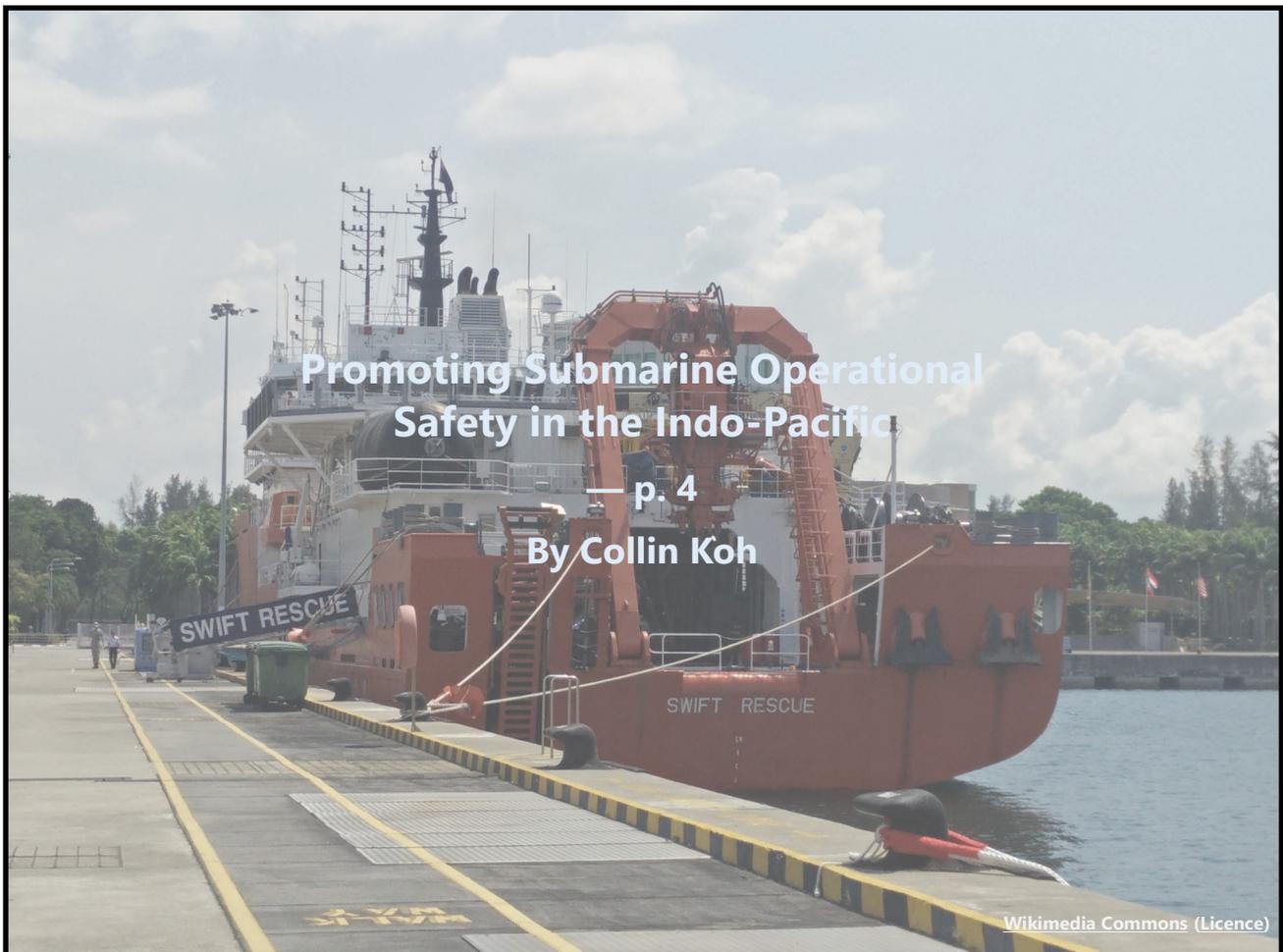


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Promoting Submarine Operational Safety in the Indo-Pacific



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By 2030, the projected 250-300 submarines lurking in the Indo-Pacific waters is no longer a remote eventuality, given the current rate of proliferation seen. The regional littorals constitute congested water-spaces – over, on and under which dense traffic exists. The South China Sea for example, where submarines are likely to operate in the backdrop of the persistent maritime disputes, is only around 60-70 meters deep, especially in the southern reaches.

