



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



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AUGUST 2023

Author

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INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

This publication is a monthly analytical survey of developments and policy trends that impact India's interests and define its challenges across the extended Indo-Pacific maritime space, which has become the primary theatre of global geopolitical contestation. It is authored by Cmde. Lalit Kapur (Retd.), DPG Senior Fellow for Maritime Strategy based on open source reports and publications. Your comments and feedback may be addressed to the author at lalit@dpg.org.in. To subscribe, please [click here](#).

Cover Image:

Presidents Yoon Suk Yeol, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at Camp David, August 18, 2023.

Source: Japan's PMO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BRICS Leaders at the 15th BRICS Summit, Johannesburg, August 22, 2023.

Source: PIB Photo Gallery

P-8 aircraft and crew from the US, Australia and India gather for Exercise Malabar at RAAF Base Amberley, August 15, 2023.

Source: Australian DoD

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INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

August 2023

Abstract

Two summits epitomized Indo-Pacific great power competition during the month. The Camp David Summit, on August 18, resulted in the US and its East Asian allies, Republic of Korea and Japan, agreeing to consult each other and act together to address regional challenges, provocations and threats impacting their collective interests and security. The 15th BRICS Summit at Sandton in South Africa from August 22-24, on the other hand, saw the BRICS-5 expanding to BRICS-11 as Argentina, Ethiopia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran joined the group of emerging economies and non-Western powers.

India's historic Chandrayaan-3 mission successfully put a lander on the Moon's South Polar Region for the first time in history on August 23, sparking a surge of national pride and announcing to the world India's arrival as a space power.

Two maritime incidents in the Indo-Pacific sparked attention during the month. In the first, a China-Russia flotilla comprising 11 warships carried out a patrol off the Aleutian Islands, at the gateway from the Pacific to the Arctic Ocean. The USN fielded a four-ship task force to shadow them, bringing into focus the advantage in numbers enjoyed by the China-Russia combine. In the South China Sea's Second Thomas Shoal, China's Coast Guard used water cannon and blocking manoeuvres to prevent the Philippines from resupplying personnel on its grounded vessel BRP Sierra Madre, prompting an immediate warning from the US that any use of military force against Philippine official vessels would invoke the bilateral Mutual Defense Treaty. The Philippines was eventually able to resupply its personnel, but tensions can be expected to continue.

India's Navy reached out into the Southern Pacific through visits by frontline warships to Port Moresby, in Papua New Guinea. The ships also visited Sydney, and are expected to visit New Zealand in early September. Meanwhile, INS Vagir, a Kalvari-class submarine, undertook an extended deployment to Fremantle, in Australia.



The 27th edition of the India-US Exercise Malabar-2023 was conducted off Sydney from August 11-21. The bilateral India-Australia Exercise AUSINDEX-23 followed, from August 22-25.

The Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement came into effect on August 14. JASDF aircraft flew into RAAF Base Tindal for a bilateral exercise under the agreement from August 26-29, while Australian aircraft are slated to fly into Japan in early September to participate in Exercise Bushido Guardian.

The first Australia-Philippines joint amphibious exercise ALON was conducted in the Philippines from August 14-31. It included an air assault exercise in Palawan on August 21, an amphibious assault in the Zambales Province on August 25 and live fire training on August 31, and simulated the retaking of a Filipino Island occupied by an external power.

Taiwan announced a defence budget request of nearly \$ 16 billion for FY 2024, an increase of more than 7% over the previous year. On August 31, Japan's Ministry of Defence announced a budget request of ¥ 7.74 trillion (\$ 53 billion) for FY 2024.

Vindhyagiri, the sixth of India's Project 17A frigates, was launched by President Smt Droupadi Murmu at Kolkata on August 17. The last ship of the series, Mahendragiri, will be launched at Mumbai on September 1. The Indian Navy began the process of acquisition of Mine Counter Measures Vessels afresh, inviting proposals for the construction of eight vessels by Indian shipyards. The Ministry of Defence also signed a contract for the procurement of four Fleet Support ships with Hindustan Shipyard Ltd on August 25.

The Camp David Trilateral Summit

Seventh amongst the ten core lines of effort identified in the US Indo-Pacific Strategy¹ announced in February 2022 was, "Expand US-Japan-ROK Cooperation". The March 2022 South Korean Presidential elections were still a month away when the strategy was released; South Korea-Japan relations were in deep freeze. The Camp David Trilateral Summit of August 18 speaks volumes of not just the US influence over its East Asian allies and the distance travelled by the Biden-Harris administration in achieving its objectives, but also of the political courage of the two Asian leaders in charting out a new era of cooperation between their estranged nations.

¹ Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States, February 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>



Presidents Biden and Yoon and Prime Minister Kishida met in the trilateral format on the margins of the Madrid NATO Summit in June 2022 and the Phnom Penh ASEAN Summit in November 2022. In March 2023, President Yoon travelled to Tokyo for the first Japan-ROK Summit in over 12 years². The Tokyo G7 Summit of May 2023 again witnessed the three leaders coming together. It has, in effect, taken the US 18 months to overcome the frost and obtain concurrence on the several initiatives that were announced at the first standalone summit at Camp David. The convergence in objectives between the three is visible. And yet, as the outcome documents indicate, several sticking points remain.

The Trilateral Joint Statement³ described the event as inaugurating “a new era of trilateral partnership” at “a hinge point in history”. The three nations declared their unity in ensuring that they are aligned in their objectives and actions and generate the common capacity to ensure that the Indo-Pacific thrives, is connected, resilient, stable and secure.

