

Proceedings
Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Exchange Conference
1-2 August, 2024
Imin Conference Center
East-West Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa

The enduring IMSE theme is *Building Partnerships for Security, Stability and Prosperity*. IMSE's purpose is to provide a forum for senior leaders, subject matter experts, and interested members of the general public to engage in dialogue about maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region. A simple definition of maritime security would list four key elements. They are freedom of navigation, unrestricted flow of commerce, the protection of ocean resources and the exclusive rights of sovereign nations in their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).

Day 1 – Thursday, 1 August 2024

IMSE's conference came at the conclusion of the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercise, which involved 29 nations from around the Indo-Pacific as well as Europe. The exercise had 42 participating ships, including three submarines, and marine and air forces. A major focus of the exercise, and of the IMSE conference, was sustainable logistics.

The conference began with a luncheon and a keynote address by **Admiral Yang Yong-mo, Chief of Naval Operations for the Republic of Korea**.



The admiral began citing the challenges and threats faced by Indo-Pacific nations that include natural disasters, climate change, and aggressive actions of some nations. He focused on the threat to freedom of navigation, which due to the percentage of populations, economies, and trade in Asia, if interrupted would adversely impact the entire world. Critical to maintaining the rules of international order, he said, is the partnerships of nations that share a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Due to the size of the Pacific it takes more than one nation to ensure this vision. Admiral Yang opined that he hoped more nations would join in exercises to build trust.

He then focused on specifics that would enhance multinational naval operations. Developing common procedures for port visits would eliminate bureaucratic delays affecting many navies. Knowledge sharing, especially about logistics, is necessary. He cited an example of a breakdown of a ROKN ship during RIMPAC that was rapidly fixed due to receiving a common part from an allied navy. Having coordinated logistics information and high interoperability of weapons systems is crucial for allied navies. Admiral Yang concluded by saying that while combined exercises, such as RIMPAC, focus on operations and coordination, in the future greater emphasis on logistics information sharing would lessen problems encountered when systems fail, which the lessons of war teach will happen.

A panel discussion with the leadership of RIMPAC followed, involving **Vice Admiral John Wade, USN**, Commander of the Combined Task Force and Commander of the US Third Fleet, **Commodore Alberto Guerrero, Chilean Navy** and Deputy Commander of the RIMPAC Combined Task Force, and **Rear Admiral Kazushi Yokota, Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force** and Vice Commander of the Combined Task Force.

VADM Wade gave a brief overview of the RIMPAC exercise that involved 29 nations, 40 allied ships, over 150 aircraft, 14 land force units, and 25 thousand men and women – the world’s largest maritime exercise. Goals VADM Wade set were (1) safety of operations, (2) environmental stewardship (especially for hazardous materials), and (3) professionalism (do the right thing). The aim was to enhance interoperability with information systems, processes, and authorities that will make the allied navies more ready to respond to natural or manmade events.



Commodore Guerrero noted the thirty years that Chile has participated and is an investment not only in friendship but also in tackling the vast that exist across the Indo-Pacific.



that RIMPAC differences

Rear Admiral Yokota, who commanded one of RIMPAC’s task forces, emphasized the value of the exercise in achieving greater interoperability between ships and with aircraft and multi-national staffs.



The panel then responded to questions.

Regarding the closing of the Navy’s main fuel depot at Red Hill on O’ahu, VADM Wade indicated that as a consequence, fuel was distributed widely across the Pacific, which has increased the flexibility of refueling ships that no longer need to come to Pearl Harbor. The US Navy now employs six super tankers that can refuel smaller traditional tankers and ships, six smaller tankers and three oilers.



When asked how to reconstitute supply chains, Commodore Guerrero commented that it was a tough question best answered by

professional logisticians. He did cite its criticality recalling that during the Falklands War the British fleet has but one vessel that carried replenishment POL. Rear Admiral Yokota observed that Japanese logistics failed during World War II and consequently logistics is seen as a critical element of the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force. VADM Wade added that RIMPAC had a specific multi-national task force focused on logistics, tied together by a secure communications network, that was not conducting simulations but tried different approaches to learn from actual experience. The panel noted the lessons coming from the Red Sea and the Houthi attacks on merchant shipping and noting the World War II employment of convoys to protect merchantmen.