It does not help that deep-draught vessels increasingly ply the regional waters. Ultra-Large Crude Carriers (ULCCs) and giant container ships such as the Maersk Triple E class for instance have draughts around 16-24.5 meters deep, leaving little space for manoeuvre which “is more akin to a two-dimensional space rather than a three-dimensional space for submarines” as former Chief of Navy Rear Admiral Lai Chung Han aptly described back in 2015. The margin for error is too narrow for submariners.

Compounding the submarine proliferation challenge is that new boats entering service are increasingly quieter. Moreover, the region is also witnessing a buildup in other asymmetric countermeasures, such as anti-submarine equipped aerial and surface assets – essentially an entire “eco-system” of platforms that enhances detection and tracking, yet also complicating underwater safety at the same time.

To be sure, some of the regional navies have implemented ways to mitigate underwater risks, chiefly through the acquisition of submarine emergency response capabilities such as a rescue vessel. But there are clear limitations. First, only better-endowed navies would acquire these assets since they add onto the already exorbitant costs of building an underwater force. Where no independent rescue capabilities are available, regional navies are seen to be striking up bilateral submarine rescue pacts.

Secondly, submarine emergency response as its name implies is a reactive undertaking – essentially waiting for disaster to strike and then hope to mitigate it. Quick response may not always be forthcoming, and this could mean life and death for the submariners in distress. Recall the procrastination amidst internal bureaucratic constraints and suspicions about foreign intervention within the Russian establishment that led to delays in rescuing those few survivors on board the submarine Kursk back in 2000?

What this region lacks is a robust preventive approach, which would complement the reactive aspect. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has a Submarine Movement Advisory Authority to deconflict underwater activities. There are also

established procedures and standards under the auspices of NATO’s International Submarine Escape and Rescue Liaison Office (ISMERLO). However, given the vastly different Indo-Pacific geopolitical context, an ISMERLO analogue would prove to be elusive.

Nevertheless, initial if modest steps could still be undertaken. For instance, the RSN recently launched the Submarine Safety Information Portal (or SSIP) – a first step towards a larger operational framework for submarine safety, comprising both reactive and preventive measures. The portal, hosted by the Information Fusion Centre at the Changi Naval Base, is a centralized, multi-input information platform designed to promote voluntary sharing of non-sensitive, “live” updates of activities at sea such as movements of ULCCs, deep-sea oil rigs, submarine-cable layers, trawlers and seismic activities (which may interfere with sonar).

It would also prove critical for the coordination of submarine rescue assets – including vessels of opportunity – should disaster strike. International liaison officers stationed at the Centre would act as the conduit to facilitate access or resources for submarine rescue. The Multinational Operations and Exercises Centre (MOEC) at Changi Naval Base possesses the ready infrastructure to support the essential planning and control of rescue operations if required.

Following SSIP, the logical next steps would include extending the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES), which was promulgated by 21 regional navies at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium in 2014, to the underwater realm. This proposed mechanism seeks to outline submarine operational safety procedures. For instance, when a submarine detects another boat, both vessels are to reduce speed or reverse propulsion to allow more time to assess the situation.

As the next Chair of ASEAN in 2018, Singapore would most likely actively push for the Underwater CUES. But present political process could be slow in creating conditions conducive for this goal. In the meantime, however, SSIP represents the best, initial and possibly interim preventive mechanism navies in the Indo-Pacific could hinge on to promote submarine operational safety. It is better for regional navies to be proactive now than wait till disaster strikes.