Towards this end, the three leaders have committed their governments to consult trilaterally with each other, in an expeditious manner, to share information, align their messaging, and coordinate their response to regional challenges, provocations and threats impacting their collective interests and security⁴. A set of principles to guide their partnership has been set out⁵. These include advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific based on respect for international law, shared norms and common values, and opposing any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion; an unwavering commitment to ASEAN centrality and unity and the ASEAN-led regional architecture; working closely with the Pacific Island countries and the Pacific Islands Forum; a commitment to the complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and dialogue with the DPRK without preconditions; peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait; open and fair economic practices that promote financial stability as well as orderly and well-functioning financial

² For an overview, see Lalit Kapur, “The Japan-South Korea Summit” in the Indo-Pacific Monitor, March 2023,

https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads_dpg/publication_file/indo-pacific-monitor-4873.pdf

³ The Spirit of Camp David: Joint Statement of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States, August 18, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/the-spirit-of-camp-david-joint-statement-of-japan-the-republic-of-korea-and-the-united-states/>

⁴ Commitment to Consult, August 18, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/commitment-to-consult/>

⁵ Camp David Principles, August 18, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/camp-david-principles/>



markets; technology cooperation that contributes to the vibrance and dynamism of the Indo-Pacific; addressing climate change together; upholding the principles of the UN Charter, particularly those relating to sovereignty, territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of territorial disputes and the use of force; honouring non-proliferation commitments; and promoting the participation of women in their societies, as well as to human rights and dignity for all.

At the political level, the mechanisms announced⁶ include an annual meeting of the leaders to share assessments on a range of geostrategic issues and discuss opportunities for further trilateral cooperation; annual meetings of their foreign, defence and commerce and industry ministers as well as national security advisers, hosted in rotation; the first trilateral meeting of their finance ministers soon; and an annual trilateral Indo-Pacific dialogue at the Assistant Secretary level, to coordinate Indo-Pacific approaches and partnerships with Southeast Asian and Pacific Island nations.

At the military level, the announcement includes a multi-year trilateral exercise framework including annual, named, multi-domain exercises; improved data-sharing to exchange real-time warning data on DPRK missile launches; a trilateral working group to counter DPRK cyber activities; enhanced information sharing and coordination; and discussion on ways to counter foreign information manipulation.

In the Indo-Pacific, development finance institutions of the three countries are to sign an MOU to strengthen cooperation to mobilise financing for quality infrastructure; a trilateral maritime mechanism is being established to synchronize partners capacity, particularly in maritime law enforcement and domain awareness, in Southeast Asia and the Southern Pacific; and a development and humanitarian response policy dialogue is being established.

On the economic and technological fronts, a Supply Chain Early Warning System Pilot being launched to share information on supply chain disruptions; Trilateral National Laboratories Cooperation is being launched to drive cooperation in advanced computing, artificial intelligence, materials research, and climate and earthquake modelling, among other areas; a Disruptive Technology Protection Network is being established; and Technology Standards cooperation is to be advanced.

⁶ FACT SHEET: The Trilateral Leaders' Summit at Camp David, August 18, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/fact-sheet-the-trilateral-leaders-summit-at-camp-david/>



Examples on the social front include Cancer Moonshot cooperation, a trilateral youth leaders' summit in 2024, and a trilateral technology leaders training programme for mid-career government officials.

Perseverance and political courage have produced an agreement for regional cooperation, the challenge will lie in ensuring continuity in implementation as leaderships go through inevitable change. Considerable bitterness about Japan's occupation remains in South Korea, even though pacifist Japan no longer poses a threat and could be a very capable and effective partner. President Yoon may have found a solution to the vexed issue of reparations for 'comfort women', but the territorial dispute over the Liancourt Rocks (Takeshima in Japan, Dokdo in ROK) still remains. The leaders have attempted to insulate this and other differences from political exploitation by mandating a network of annual interactions at every level of government. Maintaining this network will be a prime US task, without the necessary political effort, it could quickly decay. The Japanese and Korean leaders, on the other hand, will have to motivate their legislatures and administrations to implement the decisions taken at future dialogues.

The geographical footprint of the agreement focuses on East Asia, with Southeast Asia and the Southern Pacific being an extension. Convergence between the leaders on the 'Indo' part of the Indo-Pacific is conspicuously absent. Even within East Asia, the focus is on the Korean Peninsula and, to a lesser extent, on Taiwan. Whether trilateral cooperation will extend to Japan's claims in the East China Sea is questionable. The agreement falls short of a Mutual Defense Treaty and cannot be likened to an East Asian NATO. The present agreement is only to consult, a provision that was already there in Article IV of the Japan-US Security Treaty⁷ and Article II of the Mutual Defence Treaty between ROK and the US⁸. The change is that consultations will now be trilateral.

The China focus of the agreement is evident, even though the reluctance of South Korea to name China remains visible. The military exercises planned go far beyond addressing the DPRK's limited capability. The agreement will no doubt enhance the ability of the three to respond to actions by both China and DPRK. Whether they will enhance deterrence, however, is questionable.

⁷ Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America, January 19, 1960, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>

⁸ Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea; October 1, 1953, https://www.usfk.mil/Portals/105/Documents/SOFA/H_Mutual%20Defense%20Treaty_1953.pdf



Finally, many of the mechanisms announced in the Camp David Summit have substantial utility in the Indian Ocean. The need, after all, is to deter China's revisionism throughout the Indo-Pacific, not just in East Asia. Evidently, US influence particularly in South Asia has some distance to go before such an agreement can be contemplated for the Indian Ocean.

Authoritarian Assertion and the Maritime Balance

Two events marking increased authoritarian maritime assertion generated a media furore during the month. The first was the joint China-Russia naval patrol near Alaska's Aleutian Islands; the second was China's driving away of vessels attempting to resupply the Philippines outpost on the Second Thomas Shoal.

The China-Russia Patrol off Alaska

On July 26, China's MOD reported that China and Russia would hold their third joint naval patrol in the western and northern waters of the Pacific Ocean⁹. Two days later, the Russian Ministry of Defence reported that ships of the Russian and Chinese navies had sailed from Vladivostok and started to fulfil the tasks of the third joint naval patrol¹⁰. Russia contributed two destroyers, two corvettes and a supply ship to the patrol, while China contributed two destroyers, two frigates and a tanker, taking the total strength to ten ships. Early in August, two US senators from Alaska stated that 11 foreign military vessels from China and Russia had been operating near the Aleutian Islands, and that the Alaska Command had sent out four destroyers and a P-8 to shadow them¹¹. The Russian and Chinese ships did not enter US territorial waters.

