



# ICAS MARITIME AFFAIRS HANDBILL

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## Recent News in Global Maritime Affairs

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

#### [Rising temperatures from climate change depleting oxygen in coastal waters, threatening marine life](#)

March 25 - *Oregon Capital Chronicle*

[North America, Pacific Ocean]

Measurements taken from across 2,100 square miles of Pacific Ocean off the continental shelf of the northwest United States in the summer of 2021 depict how warmer ocean temperatures have decreased oxygen levels in coastal waters more than previously expected, with about half or the levels being deemed “hypoxic,” or not high enough in oxygen to support many organisms for long.

#### [Thai scientists breed coral in labs to restore degraded reefs](#)

March 22 - *Reuters*

[Southeast Asia]

In a once-a-year opportunity to help restore degraded coral reefs around Thailand, scientists from Thailand's Department of Marine and Coastal Resources were able to gather rare samples released from coral off the southern Man Nai Island, which houses over 98 species of coral. The coral only spawn once a year and can take up to five years to grow in a lab before being returned to the sea.

#### [Scientists Quantify Blue Carbon in Bahamas Seagrass](#)

March 14 - *Eos*

[Caribbean Sea]

A team of scientists have quantified the blue carbon stored within seagrass ecosystems in The Bahamas, revealing significant carbon reserves and their criticality in climate change mitigation. Their study highlights that the conservation efforts for these seagrass meadows are crucial for preserving their carbon storage potential and safeguarding marine ecosystems.

### [100 New Deep-Sea Species, Including Mystery Creature, Found In New Zealand](#)

March 12 - NDTV

[South Pacific]

During a three-week research investigation of the waters off of the submerged Bounty Trough near the coast of New Zealand's South Island, researchers found 100 new deep-sea species, with expectations to discover even more in the future.

### [Researchers discover a coral superhighway in the Indian Ocean](#)

March 12 - University of Oxford

[Africa, Indian Ocean]

Researchers led by the University of Oxford and the Seychelles Islands Foundation conducted a genetic analysis of coral samples from 19 reef sites in the Seychelles region. Simultaneously, another Oxford researcher led the oceanographic modeling efforts, which simulated larval dispersal pathways across the region. This discovery highlights the critical role of larval supply in coral reef recovery and has implications for reef management and conservation strategies in the Western Indian Ocean.

### [Arctic rivers face big changes with warming climate, permafrost thaw and accelerating water cycle](#)

March 11 - Arctic Today

[Arctic Ocean]

Rivers in the Arctic are undergoing significant changes including increased river discharge, alterations in water chemistry, and shifts in the timing of spring flooding due to climate change, permafrost thaw, and an accelerating water cycle. These changes are predicted to bring notably negative implications for Arctic ecosystems, indigenous communities, and regional hydrology.

### [Nigerian Oil-Producing Region Eyes Carbon Deals From Mangroves](#)

March 8 - Bloomberg [Paywall]

[Africa, Global]

Delta State, Nigeria's oil-rich region, has granted Serendib Capital, a United Kingdom-based company, rights to develop projects on 9% of its land for carbon credit generation through mangrove restoration. The project aims to sequester 5.32 million tons of carbon annually, prevent deforestation of 250,000 hectares, and replant 20,000 hectares of mangroves.

### [World on brink of fourth mass coral reef bleaching event, NOAA says](#)

March 5 - Reuters

[Global, United States]

As the record-breaking ocean heat continues to threaten tropical reefs, the world is facing a potential fourth mass coral bleaching event. Marine biologists warn that the ocean ecosystems, fisheries, and

tourism economies reliant on vibrant coral reefs will all face negative consequences if the widespread bleaching happens.

### [Brazil's mangrove forests represent untapped blue carbon banks, says new study from National Geographic Explorers](#)

March 4 - National Geographic Society Newsroom  
[South America]

A recent study completed by National Geographic Explorers describes Brazil's mangrove forests as untapped blue carbon banks storing vast amounts of carbon and offering significant potential for climate change mitigation. The findings show that it is necessary to conserve mangroves to sequester carbon and protect coastal ecosystems.

### [Cornwall researchers discover huge ancient seaweed bed](#)

March 2 - BBC  
[Western Europe, Atlantic Ocean]

During a research commissioned by the Cornwall Council to study blue carbon in the local region, researchers found significant presence of maerl, a rare and ancient seaweed. Researchers said that the maerl bed could play an important role in the local blue carbon ecosystem.

