



# ICAS MARITIME AFFAIRS HANDBILL

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## Recent News in Global Maritime Affairs

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

#### [Seaweed farms the size of 176 football pitches planned for Cornwall](#)

December 28 - *Cornwall Live*  
[Western Europe]

Two companies, Biome Algae and The Carbon Sea Garden, have filed applications with the United Kingdom's Marine Management Organisation to establish two large, 55-hectare seaweed farms—a region as big as 176 football fields—in Gerrans Bay off the Roseland Peninsula in Cornwall, England.

#### [Govt to link financial services and blue economy in 2024](#)

December 26 - *BVI News*  
[The Caribbean, Africa]

British Virgin Islands Minister of Financial Services Lorna Smith has announced that the Ministry will be focusing on building the blue economy in 2024, including the development of blue bonds for ocean-based projects and potential implementation of a blue carbon strategy with aid from Guyana.

#### [China to ramp up marine pollution control efforts](#)

December 23 - *China Daily*  
[China]

With China's revised Maritime Environment Protection Law set to be implemented starting January 1, Chinese officials clarified how the amended law will require authorities at all levels of government to strengthen the comprehensive, coordinated and regular environmental monitoring of the ocean.

### [Stabilizing 'coral rubble' for reef recovery](#)

December 15 - *Sea Technology*

[South Pacific]

Heron Island Research Station researchers in Australia, utilizing a Nortek velocimeter to measure hydrodynamic energy, have found that stabilizing 'coral rubble'—"the skeletons of corals broken apart by bleaching or storm events in the ocean"—can be effective for coral reef recovery.

### [A breakthrough moment for mangroves: Delivering Global Action on Mangrove Restoration and Protection](#)

December 15 - *Global Mangrove Alliance*

[Global]

During the COP28 Climate Conference in Dubai, the Mangrove Breakthrough's objective of protecting and restoring 15 million hectares of mangroves by 2030 with US\$4 billion of new investments was successfully secured. This initiative gained the backing of over 40 new governments, with various stakeholders including ministers, indigenous communities, financial institutions, and NGOs making substantial commitments toward realizing the Breakthrough.

### [China dispatches massive vessel to catalogue fisheries, scale up industry presence](#)

December 8 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[China, Global]

On December 7, the independently-owned *Lan Hai 201*, China's largest fishery research vessel, set sail from Shanghai to conduct surveys in the high seas of the northwestern Indian Ocean. The *Lan Hai 201* is owned by the East China Sea Fisheries Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences. Its four-month journey will cover and assess 100 sites as it works to achieve "sustainable development of distant-water fisheries" and safeguard "China's maritime rights."

### [Marine heat waves likely culprit in Alaska chum declines](#)

December 6 - *Arctic Today*

[Arctic Ocean]

According to a new study, the successive marine heat waves in 2014-2019, which reduced the amount of normal prey of salmon like krill, has led to chum salmon off the coast of Alaska becoming scarce.

### [Philippines joins Blue Carbon Action Partnership to Strengthen Coastal Ecosystems](#)

December 4 - *Modern Diplomacy*

[Southeast Asia, Global]

The Philippines announced at COP28 that it joined the World Economic Forum's Blue Carbon Action Partnership to bolster the conservation and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems including

mangroves, seagrasses, and salt marshes. Given the environment, the blue carbon ecosystems in the Philippines are capable of collectively sequestering nearly 700 billion metric tons of carbon.

### [Seaweed-robot startup nets GBP 150,000 in pre-seed funding; US DOE funds seaweed study searching for rare earth metals](#)

December 1 - *Seafood Source*

[Western Europe, United States]

London-based seaweed startup Samudra Ocean has received a US\$190,000 investment from the British Design Fund to support the additional creation of prototypes of AI-powered seaweed robots that are made to help farmers monitor and predict their seaweed yield.

### [Ocean Visions Creates Road Map to Advance Research for the Restoration of Blue Carbon](#)

December 1 - *Ocean Visions*

[United States]

Ocean Visions released a new road map on restoring blue carbon in order to accelerate research and development of ocean-based solutions—especially the blue carbon ecosystem—to the climate crisis. This road map aims to address challenges in carbon storage, restoration techniques, and improve monitoring and reporting systems.

## [2] Maritime Economy and Shipping [2]

### [Singapore Port Breaks Record With 3 Billion Gross Tons In Vessel Arrivals For 2023](#)

December 27 - *Marine Insight*

[Southeast Asia, Global]

On December 25, the Port of Singapore announced a record-breaking annual vessel arrival tonnage of 3 billion gross tons in 2023, which is being celebrated as a historic milestone. In 2022, 2.83 billion gross tons were reported.

### [Maersk and MSC Get Agreement to Expand Brazilian Terminal in Santos](#)

December 22 - *The Maritime Executive*

[South America, Global]

After more than two years of reviews, Brazil's Ministry of Ports and Airports and the Santos Port Authority have renewed the concession for Brasil Terminal Portuário (BTP), a joint venture between Maersk's APM Terminals and MSC's Terminal Investment Limited, for another 20 years.

### [Ships rerouted by Red Sea crisis face overwhelmed African ports](#)

December 22 - Reuters

[Africa, Indian Ocean, Europe]

As hundreds of shipping vessels are being forced to sail around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to avoid Houthi rebel attacks in the Red Sea, African ports like Cape Town, Durban and Ngqura are already becoming stressed with the high levels of unexpected traffic and berthing.

### [Greenland receives DKK 25 million from the EU for new land-based submarine cable infrastructure](#)

December 20 - Arctic Today

[North Atlantic, Arctic Ocean]

After Greenland received support last year from the European Union to conduct a seabed survey, Greenlandic telecommunications company Tusass has now been awarded an additional DKK 25 million (US\$3.72 million) in co-financing for the next step in constructing a domestic submarine cable section, which is part of the Tusass Connect 2 infrastructure project.

### [Oilmen start building of underwater pipeline across the Yenisey](#)

December 20 - Arctic Today

[Arctic Ocean]

Russian state oil company Rosneft and its subsidiary RN-Vankor have been dredging in the Russian Arctic in preparation for building an underwater pipeline that will connect the western and eastern shores of the Yenisey river. The 5,8 km long pipeline, now being laid out, is regarded as a vital component of the biggest industrial project currently underway in the Russian Arctic.