The Aleutian chain stretches across the Bering Sea, from Alaska to Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula, guarding access from the Pacific to the Arctic Ocean. This chain, up to Attu Island, has been a US possession since the sale of Alaska by Russia in 1867¹². The Bering Sea is destined to become a major international

⁹ China, Russia to hold third joint naval patrol, July 26, 2023, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/TopStories/16239851.html

¹⁰ Ships of Russia and Chinese Navy commence joint maritime patrols in Pacific Ocean waters, July 28, 2023, https://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12474004@aegNews

¹¹ Murkowski, Sullivan Statements on Chinese and Russian Vessels in US Waters off Coast of Aleutians, August 5, 2023, <https://www.murkowski.senate.gov/press/release/murkowski-sullivan-statements-on-chinese-and-russian-vessels-in-us-waters-off-coast-of-aleutians>

¹² Treaty of the Cession of the Russian Possessions in North America to the United States of America by his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias to the United States of America: June 20, 1867, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/treatywi.asp



sea route between East Asia and Europe, as global warming makes the Arctic Passage available for navigation.

In China's perspective, the patrol "marks a positive force that helps safeguard regional stability and security of strategic routes in the Asia-Pacific region at a time when the US is enhancing combat readiness, rallying allies and partners in the region to change defence policies and expand militaries"¹³. Notably, the US did not protest the action of the China-Russia combine: UNCLOS permits warships to operate without hindrance so long as they remain outside territorial waters (12 nautical miles from land), and even within territorial waters so long as the passage is 'innocent'. China's media was, however, quick to claim double standards based on media reporting of the patrol, citing the frequent passage of US warships through China's territorial waters in the South China Sea. The fact that China has no basis to claim the South China Sea as its territorial waters is conveniently omitted in China's reports of the incident¹⁴.

That China's navy is expanding at an unprecedented pace is too well-known to bear repetition. In his Navy Day speech on July 30, 2023, Russia's President Vladimir Putin noted that the Russian Navy would induct 30 ships of different classes this year¹⁵. China's (and Russia's) Navy, continues to expand even as the USN fleet strength declines. Reducing force levels have compelled the USN to announce extension of the life of four Arleigh Burke class destroyers from the estimated 35 years to 40 this month¹⁶, notwithstanding the increased maintenance load. The differential in force levels will enable the China-Russia combine to continue stretching USN warship employment in the years ahead, in much the same manner as the PLA (AF) is stretching Taiwan's forces. The increased maritime presence will also provide greater opportunities for grey zone and other coercive activities, further challenging US supremacy at sea.

The Second Thomas Shoal

The long-running dispute between the Philippines and China on territorial claims in the South China Sea Islands took a new turn when the China Coast Guard used water cannon and blocking manoeuvres to prevent the Philippines

¹³ "US hype of China-Russia joint naval patrol near Alaska is overreaction, exposes double standards", Global Times, August 7, 2023, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202308/1295829.shtml>

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Main Naval Parade, July 30, 2023, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71848>

¹⁶ Navy Approves Service Life Extension for Four Arleigh-Burke Class Destroyers, August 03, 2023, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/Press-Releases/display-pressreleases/Article/3480104/navy-approves-service-life-extension-for-four-arleigh-burke-class-destroyers/>



from resupplying its outpost on the grounded BRP Sierra Madre on August 05¹⁷. The World War II vintage ship was deliberately grounded on the Second Thomas Shoal in 1999, following China's occupation of Mischief Reef in 1994.

China claimed that Ren'ai Jiao (its name for the Second Thomas Shoal) has always been part of China¹⁸. It had made 'temporary arrangements' for the Philippines to deliver necessary supplies such as food to the grounded military vessel. The Philippines had, however, in violation of international law, sought to overhaul and reinforce the vessel, forcing China to respond. China also claimed the existence of an agreement under which the Philippines government had undertaken to remove the vessel¹⁹. In response, President Marcos said no records of such agreement could be found and asked China for a copy, in case it existed in Chinese records. He also said "If there does exist such an agreement, I rescind it now"²⁰. China has evidently not been able to produce a copy of any such agreement.

The Philippines also said it would not abandon Ayungin Shoal and dismissed China's claims to the atoll²¹. The US came out with a statement of support for the Philippines, reiterating that any armed attack on Philippine public vessels, including those of its Coast Guard in the South China Sea, would invoke US mutual defence commitments under Article IV of the 1951 US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty²². Australia, Japan and the EU joined the US in supporting the Philippines²³.

Reports indicate that the Philippines has successfully resupplied its personnel on board BRP Sierra Madre²⁴. The US has reportedly said that it is ready to

¹⁷ Philippines says China blocked, water-cannoned boat in South China Sea, August 6, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-says-china-blocked-water-cannoned-boat-s-china-sea-2023-08-06/>

¹⁸ Remarks of the Spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines on the Issue of Ren'ai Jiao, August 8, 2023, http://ph.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/fyrth/202308/t20230808_11123893.htm

¹⁹ http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/TopStories/16243095.html. The link appears to have been removed now.

²⁰ No existing agreement to remove BRP Sierra Madre from Ayungin Shoal – PBBM, August 9, 2023, https://pco.gov.ph/news_releases/no-existing-agreement-to-remove-brp-sierra-madre-from-ayungin-shoal-pbbm/

²¹ Philippines tells China it will not abandon post in disputed reef, August 7, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-tells-philippines-remove-grounded-warship-south-china-sea-2023-08-07/>

²² US Support for the Philippines in the South China Sea, August 5, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-support-for-the-philippines-in-the-south-china-sea-5/>

²³ Gunboats and diplomacy in the South China Sea, August 7, 2023, <https://www.euronews.com/2023/08/07/gun-boats-and-diplomacy-in-the-south-china-sea>

²⁴ South China Sea: Philippines resupplies Spratlys Shoal troops, August 22, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-66579853>



provide support for resupply missions if needed²⁵. The crisis may have blown over for the time being, but such crises will continue to flare up in the years ahead.