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

### [Houthi Missile Strike Leads To Fire Onboard Chinese Oil Tanker In the Red Sea](#)

March 25 - *Marine Insight*  
[Red Sea, China]

On March 23—days after diplomatic talks were held in Oman with one of the Houthi's top political figures Mohammed Abdel Salam in which the Yemen-based Houthis told China and Russia their ships can sail through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden without being attacked—a Chinese-owned, Panamanian-flagged oil tanker was hit by one of the five ballistic missiles fired from Yemen.

### [India Stops Accepting Russian Oil Delivered By US-Sanctioned Tankers, Reports Say](#)

March 22 - *Forbes*  
[South Asia, Russia, Global]

All of India's oil refiners, both private and state-run processors, are now refusing to take Russian crude oil carried on PJSC Sovcomflot tankers due to U.S. sanctions on the state-controlled Sovcomflot and 14 related tankers. Following the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war, India became one of the largest importers of Russia's fossil fuels.

### [Africa Internet Outage Risks Leaving Millions Offline for Weeks](#)

March 15 - *Bloomberg* [Paywall]

[Africa]

After undersea cables off of Africa's west coast were damaged from an unknown cause, disruption to internet services for millions of users in eight West African countries could reportedly take weeks or even months to fix.

### [Houthis Threaten to Target Merchant Ships in Indian Ocean](#)

March 14 - *USNI News*

[Indian Ocean, Middle East]

In mid-March, two Houthi spokesmen posted on social media that the Houthis would now also target ships linked to Israel traveling in the Indian Ocean on the way to South Africa's Cape of Good Hope, significantly expanding their threats beyond the Red Sea. Pentagon officials say they are "putting at risk 12 to 15 percent of the world's commerce" which "affects the entire world" including Yemen.

### [Cargill Shares Outcome of the World's First Wind-Powered Ocean Vessel's Maiden Voyage](#)

March 13 - *Business Wire*

[North Atlantic Ocean, Europe, Global]

Ocean transportation company Cargill's six-month trial of the *Pyxis Ocean*, equipped with WindWings made by BAR Technologies, showcased promising results in fuel savings, averaging 3 tonnes per day or 11.2t/day CO<sub>2</sub>e well-to-wake emissions reductions. This wind-assisted propulsion aligns with the International Maritime Organization's decarbonization goals, and Cargill plans to continue testing to inform future implementations.

### [U.S. Lawmakers Push for Deep-Sea Mining Funding in New Bill](#)

March 12 - *The Wall Street Journal* [Paywall]

[United States]

U.S. lawmakers introduced the Responsible Use of Seafloor Resource Act of 2024, sponsored by Reps. Carol Miller (R-WV) and John Joyce (R-PA), aiming to bolster American interests in deep-sea mining, specifically pushing for financial, diplomatic and infrastructure support for the industry and reducing reliance on China for critical minerals.

### [U.S. unions ask Biden administration to probe Chinese shipbuilding](#)

March 13 - *Nikkei Asia* [Paywall]

[United States, China, Global]

On March 12, five U.S. labor unions filed a petition with the office of the U.S. Trade Representative requesting a probe to address "China's drive to dominate the global shipbuilding, maritime, and logistics sector" which they say is "built on non-market policies that are far more aggressive and

interventionist than any other country.” The petition also calls on the White House to impose port fees on Chinese-built vessels and revitalize U.S. shipbuilding.

### [A major Chinese crane maker says it's no security risk to U.S. ports](#)

March 11 - Quartz

[United States, China]

After a security probe by the U.S. Congress, Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries said their “cranes will not pose a network security risk to any port” as they are “designed, manufactured, transported, installed, debugged, accepted and delivered in strict accordance with international standards.”

### [CNOOC announces oil discovery in South China Sea](#)

March 8 - Offshore Technology

[South China Sea, China, Global]

China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) has announced a notable discovery at the Kaiping oilfield in the South China Sea. Production testing yielded approximately 7,680 barrels of crude oil and 0.52 million cubic feet of natural gas per day at the site, also said to be China’s first deep-water and deep-play oilfield with proved in-place volume exceeding 100 million tonnes of oil equivalent.

### [U.S. seeks to revive idled shipyards with help of Japan, South Korea](#)

March 4 - Nikkei Asia [Paywall]

[United States, East Asia]

At the end of February, U.S. Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro visited two shipyards in South Korea and one in Japan as part of efforts to bring Asian funds and expertise to the U.S. to reopen closed or inactive American shipyards.

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

### [Geopolitical showdown: US, China and Russia clash over seabed resources](#)

March 25 - Voice of Europe

[United States, Global]

The International Seabed Authority has resumed meetings to discuss global rules and regulatory standards on deep-sea mining on the ocean floor beyond national jurisdictions. At one of these meetings in Jamaica, Chinese and Russian diplomats expressed opposition to recent U.S. attempts to extend its jurisdiction over resource-rich seabed areas along various parts of its national borders because the U.S. has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which governs resources in international waters.