*This is an abridged version of a commentary published in *The Diplomat* ([click here](#))*



CHINA | 28 JUNE | GLOBAL TIMES

China's first home-grown missile destroyer launched in Shanghai, enhances PLA Navy's combat ability

China's first home-grown 10,000-ton class missile destroyer has been launched in Shanghai on Wednesday morning, marking a step forward for China's development in missile destroyers.

[Full Report](#)

TAIWAN | 6 JUNE | TAIPEI TIMES

Navy wants more advanced systems

The Republic of China Navy's next-generation frigates are likely to be equipped with an active electronically scanned array (AESA) as well as other weapons, a Ministry of Defense official said.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 6 JUNE | THE HINDU

Navy eyes advanced subs

With the Strategic Partnership model for procurement of defence platforms now official, the Navy is not interested in ordering additional Scorpene submarines, a senior naval source told The Hindu.

[Full Report](#)

NORTH KOREA | 8 JUNE | REUTERS

North Korea says leader Kim supervised test of new anti-ship missiles

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised the test launch of a new type of anti-ship cruise missiles that can accurately hit targets such as an enemy battleship, the country's official KCNA news agency reported on Friday.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTH KOREA | 9 JUNE | YONHAP

New minelayer delivered to S. Korean Navy

South Korea's Navy received a new minelayer from a local shipbuilder Friday, as it's trying to beef up its mine warfare capabilities against North Korea.

[Full Report](#)

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UNITED STATES | 13 JUNE | USNI NEWS

CNO: Navy 'Taking a Hard Look' at Bringing Back Oliver Hazard Perry Frigates, DDG Life Extensions as Options to Build Out 355 Ship Fleet

Studies are underway to "take a hard look" at putting eight mothballed Oliver Hazard Perry frigates back into service as well as extending the life of existing Arleigh Burke guided-missile destroyers to help the Navy reach its goal of a 355-ship fleet, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson said on Tuesday.

[Full Report](#)

AUSTRALIA-INDIA | 14 JUNE | THE TIMES OF INDIA

India-Australia bilateral on expansion mode

Weeks after India refused Australia's request to join the Malabar exercises, Indian warships began a week-long naval exercise off the coast of western Australia.

[Full Report](#)

AUSTRALIA | 16 JUNE | UPI

Royal Australian Navy receives first Hobart-class destroyer

The first of three planned Hobart-class air warfare destroyers has been delivered to the Royal Australian Navy at Osborne shipyard, Adelaide.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 21 JUNE | GLOBAL TIMES

China's new long-range maritime surveillance plane could cover all of S. China Sea: report

The first medium-to-long-range maritime-surveillance plane under the Chinese State Oceanic Administration has started operation at the South China Sea Branch of the government department.

[Full Report](#)

JAPAN-UNITED STATES | 22 JUNE | CNN

US, Japan missile interception test fails

A US and Japanese missile test conducted in Hawaii missed its target, but both militaries stopped short of calling it a failure.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 22 JUNE | DEFENSE NEWS

China deploys new anti-submarine aircraft to fringes of South China Sea

China has deployed its newest anti-submarine aircraft and stepped up unmanned aircraft deployments to Hainan island on the fringes of the South China Sea, according to satellite imagery obtained by Defense News.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA-UNITED STATES | 26 JUNE | THE ECONOMIC TIMES

India settles for unarmed Guardian UAVs, but actually wants combat drones

India's quest for advanced surveillance drones to keep a hawk eye on the Indian Ocean Region will now be met through the proposed acquisition of Predator naval drones from the US.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 29 JUNE | THE STAR ONLINE

RMAF eyeing new maritime patrol aircraft

The Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) is keen to acquire more maritime assets to beef up the country's security.

[Full Report](#)

AUSTRALIA | 30 JUNE | ABC NEWS

Tony Abbott rebuked by Marise Payne over criticism on nuclear submarine rejection

Defence Minister Marise Payne hits back at Tony Abbott's recent criticisms of rejecting nuclear-powered submarines, warning he is damaging his credibility with recent speeches and interviews.