### [China Pushes Northern Sea Route Transit Cargo to New Record](#)

December 18 - High North News

[Arctic Ocean, China]

According to data by the Center for High North Logistics, transit traffic through the Arctic's Northern Sea Route saw 75 shipments totalling 2.1 million tons of cargo during 2023; a new record which observers are crediting to a strong Chinese demand for Russia crude oil.

### [Shippers mask positions, weigh options amid Red Sea attacks](#)

December 19 - Reuters

[Indian Ocean, Global]

Global shipping companies transiting the Suez Canal are being forced to make security decisions following weeks of maritime attacks in the Red Sea by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi militants. Many have announced plans to avoid the Red Sea route entirely and re-route around the southern tip of Africa, making their average travel time from Singapore to Rotterdam 36 days instead of 26 days.

[With China's first cruise ship delivered, unit of CSSC calls for Shanghai-based supply chain as it chases more orders](#)

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

[China, Global]

After delivering China's first self-built cruise ship in November, Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding plans to continue establishing a local supply chain and expand its fleet of giant pleasure vessels, with the final assembly of its second cruise ship, code-named H1509, set to begin in April 2024.

[Sen. Kelly to propose legislation to strengthen commercial shipping](#)

December 5 - *Defense News*

[United States, Global]

U.S. Senator Mark Kelly, speaking at a Center for Maritime Strategy and Naval War College Foundation event, noted that "[t]here's a lot that needs to be done to revitalize this [shipping] industry" while noting he has readied but not yet filed legislation to revitalize the U.S. commercial maritime industry.

[Sea Cargo Charter to align with IMO emission targets](#)

December 5 - *Splash*

[Global]

Chair of the Sea Cargo Charter, a global framework for assessing and disclosing the climate alignment of chartering activities, has announced that the Charter will align its shipping emissions reporting with the International Maritime Organization's new ambition. This Charter currently has 37 signatories representing more than 17% of total bulk cargo transported by sea.

**[3] Ocean Governance and Maritime Cooperation [3]**

[Ukraine, Moldova and the European Commission signed an agreement to improve transport connectivity](#)

December 26 - *EU Reporter*

[Europe]

On December 26, the European Commission signed high-level agreements with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to revise the Trans-European Transport Network, set to come into effect in early 2024. The revisions also introduce mandatory targets including the integration of the maritime space with other transport modes as well as upgrading and creating new shipping routes and ports.

### [China, Philippines agree to hold talks](#)

December 22 - *China Daily*

[Indo-Pacific, Southeast Asia]

On December 20, China's Prime Minister Wang Yi and Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo held an extensive phone conversation during which objections and clarification of stances were exchanged. They also agreed to strengthen dialogue and "hold a meeting of the bilateral consultation mechanism on the South China Sea issue at an early date and earnestly create conditions for this."

### [Marcos: PH working to resolve WPS row for new energy exploration projects](#)

December 17 - *CNN Philippines*

[South China Sea, Southeast Asia]

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said Manila is currently working towards settling the "deadlock" in the West Philippine Sea specifically to begin new energy exploration projects before the Malampaya gas field starts to run dry; a region he clarifies is "clearly within our [EEZ] baselines."

### [Japan, ASEAN Agree To Boost Maritime Security Cooperation](#)

December 17 - *Barron's*

[East Asia, Southeast Asia]

At an international summit in Tokyo marking 50 years of ties between ASEAN and Japan, Southeast Asian and Japanese leaders agreed to "strengthen dialogue and cooperation for the maintenance of maritime security and safety (and) maritime order based on the rule of law." On the sidelines of the summit, the prime ministers of Japan and Malaysia signed a bilateral 400 million yen (US\$2.8 million) security assistance deal to boost Malaysia's "warning and surveillance" equipment.

### [Philippines summons China ambassador after South China Sea confrontations](#)

December 11 - *Al Jazeera*

[Southeast Asia, South China Sea, China]

Manila summoned the Chinese Ambassador and filed a diplomatic complaint with Beijing after Philippine and Chinese government ships faced off in the South China Sea once again. The Philippines said its vessels were "directly targeted" by a Chinese Coast Guard water cannon during a supply mission to the Second Thomas Shoal, with one Philippine vessel reportedly taking severe damage and another being rammed by a Chinese Coast Guard ship.

### [Turning a page, Greece and Turkey agree to mend ties](#)

December 7 - Reuters

[Mediterranean Sea, Europe]

After decades of sparring over the Aegean Sea and other divisive issues, Greece and Turkey agreed to reboot their relations and communication. “We want to turn the Aegean into a sea of peace...[and] be an example to the world,” said Turkey’s prime minister Tayyip Erdogan.

### [Norwegian government makes deal over deep sea mining in Arctic Ocean](#)

December 5 - *The Irish News*

[North Atlantic, Arctic Ocean]

Opposing parties within the Norwegian government have struck a deal to open the Arctic Ocean to seabed mineral exploration; a deal that environmental groups call a “disaster for the sea” and “completely contrary to scientific recommendations.”

### [Britain, US Blame Iran for Enabling Red Sea Shipping Attacks](#)

December 4 - *gCaptain*

[Red Sea. Europe, United States]

In early December, the British government released a statement condemning the recent attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea, clarifying that Iran “bears responsibility for the actions of its proxies and partners” such as the Houthi militants who they have “long provided” support to.

### [Beijing accuses US of threatening peace and stability after warship passes disputed South China Sea reef](#)

December 4 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[South China Sea, China, United States]

After the American warship the USS *Gabrielle Giffords* sailed in disputed waters in the South China Sea near the Second Thomas Shoal on December 4, China's military criticized the U.S., saying the move “seriously violated China's sovereignty and security” and is a demonstration of how “the US is the biggest threat to peace and stability” in the region.

## [4] Maritime Security and Defense [4]

### [Ukraine attacks Russian landing ship in Crimean port](#)

December 26 - *The Washington Post* [Paywall]

[Eastern Europe]

In the early morning local time, Ukraine attacked and destroyed the *Novocherkassk*, a large Russian landing ship, while it was docked at the Crimean port of Feodosia; a port located in a Russian-controlled portion of eastern Crimea that was annexed by Moscow in 2014.



### [Taiwan Navy confirms submarine incident likely due to unexpected waves](#)

December 26 - Focus Taiwan

[East Asia]

On the same day the prototype of Taipei's first indigenous defense submarine, the *Hai Kun* (SS-711), underwent a harbor acceptance test, one of Taiwan's purchased submarines, the *Hai Hu*, departed from Kaohsiung on December 18 for an 11-day training session. Three days later, "abnormal sounds" were reported from an incident involving sudden waves, leaving three crew members missing.

