The U.S. Role in Indo-Pacific Security.”](#) A full recording is available.
- On May 29, 2023, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Wilson Center’s Polar Institute, along with several co-sponsors, held an online event at Helsinki’s City Hall on [“Antarctica Today: Shared Challenges for Science and Environmental Protection in the Final Frontier.”](#) The event included a session in English and a session in Finnish.

- On May 30, 2023, the International Maritime Organization and the Republic of Korea jointly hosted the [Symposium on "Making headway on the IMO MASS Code"](#) at the IMO Headquarters in London, United Kingdom.
- From June 2-4, 2023, the International Institute for Strategic Studies hosted its [20th Shangri-La Dialogue](#) in Singapore, bringing together defense ministers to “debate the region’s most pressing security challenges, engage in important bilateral talks and come up with fresh approaches together.” The full speaker agenda, transcripts, videos, and plenary discussions of public access are available on their website to explore. [[U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin’s As Delivered Speech Transcript](#)] [[Chinese Minister of National Defense Li Shangfu Provisional Speech Transcript](#)]
- From June 5-8, 2023, the IEEE Oceanic Engineering Society and Marine Technology Society hosted the [“OCEANS 2023 Limerick - Blue Ocean Planet Earth”](#) in person in Limerick, Ireland; an event for “global maritime professionals to learn, innovate, and lead in the protection and utilization of the world’s largest natural resource – our Oceans.”
- On June 6, 2023, the Wilson Center held a hybrid event discussing [“Ocean Policy to Strengthen the Resilience of Marine Ecosystems.”](#) A full recording is available.
- On June 7, 2023, the Center for Strategic & International Studies Asia Program held a hybrid [“CSDS-CSIS Transatlantic Dialogue on the Indo-Pacific.”](#) A full recording is available.
- On June 8, 2023, the [Ocean Awards Gala](#) was held in Washington, D.C. on the evening of World Ocean Day. The gala, also a part of [Capitol Hill Ocean Week](#), annually recognizes champions of marine and Great Lakes stewardship.
- From June 13-14, 2023, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conducted its third [Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue](#), this time in Bonn, Germany. The two chosen topics for this Dialogue were 1) Coastal ecosystem restoration including blue carbon and 2) Fisheries and food security. Portions of the dialogue were [webcast](#).
- From June 15-16, 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia and the Institute for Strategic Studies of Mongolia held the [8th International Conference on Northeast Asian Security “Ulaanbaatar Dialogue”](#) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
- From June 20-22, 2023, the World Maritime University and its partners held its [“Conference on Maritime & Ocean Sustainability”](#) in alignment with its 40th anniversary, in Sweden.
- On June 21, 2023, *Foreign Policy* held a virtual dialogue on [“Tensions Beyond the Strait: How Taiwan’s security is impacting the transatlantic alliance”](#) in partnership with Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies. A full recording is available.
- On June 26, 2023, the Center for Strategic & International Studies Australia Chair held [“A Conversation with Dr. Kurt Campbell and Admiral Michael Gilday on the Strategic and Military Implications of AUKUS.”](#) A full recording is available.
- From June 29-30, 2023, [The Nautical Institute’s Developing Maritime Professionals Conference and AGM](#) will be held in Hamburg, Germany. The conference will be conducted on board the historic cargo ship MS Bleichen.
- On July 4, the Ocean Policy Research Institute of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (OPRI-SPF) will hold its hybrid [“194th Ocean Forum: Game-changing technology for fisheries resource surveys - Ocean acoustic waveguide remote sensing”](#) out of Japan.
- From July 12-13, 2023, the Wilson Center, in partnership with the University of Alaska, the U.S. Department of Energy’s Arctic Energy Office, and Rand Corporation will hold a two-day online dialogue titled [“Critical Minerals in the Arctic: Forging the Path Forward.”](#)

Handbill Spotlight

Maritime Search and Rescue

Issue Background

While several multinational organizations ([European Union](#), [IMO](#), [ASEAN](#), etc.) and individual states have specialized definitions of “search and rescue” and its related operations, in general, maritime search and rescue (SAR) is a maritime safety operation referring to the highly coordinated efforts to provide assistance to persons or vessels in distress at sea, which is usually given regardless of their status or nationality. One of the most common forms of search and rescue is “air-sea rescue” (ASR or A/SR), referred to as aeronautical and maritime search and rescue ([AMSAR](#)) by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which is conducted over water.