India's MCMV Saga

The ability to lay and clear mines is recognised as an essential pre-requisite for both offensive and defensive operations. On land, no offensive is possible without effective mine clearance: defensive minefields are acknowledged as having slowed down Ukraine's offensive to reclaim territory occupied by Russia to a virtual snail's pace, resulting in the efficacy of the offensive itself being in doubt. Their effect at sea was proved when British and French naval forces tried to run the Dardanelles and open a sea route to the Black Sea in March 1915: they lost the battleships Bouvet, Ocean and Irresistible and experienced serious damage to Inflexible, Agamemnon and Suffren due to a Turkish minefield protected by shore batteries, forcing a hasty retreat. The strategic plan of the allies then changed to the ill-fated amphibious landings to capture Gallipoli, leading to an Ottoman victory and the rise of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Turkish commander there. Mines were instrumental in saving the North Korean army retreating after the Inchon landings: General MacArthur's plan to catch it in a pincer through an amphibious landing at Wonsan failed as his MCM forces could not clear the over 3000 mines laid in the approaches, leading the Allied Commander at Wonsan to remark, "We have lost control of the seas to a nation without a navy, using pre-World War I weapons, laid by vessels that were utilised at the time of the birth of Christ"²⁶. This loss of control was repeated in the Northern Arabian Gulf in February 1991 with Iraq laying over 1300 mines, resulting in damage to USS Tripoli and USS Princeton, and the shelving of plans for an amphibious assault to retake Kuwait City.

India acquired first-hand experience of the importance of MCM in 1972. The retreating Pakistani forces laid 94 mines in Chittagong. A prolonged effort lasting nearly two years resulted in 18 mines being confirmed as cleared by the IN and two by the Russian Navy. The strategic impact that mines can produce is thus known to India. "Robust Mine Counter Measures (MCM) capability is an essential requirement for a maritime country like India, India's Maritime Strategy states²⁷. Yet, for the first time in independent India's history, the Indian

²⁵ US ready to support PH in supply missions, August 28, 2023,

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/218402/us-ready-to-support-ph-in-supply-missions>

²⁶ Andrew S Erickson, "Taking Mines Seriously: Mine Warfare in China's Near Seas", February 8, 2012, <https://www.andrewerickson.com/2012/02/taking-mines-seriously-mine-warfare-in-chinas-near-seas/>

²⁷ Ensuring Secure Seas: India's Maritime Security Strategy, October 2015, P 140.



Navy (IN) finds itself without a single dedicated MCM ship. The drop in numbers has been precipitous, from a peak of 18 ships (12 ocean-going, six inshore) in the 1990s to zero since 2019. More important than the loss of capacity is the loss of capability and experience in a demanding field that requires the highest levels of seamanship and shiphandling, thus generating a vulnerability that could be exploited by adversaries. The presence of Chinese ships and submarines in the Indian Ocean adds urgency: China is known to possess the world's largest inventory of sea mines and is unlikely to hesitate in using them if and when it sees benefit in doing so.

A new phase in the unending saga of rejuvenation of India's Mine Counter-Measures Vessel (MCMV) capability began this month when the IN published yet another Request for Information (RFI) for the procurement of 12 MCMVs from registered Indian Shipyards, to be constructed in a phased manner over a period of eight years²⁸. Shipyards have been directed to submit their responses within a period of eight weeks, i.e. by September 28, 2023.

India inherited 13 Bangor class ocean minesweepers at independence, including four built by GRSE Kolkata. Four were transferred to Pakistan in 1948 and six were scrapped in 1949, leaving three MCM vessels that served till the 1960s. Four second-hand coastal minesweepers were acquired from UK in 1956 and served till 1981, while two inshore minesweepers were acquired in the late 1960's and served till the 1990s. Six inshore minesweepers of the Yevgenya class were acquired from USSR in 1983-84 and served till 2006. Six Natya class ocean minesweepers were acquired from USSR in 1978-80 and another six in 1986-88; the former were decommissioned in the early part of this century, while the last of the latter was decommissioned in April 2019.

The IN plan for MCM capability upgradation, finalised in 2004, comprised three elements: procurement of state-of-the-art vessels from a foreign vendor; the creation of infrastructure for indigenous construction at an Indian shipyard; and training of officers in latest MCM techniques. Officers were sent for MCM training to the US for the first time in 2009. The creation of facilities at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) under a four-phase plan began the same year; the third phase was inaugurated by the PM in November 2016²⁹. However, procurement, the first element, has repeatedly come a cropper.

²⁸ Request for Information (RFI) for Procurement of Mine Counter Measure Vessels (MCMVs), August 3, 2023, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/rfi-procurement-12-x-mine-counter-measure-vessels-mcmvs>

²⁹ Twenty-ninth Report, Committee on Estimates 2018-2019, (Sixteenth Lok Sabha), Ministry of Defence, Department of Defence Production, https://loksabhadocs.nic.in/lsscommittee/Estimates/16_Estimates_29.pdf



Bids for the procurement of eight MCMVs were invited from French, Italian, Spanish, South Korean and US makers in 2008 (the first two of the IN's Pondicherry-class MCMVs were decommissioned in 2007). By 2011, South Korea's Kangnam Corporation had emerged as the front-runner. The goalposts were changed at MoD's behest and price negotiations completed for the procurement of two vessels with transfer of technology, followed by construction of six more at GSL. The Ministries of Defence and Finance both concurred. As the proposal moved to the Cabinet Committee on Security for final approval, allegations of corruption emerged, holding up a decision. The procurement was eventually cleared by a special technical oversight committee, but in the interim, the validity of the bid submitted by Kangnam lapsed³⁰. Procurement was cancelled in 2014 on the advice of the Attorney General.