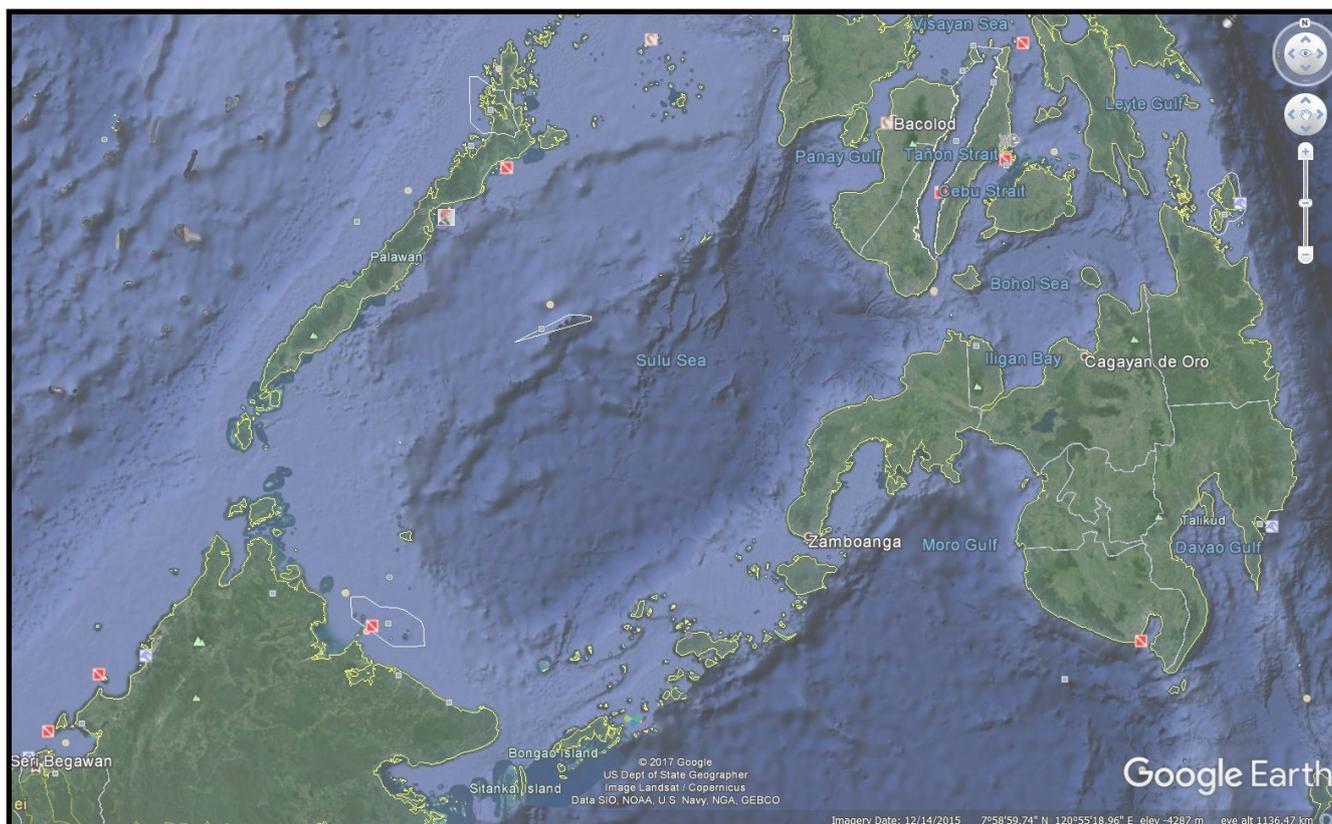
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SOUTH KOREA | 30 JUNE | YONHAP

S. Korea to cut steel for new 3,000-ton submarine

South Korea will start the construction of a new 3,000-ton submarine for the Navy, the state arms procurement agency said Friday.