### [India takes over as co-chair of IONS Working Groups on Maritime Security](#)

December 23 - Business Standard

[Indian Ocean, Global]

From December 19-22, the eighth Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs was hosted by the Royal Thai Navy in Bangkok, Thailand, during which the Indian and Thai navies jointly assumed the duties of IONS chair. Delegates from 27 member and observer countries participated.

### [Pentagon announces new international mission to counter attacks on commercial vessels in Red Sea](#)

December 19 - AP

[Indian Ocean, United States]

Following a series of attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea by Yemeni-based Houthi rebels, the U.S. and several other nations established Operation Prosperity Guardian, described by U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin as "an important new multinational security initiative."

### [Chinese Maritime Militia Swarms Second Thomas Shoal as Manila Mulls Contingency Plans](#)

December 15 - USNI News

[Southeast Asia, South China Sea, China]

According to Sealight, a maritime transparency group, 11 Chinese maritime militia vessels entered the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea on December 11; a number that increased by four two days later. Meanwhile, Chinese vessels were reported sailing around the shoal throughout the week, numbering between five to 27 at a time and including larger vessels.

### [Houthis Hit Tanker with Missile in Red Sea, French Frigate Downs Drones](#)

December 12 - USNI News

[Indian Ocean, Europe]

On December 11, Yemen-based Houthi rebel forces attacked the Norwegian Motor Tanker *Strinda*, hitting it with what the U.S. described as an anti-ship missile that caused a fire. The *Strinda* was hit as it was passing through the Bab-el-Mandeb strait that connects the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea as a French frigate patrolling nearby shot down a drone that was "directly threatening" the tanker.



### [Chinese fighters, balloon cross Taiwan Strait a month before election](#)

December 8 - Reuters

[East Asia, China]

On December 8, Taiwan's defense ministry reported seeing 12 Chinese fighter jets cross the median line of the Taiwan Strait the night before. About half a day prior, a Chinese balloon was seen flying eastward 101 nautical miles southwest of Keelung, though the defense ministry believes it was likely a weather balloon.

### [US Raises Concern Over China Warships' Rare Stop in Cambodia](#)

December 6 - Bloomberg [Paywall]

[Southeast Asia, China, United States]

After a Chinese warship appears to have docked at Ream Naval Base in Cambodia in a rare visit, the U.S. again called for “transparency on activities at Ream” including regarding China’s presence in and “future use of the facility.” When asked about the visit, a Chinese spokesperson said “China and Cambodia enjoy deep friendship” and “have productive cooperation” while Cambodia’s Defense Minister said he visited the ships “in preparation for training.”

### [U.S. Urging Pacific Allies to Step Up Surveillance at Sea, Says Official](#)

December 5 - USNI News

[United States, Pacific Ocean]

Speaking to reporters at a breakfast, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Ely Ratner explained that the U.S. has been urging its allies in the Indo-Pacific region to increase their maritime awareness specifically by integrating new technology such as unmanned systems amidst “concerns about China’s coercive behavior” and increasing activity.

### [The Philippines opens a new monitoring base on a remote island in the disputed South China Sea](#)

December 1 - AP

[Southeast Asia, South China Sea]

On December 1, the Philippines Department of National Defense inaugurated a new coast guard monitoring base on the Philippine-claimed island of Thitu, also known as Pag-asa, in the South China Sea. Manila also announced plans to expand joint patrols with U.S. and Australian counterparts to counter China’s “pure bullying” in the region.

## Peer-Reviewed Research on Maritime Issues

- Government Release: President of France Emmanuel Macron - [“The Pillars of Green Wisdom”](#) [Project Syndicate - December 27]
- Government Release: The White House - [“WHAT THEY ARE SAYING: Biden-Harris Administration Unveils First-Ever U.S. Ocean Justice Strategy”](#) [December 22]
- Government Release: UK Department for Transport - [“Celebrating the Seas-on of Christmas”](#) [December 21]
- Government Release: U.S. Congressional Research Service - [“Coast Guard Polar Security Cutter \(Polar Icebreaker\) Program: Background and Issues for Congress”](#) [Updated December 12]
- Government Release: People’s Liberation Army - [“Chinese People’s Liberation Army Navy Recruitment Video: ‘Always Ready’”](#) [USNI News - December 8]
- Government Release: Government of Philippines - [“PH inks agreement with World Economic Forum on blue carbon, national plastic actions”](#) [December 4]
- Government Release: U.S. Government Accountability Office - [“Arctic Region: Factors That Affect the Advancement of U.S. Priorities”](#) [November 29]
- Government Release: European Council - [“Import of fishery products: Council adopts autonomous EU tariff quotas for 2024 to 2026”](#) [November 27]
- Government Speech: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator Rick Spinrad - [“NOAA Administrator Spinrad on COP28: Despite the climate crisis, ‘there is hope’”](#) [December 1]
- Press Release: U.S. Department of Defense - [“Statement from Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Ensuring Freedom of Navigation in the Red Sea”](#) [December 18]
- Press Release: U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski - [“Murkowski: Defense Authorization Bill Invests in Alaska Defense Capabilities, Bolsters Arctic Security, Supports Servicemembers”](#) [December 14]
- Press Release: World Economic Forum - [“The Philippines joins Blue Carbon Action Partnership to Strengthen Coastal Ecosystems”](#) [December 4]
- Press Release: U.S. Central Command - [“Houthi Attacks on Commercial Shipping in International Water Continue”](#) [December 3]
- Press Release: High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy - [“Joint declaration on ocean and climate action”](#) [December 2]
- Press Release: European Council - [“Maritime safety: Council adopts positions to support clean and modern shipping in the EU”](#) [December 1]
- Press Release: MAERSK - [“Shipping CEOs join forces to accelerate the decarbonization of the global maritime transport”](#) [December 1]
- Podcast: UK National Oceanography Centre - [“The Integral Part Marine Snow is Playing in Fuelling the Ocean’s Twilight Zone”](#) [Into the Blue - December 2023]
- Podcast: *The Japan Times* - [“Feeling anxious? Wastewater, heat and Japan’s year in climate”](#) [Deep Dive - December 7]
- Report: [“Looking Beyond the Horizon: China’s Intense Fishing Efforts Threaten Galápagos Islands and Global Seafood Supply Chain”](#) [Oceana - December 2023]