In 2015, GSL was nominated to construct 12 MCMVs under a Transfer of Technology agreement with South Korea's Kangnam Corporation³¹. The Korean company reportedly demanded over \$ 1 billion for design and technical knowhow, refused to provide intellectual property rights and refused to provide production support guarantees for vessels to be built by GSL. Consequently, negotiations collapsed in 2018.

A third Expression of Interest was issued to South Korean, Italian, Spanish, German and Russian shipyards in 2018. With the acquisition process moved at its usual glacial pace and in view of the urgency, the IN invited proposals for leasing of 3-4 MCMVs from a foreign government or a shipyard backed by a foreign government, through a G2G agreement³². The proposals have not yet fructified.

It isn't as if India completely lacks MCM capability today. The IN acquired clip-on sweeps in the early part of the previous decade, these can be fitted on offshore patrol vessels and used to clear a swept channel. But MCM is a demanding task. Only someone who has served on a minesweeper can understand its complexity. The gear used is heavy and necessitates the use of

³⁰ Rajat Pandit, "India red-faced as South Korea raises long-pending minesweeper contract", Time of India, January 16, 2014, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-red-faced-as-south-korea-raises-long-pending-minesweeper-contract/articleshow/28905894.cms>

³¹ Various Achievement of the MoD, Year End Review 2015, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/erecontent.aspx?relid=133854>

³² RFI for the Procurement/Leasing of Mine Counter Measure Vessels (MCMVs), <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/rfi-procurement-leasing-mine-counter-measure-vessels-mcmvs>



slow speeds. Managing heavy gear at slow speeds, particularly in adverse weather conditions and in areas with strong currents to carry out repetitive transits of a desired path to create a safe swept channel, requires seamanship and shiphandling skills of the highest order. Hoping to achieve this level of skill without continuous training under varied conditions is somewhat optimistic.

The current RFI is conceptually different from earlier proposals. It envisages that the MCMVs to be procured will operate remaining outside the minefield, acting as a mother ship with an unmanned fleet of Autonomous Unmanned Vehicles (AUVs) and Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) doing the actual mine clearance. A similar concept is in or coming into use in the US and French navies as well as the Japan Maritime Self Defence Force. The difference is that vessels used by them are larger and make greater use of heliborne sweeps.

The vessels to be acquired by India under this RFI will displace 2800 tons \pm 10%; much larger than the under 1000-ton displacement envisaged for the Kangnam class MCMVs. They will have an endurance of \geq 2500 nm, at an economical speed of 14 knots, and should be able to sustain themselves at sea for 8-10 days. Complement is expected to be not more than 75, with 30% women as officers and 20% as sailors. The RFI indicates a requirement for 12 vessels, to be delivered between 2030 and 2037. Two Indian shipyards will build them, with the L1 shipyard getting an order for eight and L2 for four, to be built at the L1 cost. GoI having already created specialised infrastructure at Goa, the likelihood of GSL emerging as L1 would appear to be good, but a private sector shipyard can expect to build four ships as L2.

Will the current RFI result in addressing a critical gap in India's maritime capability? That will be known only with the passage of time. The RFI has, however, pushed the need for decision beyond the tenure of not just the present, but also of the next government. The bureaucracy can always point to the RFI and the need for completion of the process. Can India, as a nation, afford this delay? The answer to that will be known only if the capability is urgently needed – and found missing.

Maritime Developments in India

Launch of Project 17A Frigates. Vindhyagiri, the sixth stealth frigate being built under Project 17A, was launched by the President, Smt Droupadi Murmu, at GRSE Kolkata on August 17³³. The seventh and last ship of the class,

³³ Launch of Y-3024 (Vindhyagiri), <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/launch-y-3024-vindhyagiri>



Mahendragiri, will be launched at Mumbai on September 1³⁴. Four of the frigates are being built by MDL in Mumbai, while the remaining three are being built by GRSE. MDL expects to deliver the first ship of the class, Nilgiri, by mid-2024.

Construction of Fleet Support Ships. India's Ministry of Defence signed a contract for the construction of five fleet support ships, displacing about 44,000 tons each, with Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam³⁵. The contract was valued at Rs 19,000 crores. The Fleet Support Ship project was initially cleared in 2014. HSL explored a tie-up with South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries for the design, but the deal fell through because of Hyundai's insistence on building the first ship in Korea. HSL then explored a tie-up with Turkey's TAIS Shipyards and the Anadolu Shipyard; those deals also did not work out. HSL will now design and build the ships in-house. The first is to be delivered within four years of signing of the contract (i.e. in 2027, with the others following at one-year intervals).

CNS Visit to Oman. The Chief of India's Naval Staff visited the Sultanate of Oman from July 31 to August 02, to "consolidate bilateral defence relations and for high level discussions"³⁶. His visit coincided with the visit of INS Visakhapatnam to Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat, from July 30 – August 01. It encompassed a visit to Duqm, where the CNS visited INS Trikand, forward deployed for an anti-piracy mission in the region; an overview of Duqm port and a visit to the facilities of Asyad Dry Dock Company in Duqm. Oman's geographic location astride the Straits of Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb, its large Indian diaspora of over 7.8 lakhs and its traditional friendship with India makes it an important partner in the critical Gulf Region.

Visit by US Congressional Delegation to WNC. A US Congressional delegation comprising Representatives Mr. Rohit Khanna and Ms Deborah Ross visited India's Western Naval Command, at Mumbai³⁷, from August 10-12. Their programme included interaction with the Chief of Staff, a tour of INS Kochi, and a visit to Mazagon Docks Shipbuilders Ltd. The visit helps build greater understanding of India and its capabilities amongst US congressional leaders.