### [Russia is considering withdrawal from the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in the Arctic](#)

March 20 - *Arctic Today*

[The Arctic, Russia]

On March 18, Chairman of the Russian Parliament Committee for the Development of the Far East and Arctic Nikolai Kharitonov told Russian media outlet *Izvestia* that the "issue of the possible denunciation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in the Arctic is under study" on the grounds that Russia will not allow it to "continue to be part of...[Russia's] detriment."

### [Aid supply ship from Cyprus reaches Gaza coast but weather slows delivery](#)

March 16 - *Reuters*

[Middle East, Mediterranean Sea, Global]

On March 15, the charity ship *Open Arms* successfully arrived in Gaza from Cyprus to deliver nearly 200 tonnes of aid in the form of flour, rice and protein to the Gaza region. It was mostly funded by the United Arab Emirates and organized by U.S.-based charity World Central Kitchen. A second ship is expected to sail the same route soon now that the sea route was proven successful.

### [Maritime corridor for aid to Gaza will take two months to build and 1,000 U.S. forces, Pentagon says](#)

March 8 - *CBS News*

[Middle East, United States, Global]

U.S. President Joe Biden is directing the U.S. military to establish a temporary port on the Gaza coast to ramp up the delivery of aid and ease the humanitarian crisis in the territory sparked by the Israel-Hamas war.

### [US Spends Big to Highlight Beijing's Tactics in South China Sea](#)

March 6 - *Bloomberg* [Paywall]

[United States, Southeast Asia, China]

Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink says the U.S. is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to develop maritime capabilities in Southeast Asia with growing pressure over Beijing in the South China Sea. "The more countries are able to understand what is happening in their maritime domains and defend their own interests," the more stability there will be, Kritenbrink explained.

### [Colombia to Retrieve Treasure Worth \\$ 20 Billion from Ship that Sank in 1708](#)

March 5 - *Marine Insight*

[Caribbean Sea, South America]

In 2015, the Spanish galleon *San Jose*, which sank in 1708, was discovered in the Caribbean at a depth of 2,000 feet. Now, the Colombian government will invest about \$4.5 million in 2024 to explore the *San Jose* shipwreck and recover the \$20 billion worth of treasure still believed to be on board.

### [Fatal coastguard chase: Taiwan blames Beijing's lack of enforcement on illegal fishing boats](#)

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

[South China Sea, Southeast Asia]

In investigating the deadly capsizing of a high-powered, unlicensed fishing boat from Mainland China during a pursuit by Taiwanese coast guard around the waters of the Kinmen/Quemoy islands in mid-February, Taipei has accused Beijing of inaction on 'three-no' (unnamed, uncertified and unregistered) vessels from Mainland China.

### [Philippines to push back against China if maritime interests ignored, Marcos says](#)

March 4 - *Reuters*

[Southeast Asia, South China Sea, China]

Speaking at a Lowy Institute forum in Australia, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said that the efforts to work with China and Southeast Asian nations to establish a code of conduct in the South China Sea "are not pursued in a vacuum" and relies on a "conducive environment where tensions are effectively managed."

### [The Arctic Council with new decisive step forward](#)

February 29 - *Arctic Today*

[Arctic Ocean, Global]

Members of the Arctic Council agreed that the Arctic Council's working groups meetings will gradually resume in virtual formats. According to Morten Høglund, Chair of the Arctic Council's Senior Arctic Officials, such a move will help reaffirm the members commitment to safeguard and strengthen the Arctic Council and to address "issues of emerging concern" in the region.

### [Việt Nam reasserts sovereignty over Vanguard Bank: Foreign ministry](#)

February 29 - *Viet Nam News*

[South China Sea, Southeast Asia]

In response to questions on the deployment of a Chinese coast guard ship into the waters near Vanguard Bank/Bãi Tư Chính, Vietnam reasserted its opposition to all violations of its sovereignty, reaffirming it "will continue to assist in the protection of its lawful and legitimate rights and interests in the sea via peaceful means in accordance with international law."

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

### [Pirates demand \\$5mn ransom for release of Bangladeshi crew of MV Abdullah](#)

March 25 - WION

[Africa, Indian Ocean, Global]

Amidst the ongoing threats of Houthi strikes in the Red Sea, there has been a resurgence of Somali pirate raids around the Horn of Africa, including the successful hijacking of the bulk carrier the MV *Abdullah* nearly 700 miles (1,100 kilometers) east of Somalia's capital. After being closely watched and followed by the Indian Navy, the *Abdullah* is now docked in Somalia's territorial waters with the pirates demanding \$5 million (₹420 million) for the release of the 23 Bangladeshi crew members.

