

Featured *MSP Perspectives*:



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RSISMSP@ntu.edu.sg

Maritime Security Programme, RSIS

Editorial Team

Lee YingHui
Collin Koh



Author

Collin Koh

Research Fellow, Maritime Security Programme

Late last month, in response to his Malaysian counterpart Mohamad Sabu's suggestion to strengthen security cooperation in the eastern Singapore Strait near the two islets, Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen remarked that "even joint patrols with our agencies and their agencies, I completely agree with that."

This exchange, which took place in the context of Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed's remark about reviewing the price of water Kuala Lumpur sells to Singapore, is encouraging. Though back in January 2003, Malaysia had proposed having joint patrols off Pedra Branca in the wake of the RSS *Courageous* collision. Just not long before the mishap, both countries had engaged in a word war over a host of bilateral issues, not least the dispute over the islets.

However, cooperation between the two countries' navies appeared unaffected. Exercise Malapura, a flagship annual joint training event between the Republic of Singapore Navy and the Royal Malaysian Navy, carried on as per normal that very year. It involved seven warships from both sides whereas the Royal Malaysian Air Force threw in fighter jets and maritime patrol aircraft.

One shouldn't gloss over the value of sustained, institutionalized military-to-military linkages even in times of political turbulence. Around the world, such linkages could often become casualties to downturn in interstate political relations. Yet it's precisely in times of tension that militaries ought to maintain those links as a way to promote confidence-building and crisis stability.

Interoperability between the two navies play a significant part in promoting bilateral relations. Notably, Exercise Malapura gradually evolves over the years since its inception in 1984, with its scope becoming more complex – moving from shipboard tactical procedures of individual vessels to broader operational matters involving planning at group level.

For example, Malapura in 1992 involved the two navies' command teams using the computerised Action Speed Tactical Trainer at the RMN's Maritime Tactical Centre in Lumut to undergo a series of computer-simulated wargaming aimed at developing common operating procedures and naval techniques. Since the 1992 exercise, both navies also jointly tackled topical issues such as rules of engagement.

Malapura in 1993 played out more complex scenarios including operating around the territorial waters and warships of neutral countries – referring to two-sided naval conflict which might stray close to the territorial waters of other countries and as a result involve warships from a third party – and developing logistics support plans to sustain their joint forces for long deployments at sea under periods of tension. The exercise was aimed at developing joint operating procedures and doctrines.

The size of Malapura in the earlier decades hovered around five or more vessels from both navies, always involving both conventional warfighting and maritime security training elements, and involving the air forces at times. The exercise in 1995 involved 10 vessels, including a landing ship tank from RMN, during which both navies endorsed a jointly-developed, second edition of a naval exercise planning guide.

Even if impervious to the ups and downs of political ties, Malapura instead became a casualty of the Asian financial crisis in 1997. The exercise suspended for a short while before it was

reinstated in 1999. Over the past decade or so, Malapura has stabilized without disruption, routinely involving six vessels from both navies.

Given the longstanding ties between the two navies, it is a worthwhile idea to expand existing maritime security cooperation to waters around Pedra Branca and Middle Rocks.

In the recent years, the threat to shipping in the eastern waterways from a variety of causes – accidents and potentially maritime terrorism including sabotage – has become amplified. For example, in October 2016, two individuals were apprehended by Malaysian authorities in waters off Middle Rocks after being set adrift by the currents. It was established later that they conducted recreational diving activities in waters off South Ledge, and were found with only normal diving equipment. Fortuitously they weren't militant frogmen attempting to conduct sabotage against shipping or key installations in the area.

The collision in last August between the American destroyer USS *John S. McCain* and oil tanker *Alnic MC* about 8.5 kilometers north-northeast of Pedra Branca, is also one example. Later in December, two Malaysian anglers went missing after their boat sank about 500 meters from Middle Rocks and about 1.5 kilometers southeast of Pedra Branca. Singapore coordinated a search-and-rescue operation alongside its Malaysian and Indonesian counterparts. Another recent case happened this April, when five foreigners fell overboard from a vessel some 1.3 kilometers northeast of Pedra Branca.

