

NAVY NEWS WEEK 1-5

5 January 2017

WORLDWIDE: Worldwide Threat to Shipping (WTS) Report

29 November - 28 December 2016

WEST AFRICA

NIGERIA: On 15 December, eight robbers in a skiff approached and attempted to board an anchored tanker using a long ladder, near position 04:21N - 008:26E, Qua Iboe Anchorage. Upon noticing the robbers, the duty officer raised the alarm and mustered the crew. The Master requested immediate assistance from the local Naval Security patrol boat. Upon seeing the approaching patrol boat, the robbers aborted their boarding attempt and moved away. (IMB)

NIGERIA: On 12 December, three robbers in a small speed boat attempted to board an anchored product tanker using ropes, near position 06:18N - 003:21E, Lagos Anchorage. The crew raised the alarm and mustered in the accommodation area. The armed embarked security team fired warning shots resulting in the robbers moving away. Local authorities were informed. (IMB)

NIGERIA: On 13 December, bandits attacked the offshore supply vessel *Chilosco* near position 03:45N - 006:10E, 29 nm south of Brass. (www.fleetmon.com)

NIGERIA: On 10 December, suspected pirates in a speedboat attempted to board the product tanker *Sochima* approximately 40 nm south of Brass, Nigeria. The Nigerian Navy security team aboard on the product tanker prevented the pirates from boarding. The Master of the *Sochima* reported the incident to the local authorities. (www.maritimeherald.com)

ANGOLA: On 1 December, two robbers boarded an anchored product tanker near position 08:44S - 013:17E, Luanda Anchorage. Alarm was raised and crew was mustered. Seeing the crew's alertness, the robbers escaped with stolen ship's properties. (IMB)

ARABIAN GULF: No current incidents to report.

INDIAN OCEAN - EAST AFRICA:

SOMALIA: On 11 December, a suicide truck-borne bomb detonated in the port of Mogadishu, killing at least 29 persons. The militant group al-Shabaab claimed responsibility. (www.fleetmon.com) **Source: OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE**

Indonesia's Role in Handling Maritime Piracy in ASEAN

Maritime piracy and sea border security has been one of the biggest problems faced by countries in the Southeast Asia region in 2016. Sailors and ship crews who came across sea borders in Southeast Asia, for example in the southern Philippines Sulu Sea and in the Malaysian waters of Sabah, often become victims of piracy and were taken hostage by armed groups. This issue has been a concern of ASEAN countries, including Indonesia, because there were several incidents of sea hijackings, with Indonesian sailors taken hostage during 2016, especially in the triangle of Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines. For instance, in June 2016, seven Indonesian ship crews were taken hostage by the armed Abu Sayyaf group in the southern Philippines Sulu Sea. In July 2016 a similar incident happened again. The Abu Sayyaf members kidnapped three Indonesian citizens in the waters of Felda Sahabat, Lahat Datu in Malaysia. Throughout 2016, there were at least seven hijackings and kidnappings of Indonesian sailors, and the perpetrator were the same - the Abu Sayyaf group. This has been an ongoing security dilemma for ASEAN countries. These actions can be categorized as acts of terrorism. In fact, the Abu Sayyaf group has been declared a terrorist group by the Philippine government. Terrorism is a delicate issue. Unlike normal security dilemmas, in which conflicts are state-to-state or between states, terrorism is an asymmetric security threat stemming from a relationship between strategy and tactics conducted outside accepted international norms by non-state actors, in this case, terrorist groups. Moreover, maritime piracy by the Abu Sayyaf group also can be categorized as a transnational crime. By definition, transnational crimes are those that occur across national borders. Transnational crimes also include crimes that take place in one country, but their consequences significantly affect another country. Even if the crime is committed by a terrorist group from the Philippines, it might affect other countries and nations. Beside Indonesians, Malaysian and Vietnamese ship crews also have become victims of hijackings and kidnapping by the armed group based in the southern Philippines waters. Considering the nature of maritime piracy - by armed group operating in international waters which is a terrorist act, as well as a transnational crime, no country should or can face this problem alone. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has approached countries that have a direct interest in this issue, namely Malaysia and the Philippines. Malaysia needs to protect Malaysian ship crews who have been taken hostage by the Abu Sayyaf group. To the Philippines, Indonesia emphasized the fact that frequent hijacking by Abu Sayyaf have occurred in southern Philippines' waters, particularly along the trade lanes, through which ships deliver coal needed by Philippines' energy suppliers. Indonesia has been trying to deal with the problem, along with Malaysia and the Philippines. Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have agreed to begin joint army training later in 2017 to advance efforts to secure the Sulu Sea from rampant piracy. The military training will take place in Indonesia's Tarakan in North Kalimantan, Malaysia's Tawao Island and the Philippines' Bongao Island. Earlier, Indonesian Defense Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu explained that the training locations would later become posts for a joint taskforce to help secure Sulu waters. The three countries also have agreed to start joint sea patrols. However, to solve this problem of maritime piracy through the regional