- Report: [Arctic Shipping Status Report – Flag States of Ships in the Arctic: 2022](#) [Arctic Council Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment - December 19]
- Report: [Global Tipping Points Report](#) [Multinational effort launched at COP28 on December 6]
- Report: [2023 Annual Progress Report on Green Shipping Corridor](#) [Global Maritime Forum - November 2023]
- Interview: [“Q&A: Dr. Edie Widder”](#) [Sea Technology - December 2023]
- Interview: [“U.S. Navy Warship responds to Red Sea Attacks”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - December 4]
- Opinion: [“Greater consensus on improving the Middle Corridor”](#) [International Institute for Strategic Studies - December 2023]
- Opinion: [“A Middle East preview for 2024: Maritime cooperation, regional rivalries and a new jet”](#) [Breaking Defense - December 27]
- Opinion: [“The India-France Partnership: New Avenues for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific”](#) [South Asian Voices - December 27]
- Opinion: [“Africa’s Maritime Security Experts Weigh In on Red Sea Attacks”](#) [The Maritime Executive - December 22]
- Opinion: [“Contributing to US-led Red Sea coalition is clearly in Australia’s interests”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - December 22]
- Opinion: [“NATO’s delicate balancing act in the Indo-Pacific”](#) [The Japan Times - December 19] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“A new Suez crisis threatens the world economy”](#) [The Economist - December 16] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Why the Indian Ocean could be China’s Achilles’ heel in a Taiwan war”](#) [Reuters - December 14]
- Opinion: [“Biden’s trade policy U-turn bodes ill for Indo-Pacific security”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - December 14]
- Opinion: [“Why China Is Stepping Up Its Maritime Attacks on the Philippines”](#) [Foreign Policy - December 13] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“‘Megayachts’ are environmentally indefensible. The world must ban them”](#) [The Guardian - December 11]
- Opinion: [“China Hawks Are Putting the Green Transition at Risk”](#) [Foreign Policy - December 6] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“America’s Indo-Pacific Alliances Are Astonishingly Strong”](#) [Foreign Policy - December 5] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Putin’s Weak Link to Crimea”](#) [Foreign Affairs - December 5] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Viewpoint: What Red Sea attacks mean for shipping”](#) [Freight Waves - December 4]
- Opinion: [“Why Yemen’s Houthis are attacking ships in the Red Sea”](#) [The Economist - December 4]
- Opinion: [“Why Clean Shipping Fuels Need Solar-Industry Style Support”](#) [The Maritime Executive - December 4]
- Opinion: [“American fingerprints all over Manila’s new spat with Beijing”](#) [South China Morning Post - December 3] [Paywall]
- Opinion: [“Britain’s Navy Is Diminished. Its Ambitions Are Not.”](#) [Foreign Policy - November 29] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Demystifying the Deep Sea: Holistic Solutions Illuminate the Ocean’s Depths”](#) [Sea Technology - December 2023]

- Analysis: [“Contactless Subsea Positioning: HaloCAM Upgrades INS with High-Res Imaging to Monitor Structures”](#) [Sea Technology - December 2023]
- Analysis: [“Analysis: In the Red Sea, the US has no good options against the Houthis”](#) [Al Jazeera - December 27]
- Analysis: [“When fishing boats go dark at sea, they're often committing crimes – we mapped where it happens”](#) [Midland Daily News - December 27]
- Analysis: [“Up for Debate: Should the U.S. ratify UNCLOS?”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - December 26]
- Analysis: [“Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea Disrupt Global Supply Chains”](#) [United States Institute of Peace - December 22]
- Analysis: [“U.S. Maritime Priorities for a New Era of Competition”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - December 21]
- Analysis: [“Developing Djibouti as a Sustainable Maritime Hub”](#) [Forbes - December 20]
- Analysis: [“Chinese Traders and Moroccan Ports: How Russia Flouts Global Tech Bans”](#) [The New York Times - December 19] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Sundowning the Oliver Hazard Perry-Class Frigate”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - December 19]
- Analysis: [“Deep Blue Scars: Environmental Threats to the South China Sea”](#) [Center for Strategic & International Studies - December 18]
- Analysis: [“Part II – U.S. Fisheries Enforcement in the Western Pacific: Embracing the Long Run”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - December 14]
- Analysis: [“Nature Undamned: Klamath River Dam Removal”](#) [The Washington Post - December 14] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Astute lessons for Australia’s AUKUS submarine workforce”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - December 14]
- Analysis: [“In global shipping, it’s China vs South Korea, and Seoul is securing its shipbuilding secrets”](#) [South China Morning Post - December 13] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Scared Strait: Understanding the Economic and Financial Impacts of a Taiwan Crisis”](#) [Center for Strategic & International Studies - December 13]
- Analysis: [“Deterrence and Dissuasion in the Taiwan Strait”](#) [Foreign Policy Research Institute - December 12]
- Analysis: [“How does a 1980s Video Game inform Uncrewed Surface Warfare Systems?”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - December 12]
- Analysis: [“Who are the Houthis, the group attacking ships in the Red Sea?”](#) [The Economist - December 12] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Storm assault on Chinese ports a wake-up call for climate risks”](#) [The Japan Times - December 12] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Explainer: Why China, the Philippines keep fighting over tiny shoal”](#) [Reuters - December 11]
- Analysis: [“What It Feels Like to Be the Target of China’s Water Cannons”](#) [The New York Times - December 11] [Paywall]
- Analysis: [“Part I: Combatting Short Term Limitations of U.S. Fisheries Enforcement in the Western Pacific”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - December 7]
- Analysis: [“Watch Russia's Shadow Fleet”](#) [Bloomberg - December 5] [Paywall]

- Analysis: [“China and Russia in the Black Sea Region: Moving towards Pax Sinica?”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - December 5]
- Analysis: [“How Will Climate Action Change The Face Of Global Shipping?”](#) [Forbes - December 5]
- Analysis: [“How States Can Develop Blue Carbon Programs”](#) [Pew Charitable Trusts - December 4]