Pushing for closer maritime security cooperation around Pedra Branca and Middle Rocks would be mutually beneficial for both Malaysia and Singapore in view of the potential security challenges encountered in those waterways.

Joint patrols to respond to abrupt contingencies in the area would allow both countries to free up resources and allocate them to other locations. In particular, Kuala Lumpur could allot more maritime security assets to eastern Sabah and the Sulu Sea.

But one also should not forget the role of civilian maritime agencies in this potential setup. The Malaysian Marine Operations Force and Singapore Police Coast Guard enjoy a longstanding working relationship. What's left is to iron out how best to bring together their maritime forces – both military and civilian – and perhaps commence a joint feasibility study on a slate of maritime security operations that both sides can accept to undertake on a regular basis in waters around Pedra Branca and Middle Rocks.

It may be prudent to start small, focusing on search-and-rescue and joint action against transnational crimes and counter-terrorism in those waterways. Exercise Malapura, which has traditionally been conducted in the Malacca Strait, could extend to waters near Pedra Branca and Middle Rocks, and expand into a multi-agency activity involving the two countries' civilian maritime law enforcement bodies.

The road ahead may not be an easy one, though both countries can certainly take advantage of the longstanding, tension-proof relationship between their maritime forces and the extent of interoperability that has been cultivated over the years.



AUSTRALIA | 28 JUNE | REUTERS

UPDATE 2-Britain's BAE wins \$25.7 billion Australian frigate contest

Britain's BAE Systems PLC has won a A\$35 billion (\$25.7 billion) contest to deliver anti-submarine warfare frigates for the Australian navy, the Australian government said on Thursday.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 1 JUNE | DEFENSE NEWS

It's official: The US Navy has a new ship killer missile

The U.S. Navy has selected the Norwegian Naval Strike Missile as its new over-the-horizon anti-ship missile destined for the littoral combat ship and likely the service's future frigate as well.

[Full Report](#)

PAKISTAN | 1 JUNE | THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Pakistan Navy signs contract to acquire two modern warships from China

Contract for acquisition of two warships for Pakistan Navy was signed with M/s China Shipbuilding Trading Company Ltd (CSTC), at Ministry of Defence Production, Rawalpindi.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 5 JUNE | GLOBAL TIMES

Unmanned 'shark swarm' to be used in sea battles, military patrols

A Guangdong company has tested 56 unmanned boats and is working with the military to develop a "shark swarm" for sea battles and military patrols.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 6 JUNE | THE MALAY MAIL

Dr M: Better not to have warships in Malaysian waters

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it is better not to have any warship present in the Straits of Melaka and South China Sea.

[Full Report](#)

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THE PHILIPPINES | 11 JUNE | PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

PH now looking for possible suppliers of diesel-electric submarines

Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Monday said the country is now looking for possible suppliers of diesel-electric submarines to beef up the Philippine Navy's capabilities.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 16 JUNE | DEFENSE NEWS

The US Navy is fed up with ballistic missile defense patrols

The U.S. Navy's top officer wants to end standing ballistic missile defense patrols and transfer the mission to shore-based assets.

[Full Report](#)



SOUTH KOREA | 18 JUNE | THE KOREA HERALD

S. Korea kicks off military drill to defend Dokdo

South Korea on Monday kicked off a military exercise designed to defend its easternmost islets of Dokdo, prompting Japan to protest against the maneuver as it continues to claim sovereignty over Dokdo.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 20 JUNE | SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

China's newest aircraft carrier likely to have catapult launch system

A photograph published on social media by one of the companies that develops China's aircraft carriers appears to suggest that the latest vessel will be equipped with a catapult launch system, unlike either of its predecessors.