What did not go well in RIMPAC?, was one question. Obtaining visas for teams that has flown in was an immediate answer. Also challenging was how to pay for international obligations. VADM Wade said that there were some 40 experiments conducted during RIMPAC. He focused on 3-D printing capabilities that can replace broken parts. RIMPAC 2024 had no repeat of the problem in RIMPAC 2022 when an Australian frigate was sidelined during the exercise due to an electrical panel failure that took more than a week to get a replacement part from Perth, Australia. Regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) VADM Wade cautioned that it was important to retain knowledge of old technologies. If GPS is down, knowing how to use a sextant is critical.



CAPT Edward Lundquist, USN (Ret.) then led a commanding officer's panel. Participants included **Captain Lee Beam Seok, ROK Navy**, commander of the submarine SS-081, **Colonel Russell Fette, USAF**, 47th Fighter Squadron (A-10s), and **Captain Yakahiro Suzuki, JMSDF**, commanding officer of *JS Kunisaki* (LST-4003)

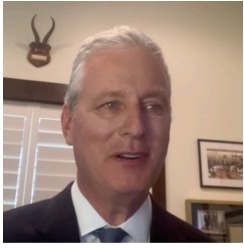
Captain Lee was the commander of the Red Team. He indicated the need for others to be able to contact his submarine more easily. The Red Team shared tactics enhancing interoperability. He commented on how critical the sea lines of communication are from the Straits of Malacca to the Korean peninsula for oil and critical supplies. He also mentioned how the ROKN helps to train submariners from other Indo-Pacific nations. When asked what was unexpected during the exercise, Captain Lee observed how quiet some vessels are, which was challenging operationally.

For the first time a US Air Force participant added to the picture of the exercise. **Colonel Fette** commanded an A-10 squadron from Arizona that came to RIMPAC. It participated in search and rescue operations as well as an amphibious landing and SINKEX. He noted the importance of interoperability in air-to-ship data links. He noted that the weather in ocean environments was challenging for Air Force aircraft. A participating AC-130 gunship often could not see its target and that ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) under a 1,000-foot ceiling was difficult. He also described the procedures for moving A-10s to Hawaii and back to Arizona, the refueling tankers required, and the safety procedures that pilots followed.



Captain Suzuki commanded the JMSDF LST landing ship in RIMPAC, the first time an LST has participated. He recounted that it conducted an at-sea replenishment. Challenges encountered including vehicle loading to support US Marine Corps-Peruvian marine operations and communications (language) with other countries.

At Friday’s breakfast a video of **Robert C. O’Brian**, former National Security Advisor to President Trump, was shown. He commented on the threat from the PRC and the need to build up the US maritime industrial base, which has atrophied.



The keynote address was from **CAPT Brent Sadler, USN (Ret.)** of the Heritage Foundation via Zoom. He posited that we are in a new Cold War. He compared it to the “Great Game” between Russia and Britain during the 18th and 19th Centuries in Central Asia, except the players are now the West and China, Russia and Iran. This

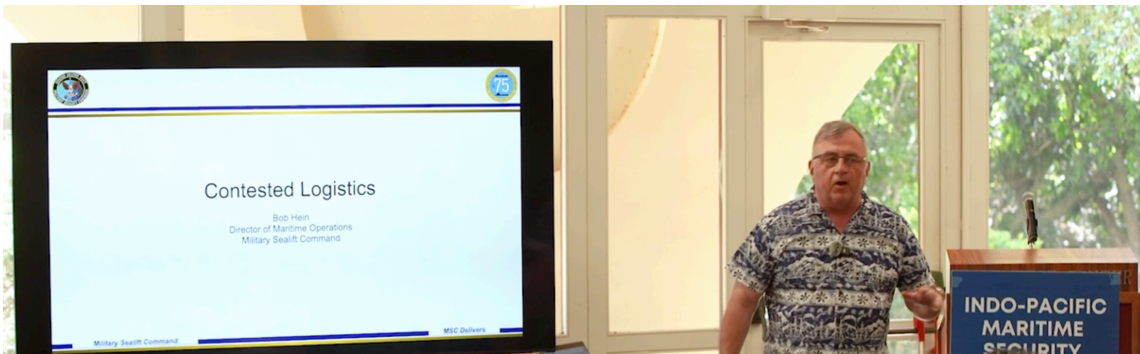


triumvirate seeks to alter the world order and gain geostrategic positions. A prime example is the Solomon Islands and the secret security pact it signed with China. Vanuatu and other Pacific islands are also Chinese targets. Sadler pointed to the example of Sri Lanka where China “captured” the elite and established a military base. Chinese “colonialism” is a growing danger.