³⁴ Curtain Raiser: Launch of Y-12654 (Mahendragiri),

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1953504>

³⁵ MOD Inks Rs 19,000 crore contract with HSL for five Fleet Support Ships for Indian Navy, August 26, 2023, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1952073>

³⁶ Chief of the Naval Staff Visit to Oman (31 Jul – 02 Aug 2023),

<https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/chief-naval-staff-visit-oman-31-jul-%E2%80%93-02-aug-2023-0>

³⁷ Visit of United States Congressional Delegation to WNC (10-12 August 2023),

<https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/visit-united-states-congressional-delegation-wnc-10-12-august-2023>

White Shipping Information Exchange. The visit by Admiral Artemio M Abu, Commandant of the Philippines Coast Guard to India on August 23 saw him signing the Standard Operating Procedure for exchange of White Shipping Information between India and the Philippines³⁸. This made the Philippines the 25th country with which India exchanges white shipping information.

Exercise Malabar. The 27th edition of Exercise Malabar took place off Sydney, Australia from August 11-21³⁹. IN ships Kolkata and Sahyadri and a P-8I aircraft represented India. This was the first time the venue of Exercise Malabar expanded into the Southern Pacific⁴⁰.

Exercise AUSINDEX. The fifth Exercise AUSINDEX took place off Australia's Southeast coast from August 22-25⁴¹. Participating units included IN Ships Sahyadri and Kolkata, Australian Ships Choules and Brisbane and LRMP aircraft. The same units had participated in Exercise Malabar 2023, which ended on August 21⁴². The exercise signals growing bilateral maritime cooperation between India and Australia on high-range maritime warfare operations.

IN Visit to Port Moresby. IN ships Kolkata and Sahyadri visited Port Moresby, in Papua New Guinea, from August 02-05 with the objective of strengthening bilateral maritime ties⁴³. This marked the third time an IN ship had visited the port: INS Tabar visited in July 2006, while INS Sahyadri was there in June 2017⁴⁴. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited Port Moresby in May 2023.

³⁸ Signing of SOP on White Shipping Information Exchange between Indian Navy and Philippine Coast Guard, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/signing-sop-white-shipping-information-exchange-between-indian-navy-and-philippine-coast>

³⁹ Exercise Malabar-23 Concludes, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/exercise-malabar-23-concludes>

⁴⁰ For an overview of the exercise, see Lalit Kapur, "Exercise Malabar Goes Down Under", DPG Policy Brief Vol VIII, Issue 24, August 29, 2023, https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads_dpg/publication_file/exercise-malabar-goes-down-under-4951.pdf

⁴¹ 5th Edition of AUSINDEX-23 at Sydney, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1952521>

⁴² 5th Edition of Ausindex-23 at Sydney, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/5th-edition-ausindex-23-sydney>

⁴³ Port Call of INS Sahyadri and INS Kolkata to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/port-call-ins-sahyadri-and-ins-kolkata-port-moresby-papua-new-guinea>

⁴⁴ High Commission of India, Papua New Guinea, <https://www.hcipom.gov.in/page/india-papua-new-guinea-bilateral-relations/>

The goodwill was visible from PNG Prime Minister James Marape visiting the ships and attending a reception on board during the current visit⁴⁵.

IN Visit to Port Rashid, Dubai. IN ships Visakhapatnam and Trikand visited Port Rashid, Dubai, from August 08-11⁴⁶. The ships thereafter participated in a Maritime Partnership Exercise with the UAE Navy on August 12⁴⁷. The visit is part of India's showing the flag and outreach in the Gulf Region.

Deployment of INS Vagir to Fremantle. INS Vagir, the fifth of India's Kalvari-class submarines commissioned earlier this year, arrived at Fremantle for exercises with the Royal Australian Navy on August 20⁴⁸. This is the maiden deployment of an IN submarine to Australia.

INS Sunayna Visits South Africa. INS Sunayna, an Indian offshore patrol vessel, visited Durban, South Africa from August 21-25⁴⁹. The visit coincided with the BRICS Summit at Johannesburg from August 22-24. A maritime partnership exercise with SAS King Kekhulune I off Durban on August 25 completed the flag-showing exercise.

Visit by JS Samidare to Port Blair. JS Samidare, a Murasame-class destroyer of the JMSDF, visited Port Blair as part of Japan's Indo-Pacific Deployment 2023, from August 2-5⁵⁰. This may be the first visit by a JMSDF vessel to Port Blair, according to one report⁵¹. The ship thereafter visited Colombo Dockyard for some routine maintenance work, the first time a JMSDF ship has undergone maintenance abroad⁵². Colombo Dockyard is operated by Japan's Onomichi Dockyard.

⁴⁵ Indian Navy Hosts Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea on board INS Sahyadri and INS Kolkata at Port Moresby, August 4, 2023,

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1945848>

⁴⁶ Visit of Indian Ships to Port Rashid, Dubai (08-11 Aug 2023),

<https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/visit-indian-ships-port-rashid-dubai-08-%E2%80%93-11-aug-2023>

⁴⁷ Indian Navy Participates in Bilateral Naval Maritime Partnership Exercise with UAE Navy,

<https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/indian-navy-participates-bilateral-naval-maritime-partnership-exercise-uae-navy>

⁴⁸ INS Vagir on an extended range deployment to Fremantle, Australia,

<https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/ins-vagir-extended-range-deployment-fremantle-australia>

⁴⁹ INS Sunayna visit to port of Durban, South Africa,

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1952381>

⁵⁰ Port visit to Port Blair, Republic of India,

https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/en/release/202308/20230807_02en.pdf

⁵¹ Japan destroyer tests Sri Lanka shipyard with an eye to future use, August 10, 2023,

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/Japan-destroyer-tests-Sri-Lanka-shipyard-with-eye-on-future-use>

⁵² Ibid



Italian Ship visit to Mumbai. Italian Navy Ship Francesco Morosini visited Mumbai from August 10-14⁵³, becoming the first Italian warship to do so after India's Supreme Court closed the case against the Italian marines on board Enrica Lexie following payment of over Rs 10 crores as compensation to the heirs of the deceased fishermen and the boat owner. The Italian ship conducted a Maritime Partnership Exercise with INS Trishul on leaving harbour. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni had earlier visited India in March 2023.