[Full Report](#)

TAIWAN | 25 JUNE | UPI

BAE to manufacture amphibious assault vehicles for Taiwan

BAE Systems has been awarded a contract for amphibious assault vehicles as part of a foreign military sale for Taiwan.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 25 JUNE | THE MALAY MAIL

Royal Malaysian Navy targets RM180m in savings this year

The Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) is targeting to save RM180 million this year, through the '15 to 5' fleet transformation programme, said its chief Admiral Tan Sri Ahmad Kamarulzaman Ahmad Badaruddin.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTH KOREA | 25 JUNE | YONHAP

S. Korea may temporarily suspend regular K-9 live-fire drills: sources

South Korea's military may temporarily suspend regular live-fire drills on western border islands in line with the April inter-Korean summit agreement to halt "all hostile acts," multiple sources said Monday.

[Full Report](#)

SOUTH KOREA | 25 JUNE | YONHAP

(2nd LD) S. Korea chooses Boeing's P-8 patrol aircraft for naval procurement project

South Korea decided Monday to purchase U.S. defense company Boeing's P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft in a US\$1.7 billion project, Seoul's military acquisition agency has said.

[Full Report](#)

RUSSIA FEDERATION | 25 JUNE | TASS

Shipbuilders to deliver 2 noiseless submarines to Russia's Pacific Fleet in 2020

Two Project 636.3 Varshavyanka-class diesel-electric submarines will be handed over to Russia's Pacific Fleet in November 2020, according to an annual report of the Admiralty Shipyard released on Monday.

[Full Report](#)

UNITED STATES | 25 JUNE | DEFENSE NEWS

Advanced arresting gear is coming along

The Navy's next generation advanced arresting gear destined for the Ford-class carriers trapped two new aircraft in May, according to a release from the company.

[Full Report](#)



CHINA | 24 JUNE | GLOBAL TIMES

China's military to lead coast guard to better defend sovereignty

The leadership of China's coast guard will be transferred from oceanic authorities to the country's army beginning July 1, a move that analysts say will enable it to play a bigger role in emergencies and crises including war.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 6 JUNE | THE JAKARTA POST

Navy tightens security to prevent terrorists from distributing weapons, explosives

Following a string of terror acts in Indonesia recently, the Indonesian Navy (TNI AL) has focused on strengthening security in the country's "vulnerable" waters.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA-THE PHILIPPINES | 8 JUNE | INQUIRER.NET

Caught on video: China Coast Guard taking PH fishermen's catch in Scarborough

The Chinese Coast Guard have been reportedly taking the catch of Filipino fishermen in Scarborough Shoal (Panatag Shoal) in Zambales.

[Full Report](#)

TAIWAN | 8 JUNE | TAIWAN NEWS

267 ships banned from Taiwan ports for violating N. Korean sanctions

An internal port circular from Taiwan's Maritime and Port Bureau under the Ministry of Transportation and Communication distributed on June 5, has announced a ban on vessels that have violated sanctions targeting North Korea from the Taiwan's ports and territorial waters.

[Full Report](#)

THE PHILIPPINES | 10 JUNE | THE PHILIPPINE STAR

PCG vows more vigilance, patrols at Panatag Shoal

Amid reports that some Chinese coast guard units have been harassing Filipino fishermen by confiscating the fish they caught in Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) yesterday said they would be increasing vigilance and patrols in the disputed area.

[Full Report](#)

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INDONESIA | 12 JUNE | ANTARA

Marine security urged to prevent fishermen from conducting border violations

The Indonesian Fishermen Association of North Sumatra has urged the Maritime Security Association to prevent traditional fishermen from not violating the border with Malaysia.

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CHINA | 14 JUNE | GLOBAL TIMES

China's coast guard conducts South China Sea drills to sharpen skills in 'complex' waters

The China Coast Guard (CCG) is conducting a seven-day cruising drill in the South China Sea to sharpen its fleet's law-enforcement capability in "strange and complex" waters in the region.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA-VIETNAM | 14 JUNE | THE SUN DAILY

Vietnamese fishing boat, crew detained for ramming MMEA patrol boat

The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) seized a Vietnamese fishing boat in the waters off Kuantan yesterday, when it was alleged to have wantonly rammed into an MMEA patrol vessel.