ASEAN organisation, Indonesia also needs to approach other ASEAN countries, not only Malaysia and the Philippines, since coordination and planning are crucial for the success of undertakings that are too large or complex for any country to address. Complex issues, such as maritime piracy in Southeast Asia, is the kind of challenge that requires regional cooperation. The efforts could begin with the Indonesian government propose a regional meeting discussing border security between countries in Southeast Asia region. For the long-term goal, Indonesia could initiate a type of ASEAN Joint Patrol for Sea Border Security, as a regional mechanism aimed at solving maritime piracy matters in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Indonesia, through diplomatic efforts, needs to attract the attention of all parties by demonstrating that the meeting being proposed is for the common interest of all ASEAN countries. Border issues are a delicate matter, because they are associated with sovereignty, so Indonesia's approach should be more focused on what the ASEAN countries could gain, as opposed to what they are losing. Encouragement can also be given to all ASEAN countries to agree upon the joint patrols, as the objective to create security and stability in the territorial waters of Southeast Asia - particularly in trade lanes is in the common economic interest of surrounding nations. The Indonesian government can also emphasize that ASEAN joint patrols might also be useful to address other boundary issues in the region, such as fishing and the trafficking of people through the sea. Another measure which might be discussed is the effort to establish intelligence cooperation among ASEAN countries and gather information that could be used to weaken the network of armed groups. For instance, ASEAN intelligence services could share information about funding of the Abu Sayyaf group. Such armed groups often have financiers, to assure they continue to operate.

Source: Tempo



MEDITERRANEAN SEA (Dec. 28, 2016) Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Electrical) 2nd Class Chad Mercer, from Port Saint Lucie, Fla., holds a simulated fire flag towards hose team members while in a dark space aboard the guided-missile cruiser **USS Monterey (CG 61)** during a general quarters drill. **Monterey**, deployed as part of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group, is conducting naval operations in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national security interests in Europe. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class William Jenkins/Released)

USS Carl Vinson begins deployment in January



US Navy file photo of **USS Carl Vinson**

The U.S. Navy's 3rd Fleet announced that ships and units from the Carl Vinson strike group (CVNSG) will depart San Diego for a regularly-scheduled deployment to the Western Pacific on

January 5 and 6. The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier **USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70)**, Carrier Air Wing 2, and embarked Destroyer Squadron 1 will deploy with Ticonderoga class guided-missile cruiser **USS Lake Champlain (CG 57)** and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers **USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112)** and **USS Wayne E. Meyer (DDG 108)**. Homeported in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, **Michael Murphy** will join CVNSG later as the strike group makes its way to the Western Pacific. CVNSG will deploy with approximately 7,500 sailors and will focus on maritime security operations and theater security

cooperation efforts. The strike group assets will conduct bilateral exercises in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region to include anti-submarine warfare, maneuvering drills, gunnery exercises and visit, board, search and seizure subject matter expert exchanges.

Source : Naval Today



ARABIAN SEA (Dec. 28, 2016) Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Chad Beall signals the Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler **USNS Kanawa (T-AO 196)** during a replenishment-at-sea aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer **USS Mahan (DDG 72)**. *Mahan* is deployed in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in support of maritime security operations and theater security operation efforts. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Tim Comerford/Released)

China Commissions New Stealth Warship into East Sea Fleet



The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) commissioned a new warship, the Type 054A Jiangkai II-class frigate **Binzhou**, into its East Sea Fleet on December 29, according to images that appeared on Weibo, a Chinese microblogging website. It is the ninth Type 054A frigate to enter active service with the East Sea Fleet, the PLAN's oldest fleet assigned to patrol the East China Sea. One of the fleet's primary responsibilities is to support an amphibious invasion of Taiwan in the event of war. Type 054A frigates are also the mainstay of PLAN escort and

