

27 October 2020

**IN MEMORIAM:
SAM BATEMANN**



Senior Fellow and Advisor to the RSIS Maritime Security Programme

ON 18 OCT 2020, the Maritime Security community bid farewell to a giant.

Dr. Sam Bateman, Senior Fellow and Advisor to the RSIS Maritime Security Programme (2004-2018), retired from the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) with the rank of Commodore and went on to become a central figure in the Track II effort to improve the region's maritime future. His zeal for building a stronger, safer and more cooperative environment at sea, endless capacity to support the development of others, and unflappable drive to strengthen the community of likeminded scholars and practitioners were well-appreciated around the globe.

As the news of Sam's passing travelled through the Indo-Pacific maritime security community, leaders called him a mariner, a mentor, a philosopher, a guide, a wonderful colleague, a true friend, and Australia's greatest thinker on maritime issues. RAN certainly recognised these traits when he was sent overseas to represent Australia, placed him in command of four different ships, and assigned him to senior postings in Canberra. His first travels to Southeast Asia were with the RAN in the

1960s, and Sam would often remind us that these experiences started off his affinity with Singapore.

Even though Sam formally stepped down from RSIS in 2018, he was consulted regularly. His last trip to Singapore was in January 2020. His standing commitment to Singapore was pivotal to expanding the Programme in terms of capacity, impact and reputation. He guided the Programme which started with a focus on Southeast Asia to start thinking more recently about engagements with the Indian Ocean. He was adamant that there must be at least one graduate-level maritime security course at RSIS and developed the early iterations of the syllabus for the Maritime Security Studies Course at the Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College. Even as the Maritime Security Programme was focused on strategic and policy research, he emphasised the need to consider the interest and concerns of the wider maritime sector and shipping community.

As a scholar, Sam was prolific and his publications touched almost every contemporary maritime issue in the region. He was a regular contributor to RSIS Commentary right from the day he joined the School. The clear theme that rang through all his works was a relentless dedication to identifying and promoting opportunities to improve the regional maritime security through enhanced confidence-building, cooperation, and coordination. He believed that maritime security was more than about naval issues. His studies leading to a doctorate on the law of the sea, led him to an institutionalist approach to maritime security, arguing for rules, norms practices and conventions to promote cooperation among conflicting parties.

He stayed true to this course, even in recent years as interstate competition grew more intense and some voices on both sides criticised him for not being “tough enough”. Indeed, his toughness was to be found in the meticulous detail of his scholarship and commitment to finding realistic ways towards more positive outcomes for all those who rely on the sea. While his even keel may not have completely persuaded everyone, he was uniformly liked, valued and was respected for his transparently constructive and formidably well-argued approach.

Sam firmly believed in the importance of the ASEAN and ASEAN-led maritime security mechanisms, and that the Track II process can and must contribute to make it better. In the Track II community, Sam diligently served in several key leadership roles, including as the co-chair of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Maritime working group. He also represented Australia as the co-chair of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Expert and Eminent Persons’ (EEPs) Maritime Security working group that conducted a study of lessons learned and best practices with regard to preventing and managing incidents at sea in the Asia-Pacific region.

As a leader and a mentor, Sam always took the time to foster individuals at all stages of their professional development. As a university lecturer and military trainer, he was well-respected by his students and hugely popular with everyone. As a critic, he was firm, fair and supportive. As a PhD supervisor and Track II event organiser, he charted courses for an entire generation of maritime thinkers. As a friend, he was the first to call you over for a drink, show genuine curiosity about your work, and offer sound advice. Always bright in his personal outlook, he buoyed the room.

All of us in RSIS deeply appreciate Sam Bateman's humanity and scholarship. His mentorship and friendship enabled his friends and students to be always ready to engage strategically in the many maritime causes he espoused and to ensure a consistent and stable development of relevant maritime studies. We will dearly miss Sam's sure-footed guidance in navigating an increasingly contentious field. He was 82.

Farewell, Sam.

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