### [North Korea fires ballistic missiles as Blinken visits Seoul](#)

March 18 - Reuters

[East Asia, Global]

Early in the morning on March 18, North Korea fired several short-range ballistic missiles into the sea off its eastern coast for the first time in two months. The launches coincided with a visit from U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to Seoul, South Korea for the third Summit for Democracy.

### [Maldives signed military deal with Beijing but may remain swing state in China-India tug of war](#)

March 14 - *South China Morning Post* [Paywall]

[South Pacific, China, South Asia]

The Maldivian defense ministry stated that the military assistance agreement signed with China in Male on March 4 aimed at fostering strong bilateral ties. In response to the Maldives' pact with China, India began withdrawing 89 Indian military personnel and announced the establishment of a new naval base on Lakshadweep islands, which is strategically located near the Maldives.

### [Russia, Iran, And China Conduct Joint Maritime Security Drills In Arabian Sea](#)

March 13 - *Marine Insight*

[Arabian Sea, Middle East, Eurasia]

The navies of Russia, Iran and China will be conducting joint exercises—known as Maritime Security Belt 2024—in the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea involving war vessels and aviation.

### [France Is Fitting Paseo XLR EO/IR System On All Its FREMM And Air Defense Destroyers](#)

March 12 - *Naval News*

[Europe]

The French Navy issued an “urgent operational requirement” to fit Safran Electronics and Defense's PASEO XLR extra long-range naval optronic identification and fire control system on all its first rank



vessels. This decision was made as a direct response to the repeated Houthi rebels threats posed by kamikaze unmanned surface vehicles (USV) and unmanned air vehicles (UAV) in the Red Sea.

### [Pentagon to release Arctic strategy that outlines tech, presence needs](#)

March 12 - *Defense News*

[United States, Arctic Ocean]

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Arctic and Global Resilience Iris Ferguson said the Pentagon will release an updated Department of Defense Arctic Strategy in Spring 2024. The new strategy will reportedly highlight how the Arctic has changed in the last five years and emphasize the need for advancements in technology and presence.

### [Sweden joins NATO as war in Ukraine prompts security rethink](#)

March 7 - *Reuters*

[North Atlantic, Europe, Global]

On March 7, Sweden officially joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and will benefit from NATO's common defense commitment. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken attributed Russia as the reason that prompted Sweden's efforts to join.

### [Ukraine war: Kyiv says seven dead as drone attack sinks Russian ship](#)

March 5 - *BBC*

[Europe, Black Sea]

Ukraine says its Magura V5 maritime drones successfully hit and sank the *Sergey Kotov*, a Russian Black Sea Fleet patrol ship, in an overnight attack near the Kerch Strait off occupied Crimea.

## Peer-Reviewed Research on Maritime Issues

### Government Releases & Other Press Statements

- Japan International Cooperation Agency - [“Signing of Grant Agreement with Indonesia: Contributing to the improvement of maritime safety and security in the territorial waters of Indonesia through the deployment of a patrol vessel”](#) [March 25]
- U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration - [“Early Adopters of NASA’s PACE Data to Study Air Quality, Ocean Health”](#) [March 25]
- U.S. Department of State - [“U.S. Support for the Philippines in the South China Sea”](#) [March 23]
- Australian Government Department of Defence - [“ADF helps deter illegal fishing in collaboration with Vanuatu”](#) [March 18]
- Republic of Korea Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries - [“2024 Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries Major Policy Implementation Plan”](#) [March 18]

- Republic of Cyprus Ministry of Foreign Affairs - [“Joint Statement by Cyprus, USA, UAE, UK, the European Commission & Qatar on Ministerial Consultations to Advance a Maritime Corridor to Deliver Humanitarian Assistance to Gaza”](#) [March 13]
- Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force - [“Japan-Kingdom of Bahrain Goodwill Exercise”](#) [March 12]
- U.S. Southern Command - [“Statement of General Laura J. Richardson Commander, United States Southern Command Before the 118th Congress House Armed Services Committee”](#) [March 12]
- U.S. Department of Defense - [“TRANSCRIPT: Navy Officials Hold a Press Briefing on President Biden's Fiscal 2025 Navy Budget”](#) [March 11]
- Republic of Korea Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries - [“Strengthening Ecosystem Surveys for the Designation of Large Marine Protected Areas”](#) [March 8]
- Republic of Korea Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries - [“Revitalizing Investment in the Seafood Sector by Establishing the First-ever Secondary Fund and Blue Food Tech Fund”](#) [March 7]
- U.S. Department of State - [“Digital Press Briefing with Daniel J. Kritenbrink, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs”](#) [March 7]
- Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water - [“Declaration of Southern Ocean offshore wind zone”](#) [March 6]
- U.S. Department of State - [“U.S. Support for the Philippines in the South China Sea”](#) [March 5]
- U.S. Department of Navy - [“7th Fleet Destroyer transits Taiwan Strait”](#) [March 5]
- Arctic Council - [“Arctic Council advances resumption of project-level work”](#) [February 28]
- Equatic - [“Equatic Unveils Plans for the World's Largest Ocean-Based Carbon Removal Plant”](#) [February 27]