patrol missions in the South China Sea. The **Binzhou** is the 23rd Type 054A frigate on active duty with the PLAN and constitutes the cornerstone of China's surface warfare capabilities. The PLAN expects to commission another four Type 054 frigates by 2018. According to a cost estimate published in *The Diplomat*, the per unit price is set at around \$348 million. Type 054A frigates have seen sustained operational deployments. For example, ships of the class have been deployed for anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2009. Type 054A frigates also participated in Sino-Russian maritime exercises in 2015 and 2016, next to a number of other unilateral and bilateral naval drills (See: "**China and US Navies Conduct Joint Search and Rescue Drill**"). The stealth frigate is armed with HQ-16 medium range air defense missiles and boasts a 32-cell vertical launching system (VLS) in the forward section, capable of firing anti-ship and air defense missiles as well as anti-submarine torpedoes. It also features a Russian-made AK-630 fully automatic naval close in weapon system and a Chinese variant of the AK-176 76 millimeter naval gun. Some frigates of the class are also known to have been equipped with variable depth sonar and towed array sonar systems. In addition, the ship is equipped with a Type 382 phased-array radar system and Type 344 and Type 345 multifunctional fire control radar systems, capable of over the horizon targeting. Type 054A frigates also feature a hangar capable of accommodation Kamov K-27 and Harbin Z-9 helicopters or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). As I reported elsewhere, the ship has a standard range of about 3,800 nautical miles - 7,037 kilometers - at a speed of 18 knots, and a maximum un-refuelled radius is 12,000 kilometers or 8,000 miles. According to an analysis, the Type 054A class "*remains a limited design in terms of its size, armament, and electronics outfit and is viewed as an intermediary design intended to play a specific, limited role in fleet defense.*" It will almost certainly be part of the PLAN's first carrier strike group, where it most likely would be deployed within a second, inner

screen for anti-submarine warfare and defense against any air or missile threats that make it through the outer defense perimeter.

Source : Defence News (India)



MEDITERRANEAN SEA (Dec. 28, 2016) The guided missile destroyer **USS Porter (DDG 78)** fires a close-in weapons system during a live-fire exercise Dec. 28, 2016. **Porter**, forward-deployed to Rota, Spain, is conducting naval operations in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national security interests in Europe. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Ford Williams/Released)

ATLANTIC OCEAN (Dec. 29, 2016) An F/A-18E Super Hornet assigned to the Sidewinders of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 86 prepares to launch from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier **USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69)** during the Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 3 fly-off. In the background is the guided-missile cruiser **USS San Jacinto (CG 5)**. **Dwight D. Eisenhower** and its carrier strike group are returning from a 7-month combat deployment to the U.S. 5th and 6th Fleet areas of operation in support of **Operation Inherent Resolve**, maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Christopher A. Michaels/Released)



Jiangnan shipyard launches another Type 052D destroyer

By : Andrew Tate, London - IHS Jane's Defence Weekly

China's Jiangnan Shipyard on Changxing Island launched its 10th Luyang III-class (Type 052D) destroyer for the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) on 26 December. Built under cover, the ship was launched by shiplift, and joins six others that are either being fitted out in the basin or on sea trials. Of these, hull 5, which was launched in August 2014, is expected to be commissioned imminently. A further three Type 052D destroyers are under construction at the Dalian shipyard.

Source : Janes

Mayport Naval Station welcomes 2 littoral combat ships

The Florida Times-Union reported the **USS Milwaukee** and **USS Detroit** will be part of Littoral Combat Ship Squadron Two, which will consist of all the U.S. Navy's Freedom-variant littoral ships. The Navy's Independence-variant ships will be based in San Diego. The **Detroit** has been conducting system ship qualification testing since arriving Nov. 23. It was commissioned Oct. 22 in Detroit. The **Milwaukee** was commissioned in 2015 and arrived at Mayport in February. The littoral fleet is designed to operate close to shore with steerable jet propulsion. The newspaper reported the Navy's plans call for 52 littoral ships and frigates, which means half will be stationed at Mayport.

Source: newschief



PUERTO PRINCESA, Philippines (Dec. 28, 2016)
 Sailors lower the ensign on the flight deck of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer **USS John S. McCain (DDG 56)** as the ship departs Puerto Princesa, Philippines, after a scheduled port visit. **McCain** is on patrol in the Philippine Sea supporting security and stability in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class James Vazquez/Released)



The **RFA Wave Ruler** entering Portland Harbour on a fine clear morning. 30th December. With the Tugs **Rufus Castle** and **Maiden Castle** alongside. **Photo : Capt Shaun Beal - Master Wave Sentinel (c)**