[Full Report](#)



INDONESIA-MALAYSIA-THE PHILIPPINES | 19 JUNE | JAKARTA GLOBE

Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines Launch Joint Sea Patrols in Waters Off North Kalimantan

Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines launched joint sea patrols off the shores of Tarakan, North Kalimantan, on Monday (19/06) as part of efforts to enhance regional security amid increasing threats of terrorism and transnational crime.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTH PACIFIC | 1 JUNE | RADIO NEW ZEALAND

FFA welcomes bigger faster Pacific patrol boats

The Forum Fisheries Agency has welcomed a move by Australia to provide Pacific countries with bigger, faster patrol boats.

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INDONESIA | 7 JUNE | BBC

Indonesia counts its islands to protect territory and resources

Indonesia has so many islands it has never been able to fully count or name them.

[Full Report](#)

WORLD | 4 JUNE | THE STRAITS TIMES

First United Nations talks to save oceans kick off on June 5

World leaders convene at the United Nations headquarters this week for the first major bid to solve the toughest problems facing our oceans, from coral bleaching to plastic pollution, overfishing and rising seas due to climate change.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 12 JUNE | THE JAKARTA POST

Planes, submarine deployed to southern Philippines border

As an armed conflict between military forces and Islamic State (IS) fighters in Marawi on the island of Mindanao, Philippines, has yet to show signs of ceasing soon, the National Police and the Indonesian Military (TNI) are heightening security in northern border areas to anticipate possible entry of the militants.

[Full Report](#)

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Passenger Vessel Stability Requirements Boosted

IMO's Marine Safety Committee (MSC 98) has adopted amendments to SOLAS2020 that raise the damage stability requirements for passenger vessels in the event of flooding caused by a collision.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 15 JUNE | TODAY

Oil tanker sinks off East Johor Straits near Pulau Tekong, 6 Indonesian crew members missing

Six Indonesian crew members are missing when an Equatorial Guinea-registered tanker vessel sank 4.6 nautical miles from Pengerang, Johor at about 5am Thursday (June 15) due to an explosion in its engine room.

[Full Report](#)

INDIAN OCEAN | 19 JUNE | HELLENIC SHIPPING NEWS

Rise in attacks by pirates in regional waters

A resurgence of pirate activity in the Gulf of Aden and northwest Indian Ocean Region has raised concerns for the shipping industry, military authorities, UN bodies, insurers and regional bodies.

[Full Report](#)

ASEAN-JAPAN | 19 JUNE | REUTERS

Southeast Asia officers board Japanese ship for South China Sea tour

Southeast Asian military officers have embarked on a four-day tour of the South China Sea on the Japanese navy's Izumo helicopter carrier in the latest sign Japan is stepping up efforts to counter growing Chinese influence.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 19 JUNE | THE STRAITS TIMES

No abductions in seas off Sabah since police ambush in Dec

Since a Dec 8 shoot-out between police and would-be kidnappers last year, there have been no abductions reported in the notorious seas off Sabah's eastern coast, in a surprisingly quiet six-month span.

[Full Report](#)

AUSTRALIA | 23 JUNE | REUTERS

Australia to send surveillance planes to help Philippines fight militants

Australia agreed on Friday to send two surveillance planes to help the Philippines tackle Islamist rebels, as jets and artillery pounded militant positions in a southern town held for more than a month by Islamic State loyalists.

[Full Report](#)



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THE PHILIPPINES-UNITED STATES | 26 JUNE | REUTERS

U.S. warship stayed on deadly collision course despite warning - container ship captain

A U.S. warship struck by a container vessel in Japanese waters failed to respond to warning signals or take evasive action before a collision that killed seven of its crew, according to a report of the incident by the Philippine cargo ship's captain.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA-THAILAND | 26 JUNE | THE STRAITS TIMES

Pirates rob Thai oil tanker of 1.5 million litres of diesel in Malaysian waters

A Thai oil tanker was attacked by pirates on Friday (June 23) and robbed of 1.5 million litres of diesel fuel after leaving Singapore, officials said.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA-JAPAN | 30 JUNE | XINHUA

China, Japan agree on early launch of air, maritime contact mechanism

China and Japan agreed to launch an air and maritime contact mechanism as early as possible at their seventh round of high-level consultations on maritime affairs held here from Thursday to Friday.