## Events on the Maritime Domain

- From December 4-8, 2023, U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration celebrated [Corals Week 2023](#) to celebrate the beauty and importance of coral reef ecosystems.
- On December 5, 2023, Center for Maritime Strategy and the Naval War College Foundation co-hosted an in-person symposium on [“America’s Future Fleet: Maintaining Peace & Deterring China”](#) in Arlington, Virginia.
- From December 5-8, 2023, Marintec China hosted their [Marintec China 2023](#) event, with a theme of “Rebuild Together,” at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC) in Shanghai, China.
- On December 7, 2023, the Hudson Institute held an in-person discussion titled [“Senator Mike Rounds on the B-21 Bomber and Its Deterrence Mission.”](#)
- On December 7, 2023, the National Oceanography Centre’s Head of Marine Policy and Chief Executive held a [Deep Dive Discussion on NOC’s Involvement at COP28](#). A recording is available.
- On December 7, 2023, the Danish Embassy and the Danish-UK Association held the [11th Annual UK Offshore Wind Seminar](#) in London, United Kingdom. Registration is still open.
- On December 8, 2023, Digital Ship Ltd. hosted its [Maritime Cyber Resilience Forum 2023](#) in Hamburg, Germany.
- On December 9, 2023, as part of the COP28 conference hosted by the United Arab Emirates, a live panel discussion on [“Powering Ocean Breakthrough Through Sustainable Ocean Planning”](#) was live-streamed. A recording is available.
- From December 13-15, 2023, Upstream Business Solutions held its [“India International Cargo Show 2023”](#) in Mumbai, India.
- From December 14-15, 2023, Riviera hosted its [“Maritime Decarbonization Conference, Americas 2023”](#) in Houston, Texas.
- On December 18, 2023, Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs held a public seminar on [“COP28 Climate Outcomes: What Do They Mean for the Arctic?”](#) A recording is available.
- From December 21-23, 2023, INASE hosted [“The International Conference on Maritime and Naval Science and Engineering 2023”](#) in Bann, Switzerland.
- On January 10, 2024, Exim India Shipping Times and its partners will be holding the [9th East Coast Maritime Forum 2024](#) in Kolkata, India.
- On January 16, 2024, Center for Strategic & International Studies Asia Program will host a hybrid discussion on [“Indo-Pacific Forecast 2024.”](#)
- On January 16, 2024, Maritime Research Alliance will be holding an event at Copenhagen Business School for [“Maritime Research Alliance PhD Day: Decarbonizing the maritime sector.”](#)
- From January 16-17, 2024, Pacific Forum and their partners will be holding the [Operationalizing Integration in the Indo-Pacific \(OIIP\): 2024](#) dialogue in Honolulu, Hawai’i, which “seeks to facilitate



dialogue and solutions between the private and public sectors in the hopes of hastening integration...in order to bolster deterrence.”

- From January 17-19, 2024, US Climate Variability and Predictability Program (US CLIVAR) and their co-sponsors will be hosting a hybrid workshop on [“Polar Amplification of Climate Change Across Hemispheres and Seasons: Causes and Constraints.”](#)
- On January 24, 2024, Alaska Sea Grant and Alaska Ocean Observing System will co-host the [January 2024 Alaska Marine Policy Forum](#); a one-hour meeting held every other month with participants across the state interested in marine policy in Alaska.
- From January 29-31, 2024, SAE Media Group will be hosting the [9th annual Maritime Reconnaissance and Surveillance Technology](#) conference in London, United Kingdom.
- From January 29-February 1, 2024, the hybrid [Arctic Frontiers 2024: Actions and Reactions](#) conference will take place in Tromsø, Norway with the aim to “connect different expertise and perspectives from areas such as policy, science and business.” Registration is still open.
- In February 2024, Economist Impact and The Nippon Foundation will be holding the [Back to Blue in Japan](#) event. Details are coming soon.
- From February 6-7, 2024, Pacific Forum International will host the virtual [“Cross-Border Cooperation on WPS & Maritime Environmental Crimes Workshop Series”](#) to “explore common environmental crimes in the region and their gendered impacts” in the Coral Triangle region.
- From February 27-28, 2024, the IGGS Group will be hosting the [World Maritime Forum](#) in Copenhagen, Denmark, with one of the key focus areas of this year's forum being sustainability.
- On February 29, 2024, Maritime Research Alliance and Danish Shipping will co-host a [Conference on Continuing Professional Development Courses for the Maritime Sector](#).
- From March 11-13, 2024, The Economist Group will host [The 11th Annual World Ocean Summit & Expo in Lisbon, Portugal](#), which “convenes the widest cross-section of the ocean community from business and finance to government, national and international policy-makers, civil society, and academia. The summit is designed to instigate action to develop a sustainable ocean economy; to encourage new partnerships across industries, with NGOs, scientists, technology developers and investors.”
- From March 12-14, 2024, [Oceanology International](#) will host their 2024 Expo in London, Excel.