No US carrier at sea leaves gap in Middle East

For the next week, not only will there be no U.S. Navy aircraft carrier in the Middle East, but there will be no American aircraft carriers deployed at sea anywhere else in the world, despite a host of worldwide threats facing the United States. The carrier **USS Dwight D. Eisenhower** and her strike group returned to Norfolk, Va., Friday following a seven-month deployment. The Ike launched hundreds of airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria from both the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. Two destroyers in the Ike's strike group also saw combat. The **USS Nitze** and **USS Mason** were attacked in the Red Sea when Iranian backed Houthi forces in Yemen launched cruise missiles, which were intercepted by the **Mason**. A retaliatory strike by the **Nitze** destroyed the radar installations in Yemen in October. The Eisenhower's replacement carrier, the **USS George H.W. Bush**, was delayed by more than six months in the shipyards and will not be able to replace the Ike until early next year, according to Navy officials. While there is no U.S. aircraft carrier in the Middle East right now, there is a large deck U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship with thousands of Marines on board as well as helicopters and some jets to respond to a crisis, according to officials. In the meantime, the Navy tells Fox News the U.S. military has other jets available to make up for the aircraft carrier gap in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world. The Navy can also "surge" a carrier now in port to deploy if necessary. But the absence of a deployed U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, long seen as a symbol of American power projection, is noteworthy. It is believed to be the first time since World War II that at least one U.S. aircraft carrier has not been deployed. "We are not going to discuss the timing of operational movements of carrier strike groups into and out of the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility," said Capt. Terry Shannon, a U.S.

Naval Forces Central Command spokesman, in a statement to Fox News. Centcom is tasked with control over all U.S. forces in the Middle East and Afghanistan. It's not the first time there was a carrier gap in the Middle East. Last fall, the U.S. Navy relied on a French aircraft carrier to fill the void when the **USS Theodore Roosevelt** returned home. At the time it was the first gap in carrier coverage in the Middle East since 2007. Other factors contribute to the U.S. Navy not having an aircraft carrier deployed anywhere in the world right now. From 2011 to 2013, the Navy maintained two carriers in the Persian Gulf on the orders of Centcom's then-commander, Gen. James Mattis, who is now President-elect Donald Trump's pick for defense secretary. The congressionally mandated budget cuts known as sequestration have also been felt on the waterfront since 2011. After billions of dollars were cut from the Navy's budget, ships such as the **George H.W. Bush** were forced to prolong their time in the shipyards, which had a ripple effect down the line. If the **Bush** had left the shipyard on time, she would have relieved the **Ike** in the Gulf or the Mediterranean, officials tell Fox News. Fox News recently flew out to the **USS George H.W. Bush** 40 miles off the coast of North Carolina to see the crew's final tune-up. With jets landing every 60 seconds, the flight deck crew worked on getting the time between "traps" (landings) down to 40 seconds. Aboard the ship, 18- to 22-year-old men and women work 14 hour days on the flight deck, with little rest -- all this before deploying and potentially dropping live rounds on ISIS. "This is the military equivalent of spring training, because once we complete this at the end of December, then we'll be going forward and it'll be real forces that we'll be going flying with and against," said Rear Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, commander, Carrier Strike 2, interviewed on his perch above the four-acre flight deck known as "Vulture's Row." In addition to fighting ISIS, the ship's commanding officer says his crew will be ready to deal with a resurgent Russia or China if necessary. "While we don't have any emergent or pending conflicts with them, certainly, it is fair to say that we have divergent interests in many cases, and so we need to be prepared to understand how we will react to that if necessary," said Capt. Will Pennington. There is recent history with this ship. On Aug. 8, 2014, a pair of F-18s from the **Bush** launched the first airstrikes against ISIS in northern Iraq. Now, two and a half years later, the ship is headed back to the fight against the Islamic State terror group. "That doesn't mean that three months or six months from now, that will be the priority for our country. So we have to be ready to execute anywhere, anytime, any mission," said Capt. James McCall, commander of Air Wing 8, in charge of all of the aircraft on board.