#### Analyses & Opinions

- [“China's Water Cannons Test US-Philippines Pact in Sea Feud”](#) [Bloomberg - March 25] [Paywall]
- [“The project integrating renewable energy and seaweed farming”](#) [The Fish Site - March 25]
- [“Polymeric Solutions Contributing to Maritime Decarbonization”](#) [The Maritime Executive - March 25]
- [“China's Dispute With Taiwan Is Playing Out Near This Frontline Island”](#) [The New York Times - March 24] [Paywall]
- [“National security leaders worry about U.S. failure to ratify Law of the Sea treaty”](#) [60 Minutes Overtime - March 24] [Paywall]
- [“Great-Power Competition Comes to Antarctica: China's Scientific Push Tests the Continent's Stability”](#) [Foreign Affairs - March 18] [Paywall]
- [“Searching for lost submarines: An overview of forensic underwater methodologies”](#) [CIMSEC - March 18]
- [“Ships, Not Chips, Could Offer China an Edge”](#) [Bloomberg - March 18] [Paywall]
- [“In the busy waters between China and Taiwan, the de facto border is being tested”](#) [The Guardian - March 18]
- [“From the Deep Sea to D.C.—How China Fears Have Put Ocean-Floor Mining on Washington's Radar”](#) [The Wall Street Journal - March 15] [Paywall]
- [“The Red Sea crisis, food insecurity and conflict”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - March 14]
- [“One year along Australia's optimal pathway to nuclear-powered submarines”](#) [Australian Strategic Policy Institute - March 13]
- [“Red Sea inaction proves China is not a 'responsible stakeholder’”](#) [Nikkei Asia - March 13]

- [“Shipbuilding: the new battleground in the US-China trade war”](#) [The Financial Times - March 12] [Paywall]
- [“Current Status and Challenges for Japan’s Strategic Communications based on the National Defense Strategy: Indo-Pacific Deployment 2023 and a Free and Open Indo-Pacific”](#) [The Sasakawa Peace Foundation - March 12]
- [“Why Russia Has Been So Resilient to Western Export Controls”](#) [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace - March 11]
- [“A Bridge Over Troubled Waters”](#) [Center for Maritime Strategy - March 11]
- [“How the U.S. military will use a floating pier to deliver Gaza aid”](#) [The Washington Post - March 8] [Paywall]
- [“The Oceans We Knew Are Already Gone”](#) [The Atlantic - March 7] [Paywall]
- [“Sea Drone Swarms – Can NATO’s Navies Avoid Russia’s Fate?”](#) [Center for European Policy Analysis - March 6]
- [“Poland’s navy steps up a weight class”](#) [International Institute for Strategic Studies - March 6]
- [“How China’s Aggressive Sea Tactics Look From the Deck of an Opposing Ship”](#) [The Wall Street Journal - March 6] [Paywall]
- [“A Russian lake: Has the West ceded the Black Sea to Russia?”](#) [CIMSEC - March 6]
- [“The Maldives Is a Tiny Paradise. Why Are China and India Fighting Over It?”](#) [The New York Times - March 5] [Paywall]
- [“NATO Should Not Accept Ukraine—for Ukraine’s Sake”](#) [Foreign Policy - March 5] [Paywall]
- [“The South China Sea Is the Next Test of US Resolve”](#) [Bloomberg - March 3] [Paywall]
- [“The Sea Services Must Support Infrastructure Investment”](#) [U.S. Naval Institute - March 2024]
- [“How to Overcome China’s Maritime Industrial Overmatch”](#) [U.S. Naval Institute - March 2024]
- [“Why the European Union and United States are leading ‘parallel’ security operations in the Red Sea”](#) [Breaking Defense - February 28]
- [“Wherever they may roam: China’s militia in 2023”](#) [Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative - February 28]

#### Other Research

- Podcast: CIMSEC - [“Sea Control 504: Chinese Maritime interests in the Indian Ocean with Commodore Venugopal Vengalil”](#) [March 24]
- Podcast: CIMSEC - [“Sea Control 500: The UK’s Indo-Pacific engagement with Dr. Peter Chalk”](#) [March 7]
- Report: Center for Strategic & International Studies - [Antarctic Monitoring Tools in Action](#) [March 19]
- Report: United States Studies Centre - [Networked deterrence in a multipolar Indo-Pacific](#) [February 29]

