

Featured MSP Guest Column:

Inter-Agency Maritime Security Coordination: The Kingdom of Thailand's Example

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By Captain Panuphun Rakkeo, Royal Thai Navy



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Inter-Agency Maritime Security Coordination: The Kingdom of Thailand's Example



MSP Guest Columnist

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The Thai Government recognizes that maritime security could not be handled by any one agency alone. In order to ensure safety of the seas, the Office of the National Security Council approved the establishment of the Thai Maritime Law Enforcement Coordinating Center or THAI-MECC on 17 March 1997. It is located at the Navy Operations Center and operates under the Office of the National Security Council's guidance. It was officially declared operational on 9 January 1998.

THAI-MECC is led by the Royal Thai Navy as the focal point, with another five law enforcement agencies, namely, the Royal Thai Marine Police, Customs Department, Maritime Department, Department of Fisheries and the Coastal and Maritime Resources Department.

The objective of THAI-MECC is to be a coordinating center for the protection of national maritime interests. It is also intended to be the center responsible for coordinating various maritime-related organizations to ensure a clear direction of maritime operations, reduce task duplication, and to facilitate a continuous exchange of information between the agencies.

The tasks of THAI-MECC mandated by the government include protection against and prevention of piracy and armed robbery at sea, preventing slavery and human trafficking, illegal migrants, smuggling, narcotics, dual-use items under UN conventions, illegal fishing as well as engaging in anti-terrorism, disaster relief, search and rescue, and environmental laws. The Area of Operations is divided into three areas within the responsibility of THAI-MECC Area Coordinating Center (THAI-MECC ACC). The six agencies in the area conduct maritime security operations by using their maritime power act under the control and coordination from the THAI-MECC ACC.

18 years of experience in operating the THAI-MECC has shown that the current THAI-MECC as an ad-hoc organization with only a coordinating power is insufficient for effective interoperability between the agencies. As such, the way forward is to improve THAI-MECC, transforming it into a stronger entity. It would be renamed as Thailand Maritime Laws Enforcement Administration Center (THAI-MLEAC) and would serve as a

Coordinating Coastguard. However, separate legislation and reorganization of THAI-MECC, as well as Law Enforcement Task Forces, would be required.

This upgrade to THAI-MECC is being carried out in three areas. Firstly, the Administrative Authority is to be improved by enacting a new Maritime Power bill which is slated for National Assembly approval by the end of 2017. The act will empower THAI-MLEAC to have full authority at sea, having its own budget and a combined maritime task force. The second area envisages the improvement of existing THAI-MECC infrastructure, based on initial preparations made since 2015, and to upgrade the headquarters of the joint operations center and maritime Information Sharing Center, for which all construction has already been completed. In addition to those, the Maritime Information Sharing System (MISS) software is already up and running, being manned by personnel from all six agencies. The final, third area of improvement involves Operational Preparation, envisaging the promulgation of standard operating procedures between the six agencies.

THAI-MECC is well on track to be upgraded to THAI-MLEAC—which will be empowered with full authority at sea. The key to its effectiveness would be to establish an operations center that can give the commander a clear picture to understand the maritime environment and make the right decision. The Maritime Domain Awareness system is required to improve and fill the gap of situation awareness. Meanwhile, the Thai Government is also seeking any new partners to participate in this endeavor with the common goal of making the seas safe and secure for everyone.

In the foreseeable future, along with the upcoming changes, maritime security coordination among internal and international agencies, especially between ASEAN members, is vital for ensuring the security, prosperity, and sustainability of the regional waters.



VIETNAM | 1 MARCH | TUOI TRE

Vietnam completes commission of six Kilo-class submarines

A flag-raising ceremony was held on Tuesday at the military port in south-central Khanh Hoa Province for the last two of six Kilo-class submarines that Vietnam has bought from Russia.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTH KOREA- UNITED STATES | 1 MARCH | YONHAP

S. Korea, U.S. begin joint military exercise

South Korea and the United States on Wednesday kicked off an annual joint military exercise amid heightening tensions following the North's recent missile test and the death of its leader's half brother.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 2 MARCH | HINDUSTAN TIMES

India-built Scorpene submarine Kalvari test-fires missile, shows its sting

After years of delays and controversies, the Kalvari - India's first Scorpene submarine - successfully test-fired an anti-ship missile at a target in the Arabian Sea on Thursday.

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UNITED STATES | 2 MARCH | NAVY TIMES

Trump vows to build '12-carrier Navy' during visit to USS Gerald R. Ford

President Donald Trump told sailors and shipboard workers aboard the yet-to-be commissioned aircraft carrier Gerald R. Ford that he would rebuild the U.S. Navy and give the service all the resources it needs to fight and win — to include more aircraft carriers.