Other Indo-Pacific Developments

Political and Technological

The 15th BRICS Summit took place at Sandton, a suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa, from August 22-24. The summit declaration recorded the decision to invite the Argentine Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to become full members of BRICS from 1 January 2024⁵⁴. Foreign Ministers were tasked to further develop the BRICS partners' country model and a list of prospective partner countries and report by the next Summit, to be held in Kazan, Russia. BRICS lacks geographical, ideological, economic and military cohesion. It reflects growing disenchantment of developing nations with the US led global order, but as the partnership continues to develop, India will have to ensure that the agenda is not driven primarily by China and its hostility to the US.

India's Chandrayaan-3 moon mission successfully put the Vikram lander and Pragyan rover on the Moon's South Polar region for the first time in history on August 23, sparking a surge of national pride and announcing to the world India's arrival as a space power⁵⁵. The landing was witnessed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from South Africa. Meanwhile, Russia's Luna-25, attempting to beat India and become the first to reach the Moon's South Pole, crashed on

⁵³ Visit of Italian Navy Ship Francesco Morosini to Mumbai 10-14 Aug 23, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/visit-italian-navy-ship-francesco-morosini-mumbai-10-14-aug-23>

⁵⁴ XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg II Declaration – BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism, August 23, 2023, https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/CPV/Declaration_2408.pdf

⁵⁵ PM joins ISRO team via VC to witness landing of Chandrayaan 3, August 23, 2023, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1951496>

August 20⁵⁶. North Korea's attempted satellite launch on August 24 also failed during the third stage of its flight⁵⁷.

Australia announced resolution of its barley dispute with China on August 4, as a result of which the 80.5% countervailing and anti-dumping duty imposed by China on Australian barley would be removed from August 05⁵⁸. Australia also said it would discontinue its legal proceedings at the WTO. It expected a similar process to be followed on removal of duties on Australian wines.

The USS Bataan Amphibious Ready Group and the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, comprising over 3000 personnel, arrived in the Middle East for a pre-planned deployment in the 5th Fleet Area of Operations⁵⁹. The deployment calls into question whether the US will actually be able to extricate itself from the Gulf Region and focus on the Indo-Pacific.

Japan and Australia exchanged diplomatic notes on August 08 for the entry into force of their Reciprocal Access Agreement on August 13⁶⁰. This is the first such agreement Japan has struck with any country other than the USA. The Australian Foreign Minister said it would result in the deployment of Japanese F-35s to RAAF Base Tindal in end August⁶¹, the deployment of Australian F-35s to Japan for Exercise Bushido Guardian (the aircraft arrived end August), and the participation of Australian personnel in Exercise Yama Sakura for the first time in December. A JASDF contingent comprising two F-35s and 55 personnel were hosted at RAAF Base Tindal from August 26-29⁶².

⁵⁶ Russia's Luna-25 spacecraft crashes into moon, August 20, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-66562629>

⁵⁷ North Korea's second spy satellite launch fails, August 24, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-66601760>

⁵⁸ Resolution of Barley Dispute with China, August 4, 2023, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/resolution-barley-dispute-china>

⁵⁹ 3000 Sailors and Marines Arrive in Middle East aboard USS Bataan, USS Carter Hall, August 97, 2023, <https://www.cusnc.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/3484635/3000-sailors-and-marines-arrive-in-middle-east-aboard-uss-bataan-uss-carter-hall/>

⁶⁰ Exchange of Diplomatic Notes for the Entry into Force of Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e_000453.html

⁶¹ Australia and Japan Deepen Defence Ties, August 14, 2023, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/australia-and-japan-deepen-defence-ties>

⁶² Australia welcomes Japan's first international F-35 deployment, August 28, 2023, <https://www.defence.gov.au/news-events/releases/2023-08-28/australia-welcomes-japans-first-international-f-35a-deployment>



The US and Japan began their cooperative development programme of a glide phase interceptor on August 18⁶³. Discussions on this been undertaken following the January 2023 Security Consultative Committee (2+2) meeting.

A joint statement from the US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and the Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto indicated a warming of the US-Indonesia military relationship. The two agreed that the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the US Indo-Pacific strategies share fundamental principles and the two countries should work together alongside partners who share these goals and commitment to an open, inclusive and rules-based order. They agreed that China's expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea were inconsistent with international law as reflected in UNCLOS, and they jointly condemned violations of national sovereignty by Russia in Ukraine. They noted that the US and Indonesia hold more than 220 defense engagements annually, reaffirmed the importance of Indonesia's military modernisation and discussed deepening interoperability through fighter aircraft upgrades and acquisition of fighters as well as fixed and rotary wing transport aircraft.

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen sought an increase in defence spending for 2024 to \$ 13.9 billion, with an additional \$ 2.97 billion earmarked for the purchases of jet fighters and other weapons⁶⁴. The announcement followed a day after the US State Department notified the proposed sale of \$ 500 million worth of Infra-Red Search and Track systems for F-16 aircraft⁶⁵.

Japan's Defense Ministry submitted its largest ever budget request, amounting to 7.74 trillion yen (\$ 53 billion) on August 31⁶⁶. The request includes the construction of two Aegis system equipped destroyers, displacing about a third more than the current Maya-class destroyers; two improved Mogami-class frigates equipped with improved Type 12 SSMs and with better AD capabilities; one new replenishment ship; and continued conversion of the two Izumo-

⁶³ US Department of Defense and Japan Ministry of Defense Press Release on the Commencement of Glide Phase Interceptor Cooperative Development, August 18, 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3498431/us-department-of-defense-and-japan-ministry-of-defense-press-release-on-the-com/>

⁶⁴ Taiwan President Requests Another Jump in Military Spending to Deter China, August 24, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/asia/taiwan-president-requests-another-jump-in-military-spending-to-deter-china-96fe88fd>

⁶⁵ Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the US (TECRO) – F-16 Infrared Search and Track (IRST) Systems, <https://www.dsca.mil/sites/default/files/mas/Press%20Release%20-%20TECRO%2023-25%20CN.pdf>

⁶⁶ Japan Looks to Boost Defense Budget by 13% and Add New Missiles, August 31, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/asia/japan-looks-to-boost-defense-budget-by-13-and-add-new-missiles-fa398f16>



class helicopter carriers into aircraft carriers. Other developmental projects include a new EW aircraft, a new SSM, joint development of the Glide Phase Interceptor with the US (Japan will be responsible for the rocket motor and propulsion system of the kill vehicle), besides a variety of unmanned surface, amphibious and underwater vehicles.