## Events on the Maritime Domain

- On February 29, 2024, German Marshall Fund of the United States hosted an online event to discuss [“Black Sea Security: Bulgaria’s Role and the Need for a Regional Strategy.”](#)
- On February 29, 2024, Center for Strategic & International Studies hosted a webinar titled [“Navigating the Seas with Admiral Lisa Franchetti, Chief of Naval Operations of the U.S. Navy.”](#)

- On February 29, 2024, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, The Maldives National University (MNU), Global Infrastructure Fund Research Foundation Japan (GIF Japan), and Hosei University hosted a hybrid seminar titled [“Climate Change Adaptation Strategies for Small Island Developing States: Lessons from Artificial Island Development in the Maldives.”](#)
- On March 5, 2024, Wilson Center held a hybrid event on [“Water and Energy in MENA After COP28.”](#)
- On March 7, 2024, the Ocean Policy Research Institute of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (OPRI-SPF) organized the hybrid [UN Ocean Decade ECOP Japan Symposium](#) to discuss the UN’s international framework for the sustainable use and management of the oceans using ocean science to achieve the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.
- From March 11-13, 2024, The Economist Group hosted [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.”
- On March 20, 2024, Wilson Center Asia Program hosted an online webinar titled [“Completing the US Strategic Rebalance: The Launch of the Wilson Center’s Indo-Pacific Program.”](#)
- On March 20, 2024, International Institute for Strategic Studies hosted a webinar on [“Critical infrastructure: the maritime challenge.”](#)
- On March 26, 2024, Wilson Center Kissinger Institute and AidData will hold an in-person event in Washington, D.C. to present [“BRI, Ports, and Debt: Getting the China Facts Straight.”](#)
- On March 26, 2024, Center for a New American Security will hold a virtual launch event for their new report titled [Autonomy and International Stability: Confidence-Building Measures for Uncrewed Systems in the Indo-Pacific.](#)
- On March 28, 2024, Wilson Center will host an online event to discuss [“Competition at Sea: Building Resilience in a Maritime Enterprise in Crisis.”](#) Registration is still open.
- On April 1, 2024, Center for Strategic & International Studies will hold [“A Conversation with U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield on U.S. Diplomacy in the Pacific Islands.”](#)
- On April 9, 2024, Center for Maritime Strategy will hold their [annual breakfast](#), convening “leading members of the maritime security community to engage in critical discussions on the future of America’s role as a global sea power.”
- On April 11, 2024, the International Maritime Organization will be holding an [“IMO Seminar on implications, challenges and opportunities of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships \(MASS\) for ports and public authorities.”](#)
- From April 22-24, 2024, Wilson Center, Battelle and several U.S. National Laboratories will co-host the [Innovations in Climate Resilience Conference 2024 \(ICR24\)](#) in Washington, D.C. “to share and inspire science and technology solutions for addressing climate change.” Registration is still open.
- On April 24, 2024, National Oceanography Centre and the Challenger Society for Marine Science’s joint Upscaling of Autonomy Working Group (UAWG) will be holding an [online roundtable discussion workshop](#). Registration is still open.
- On April 25, 2024, Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology will hold the 92nd Andrew Laing Lecture in Newcastle, England to discuss [“Applying Alternative Fuels to Existing Ships.”](#)

# Handbill Spotlight

## Unmanned Underwater Vehicles

### Issue Background <sup>1</sup>

Unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), also known as underwater drones, are submersible vehicles that can operate underwater without a human occupant. There are two main categories of UUVs: remotely operated underwater vehicles (ROVs) and autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs). ROVs are controlled in real-time by an operator from a surface vessel or platforms similar to the pilot for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), whereas AUVs operate independently, following pre-programmed instructions or utilizing advanced algorithms.

Since the 1950s, UUVs have been a pivotal technology for the navies in executing maritime search missions. In the 1970s, the UUVs played a crucial role in assisting the rescue mission for crews of wrecked submarines. Then the commercial industry began exploring this technology in the 1980s. For instance, around 1985, ROVs enabled scientists to discover the [shipwrecks of the RMS Titanic](#) and WWII-era [German battleship the Bismarck](#) in the North Atlantic Ocean.