## Handbill Spotlight

### The Red Sea

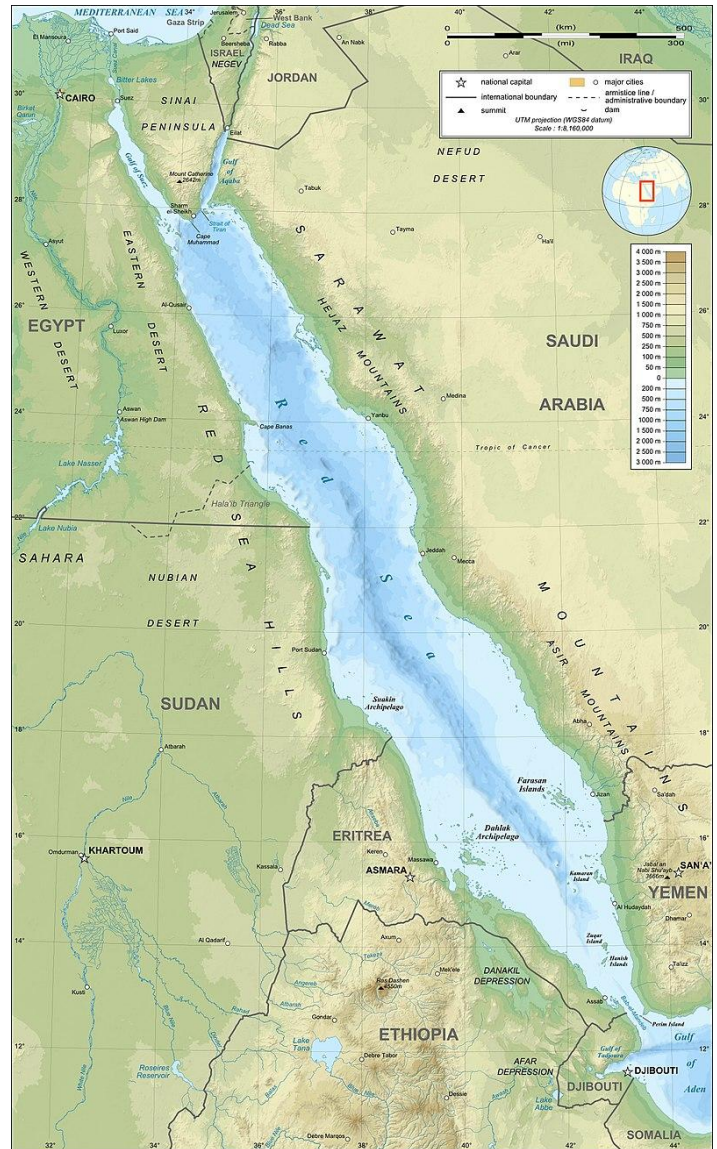
#### Issue Background

The Red Sea is a seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean, [roughly](#) 1,200 miles long and 190 miles wide at its widest point, that separates the African and Asian continents and connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Arabian Sea. It is connected to the Indian Ocean and Asia via the Bab-el-Mandeb strait and the Gulf of Aden at its south, and to the Mediterranean Sea and Europe via the Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal at its north. To the majority of its east lies Saudi Arabia, with Yemen bordering its southeasternmost extent, while Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, and Djibouti lie to its west and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula caps its northern extent. Because of its narrow width, there is no portion of the Red Sea that does not [lie](#) in one of the exclusive economic zones of its six coastal nations.

Geologically, it is part of the [Red Sea Rift](#) which itself is part of the [Great Rift Valley](#); the most well-known rift valley on Earth. Scientific research believes the Red Sea to have [originated](#) from the Indian Ocean flooding the rift valley millions of years ago upon the Arabian African tectonic plates drifting apart, and [expects](#) it to eventually continue to drift apart and separate Africa and Asia entirely. This body of water, one of the first large bodies of water mentioned in recorded history, also has [extensive](#) cultural and historical significance as it has been being used and accessed by empires, cultures, religions, and explorers for over 4,500 years.<sup>1</sup>

Like the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea is one of the most [saline](#) bodies of water in the world largely [due](#) to high evaporation rates and insignificant freshwater inflow, with its salinity typically recorded at 40-41 parts per thousands (ppt) but capable of reaching 50 ppt in certain areas. This measure is compared to the [typical](#) range of sea water salinity at 33-37 ppt. While the Red Sea does reach [depths](#) of 3,000 meters at its deepest point, it is holistically shallow, with one-quarter of the Red Sea being less than 50 meters deep. As the Red Sea simultaneously contains some of the world's hottest water from two distinct monsoon seasons thus making it the world's most northern tropical sea, it is the habitat of [over](#) 1,200 fish species and 200 soft and hard corals. These unique characteristics and the extensive presence of marine life and corals led the World Wide Fund for Nature to identify the Red Sea as a "[Global 200](#)" [ecoregion](#) and a priority for conservation.

Still, because of its geographical location, the Red Sea has been used as a vital maritime shipping route since ancient times. [According](#) to the U.S. Naval Institute, about 12% of global maritime trade transits the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. Without this route, ships traveling between the Indian Ocean and Europe have to sail around the southern tip of Africa, extending their journey by at least 10 days, or by about 30%. There are also several types of mineral resources found in the Red Sea region—including petroleum deposits, evaporite deposits (magnesite, gypsum, etc.), sulfur, phosphates, and heavy-metal deposits—that have [caught](#) the [attention](#) of governments and private entities.



<sup>1</sup> Image: A topographical map of Red Sea and its surrounding region. (Source: [Eric Gaba, Wikimedia Commons, CC4.0](#))



## Recent Events

It is largely because of this strategic importance to global maritime shipping that the Red Sea is often targeted by adversaries, such as the Yemen-based [Houthi rebel group](#) who have been attacking commercial ships transiting the Red Sea for over 10 weeks. Since October 17, 2023, exactly one week after the Houthi leader [warned](#) against U.S. interference in the Gaza conflict, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels have been targeting ships that they say have a connection to Israel as a sign of solidarity with the Gaza-based Hamas group currently fighting against Israel in the Gaza strip. As warned, these attacks have typically come in the form of [ballistic missiles](#) fired from and aerial drones originating from Houthi-controlled regions of Yemen, and in [October](#) and [November](#) were also shot towards Israel itself.

As December approached, these attacks began primarily targeting private, commercial vessels in the Red Sea, [most](#) of which occurring as they transit through the Bab-el-Mandeb at the southern exit of the Red Sea, which Yemen borders. These attacks appeared to only increase in frequency over December. For example, on December 3 USS *Corney* [responded](#) to three separate distress calls from Bahamian-flagged, Panama-flagged, and Panamanian-flagged vessels while patrolling the Red Sea. The [Norwegian](#) Motor Tanker *Strinda* was attacked while passing through the Bab-el-Mandeb on December 11; the same day that French guided-missile frigate FS *Languedoc* (653) [shot](#) down a third drone with surface to air missiles while patrolling nearby after it was reportedly under attack two days prior. Three days later, Houthis attempted to [board](#) and reroute the Hong Kong-flagged *Maersk Gibraltar* cargo container ship after firing a ballistic missile at it; an attack that was deflected by the USS *Mason* (DDG-87). The following day, two Liberian-flagged ships were [attacked](#) and caught fire as a third was hailed by the Houthi told to turn to Yemen, which the crew did not do. Three days after that, two other missile attacks were separately [reported](#) against a Cayman Islands-flagged chemical/oil tanker and a Liberian-flagged bulk cargo ship. The Houthis have also [seized](#) and raided ships since mid-November—[such](#) as the Japanese-operated, British-owned vehicle carrier *Galaxy Leader*—prompting the U.S. to call their actions “piracy” and potentially designate the Houthi as a “terrorist” group.

These attacks, along with others of similar nature, prompted reactions from both the private and public sectors. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, like other organizations of its kind, continued to [report](#) a series of warnings over the last 6 weeks regarding this region, the comparative amount of which emphasizes the severity and rarity of such activities. Some companies ([A.P. Moller - Maersk](#), [COSCO](#), [BP](#), [Equinor](#), CMA CGM, Mediterranean Shipping, Evergreen Marine, etc.) officially halted all tanker transits through the Red Sea, forcing vessels to reroute around the southern tip of Africa in spite of the [soaring prices](#) and major supply chain disruptions caused by skipping the Red Sea and additional 10 days of sailing. Notably, there are still ships successfully transiting the route. Still, from November 19-December 19, the Suez Canal Authority [recorded](#) 2,128 ships had traveled through the route while 55 ships diverted via the Cape of Good Hope.