Formalized maritime search and rescue considerations date back to more than a century ago. Sparked by the sinking of the Titanic, the [1914 Safety of Life at Sea \(SOLAS\) Convention](#) (amended in 1929, 1948, 1960, and 1974) is [regarded](#) as “the most important of all international treaties concerning the safety of merchant ships.” Still, while air-sea rescue coordination was [developed](#) during World War II and some states [continued](#) post-war developments themselves, the formalized concept of maritime search and rescue truly began to take shape at the international level in the 1970s. The [SAR Convention—adopted](#) at a Conference in Hamburg, Germany on April 27, 1979 and entered into force on June 22, 1985—is another leading international convention on coordinated search and rescue efforts and obligations. Notably, the SAR Convention was successfully [amended](#) two decades later after many substantial concerns on government responsibilities were addressed, making it more broadly acceptable and further emphasizing coordination.

As the end of the 20th century approached, several supplemental actions related to SAR were taken at the international level. From 1979-1998, the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee successfully divided the world's oceans into [13 search and rescue areas](#), “in each of which the countries concerned have delimited search and rescue regions for which they are responsible.” The IMO's [Global SAR Plan](#), as a “necessary and practical tool for SAR operations,” was developed with the intention of “defining detailed responsibilities for each member nation” [as part](#) of the global community. Additionally, several region-specific and charity organizations ([International Maritime Rescue Federation](#), [Association for Rescue at Sea](#), [Search and Rescue Charitable Foundation](#), [International Ice Patrol](#), etc.) were created to support SAR operations. Several other formal international agreements include elements of or direct references to search and rescue. The most notable of these are the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) ([Article 98 - Duty to render assistance](#)) and the 1949 Geneva Convention ([Article 27 - Protection of coastal rescue craft and fixed coastal installations](#)). The International Maritime Organization still maintains a [“minimum list”](#) of the “essential” publications and documents online specifically related to maritime search and rescue.

Individual states also usually have domestic regulations, laws, as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements at the domestic level that include mention of maritime search and rescue, the operations of which typically fall under the purview of their coast guard or air force.

Recent Events¹

While SAR operations regularly take place around the world in varying scale and for a variety of reasons, in June 2023, there were two particular cases that received ongoing global attention: the capsizing of a migrant boat in the Mediterranean Sea and the disappearance of a tourist submersible near the wreckage of the Titanic shipwreck in the northern Atlantic Ocean.’

On June 13, a [fishing trawler](#) carrying an [estimated](#) 750-800 (more than 300 of whom were Pakistani, [according](#) to Pakistan) migrant people capsized about 50 miles off the southern coast of Greece after its engine broke down, marking the [deadliest](#) sinking off Greece since 2015. Greek authorities say that 104 survivors and 78 bodies have been brought ashore so far through SAR efforts. Meanwhile, [questions have since been raised](#) about the Greek Coast Guard’s [potential](#) accidental role in the capsizing as they had arrived on scene but had “no connection” to the sinking itself. “[A] shift in weight probably caused by panic and the boat capsized. As soon as we got there, we started our rescue operation to collect those who were in the water,” explained a Greek Coast Guard spokesman.



Five days later, the deep-sea submersible the *Titan* carrying five people went missing around the site of the Titanic shipwreck in the North Atlantic Ocean, launching a five-day, multinational search and rescue operation. A [Unified Command was established](#) out of the *Polar Prince* research vessel which launched the *Titan*. [Search teams](#) from the U.S., Canada, France, and Britain jointly scanned thousands of miles with planes and [ships](#) for a sign of the vessel, sharing information and deploying “[all assets](#)” of search and rescue mission [technologies](#), [specialty crafts](#), and [trained tactics](#). The operation ended once a debris field including the hull of the *Titan*, likely caused by a “catastrophic implosion,” was found by a [robotic diving vehicle](#) deployed from a Canadian ship, [leading](#) SAR operators to declare all five people dead and observers to raise their own questions and observations.