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CHINA | 5 MARCH | XINHUA

China to strengthen maritime, air defense and border control

China will strengthen its maritime and air defense as well as border control amid efforts to safeguard its sovereignty and security, according to a government work report to be delivered by Premier Li Keqiang at the annual parliamentary session Sunday.

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JAPAN | 8 MARCH | THE JAPAN TIMES

Japan's border islands to get ¥5 billion boon for tourism, defense

The government has earmarked ¥5 billion in increased economic assistance to 71 islands off the coast of eight prefectures, as concerns over declining populations are compounded by recurring intrusions into sovereign territory by foreign vessels.

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BANGLADESH | 12 MARCH | DHAKA TRIBUNE

Submarines lead Bangladesh navy into new waters

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina officially commissioned the Bangladesh Navy's first submarines on Sunday afternoon.

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JAPAN | 14 MARCH | REUTERS

Exclusive: Japan plans to send largest warship to South China Sea, sources say

Japan plans to dispatch its largest warship on a three-month tour through the South China Sea beginning in May, three sources said, in its biggest show of naval force in the region since World War Two.

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MALAYSIA | 20 MARCH | REUTERS

Malaysia mulls naval upgrades amid IS threat, South China Sea standoff

Malaysia is gunning for a revamp of its aging naval fleet, as countries in the region prepare to face threats from the influx of Islamic State (IS) militants fleeing Mosul, and from rising tensions in the South China Sea.

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TAIWAN | 22 MARCH | TAIPEI TIMES

Homegrown submarine plan launched

The nation is hoping to build its first homegrown

submarines within eight years and commission them into service within a decade, the shipbuilder tasked with carrying out the program said yesterday.

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THAILAND | 23 MARCH | THE NATION (THAILAND)

PM confirms Thai Navy to get three Chinese submarines

It's finally Chinese submarines for Thailand. But the government would pay for only two as the third one was "a free gift", Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha revealed at his weekly press briefing yesterday.

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THE PHILIPPINES | 25 MARCH | THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Navy deploys warship to patrol Benham

The Philippine Navy has deployed one of its three warships to Benham Rise.

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THE PHILIPPINES | 26 MARCH | UPDATE PHILIPPINES

PH's anti-submarine warfare helicopters to be armed with Israeli missiles

The Philippine Navy (PN)'s first two anti-submarine warfare (ASW) helicopters will be armed with Spike NLOS missiles giving it a capability to engage hostile vessels beyond visual range.

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JAPAN-UNITED STATES | 29 MARCH | THE JAPAN NEWS

SDF to guard U.S. vessels in drill

The Japanese and U.S. governments have begun arranging for Self-Defense Forces ships, by this summer, to protect U.S. military vessels for the first time in peacetime, it has been learned.

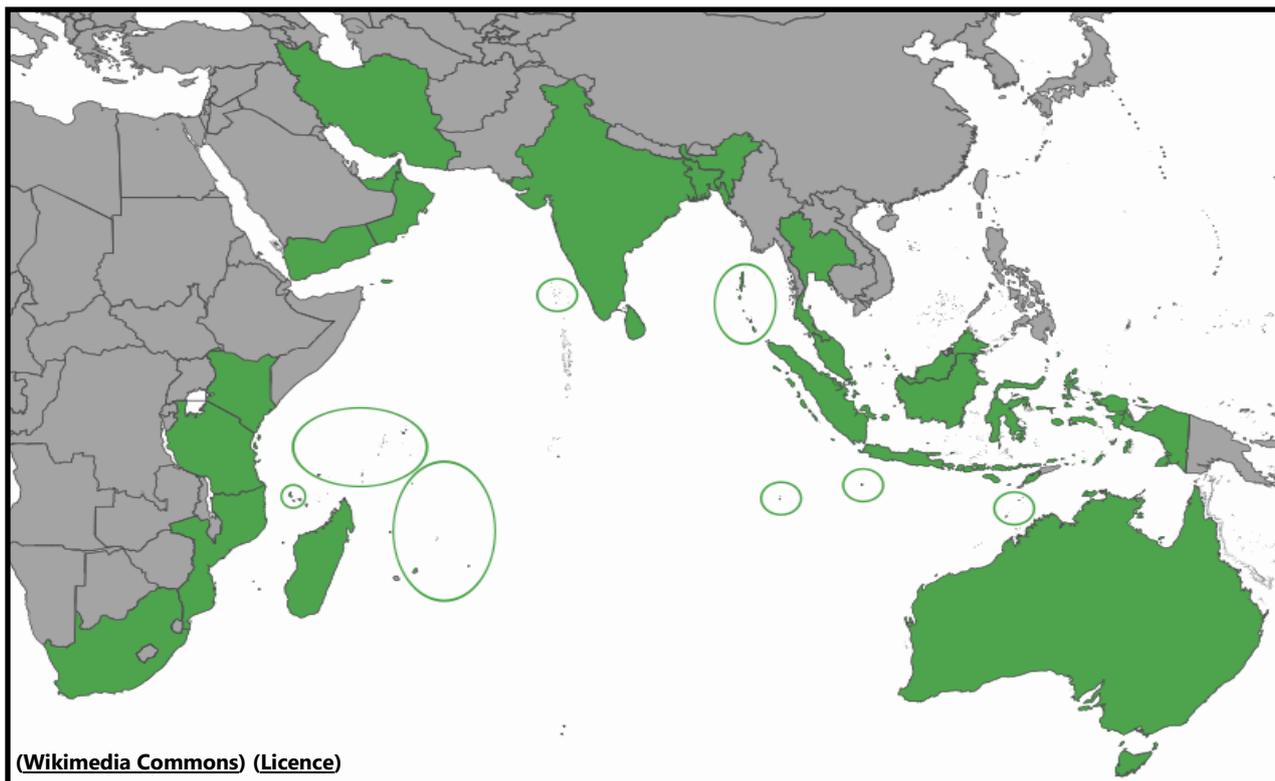
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CHINA | 29 MARCH | SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