On December 18, one week after the White House [called](#) allies to fill the “natural response” of expanding a multinational naval task force to secure the region, the U.S. Department of Defense [established](#) a new multinational security initiative named Operation Prosperity Guardian to protect commercial traffic and ensure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. Supported by [Combined Task](#)

[Force 153](#), Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, Spain, and the United Kingdom were named as initial allies in the Operation. That number reportedly expanded to 20 nations, though there appears to be [reluctance](#) in aligning themselves with the Operation as reports come of France, Italy and Spain snubbing the Operation.

Meanwhile, the Houthi rebels released [vows](#) that the attacks against Israeli-linked vessels would [continue](#) until Israel stops the conflict in Gaza, and they have [kept](#) that vow so far. Furthermore, the regional expanse of their attacks may be widening. On December 26, drone attacks were [launched](#) from Iran against two Indian merchant vessels less than 200 nautical miles off the coast of India, though the responsible party who New Delhi has promised retribution against has yet to be identified. On the same day, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces worked to [intercede](#) 12 attack drones, three anti-ship ballistic missiles and two land-attack cruise missiles that were fired on the same day by Houthi forces from Yemen.

In spite of these continued attacks, the establishment of Operation Prosperity Guardian has given some companies such as [Maersk](#) the confidence to safely utilize the Red Sea route once again, with several of their ships returning to the typical route on December 27. The [stabilization](#) of the oil market also may be an indicator of softening tensions in the area, but many container companies still [consider](#) the Red Sea route as too dangerous.

### Keep In Mind

The ongoing situation of Houthi rebel attacks in the Red Sea is a live case study in the fragility of global maritime supply chains. Similar to [March 2021](#) in the Suez Canal or just this last [summer](#) in the Panama Canal, the world is witnessing the downfalls of inflexible maritime supply chains. It is prompting a deeper exploration in solution-building and variety. Given how similar problems appear to be populating, it could leave some to question whether or not the world is sufficiently learning from these instances, whatever their root cause may be.

While there is no easy answer, global maritime transportation companies must continue to value investing in options, such as cargo [flights](#) or supporting fresh innovation. Parties would also benefit from keeping the existing alternative routes such as those in Africa updated and communicative so ports do not become overwhelmed. [Decentralizing supply chains](#) seems like an attractive option at first, as this system provides more flexibility, but it is not realistically feasible to expect centuries of habit and globally integrated infrastructures to change; especially as the ever-growing pressure on the maritime shipping industry to address climate change persists.

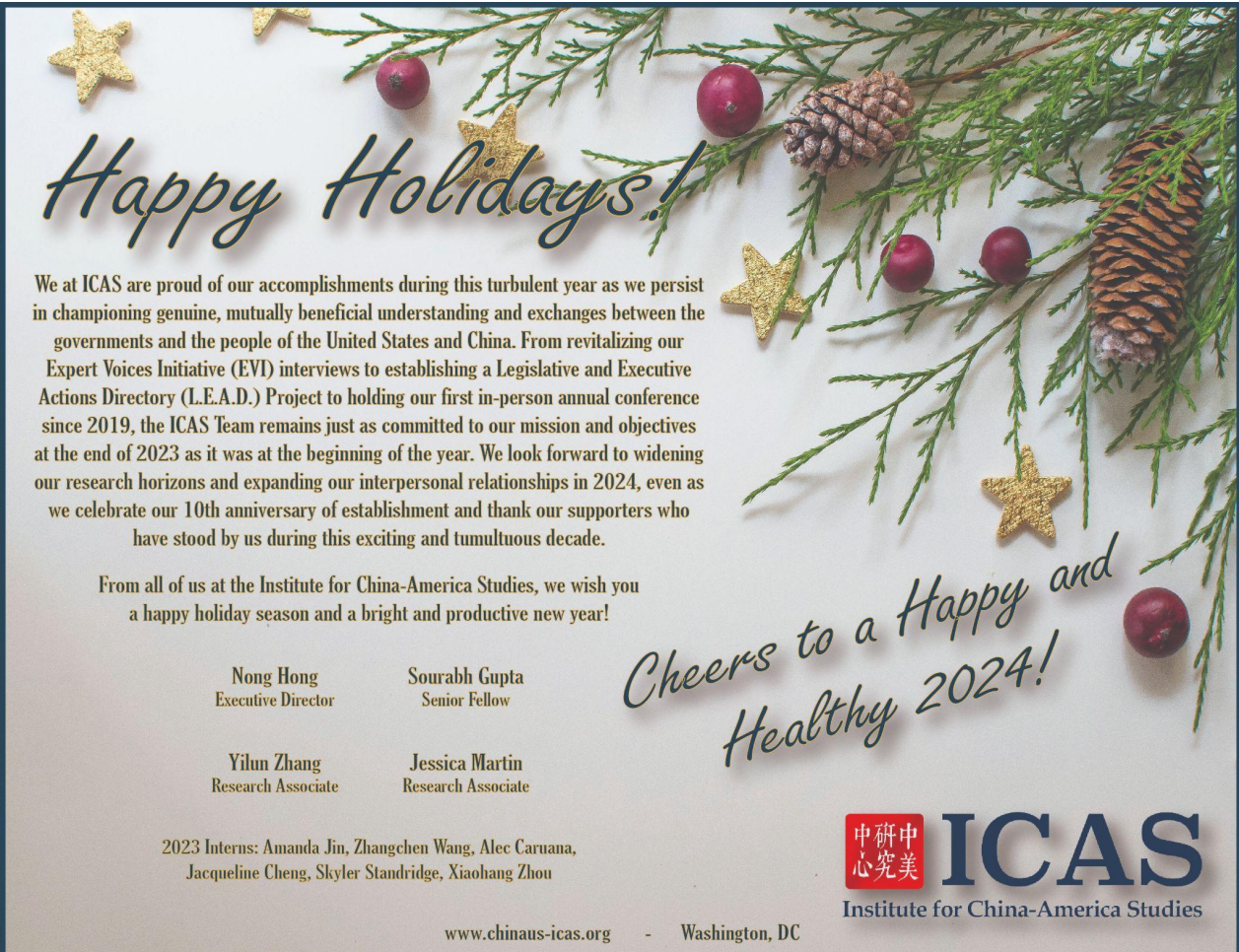
This region is no stranger to maritime piracy. The Horn of Africa is notorious for being one of the most highly pirated maritime regions in the world, and other attacks such as hijackings are still [ongoing](#). However, one special element of these attacks is the publicity and regular communication that the Houthi is employing to garner and retain global attention. Their [filming](#) of the November 19 overtaking of the *Galaxy Leader* merchant vessel was an intense message to the world and a warning that any other Israeli-linked vessel could be attacked in the same way. One way or the other, their communication efforts have driven many Israeli-linked ships to reroute while distracting governments. It is too soon to tell whether or not how effective this tactic will remain.