Source : Fox News



After 4 months patrolling the Mediterranean for the United Nations to determine the routes which are used to smuggle people into Europe The Dutch frigate **Zr Ms. De Ruyter** returned home at the Den Helder naval base in the Netherlands

Photo : Ron Damman – www.newdeep.nl (c)

Walk through 3D images of stealth frigates to be created by GRSE

By: Jayanta Gupta



Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd will use lasers to create 3D images of stealth frigates under the Navy's Project 17A before finalising their designs. The shipyard in Kolkata has also signed a contract with a yard in Italy to develop its capabilities further. This was announced by outgoing chairman-cum-managing director Rear Admiral (retd) A K Verma. "From a shipyard with a question mark we have succeeded in turning GRSE into a permanent entity in five years. The turning point has been the order for three stealth frigates under Project 17A. These 7,000-tonne stealth frigates will be the largest and most technologically advanced in the

world. The price tag for the four Anti Submarine Warfare (ASW) Corvettes that we are currently building (two already delivered) is a mere Rs 7,000 crore. Each stealth frigate will cost nearly Rs 7,000 crore. The order for three frigates is Rs 20,000 crore. The keel for the first ship of this class will be laid in 2017 and the construction will start in 2018. The first ship will be delivered in 2023," Verma said. According to him, GRSE has moved from just any shipyard to the best one in the country. Not only has its infrastructure capacity doubled, the shipyard's outsourced outfitting capability has gone up by four times. "Every ship requires hundreds of km of cables. Earlier, our cabling capability was a mere 70 km per year. In 2015-16, it went up to 256 km. This means that we can complete cabling of a frigate (280-300 km) in a year. Though this is not done as the work is divided. Earlier, the same work would take up to four years. Our tie-up with the Italian shipyard will also enhance our capabilities. We had already started modular construction. Parts of ships (blocks) are built elsewhere and then lifted to position before being welded together. The blocks we lift are empty. After being welded together, outfitting is done. This takes time. Under the new arrangement, we shall lift blocks that have been outfitted. These will be much heavier but we now have a 250-tonne crane to handle such loads," Verma added. GRSE's turnover is now Rs 1,700 crore but the company plans to take it to Rs 3,400-3,500 crore by the end of 2020. The outgoing CMD believes that the shipyard will get more projects on completion of Project 17A. This belief has boosted morale.

Source: Times of India

Steel cutting ceremony of fourth Fast Attack Craft held by Pak Navy

The steel cutting ceremony of the fourth Fast Attack Craft (Missile) and two 32 x Tons Bollard Pull Tugs being built for the Pakistan Navy was held here at the Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works. NESCOM Chairman Dr Nabeel Hayat Malik was the chief guest on the occasion. The Fast Attack Craft (Missile) is a state of the art, multi mission vessel, commonly known as the missile boat, designed by the Maritime Technologies Complex (MTC) and will have latest weapons and sensors. The first missile craft of this series **PNS Azmat** was designed and constructed by the China Shipbuilding and Offshore International Corporation Ltd (CSOC) under a contract of the transfer of technology, and inducted in PN Fleet in June 2012. The second craft **PNS Dehshat** was indigenously-built at the Karachi Shipyard and commissioned in the Pakistan Navy in June 2014. The third fast attack craft has been launched in September this year and will be inducted in PN Fleet shortly. Addressing the ceremony, Dr Nabeel Hayat Malik appreciated accomplishment of these important milestones and urged each and every individual working in MTC and the Karachi Shipyard to put in the best towards the goal of indigenization of shipbuilding industry. He highlighted that KS&EW was consistently achieving major targets of its business plan and has become a role model for other public sector industries. He said that the indigenous design of the Fast Attack Craft (Missile) is a first step towards the goal of self reliance in the ship design. He extended his gratitude to Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah for reposing confidence in KS&EW and MTC. In his welcome address, KS&EW Managing Director Rear Admiral Syed Hasan Nasir Shah said that the Fast Attack Craft (Missile) was the first-ever missile boat being designed and constructed in Pakistan. Realisation of this project has put huge responsibility on the Karachi Shipyard and MTC for its timely and successful completion. Giving a brief progress of ongoing projects, he highlighted that all out efforts would be made to deliver these projects on time with high quality.

Source: paktribune

Chilean Navy Sailors Accused of Secretly Filming Female Crewmates

December 29, 2016 by [Reuters](#)



FILE PHOTO: The Chilean Navy ship "**Almirante Lynch**" is seen off the coast of Valparaiso, Chile September 20, 2010. REUTERS/Rodrigo Garrido/File Photo