Exercises

A contingent of Italian aircraft including F-35s joined the JASDF for their first ever bilateral fighter aircraft exercise at Japan's Komatsu airbase from August 7-10. The exercise follows the elevation of the Japan-Italy relationship to a strategic partnership in January 2023⁶⁷.

The USN and USMC carried out their Large-Scale Exercise 2023 from 09-18 August⁶⁸. The exercise involved over 10,000 personnel spread across 22 time zones, integrating six component commands and seven US numbered fleets around the globe. The exercise is intended to refine how the marine services work as one team on a global scale and enable advancing of naval doctrine and tactics by integrating fleet operations with emerging technologies.

The USN announced the conduct of Exercise Ulchi Freedom Shield 23, a joint, combined and interagency exercise, from August 21-31. The live and virtual exercise is designed to strengthen the combined defence posture and alliance response capabilities in South Korea.

The first Australia-Philippines exercise ALON was conducted in the Philippines from August 14 - 31⁶⁹. The exercise scenario simulated retaking a South China Sea Island occupied by an external power. It encompassed an air assault exercise in Palawan on August 21, a combined amphibious assault in Zambales on August 25, and live fire training on August 31⁷⁰. Participants included 560 personnel from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, about 1200 personnel from the Australian Defence Force and 120 support personnel from the USMC. Australian platforms involved included HMAS Canberra and HMAS Anzac, Lightning-II aircraft, M-1A1 tanks and two amphibious assault vehicles, while

⁶⁷ Japan and Italy to elevate ties with first joint fighter drills, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/08/04/japan/japan-italy-fighter-jet-joint-exercises>

⁶⁸ Navy and Marine Corps Commence Large Scale Exercise 2023, August 09, 2023, <https://www.cpf.navy.mil/Newsroom/News/Article/3488597/navy-and-marine-corps-commence-large-scale-exercise-2023/>

⁶⁹ PH-Aus Exercise Alon Officially Kicks Off, August 14, 2023, <https://www.afp.mil.ph/news/ph-aus-exercise-alon-2023-officially-kicks-off>

⁷⁰ Filipino, Aussie troops successfully conduct 'Exercise Alon', August 29, 2023, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1208723>



the Philippines fielded BRP Davao Del Sur. The amphibious assault phase on August 25 was witnessed by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr⁷¹, Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles, and Philippine Secretary of National Defence Gilberto Teodoro Jr, among others. On August 24, JS Izumo, JS Samidare and USS Mobile joined the exercise participants at sea off Manila⁷². The exercise sends a strong signal of US, Japanese and Australian resolve to deter/counter China's expansion in the South China Sea. Its next edition will be held in 2025.

Warships from the US, Japanese and ROK navies conducted a trilateral ballistic missile defence exercise on August 29⁷³. The exercise follows the trilateral summit at Camp David earlier this month and is intended to promote trilateral cooperation to counter DPRK ballistic missile threats.

Miscellaneous

The Pearl Harbour Naval Shipyard welcomed the first contingent of Australian, UK and US personnel on August 16⁷⁴. These personnel will work directly with the shipyard to gain a full understanding of maintenance and industrial skills required to establish the Submarine Rotation Force West (SRF-W) in Australia by 2027. SRF-W will host four Virginia and One RN Astute SSN. The combined US-Australian team will maintain USN SSNs, with US presence reducing as Australia grows expertise. Earlier, USS North Carolina had become the first Virginia-class SSN to dock at HMAS Stirling, the future base for SRF-W, on August 4⁷⁵.

Adm Lisa Franchetti, the US Vice Chief of Naval Operations, relieved Admiral Michael Gilday when he completed his four year tenure as the Chief of Naval

⁷¹ PBBM observes ALON 2023 amphibious assault exercise in Zambales, August 25, 2023, <https://pia.gov.ph/news/2023/08/25/pbbm-observes-alon-2023-amphibious-assault-exercise-in-zambales>

⁷² Japan-US-Australia-Philippine Quadrilateral Exercise, https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/en/release/202308/20230825_02en.pdf

⁷³ US, Japan, Republic of Korea Conduct Trilateral Ballistic Missile Defense Exercise, August 29, 2023, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3507956/us-japan-republic-of-korea-conduct-trilateral-ballistic-missile-defense-exercise/>

⁷⁴ Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility Welcomes First Contingent of AUKUS Personnel, August 16, 2023, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/Press-Releases/display-pressreleases/Article/3494400/pearl-harbor-naval-shipyard-and-intermediate-maintenance-facility-welcomes-firs/>

⁷⁵ US Nuclear-powered Submarine Visits Western Australia, August 04, 2023, <https://www.cpf.navy.mil/Newsroom/News/Article/3483661/us-nuclear-powered-submarine-visits-western-australia-first-since-aucus-announce/>

Operations on August 14⁷⁶. Franchetti has been nominated by President Biden to be the next CNO, but the appointment is yet to be confirmed by the Congress.

Australia announced its decision to purchase more than 200 Tomahawk cruise missiles for its Hobart-class destroyers, at an anticipated cost of A\$ 1.3 billion. It also announced the intent to acquire 60 Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missiles – Extended Range for RAAF aircraft at a cost of A\$ 431 million⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ Franchetti Takes the Helm After Gilday's Relinquishment of Office, August 14, 2023, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/Press-Releases/display-pressreleases/Article/3492496/franchetti-takes-the-helm-after-gildays-relinquishment-of-office/>

⁷⁷ Australia invests in powerful new high-tech missiles, August 21, 2023, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2023-08-21/australia-invests-powerful-new-high-tech-missiles>



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