Last, while Operation Prosperity Guardian is still fledgling, its initial setup shows how establishing joint military operations is more difficult than it may seem, even among allies and with a clear adversary in sight. U.S. Secretary Lloyd Austin called it “an international challenge that demands collective action” but, even if his counterparts agree, there is an endless list of considerations and several unknowns. Perhaps some of these U.S. allies are looking at how unexpectedly long the Ukraine-Russia conflict has lasted and fear a similar case taking place in the Red Sea. One analyst [described](#) the task force as a “half measure that the Houthis will test.” Given how the Houthi leadership has also been vocalizing their warnings and doing what they have said they would, it would be wise to fear testing their resolve and foolish to disregard their words as pure propaganda, so their caution to tie themselves to an official military operation is understandable even if contributing seems like the [clear](#) answer.

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

## ICAS Maritime Affairs Program: New and Upcoming

### — A Note from the ICAS Team —



*Happy Holidays!*


We at ICAS are proud of our accomplishments during this turbulent year as we persist in championing genuine, mutually beneficial understanding and exchanges between the governments and the people of the United States and China. From revitalizing our Expert Voices Initiative (EVI) interviews to establishing a Legislative and Executive Actions Directory (L.E.A.D.) Project to holding our first in-person annual conference since 2019, the ICAS Team remains just as committed to our mission and objectives at the end of 2023 as it was at the beginning of the year. We look forward to widening our research horizons and expanding our interpersonal relationships in 2024, even as we celebrate our 10th anniversary of establishment and thank our supporters who have stood by us during this exciting and tumultuous decade.

From all of us at the Institute for China-America Studies, we wish you a happy holiday season and a bright and productive new year!

Nong Hong Executive Director	Sourabh Gupta Senior Fellow
Yilun Zhang Research Associate	Jessica Martin Research Associate

2023 Interns: Amanda Jin, Zhangchen Wang, Alec Caruana,  
Jacqueline Cheng, Skyler Standridge, Xiaohang Zhou

*Cheers to a Happy and Healthy 2024!*

  
Institute for China-America Studies

www.chinaus-icas.org - Washington, DC



## – Upcoming Book Release –

US-China Global Maritime Relations (Routledge 2024)

By Nong Hong

Release Date: January 1, 2024

This book explores the U.S.-China global maritime relationship, examining the development and implementation of the maritime strategies of both the United States and China.

Delving into the U.S.-China maritime relationship within the global context, the book investigates six key maritime regions: the South China Sea, the Northeast Asia waters (the East China Sea, the Yellow Sea), the Indian Ocean, the South Pacific Ocean, as well as the Arctic and Antarctic regions. Its observations form a comprehensive exploration of these regions and their significance in shaping the dynamics between the two nations, and this analysis reveals that an expanded view is necessary to discover and clearly display the role that these maritime regions currently—and could potentially—play in overarching U.S.-China relations.

Examining both the ongoing conflicts and opportunities for cooperation in the global maritime domain between the United States and China, this book will be a valuable resource to students and scholars of international relations, Chinese and U.S. politics, strategic studies, and maritime studies.

Learn More: <https://chinaus-icas.org/research/us-china-global-maritime-relations/>

Order a Copy with Code ESA33 for a 20% Discount:

<https://www.routledge.com/US-China-Global-Maritime-Relations/Hong/p/book/9781032510897>



### US-CHINA GLOBAL MARITIME RELATIONS

Nong Hong



## – MAP Academic Engagement –

Visit by ROK MND officers with ICAS staff

December 7, 2023

On Thursday, December 7, 2023, a small delegation from the Republic of Korea Ministry of Defense visited with ICAS Senior Fellow Sourabh Gupta and Research Associate Jessica Martin to discuss current events at the ICAS office in Washington, D.C. The discussion covered topics including perspectives on the general state of U.S.-China relations, the dynamic changes occurring in outer space relations and their potential security implications, the upcoming elections in Taiwan and the United States, and potential methods to achieve stability at the multinational level.

Learn More: <https://chinaus-icas.org/event/visit-by-rok-mnd-officers-with-icas-staff/?c>

## – MAP Academic Engagement –

ICAS Staff Participate in Several Academic Exchanges in the State of Washington  
December 11-12, 2023



From December 11-12, 2023, ICAS Executive Director Dr. Nong Hong engaged in academic discussions with various institutions in the State of Washington, which were facilitated through the invitation extended by the China Ocean Institute. Dr. Tabitha Grace Mallory (Founder and CEO of the China Ocean Institute and Affiliate Professor of the University of Washington Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies), Mr. Wang Sheng (President of China National Institute for South China Sea Studies–NISCSS), Dr. Ding Duo (Deputy Director, Research Center for Oceans Law and Policy, NISCSS), Dr. Hu Xin (Assistant Research Fellow, Research Center for Maritime Economy, NISCSS) and Ms. Amanda Jin (Research Assistant, ICAS) also participated in the group visits and exchanges...

Read the Full Summary:

<https://chinaus-icas.org/event/icas-staff-participate-in-several-academic-exchanges-in-the-state-of-washington/?c>

## – MAP Academic Engagement –

Visit by National Institute for South China Sea Studies Scholars with ICAS Staff  
December 14, 2023

On Thursday, December 14, 2023, a delegation from the National Institute for South China Sea Studies (NISCSS) visited ICAS and discussed a variety of current topics on U.S.-China relations with ICAS researchers. The NISCSS delegation was led by Mr. Wang Sheng (President, NISCSS), who was accompanied by Dr. Ding Duo (Deputy Director, Research Center for Oceans Law and Policy, NISCSS) and Dr. Hu Xin (Assistant Research Fellow, Research Center for Maritime Economy, NISCSS).



Learn More:

<https://chinaus-icas.org/event/visit-by-national-institute-for-south-china-sea-studies-scholars-with-icas-staff/?c>