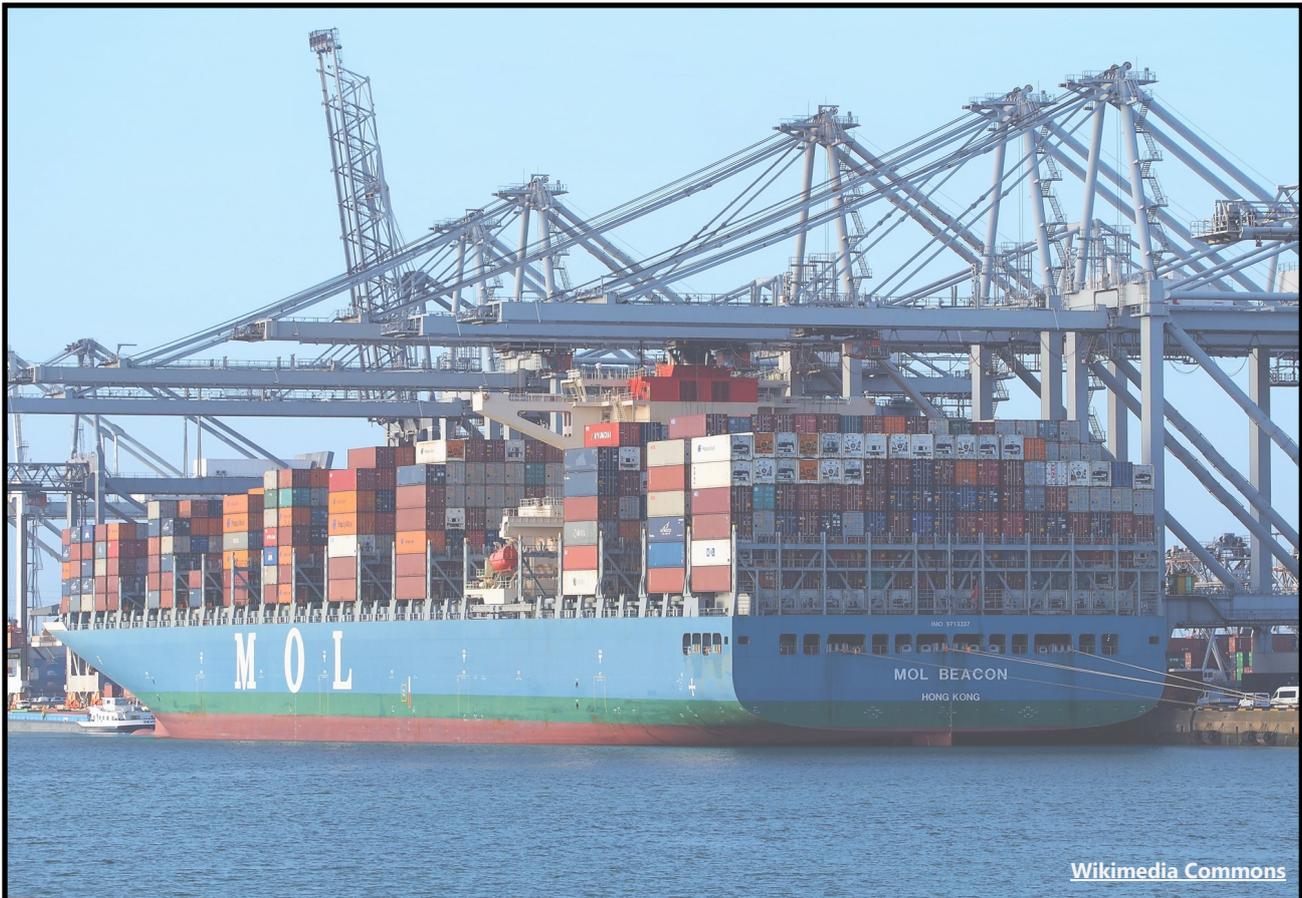
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THE PHILIPPINES-UNITED STATES | 30 JUNE | CNN PHILIPPINES

PH, U.S. navies hold coordinated anti-piracy patrol in Sulu Sea

The Philippine and U.S. navies have conducted a coordinated patrol in Sulu Sea in a bid to deter piracy and other crimes.