[Full Report](#)



INDIA-SEYCHELLES | 25 JUNE | THE TIMES OF INDIA

India, Seychelles agree to work on naval base project, respect mutual concerns

India extended a \$100 million line of credit to Seychelles on Monday as the two countries agreed to work on the stalled Assumption Island Project keeping each other's interests in mind.

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KOREAS | 25 JUNE | KBS WORLD

Two Koreas Agree to Swiftly Restore Maritime Military Channels

South and North Korea have agreed to swiftly restore two major military communication lines.

[Full Report](#)

AUSTRALIA | 26 JUNE | CNN

Australia invests in unmanned spy drones to fly over South China Sea

Australia is spending billions on unmanned American spy drones that will be able to fly higher and further than its manned aircraft, to beef up its surveillance operations in areas that include the disputed South China Sea.

[Full Report](#)

ASEAN | 26 JUNE | THE JAKARTA POST

Southeast Asian countries zero in on marine protection in Bali meeting

Delegates from Southeast Asian countries are sharing their experiences in implementing marine environment protection conventions set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in a three-day high level meeting in Bali.

[Full Report](#)

ASEAN-CHINA | 28 JUNE | XINHUA

China, ASEAN to hold maritime drill

China and the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have scheduled a joint maritime exercise to take place later this year, a Chinese ministry spokesperson said Thursday.

[Full Report](#)

JAPAN-NORTH KOREA | 30 JUNE | REUTERS

Japanese fishermen fear confrontation with North Korea boats as season peaks

U.S. President Donald Trump has declared North Korea is no longer a threat, but that doesn't make the Japanese fishermen of Sakata feel any easier as they leave port for the peak fishing season.

[Full Report](#)

SRI LANKA | 30 JUNE | COLOMBO PAGE

Sri Lanka Navy to move Southern Command to Hambantota - PM's Office

Sri Lanka Navy is moving its Southern Command to Hambantota Port in the deep south, Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's office said on Saturday making it clear that Sri Lanka Navy will be in charge of port's security.

[Full Report](#)



SINGAPORE | 6 JUNE | SPLASH 24/7

MPA and NUS Enterprise launches maritime accelerator programme

Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) and NUS Enterprise, the entrepreneurial arm of the National University of Singapore, has officially launched Asia's first dedicated maritime accelerator programme – Port Innovation Ecosystem Reimagined @ Block 71 (PIER71).

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ANTARCTIC | 7 JUNE | REUTERS

Plastic waste in Antarctic reveals scale of global pollution: Greenpeace

Plastic waste and toxic chemicals found in remote parts of the Antarctic this year add to evidence that pollution is spreading to the ends of the Earth, environmental group Greenpeace said on Thursday.

[Full Report](#)

INDONESIA | 7 JUNE | ANTARA

Micro finance for fisheries' working capital: President

President Joko Widodo has called on fishermen and micro entrepreneurs to spend the fund from micro-finance for fisheries to increase their working capital.

[Full Report](#)

INDIA-IRAN | 8 JUNE | HINDUSTAN TIMES

Interim operations in Chabahar port in Iran to start by next week

Notwithstanding the plans by the United States to impose fresh sanctions on Iran nuclear deal, India is all set to begin interim operations in the strategically important Chabahar port project next week, shipping ministry officials familiar with the development said.

[Full Report](#)

SINGAPORE | 9 JUNE | THE STRAITS TIMES

SembMarine to buy Sevan Marine's IP in \$37m deal

Sembcorp Marine (SembMarine) plans to buy the intellectual property of Norway's Sevan Marine for US\$28 million (S\$37 million) and bring an end to a longstanding intellectual property dispute between the two parties, according to an announcement on the Singapore Exchange yesterday morning.