Keep In Mind

Since the 1979 SAR Convention, search and rescue has become an increasingly regular point of discussion, with many states having since developed their own definitions, declarations and training systems; both domestically and multilaterally. Search and rescue—similar to ecological sustainability

¹ Image: An undated handout photo provided by the Hellenic Coast Guard shows migrants onboard a boat during a rescue operation, before their boat capsized on the open sea, off Greece, June 14, 2023. (Source: Hellenic Coast Guard/Handout)

and scientific research—is a reliable point of intersection for establishing and maintaining cooperation, even amidst dueling states. As SAR requires formal training, many states take these opportunities to conduct maritime search and rescue-related drills and exercises between their armed forces, such as those [held between the U.S., Japan and the Philippines](#) in the South China Sea in early June. Even in highly tense regions like the South China Sea, search and rescue is finding its value, with ASEAN publishing a milestone [ASEAN Agreement on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Cooperation](#) in January 2023. The U.S. Coast Guard and Chinese Maritime Safety Administration [held bilateral SAR training](#) exercises in 2012, though such operations now seem nonexistent as the relationship has become strained.

As much as SAR can be a gathering force, as it is a regulated practice, it can also become divisive. For instance, the issue of unregulated maritime migration in the Mediterranean Sea has [long](#) been an [increasing issue](#) for regional states. Notably, this capsizing in June occurred soon after the European Commission released a [“Draft Roadmap towards a ‘European Framework for Operational Cooperation on Search and Rescue in the Mediterranean Sea.’”](#) written by the Search and Rescue Contact Group who have been holding meetings since January 2023 to develop this framework. This draft’s context, such as its inclusion of vessel “registration and certification,” has received [mixed](#) response from states including Germany who gave a [full paper response](#) to each of the nine deliverables. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also spoke up in response, [calling](#) for regional countries to clamp down on human smuggling and maritime safety. Meanwhile, having another jarringly different SAR operation being conducted around the same time in the North Atlantic caused some observers to [directly](#) criticize the [equality](#) of [reception](#) regarding these two situations.

Despite these understandable cases, which are often sprinkled with historical context and political agendas, it remains true that maritime search and rescue offers a practical point of mutually beneficial connection between states. Rather than relying solely on domestic, regional and international regulations—which can easily become too narrowly focused or overly generalized—neighboring coastal states should discuss maritime search and rescue operations with one another in a bilateral capacity to build the most reasonable and mutually beneficial solution between them. Especially for major maritime states—as well as states simply in need of a positive point of connection—SAR should not be continually hidden within a simple list of cooperative efforts, but be given its own platform for improvement.

This issue’s Spotlight was written by Jessica Martin, ICAS Research Associate & Chief Editor, ICAS Newsletters.

ICAS Maritime Affairs Program: New and Upcoming

— Journal Article —

China and the United States in the South Pacific Ocean: Will Strategic Competition or Practical Cooperation Drive the Future Development

By Nong Hong

June 16, 2023

Abstract:

The South Pacific Ocean is emerging as an arena of U.S.-China strategic competition while the practices of the two countries in some areas suggest that the model of cooperation could benefit the regional States. It is hard to foresee whether competition or cooperation will drive the future development of the South Pacific or whether the two phenomena may co-exist. It is determined not only by policies taken by the two States themselves and their respective engagements with both external stakeholders and regional States. Also, it is critical to understand how the regional states view the United States and China and how they are responding to U.S.-China competition.

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— ICAS Blog Post —

Event Summary: Building a Networked Security Architecture in the Indo-Pacific

By Alec Caruana

June 26, 2023

On June 8, 2023, Dr. Ely Ratner, Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs in the Biden administration, sat down with Lisa Curtis of the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) for a discussion on '[Building a Networked Security Architecture in the Indo-Pacific](#).' On the heels of [a tour throughout Asia](#) alongside Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, ASD Ratner returned stateside to this event with palpable optimism about the geopolitical situation in the Indo-Pacific region. "This is a moment of unprecedented alignment in our alliances and partnerships in the region," he said, echoing Secretary Austin's remarks given at the 20th Shangri-La Dialogue of a "shared vision" across the Pacific...

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