China building navy's biggest amphibious assault vessel, sources say

China has started building a new generation of large amphibious assault vessels that will strengthen the navy as it plays a more dominant role in projecting the nation's power overseas, military sources said.

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INDIAN OCEAN REGION | 8 MARCH | THE DIPLOMAT

Indian Ocean Rim Association Concludes First-Ever Leaders' Summit

For the first time, leaders of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) are meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia, for a summit.

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THE PHILIPPINES | 1 MARCH | PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Pirate attacks stop flow of goods to ARMM port

Successive pirate attacks in the Sulu Sea in southern Philippines have forced international traders to suspend the shipment of goods to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) via the Polloc Port in Maguindanao province, a ranking regional official said.

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INDIA-UNITED STATES | 5 MARCH | THE TIMES OF INDIA

India, US set to bolster security ties, focus on cyber, maritime security

India and the US are set to further strengthen their bilateral security ties under the Trump administration with the two countries deciding to continue exchange programmes on hostage crisis, terror crime scene probe and cybercrime.

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INDIA | 7 MARCH | THE ECONOMIC TIMES

India offers to host information centre for maritime security

India today offered to host an Information Fusion Centre as part of efforts to ensure maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean.

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UNITED STATES | 9 MARCH 2017 | THE NEW YORK TIMES

Trump Weighs Cuts to Coast Guard, T.S.A. and FEMA to Bolster Border Plan

The Trump administration is considering deep cuts in the budgets of the Coast Guard, the Transportation Security Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency as it looks for money to ratchet up security along the southern border, according to a person familiar with the administration's draft budget request.

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INDONESIA-MALAYSIA-THE PHILIPPINES | 9 MARCH | CHANNEL NEWSASIA

Southeast Asian nations to patrol piracy-prone waters

The Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia will launch joint patrols in piracy-plagued waters, Manila's defence secretary said Thursday (Mar 9), after a wave of attacks that saw Islamic militants kidnapping and murdering foreigners.

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SOMALIA | 14 MARCH | BBC NEWS

Somali pirates suspected of first ship hijacking since 2012

An oil tanker has been hijacked by suspected pirates off the coast of Somalia, reports say, the first such hijacking in the region in five years.

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PAKISTAN | 15 MARCH | DAWN

Naval network providing security to Gwadar port

Commander Shahid Ahmed, the commanding officer of PNS Akram, said here on Tuesday that without maritime security of the Gwadar port and its approaches, dividends of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) could not be accrued.

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THE PHILIPPINES-UNITED STATES | 17 MARCH | THE PHILIPPINE STAR

US extends \$1-M aid for Philippine maritime security

The US government has agreed to extend \$1 million in aid for the establishment of a maritime facility in southern Mindanao to help combat piracy and terrorism.

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INDONESIA | 20 MARCH | ANTARA

Parts of Indonesian waters to be included in sensitive areas

The government will seek to put part of Indonesian

waters in the list of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSA).

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SOMALIA | 21 MARCH | CHANNEL NEWSASIA

Somali regional anti-piracy chief says sacked over illegal fishing comments

The head of anti-piracy operations in the semi-autonomous Puntland region of Somalia said he had been fired for speaking out about illegal fishing, which he claims could trigger a new outbreak of piracy in the Indian Ocean.

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ARCTIC | 24 MARCH | THE MARITIME EXECUTIVE

Arctic Coast Guard Forum Agrees Protocols

Leaders representing eight coast guards of Arctic nations signed a joint statement on Friday, adopting doctrine, tactics, procedures and information-sharing protocols for emergency maritime response and combined operations in the Arctic.