The US needs to engage the Pacific island nations, which have meager defense and economic capabilities. Fishing and tourism feed their economies. Their small economies, however, make it difficult for private investment, so USAID assistance is important. Sadler emphasized the need for a US Coast Guard presence in American Samoa to counter illegal fishing in the various nations’ EEZs.

Following was a series of presentations focusing on the theme of sustainable logistics.

Mr. Robert Hein, SES, director of maritime operations for the US Military Sealift Command, spoke about the “logistics fleet” and its criticality for the Navy and US economy. Merchant ships have always been targets during hostilities. Hein said 733 merchant ships were sunk during World War II. The toll was lessened by the



organization of convoys of 45 to 60 ships that were protected against U-boats. When Iran attacked tankers in the Persian Gulf the US reflagged the tankers with the Stars and Stripes

detering Iran from continued attacks on essential oil logistics. Today, Hein said, seaborne traffic through the Red Sea and Suez Canal has been reduced by half due to Iranian-backed Houthi rebel missile and drone attacks on merchant ships. He also showed a map of where China has made inroads to expand its influence and growing military might – Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Seychelles, Pakistan, Kenya, Namibia, and Angola. He noted that the Chinese military base in Djibouti is closed to all but the Chinese.

Hein said that protected convoys were needed in the Red Sea-Arabian Gulf due to Houthi attacks. The Military Sealift Command now operates nine supertankers, which feed the Navy’s smaller oilers. The goal is to double this number. He noted that the US merchant fleet had sacrificed effectiveness for efficiency.

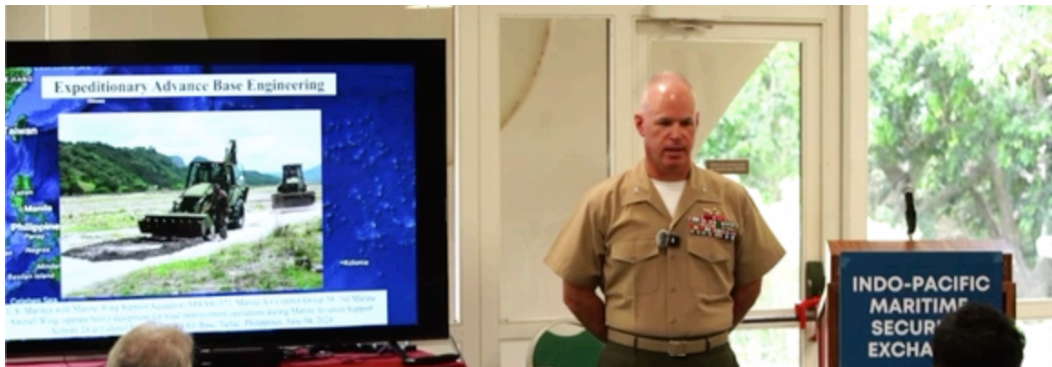
RDML (sel) Christopher Nash, USN, is the Director of Maritime Headquarters of the Pacific Fleet. As such he directs the functions of the N1 (personnel), N4 (logistics), N8 (programs), and N9 (experiments). He explained the organization of PACFLT. His counterpart, the Director of Operations oversees the N3 (operations), N5 (plans), and N7 (exercises). This includes the operations of the Third, Fifth, and Seventh Fleets and subordinate task forces. His other counterpart is the Director of Information Warfare who directs the N2 (intelligence) and N6 (communications, command and control). PACFLT operates over 200 ships, 1,300 aircraft, and 150,000 personnel.

Nash spoke of the “6 R’s” for mobile operations: redistribution, refueling, resupply (at the right time in the right location), repair, rearming, and reviving (which involves hospital ships and medical teams). He also talked about combat support ships which provide the critical logistics support to warfighting. These include oilers for refueling, dry cargo ships for resupply, submarine tenders for resupply, repair, and rearming, expeditionary fast transports (EFTs) for redistribution of assets and resupply. He mentioned the new Consul Tankers (supertankers) and the development of small, fast support ships, such as small hospital ships.



RIMPAC was important, he said, for integrated deterrence of threats in the Indo-Pacific.