[Full Report](#)



JAPAN | 1 JUNE | LLOYD'S LOADING LIST

Three Japanese lines become ONE

Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, and Nippon Yusen Kabushiki Kaisha have announced that their new joint venture will operate under the name Ocean Network Express.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTH KOREA | 1 JUNE | KOREA JOONGANG DAILY

Moon pledges ocean investment

President Moon Jae-in pledged his administration's full support for Korea's flagging shipping and shipbuilding industries.

[Full Report](#)

WORLD | 5 JUNE | METAL MINER

Environmental Regulations to Impact Maritime Industry

President Donald Trump announced to the world his decision to pull the U.S. from the Paris climate accord, but a little-discussed change in the sulphur content of marine fuel oil is likely to have a significant impact on transport costs by the end of this decade.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 6 JUNE | SEATRADE MARITIME NEWS

Indonesia wants to collect fees from foreign vessels laid-up off Batam

In more unwelcome news for OSV owners Indonesia's Maritime Coordinating Minister Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan has set his sights on laid up vessels off Batam.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTHEAST ASIA | 7 JUNE | SPLASH 24/7

One Belt, One Road: changes to shipping in Southeast Asia?

There has been much commentary surrounding the development, conception, and roll of the New Silk Road by China.

[Full Report](#)

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WORLD | 7 JUNE | THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The state of global shipping in three charts

The shipping industry, which has ailed for years, is finally showing signs of recovery.

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JAPAN | 8 JUNE | NIKKEI

Japan aims to launch self-piloting ships by 2025

Japan's shipbuilders and maritime shippers are teaming up to make self-navigating ships a reality by 2025, hoping to lead global development on a project that should dramatically reduce accidents at sea.

[Full Report](#)

ASIA | 9 JUNE | THE BORNEO POST

LNG supply to Asia unimpacted by Qatar crisis

MIDF Amanah Investment Bank Bhd (MIDF Research) expects supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Asia to remain the same in spite of political tensions surrounding oil producer Qatar.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA | 12 JUNE | THE TIMES OF INDIA

In three years, major ports double operational profit

The focus of the Modi administration on port and port-led development has resulted in a revival of the financial fortunes of major ports in the past three years.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 11 JUNE | THE MALAY MAIL

Kedah bunker fuel company loses RM4.5m to email scam

Kedah police are advising the people to be cautious when dealing with payment into the account of a third party via email transactions.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTH KOREA | 12 JUNE | YONHAP NEWS

S. Korean shipyards outpace Chinese rivals in new orders for 2nd month

South Korean shipyards outpaced their Chinese rivals in terms of new orders for the second straight month in May, with their order backlog rising for the first time in nearly two years.

[Full Report](#)

ASIA | 22 JUNE | EBN

More trade with Asia comes at a shipping price

Shipments to and from Asia have been seeing major disruptions since the last quarter. Compounding the lack of visibility for when things will get better is how there are different opinions about the root cause.

[Full Report](#)

WORLD | 22 JUNE | FITCH RATINGS

Global ports sector faces structurally slower growth

Traffic growth in the ports sector is likely to remain well below historical levels for the foreseeable future, due to fundamental structural changes in the industry and global trade, Fitch Ratings says.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 23 JUNE | REUTERS

Touted sea change in Indonesia shipping network may hot choppy waters

With its towering new cranes and wharves that can handle some of the world's biggest ships, Indonesia's main international port has been shaking off its reputation for inefficiency and congestion with a \$2.5 billion upgrade.

[Full Report](#)



WORLD | 29 JUNE | REUTERS

Global shipping industry feels fallout from Maersk cyber attack

Global shipping is still feeling the effects of a cyber attack that hit A.P. Moller-Maersk two days ago, showing the scale of the damage a computer virus can unleash on the technology dependent and interconnected industry.

[Full Report](#)