In the last five years, several major and middle powers have dedicated themselves to developing their own UUVs for naval operation. In 2019, during the parade celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese military demonstrated its first large AUVs, [the HSU-001](#). In the same year, the Russian government [announced](#) the sea trial of its “Poseidon” UUV which would be deployed on its Project 09852 nuclear-submarine. In 2023, Boeing delivered the first [autonomous Extra Large Unmanned Underwater Vehicle](#) (XLUUV) named as *Orca* for the U.S. Navy. Since 2019, the U.S. Navy and Department of Defense have been updating its fleet architecture which aims to include [extra-large unmanned Undersea vehicles](#). On December 28, 2023, the French Defense Procurement Agency (DGA) also [awarded](#) Naval Group an agreement for the design, production and testing of an Unmanned Combat Underwater Vehicle (UCUV).



However, the naval concept of operations (CONOPS) for UUVs varies between each country. According to the congress research services' report, the United States' Navy wants to develop UUVs for its “distributed fleet” naval framework. The aim of this naval initiative is to [distribute](#) the Navy's capabilities across a broader range of platforms including UUVs, preventing the concentration of the fleet's total capacity within a limited number of high-value vessels. Similar to the U.S. Navy's CONOPS, the Chinese Navy wants to [broaden](#) its options for naval operations by integrating unmanned warfare like UUVs. For the middle naval power, the CONOPS for UUV is to consolidate the offensive capability

<sup>1</sup> Image: A Remus 130 Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle portable UUV which can be used for Mine Countermeasures and Search and Rescue) is displayed during the Oceanology International 2024 on March 12, 2024 in London, England. (Photo by John Keeble/Getty Images)

of the current naval fleet. For instance, the latest South Korean naval concept “Navy Sea GHOST” [envisions](#) a lean and mobile force that includes close cooperation between manned and unmanned vessels. In the case of Russia, the latest “Poseidon” UUV was [designed](#) to carry the nuclear warhead for targeting ports or aircraft carriers.

## Recent Events

Traditionally, navies have deployed UUVs primarily for reconnaissance and surveillance (R&S) and mine detection, rather than carrying out combat operations. However, recent developments indicate a growing interest in the offensive capabilities of UUVs, especially for countries that seek to boost their forces capacity and offense variety in a short time period. Since the onset of the Ukraine-Russia War in 2022, Ukraine has been dedicated to developing its [“Army of Drones.”](#) In 2023, Ukraine's “Brave1 initiative” [revealed](#) its defense project involving Toloka TLK-150 UUVs which are particularly challenging to detect due to their relatively small size (2.5 meters).

Another instance showcasing the offensive potential of UUVs was the recent Red Sea crisis. On February 18, 2024, U.S. Navy forces neutralized a UUV in Houthi-controlled waters around Yemen. [Public images](#) captured the characteristics of those UUV which are similar to the torpedo or one-way attack underwater drone. [Former Pentagon officials](#) have highlighted the difficulty of detecting or destroying these UUVs and their threat to a ship's defense.

Furthermore, the rising importance of maritime security also prompted countries to boost their UUV development. On February 23, 2024, Japan and Australia announced their joint research on the future innovation of underwater drones. The Australian Defense Minister [described](#) this joint defense project as a key foundation for “maintaining a technological edge in our rapidly changing strategic environment.”

## Keep In Mind

In both cases of Ukraine and Houthi, UUV is an important tactical equipment to reinforce their warfare against more advanced naval powers. Unlike the conventional anti-cruise torpedo or missiles that require well-trained sophisticated operators and platforms, these one-way attack undersea drones are designed to operate in asymmetric conditions to offset the deficiencies of their naval capability vis-a-vis the advanced naval adversaries. Moreover, due to their wider operational range, these one-way attack drones can threaten naval vessels that exceed the range of conventional anti-cruise torpedoes. The adoption of UUV will revolutionize the future naval warfare as it has been proven to be effective for the weaker naval states against the more advanced conventional naval fleets.

Also, advanced UUVs will flourish future naval combat options. The U.S. congress [inquiries](#) about the Navy's acquisition of UUVs has implied that there are many potential developments for UUV. For instance, there are two available CONOPS for UUVs. On one hand, the U.S. Navy can choose to prioritize the quality over quantity of UUVs. Those kinds of UUVs will have precision offensive capabilities and self-defense measures. On the other hand, the Navy prioritizes the quantity. An abundant quantity of UUVs can organize the [“Swarm Warfare.”](#) which employs “blanketing” tactics and strikes the target from all directions. Both kinds of CONOPS can require the infrastructure, retrieving, refueling, and repairing those UUVs. In other words, the future UUV warfare might require the navy to develop the similar UUV task groups fleets with escorted vessels like those in a carrier strike groups

Despite the relatively technical competences and promising future development of UUVs, there are still concerns and challenges. Their dual-use capability for civil and military operations can easily

lead to disputes. In 2016, the Chinese Navy Dalang-III class submarine rescue vessel [retrieved](#) a UUV in the South China Sea. Although the U.S. government [claimed](#) that this UUV was U.S. property and was used as the oceanographic survey device, its potential capability of military intelligence gathering was perceived as a threat to China's national security. As the U.S.-China competition in the South China Sea remained, the adoption of UUVs for anonymous intelligence collection and surveillance might become a regular point of concern for both countries. The potential for military intelligence collection by such devices poses national security threats, underscoring the need for transparency in UUV operations, especially in contested maritime areas.