Colonel Patrick Reynolds, USMC, assistant chief of staff, logistics division (G-4) of US Marine Corps Forces Pacific, a logistics specialist, spoke of the challenges of movement and logistics for the Marine Corps. He noted that two-thirds of Marine combat power is in the Indo-Pacific, and that the Marine Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) is expanding its presence in the theater. A new base in Guam will relieve some of the forces

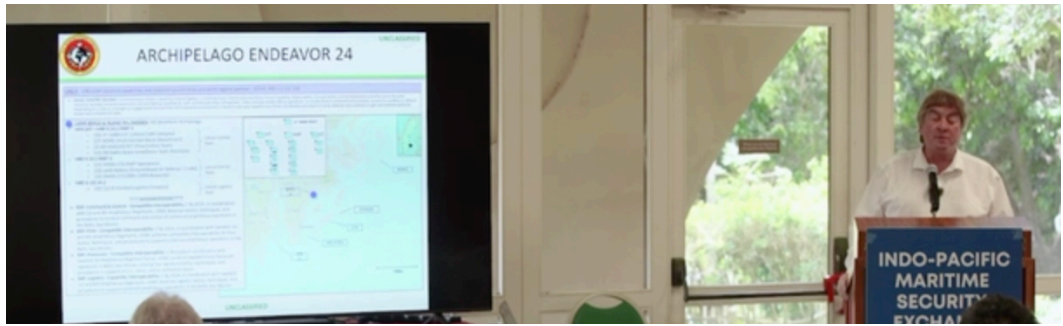


now on Okinawa. A Marine deployment to Darwin, Australia, occurs for half of the year. The Marines are engaged in advanced base engineering projects, such as in the Philippines and Palau. The purpose is to improve air strips, roadways, and bridges to

handle military equipment and support the local population. A dirt airstrip on one of the Palau islands now cuts transit times from other islands by many hours. He indicated that the Marines are trying to reduce logistics’ risks by having a mix of afloat and ashore pre-positioned materiel. With the new Marine Littoral Regiments the greatest limitation is littoral mobility. Reynolds said the Marine Corps is looking forward to the new medium landing ships that are in the defense budget. He also said the Marines are emphasizing the training of logisticians for the challenging environment of the Indo-Pacific.

The final speaker was **Mr. Anthony Mulligan**, CEO of Hydronalix, a technology company specializing in advanced small surface robotic systems. He spoke about several capabilities being sponsored by the Office of Naval Research for the Marines. Taking ideas from junior Marines the company has built Styrofoam boats for

use in littoral waters. The small unmanned surface vessels (USVs) have a standard brain box, batteries, and motor but can employ various payloads, including a mapping sonar for beach bathymetry, ship-to-shore



resupply, sonobuoy delivery out to 20 NMs, a small radar for early warning that is tied to a standard Marine radio and can help direct HIMARS fire. Other uses include radiation detection, explosive ordinance detection, and wounded Marine medivac. The company's boats have been tested in European exercises, such as BalticOps and Archipelago Endeavor in Sweden.

CAPT Edward Lundquist, USN (Ret.) then led a final question and answer session with the speakers.

RDML Nash, when asked how the Army and Air Force fit in the Indo-Pacific maritime strategy, explained the complexities of joint task forces and how they are organized for task accomplishment (like logistics support), by battle space, and by available assets. He focused on how a Sustainment Task Force, and its subordinate task groups, are integrated across all Services and responsible for moving supplies from point of origin to point of need.

Colonel Reynolds said that Marine units have a lot of organic capability to move supplies from ship to shore, but off-shore support vessels are important, especially for fuel, which runs everything. Prepositioning is intended to reduce the risk of one approach by having multiple ways to resupply units ashore. Referencing Mr.



Mr. Mulligan's talk, Colonel Reynolds endorsed taking innovative technologies and inserting them into war games and exercises. He specifically mentioned the Marines investment in distributed manufacturing capabilities, such as 3-D printing.

Mr. Hein spoke about prepositioning ships, noting that there are ones at Diego Garcia and Saipan. The Maritime Administration maintains ships on a five-day ready to sail status and has contracts with commercial shipping companies for additional support if needed. The biggest challenge, he explained was moving the "iron mountain" from bases via rail or road to ports and loading ships on an accelerated schedule. If arrival of materiel at port is delayed one cannot stack up ships. It is a "synchronized dance."

RDML Nash concluded by emphasizing the value of exercises, such as RIMPAC, in learning how to logistically support the fleet and ashore forces.

IMSE 2024

All presentations for the 2024 IMSE webinar are viewable at imsehawaii.org. Session videos can be found at imsehawaii.org/imse-2024/imse-2024-session-videos.html and slide presentations at imsehawaii.org/imse-2024/imse-2024-slides.html.

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