SANTIAGO,

Dec 29 (Reuters) – Chilean authorities said on Thursday they are investigating allegations that female sailors were secretly videotaped in

their quarters on a naval vessel and that those images were then shared via social media by other crew members. The Navy detained the sailors accused of secretly recording their female counterparts. It said "*it roundly rejects these types of actions that insult our personnel and we reiterate our respect for the privacy of those that form part of the institution.*" Chile's Defense Minister Jose Antonio Gomez said that sanction for these actions would "*set an example.*" After receiving a complaint from a sailor who had seen the recordings of the women shared on a Whatsapp group, Chile's naval prosecutor opened an investigation into at least nine seamen, the Estrella de Valparaiso newspaper reported on Thursday. Other local media said eight sailor are being investigated. According to the paper, investigators found "*elaborate and complex technical*

apparatus” in various strategic locations on the ship. “If it’s true what happened on the frigate **Lynch** it is unacceptable,” Chilean President Michelle Bachelet wrote on Twitter. “Let’s end all forms of violence against women!” Earlier in December, a Chilean business leader sparked a social media storm and criticism by Bachelet for presenting the nation’s economy minister with an inflatable sex doll as a gift at an industry dinner. Despite being South America’s most prosperous nation by most measures, Chile is more socially conservative than many of its neighbors and traditional gender attitudes persist. Abortion is illegal in all circumstances, divorce was only legalized in 2006, and women’s participation in the labor market remains low. (Reporting by Gram Slattery; Editing by Anthony Esposito and Andrea Ricci) **Source:** <http://gcaptain.com>

Angel comments: Knowing the very high standards expected in their Navy, I feel that those sailors may as well be dead – or wish they were!



The **Sørlandet** arriving in Cape Town
Photo : Glenn Käsner (c)

Angel comments: This beautiful vessel arrived in the Victoria and Alfred basin on Friday afternoon. I will hopefully be visiting her this week.

I was so fortunate to join Angel for this visit – very impressive indeed

The Bay of Bengal Naval Arms Race

As Bangladesh and Myanmar build up their navies, India and China compete to supply equipment.

By Saurav Jha

December 30, 2016



A helicopter flies past as Bangladesh’s naval frigate **BNS Abu Bakar** (front) participates in multi-country maritime joint exercises off the coast in Qingdao, Shandong province (April 23, 2014).

Image Credit: REUTERS/China Daily

In late November 2016, Bangladesh took delivery of two refurbished submarines from China, making the former the second Bay of Bengal (BoB) navy to acquire an undersea capability. This development takes place even

as Myanmar recapitalizes its surface fleet sporting sonars supplied by India. Recent maritime boundary settlements, rather than obviating the need for naval capability accretion, seem to have enhanced it in the littorals of the resource-rich BoB. As such, the India-China contest for influence in the BoB has a decidedly naval edge to it, with both sides seeking to leverage capacity-building cooperation with countries in the region to secure access and a deep security relationship. Bangladesh had actually sought to acquire its own submarine capability back in 2003, although that effort did not yield results due to internal political turmoil. The move to purchase submarines from abroad was revived in 2009, after naval tensions with Myanmar the previous year. In 2010, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced her government’s intention to develop the BN into a three-dimensional “deterrent” force, with a view to protecting the nation’s maritime resources and mostly coastal population. Similar statements have been made by Hasina on multiple occasions since then and her government is believed to be the key driver behind Bangladesh’s naval expansion. While Bangladesh had initially looked to acquire brand-new submarines of a more contemporary design such as the Type 041 **Yuan**, which China reportedly offered for \$250 million apiece, budgetary constraints meant that the BN had to ultimately settle for two used Type-035G **Ming**-class submarines instead. Financial issues probably also stopped the Bangladeshis from considering Russia’s offer to sell **Kilo**-class submarines. The two Type-035G boats ordered in 2013 for a sum of \$203 million and now commissioned as **BNS Nabajatra** and **Joyjatra**, respectively, have typical Ming class features, with a submerged displacement of 2,110 tonnes, an overall length of 76 meters, beam of 7.6 m, hull draught of 5.1 m, and a top speed of 18 knots when submerged. Each boat has a complement of 47 sailors and 10 officers and sports eight 533 mm tubes that can deploy weapons such as Yu-3 and