Another key issue related to UUVs that observers need to monitor is the supply chain for UUVs. The latest U.S. XLUUV, the *Orca*, produced by Boeing for the U.S. Navy, experienced a delayed production of three years. As a response to this overtime production, the U.S. Navy Sea System command [said](#) that Boeing is now improving its industry base for UUV production in titanium composites, pressure vessel manufacture, and also battery. The U.S. does not have a competitive downstream supplier for two of those supply chains, titanium and battery. Instead, China, which was labeled by the U.S. as the main competitor, is the biggest supplier of both these two products. In 2022, China [produced](#) 1.20 TWh relative to U.S.'s 0.11 TWh; in 2023, China manufactured the most titanium and [held](#) 30% of world's titanium reserves. The escalating sophistication and strategic deployment of UUVs not only redefine the parameters of underwater warfare and maritime security but also prompt a reevaluation of global naval capabilities in the face of burgeoning technological and geopolitical challenges, signaling a pivotal shift in the future conduct of maritime operations and international relations.

This issue's [Spotlight](#) was written by Ao Gu, ICAS Part-Time Research Assistant Intern.

## ICAS Maritime Affairs Program: New and Upcoming

### — Upcoming ICAS MAP Event —



The handbill features a background image of a globe. On the left is the ICAS logo (Institute for China-America Studies) with Chinese characters. On the right is the MAP logo (ICAS Maritime Affairs Program). The central text reads: "Thursday, April 18, 2024, 10:00am - 11:30am EST, In-Person (Washington, DC) & Online (Zoom). The United States and China's Global Maritime Relations: Inevitable Competition or Feasible Collaboration? ~Hybrid Book Talk & Panel Discussion~".

On Thursday, April 18, the ICAS Maritime Affairs Program, in collaboration with The China Institute, University of Alberta, will host a hybrid book talk and panel discussion on U.S.-China global maritime relations. This event will feature Dr. Nong Hong, the author of *US-China Global Maritime Relations* (Routledge, 2024), who will discuss the evolution and execution of maritime strategies pursued by both

the United States and China. Moreover, three panelists will provide their insights on this subject, representing perspectives from the United States, China, and a third-party viewpoint.

Stay Tuned for More Information: [chinaus-icas.org/subscribe/](https://chinaus-icas.org/subscribe/)  
About the Book: [chinaus-icas.org/research/us-china-global-maritime-relations/](https://chinaus-icas.org/research/us-china-global-maritime-relations/)

### – MAP Commentary –

Taking Down “Made-in-China” Cranes Cannot Address U.S. Weakness in The Shipping Industry

By Yilun Zhang

March 19, 2024

...The spy crane probe has brought momentum to raise public awareness and rally public support for the U.S. shipping industry. But instead of following economic common sense and building back a better U.S. shipping industry, current policies are only leading to taxpayer dollar waste and disruption in the global shipping supply chain. The fear of China posing a national security threat only produces paranoid and abrupt reactions, while the industry, which is in desperate need of long term strategic support, continues to wander by in limbo.

Read Online:

[chinaus-icas.org/research/taking-down-made-in-china-cranes-cannot-address-u-s-weakness-in-the-shipping-industry/](https://chinaus-icas.org/research/taking-down-made-in-china-cranes-cannot-address-u-s-weakness-in-the-shipping-industry/)

This article was [originally](#) published on The Carter Center’s U.S.-China Perception Monitor on March 19, 2024

### – MAP Commentary –

How Ukraine war and sanctions on Russia put Arctic cooperation on ice

By Nong Hong

March 17, 2024

Last month, the Arctic Council broke the ice by agreeing to reconvene its working group meetings virtually, nearly two years after seven of its eight members, including the US, halted participation in protest against the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which held the council chairmanship then.

The working groups had been relying on “written procedures” for the last six months, after Norway took over the chairmanship and found ways to resume project work. The latest development will hopefully pave the way for increased interaction and engagement between council members, which also include Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden...

Read Online:

[chinaus-icas.org/research/how-ukraine-war-and-sanctions-on-russia-put-arctic-cooperation-on-ice/](https://chinaus-icas.org/research/how-ukraine-war-and-sanctions-on-russia-put-arctic-cooperation-on-ice/)

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