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NEW ZEALAND | 12 JUNE | FISH INFORMATION AND SERVICES

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New innovative trawl technology approved for commercial operations

Fisheries New Zealand has approved the use of a new innovative trawl technology for commercial operations in some deep water fisheries under amendments to the commercial fishing regulations introduced last year.

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CHINA | 20 JUNE | SPLASH 24/7

Cosco to increase Arctic voyages this summer

Cosco Shipping Specialized Carriers, the special purpose vessel unit of China Cosco Shipping, is going to deploy more than ten vessels on Arctic voyages between China and Europe this summer, the company revealed at the World Transport Convention in Beijing.

[Full Report](#)

MALAYSIA | 21 JUNE | THE MALAY MAIL

Sabah mulls freezing crab exports, capping lobster sales

The Sabah government is considering halting exports of crabs from its coastal towns of Tawau and Semporna as well as restricting the sale of lobsters in the state to preserve future supply.

[Full Report](#)

SINGAPORE | 22 JUNE | ASIA ONE

Aquatech pioneer Umitron closes S\$11.2mil investment to lead sustainable development of aquaculture through technology

UMITRON PTE. LTD. (Location: Singapore, Co-founder / Managing director Masahiko Yamada, hereinafter Umitron) announced that it had raised \$11.2 million SGD on 8 June as the first enterprise equity finance.

[Full Report](#)

CHINA | 25 JUNE | XINHUA

Shenzhen to build free trade port by 2020

China's southern boomtown Shenzhen will build its port into a free trade port by the end of 2020 by further cutting red tape and streamlining customs clearance procedures, according to a local document.

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SOUTH KOREA | 25 JUNE | MARITIME EXECUTIVE

Hyundai's offshore yard to close in August

On Friday, Hyundai Heavy Industries announced that it will soon run out of work for its offshore facility, and it is making plans to close it in August.

INDONESIA | 26 JUNE | TEMPO

Tanjung Priok dropped from JWC War Risk List

The Joint War Committee (JWC) stated that the Port of Tanjung Priok has been declared safe to accommodate world shipping activities. The JWC has removed the Indonesian port from its list of ports that are susceptible to war.

[Full Report](#)

VIETNAM | 30 JUNE | FISH INFORMATIONS & SERVICES

EC to consider 'yellow card' lifting in January next year

The European Commission (EC) will once more assess within six months the likelihood of lifting the 'yellow card' imposed on Vietnam last year, as a warning due to the Government is tackling illegal fishing.

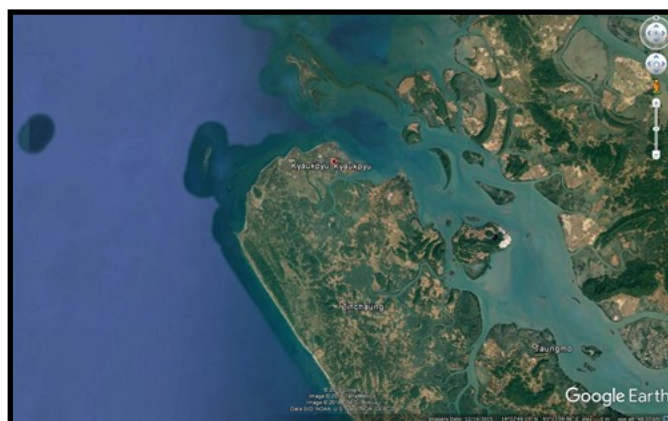
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CHINA | 30 JUNE | SEATRADE MARITIME NEWS

Cosco takeover of OOCL cleared for completion

Cosco Shipping Holdings has received all the approvals required for its takeover of Orient Overseas International one day ahead the 30 June deadline for the \$6.27bn.

[Full Report](#)



CHINA-MYANMAR | 30 JUNE | SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

There's no Chinese 'debt trap', says Myanmar minister, as government pushes for joint port project to go ahead

Myanmar's government is eager to begin work on a Chinese-backed deep water port project in Kyaukpyu, and a decision is expected soon, the country's union minister and security adviser Thaung Tun said.

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