Yu-4 heavyweight torpedoes. A total of either 14 torpedoes or 32 naval mines can be carried by these boats. The two submarines have an integrated sonar and electronic warfare suite with Chinese derivatives of Western origin systems. **BNS Nabajatra** and **Joyjatra**, though obsolete in terms of structural design, have a decent sensor fit, and have been deemed adequate by the BN not only for training and capacity-building roles but also for sea-denial potential against less capable adversaries such as the Myanmar Navy (MN). These submarines will be based in the newly constructed submarine base at Kutubdia Channel near Cox's Bazaar. Bangladesh also has a plan to build a major naval base in the Rabanabad Channel in southwestern Bangladesh, which will have both submarine berthing as well as aviation facilities. Even though Bangladesh settled its maritime boundaries with Myanmar in 2012 and India in 2014 via international arbitration, these awards probably reinforced its desire to build a deterrent navy, rather than dampening it. Post-arbitration, Bangladesh now has sovereign claim over an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) spanning 111,631 square kilometers, an area nearly equal to its landmass, which it feels the need to actively defend given that it isn't particularly rich in land-based resources. Bangladesh's acquisition of an undersea capability also comes at a time of heightened tensions with Myanmar over the Rohingya issue and turmoil all along Myanmar's Arakanese coastline. Besides the naval drive, Bangladesh is also building a new airbase close to its eastern neighbor, in addition to opening new military cantonments across its territory. Overall, Bangladesh's military build-up is directed by the Bangladesh Military's "**Forces Goal 2030**" comprehensive modernization plan introduced in 2009, which perhaps is reflective of how the country sees itself on the world stage. With a population of 170 million and a growing economy, Bangladesh has been positioning itself as a leader among the G77 group of developing countries and it should be noted that it is a top contributor to UN peacekeeping missions. Helping Bangladesh raise its military profile in the naval realm is of course China, its single largest trading partner. For instance, earlier this year two 1,350 tonne Type 056 corvettes, **BNS Shadhinota** and **BNS Prottoy**, built by China Shipbuilding and Offshore International Company, joined the BN. Each ship is armed with 76 mm and 30 mm naval guns as well as C-802A anti-ship missiles (ASMs) and a FN-3000N surface-to-air missile system. Two more Type-056s are on order. Meanwhile, Bangladesh's Khulna Shipyard is currently building six 648 tonne *Durjoy*-class patrol craft to add to the two already delivered to the BN by China's Wuchang Shipyard. The *Durjoy*-class is considered a scaled down variant of the Type-056 design and is armed with the lighter C-704 ASM. The C-704 may also arm BN's *Padma*-class patrol vessels, which are being built by the Khulna Shipyard with support from China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation. Hasina has also announced a plan to build warships in the Chittagong dry dock in future, once again with Chinese assistance. Besides the new build ships, Bangladesh had also acquired two *ex-Jianghu-III* Chinese frigates in 2014. China until now has also been the leading collaborator in the Myanmar Navy's bid to recapitalize its fleet, although this may change in the future. Though the MN's new surface combatants are being built in the Sinmalaik Shipyard in Yangon, which was set up with Chinese assistance, the ships are being outfitted with weapons and sensors of diverse origin. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that MN has opted for Indian sonars for its principal surface combatants even as China is helping Bangladesh set up a submarine arm. MN's new 3,000 ton *Kyan Sittha*-class frigates, of which two have already been commissioned and three more are planned, is equipped with a DRDO-BEL HMS-X hull-mounted sonar, which is an export version of the HUMSA-NG meant for major Indian Navy(IN) surface combatants. *Kyan Sittha*-class ships also use Indian supplied search radars even though they have to use a Chinese missile targeting radar since their main armament consists of C-802 AshMs. The single *Aung Zeya*-class frigate, which precedes the *Kyan Sittha*-class, carries the same Indian sensors as the latter, but instead of the C-802 uses Russian Kh-35 ASMs as its primary armament. In 2015, preliminary discussions were held between the visiting Myanmar delegation and officials of India's Goa Shipyard Limited for the possible supply of OPVs to Myanmar. Even as Myanmar progressively turns toward India for naval supplies, it has in the recent past also sought to address Indian concerns about the nature of its military ties with China. Back in 2013, IN and MN ships conducted a coordinated patrol between Myanmar's Coco Island and India's Landfall Island, perhaps in a bid to put to rest persistent Indian speculation about the island being used by the Chinese as a major signals intelligence (SIGINT) gathering facility. Myanmar has also invited India to overfly this island to examine the nature of the improvements taking place on it, such as an extended runway. With the inking of a pact for coordinated patrols earlier this year, it could be said that the Indian establishment is now sanguine that Myanmar is not likely to turn itself into a "second coast" for the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). India is now looking for work-arounds for sanctions to step up military supplies to Myanmar. For example, various Western components in the HMS-X sonars were indigenized specifically to enable their sale to Myanmar. A similar work-around for OPVs is being explored. By making India a party to its naval modernization programs, agreeing to coordinated patrolling, and opening itself to Indian transit corridors such as the Sittwe Port built by India and ready to be commissioned, Myanmar has signaled that its "*China card*" is essentially designed to get the best techno-commercial deal for itself and is not necessarily reflective of a burgeoning military alliance with the PRC. Sri Lanka too seems to be giving this signal to India of late, by being lukewarm to Chinese requests for the use of Trincomalee harbor, which sits on the BoB and is much closer to the Indian coast than Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port, which China has helped develop. The Sri Lankan Navy is also beginning to see steady transfers of naval equipment from India. India's strategic community, despite warming ties characterized by the settlement of both land and maritime borders, is not quite sure about the nature of Bangladesh's "*China card*," however. Bangladeshi military literature continues to talk about using China to balance India, a country that surrounds it on three sides and with which it still has a major water-sharing dispute. The timing of Bangladesh's acquisition of submarines also isn't a particularly propitious one from an Indian naval perspective because of its source. In the initial phases, Bangladesh's new (old) submarines will have Chinese crews attached to them for training and familiarization purposes while plying in waters near India's upcoming ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) bastions.