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CHINA | 25 MARCH | XINHUA

China calls for cooperation mechanism among South China Sea littoral countries

China on Saturday called on littoral countries of the South China Sea to establish a cooperation mechanism.

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SINGAPORE | 28 MARCH | CHANNEL NEWSASIA

Keeping Singapore's coastline secure amid changing threats

As efforts to enter Singapore illegally by sea become more organised, with perpetrators using faster boats, decoys and camouflage to evade detection, the Police Coast Guard is likewise stepping up surveillance with new technology, including panoramic electro-optics sensors along Singapore's borders, as well as tethered unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, that will be deployed from coastal patrol craft by 2019.

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MALAYSIA-NORTH KOREA | 29 MARCH | REUTERS

Exclusive: Malaysia inspects North Korean coal ship for possible U.N. sanctions breach

Malaysia briefly prevented a North Korean ship carrying coal from entering its port in Penang because of a suspected breach of United Nations sanctions, a port worker and Malaysian maritime officials told Reuters on Wednesday.

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WORLD | 1 MARCH | CLARKSONS RESEARCH

2016 Liner Market Review

After another year of extremely difficult market conditions, many would forgive liner sector players for an air of resignation.

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World | 1 MARCH | LLOYD'S LOADING LIST

Newbuild ship deferral

Delay offers the container industry a golden opportunity to smooth out the capacity peaks in the coming years.

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CHINA | 5 MARCH | SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

China launches world's largest oil exploration sea platform

China has put into service what it claims is the world's largest and deepest-operating offshore oil exploration platform, the Bluewhale I, the state broadcaster reported on Saturday.

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CHINA | 6 MARCH | PORT STRATEGY

Alibaba's port plan

Shipping line tie-ups with Alibaba give insight of online partnerships to come, finds Martin Rushmere.

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HONG KONG | 6 MARCH | SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

Why Hong Kong's container port may be in terminal decline, and what that would mean for a city that appears not to care

Hong Kong's wealth has grown with the container shipping trade for five decades, but if the city's port is allowed to decline much further it could go under, with big consequences for consumers and employment.

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SINGAPORE | 7 MARCH | PLATTS

South Korea's bankrupt Hanjin Shipping has vessel sold by Singapore court

One of the few remaining vessels of bankrupt South Korean container line Hanjin Shipping has been sold by a Singapore court.

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ASIA | 8 MARCH | BLOOMBERG

Asia's U.S. LNG fever going cold as buyers seek supply swaps

More Asian LNG buyers are trying to avoid taking the U.S. supplies they signed up for just a few years ago in order to cut shipping costs.

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SINGAPORE | 9 MARCH | THE STRAITS TIMES

Sulphur cap will hurt fuel oil sales: analyst

The market for fuel oil - mainly used for ships - may well have a gloomy future given recently-announced global regulations to limit sulphur emissions from ships, according to an industry analyst.

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SINGAPORE | 10 MARCH | COMPUTER WEEKLY

Singapore's maritime sector facing talent shortages in big data

A shortage of talent is preventing Singapore's maritime industry from tapping the benefits of big data analytics to improve vessel performance and lower business costs, a survey has found.

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CHINA | 14 MARCH | PLATTS

Analysis: China makes first-ever US SPR crude oil purchase

PetroChina International has bought crude oil from the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve in a move that further underscores growing Chinese interest in US crude.

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INDONESIA | 22 MARCH | REUTERS

Indonesia port graft investigation disrupting coal shipments

Indonesia is cracking down on corruption and widespread graft at some of its top coal export hubs, disrupting shipments to destinations across Asia.

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WORLD | 23 MARCH | PLATTS

Alternative bunker fuels viable but questions linger: industry sources

Many ship owners will go into 2020 unprepared for the International Maritime Organization's 0.5% global sulfur cap for marine bunker fuels, panelists said at the Connecticut Maritime Association conference as questions remain about potential alternatives.

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VIETNAM | 24 MARCH | VIETNAM NET

Foreign shipping lines must now publicise fees

Foreign shipping lines will have to publicise charges, surcharges of freight services for containerised goods, and port service charges from July 1, 2017.

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SOUTH KOREA | 27 MARCH | PULSE

Korean financial authorities under fire for inflating economic toll from DSME fall

The Korean government can hardly win rationale and public support in its proposal for another multibillion-dollar bailout package for Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering Co. (DSME) when it cannot even agree on the simple estimate of economic toll from the shipbuilder's collapse, industry watchers said.

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WORLD | 30 MARCH | PLATTS

Container shipping may grow 2%-4% in 2017 as economy revives: Maersk

Cargo volumes moved in container ships are expected to grow 2%-4% this year, up from around 1.5%-2% in 2016 as the industry capitalizes on a revival in demand in the US, Europe, China and major oil exporting countries.

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