Chinese personnel will also be heavily involved in setting up maintenance and operational support establishments at the Kutubdia submarine base, which would place them not too faraway from India's Eastern Naval Command at Visakhapatnam or from INS *Varsha*, which is still under construction and will serve as the home base for India's SSBNs. So in a sense, Bangladesh's submarine pool will allow China to extend its sensor net into the BoB, besides enabling it to gather information that would prove useful for its own submarine operations. Indeed, India will be even more concerned as to whether the Chinese naval presence would extend to being able to secure berthing facilities for their own submarines at Kutubdia. During the October visit of President Xi Jinping to Dhaka, a first by a Chinese president in 30 years, China promoted its relationship with Bangladesh from a "comprehensive partnership of cooperation" to a "strategic partnership," while promising billions of dollars in infrastructure investment. In that sense, Bangladesh's purchase of Chinese submarines while being promised major "**One Belt, One Road**" (OBOR) investments does bear more than a casual similarity to China's sale of submarines to Pakistan and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. China's outlets into the bays and seas that flank the Indian Peninsula will not really help reduce its "*Malacca Dilemma*," whether in terms of being able to divert major traffic or securing overwatch over its sea lines of communication (SLOCs). What they can do, however, is complicate Indian naval planning by forcing Delhi to invest resources in areas such as the very northern reaches of the BoB. To be sure, Bangladesh's new underwater boats by themselves do not pose much of a challenge to the IN. But even obsolete boats patrolling in areas that do not have a major naval base are a cause of concern and will mean the deployment of assets to areas that were basically Coast Guard territory earlier. As such, the impetus to set up a major port at Sagar Island just off the coast of the Indian state of West Bengal and near the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Bangladesh may be gathering pace. Work is underway on providing road-rail connectivity to this port site from the mainland. The Indian military also intends to turn Sagar Island into a major C4ISR point, complete with support from a coastal missile battery and air defenses. The port itself, given its deep draught, will be able to dock most IN ships and serve as a replenishment base. India has also been stepping up defense diplomacy with Bangladesh to ensure that the strategic overlay on China-Bangladesh economic relations remains manageable. A new defense agreement, which envisions Indian military sales to Bangladesh, extension of training facilities and joint exercises, and credible counterterrorism cooperation, was discussed during Indian Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar's late November 2016 visit to Dhaka. India is quite clearly trying to gauge the degree to which Bangladesh will accede to Chinese demands for access. Some coordination between the India and the United States in this sphere may also be expected, given U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's remark during his September 2016 visit to New Delhi that "*India and the U.S. see eye to eye on the Bay of Bengal.*" India and the United States have already included Japan in their annual **Malabar** series of exercises held in the BoB (much to the chagrin of the Chinese) and India is also exploring the possibility of connecting with Japan to offer alternatives to OBOR style investments in the BoB littorals. Intelligence sharing of Chinese submarine movements in the Indo-Pacific is also on the Indo-U.S. agenda. However even as diplomacy takes its course, India will now have to focus on increasing its own submarine strength. Parrikar himself has recently commented about the need to augment India's submarine force structure, which is inadequate (despite IN Chief S.K. Lamba's claim that "as far as deployment of PLA Navy ships and submarines are concerned, we keep a close eye and monitor their movement"). An early decision on a second line of conventional SSKs is expected soon. New Delhi intends to have two diesel-electric submarine lines humming into the 2020s (in addition to nuclear submarine construction) not just to recapitalize its underwater fleet but to also offer units for export. After all, India had to turn down a Myanmar request to refurbish an old *Foxrot*-class submarine for the MN in 2008 as that boat was too outdated and it is reported that Bangladesh had actually asked India for submarines before it placed orders for the *Mings*. India would certainly not want to give Bangladesh or Myanmar that excuse for turning to China for submarines in the 2020s.

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