

NAVY NEWS WEEK 21-1

22 May 2022

Saldanha Bay to boost South Africa's container capacity

PLANS are underway in South Africa to develop an international business zone at the deep draft Port of Saldanha Bay, reports Fort Lauderdale's Maritime Executive. The port is located 65 miles to the north of Cape Town, and once developed, would provide the transportation needs of the oil and gas industry. There may also be an opportunity to develop container operations at Saldanha Bay. Cape Town served as a port of call for the sailing ships that carried the spice trade between the East Indies and Europe. One hundred years later, Cape Town gained significance in maritime transportation when the Arab-Israeli Wars closed the Suez Canal from 1967-1975. Also the increasing size of oil tankers required deep-draft ports in southern Africa, at Richards Bay, and at Saldanha Bay. The discovery of offshore deposits of oil and natural gas off South Africa has prompted interest to develop the Port of Saldanha Bay. That initiative topped plans for International Development Zone located near the port. However, there has so far been little mention about future container operations at Saldanha Bay.

Source: Maasmond Maritime Clippings

More (unfulfilled?) plans. I will believe it when I see it.

Admiral Makarov To Assume The New Flagship Of Russian Black Sea Fleet



The Admiral Grigorovich-class frigate (Project 11356) **Admiral Makarov** is likely to become the new flagship of the Black Sea Fleet after the loss of the cruiser **Moskva**.

The **Admiral Makarov** frigate of project 11356 will likely become the flagship of the Black Sea fleet after the **Moskva** cruiser caught fire and sank, a source in Crimean security

agencies told TASS. "Following the loss of **Moskva**, one of the three projects 11356 frigates may become the new flagship of the Russian Black Sea fleet. So far, the **Admiral Makarov** has been chosen." In October 2021, a defence industry source told TASS on the sidelines of the 9th Sevastopol International Maritime Business Forum (SIMBF) that advanced project 23900 versatile amphibious assault ship the **Mitrofan Moskalenko** will become the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet after its construction is completed at the Zaliv Shipyard in Crimea's Kerch. Infrastructure facilities are already being prepared in Sevastopol, he said. Project 11356 frigate the **Admiral Makarov** was laid down by the Yantar Shipyard on February 29, 2012, and launched on September 2, 2015. It joined the Russian Navy on December 25, 2017. It is the third ship in a series of project 11356 frigates built by the Yantar Shipyard for the Defence Ministry. The first two projects 11356 frigates the **Admiral Grigorovich** and **Admiral Essen** were delivered to the customer in 2016. All three warships are operational in the Black Sea Fleet. Project 11356 frigates have a displacement of 4000 tons and a speed of 30 knots. Their cruising capacity is 30 days. The frigates are armed with 100 mm A-190 artillery guns, antiaircraft and artillery weapons, torpedoes and anti-submarine weapons, as well as precision Kalibr cruise missiles. They can also carry a Ka-27 or Ka-31 helicopter. After the dramatic loss of the cruiser **Moskva**, which was hit by two Neptune anti-ship missiles, the Russian Black Sea Fleet is expected to choose a new flagship to maintain fleet command and control. The Russian Navy is

unable to deploy additional warships to the Black Sea due to Turkey's decision to close straits to the passage of naval vessels under the Montreux Convention. Therefore, the Grigorovich-class frigates are the most suitable candidates for assuming flagship duties under wartime conditions. The flagships of the Russian Navy's fleets are selected from cruisers, so the assignment of a frigate to that role appears to be temporary. Naval News assumes that once the war is over and the straits are opened to the passage of warships, the Russian Navy will deploy a larger and more capable naval asset to the Black Sea Fleet in terms of command and control capabilities. For example Kirov-Class Cruiser **Admiral Nakhimov** could assume the role of flagship for the Northern Fleet from 2024 replacing Slava-class cruiser **Marshal Ustinov** in that role. The Slava-class cruiser could then be reassigned to the Black Sea Fleet.

Source : NavalNews



HMS Trent P224 - returning to its harbour berth after successfully completed First of Class Aviation Trials in and around Gibraltar

Photo : Francis Ferro ©

Royal Navy in the News

New monument to Royal Navy submariners unveiled



The Royal Navy submarine family celebrated the unveiling of a stunning new monument to the Silent Service.

The impressive new memorial to submariners

Earlier this week, Prince William unveiled the imposing new Submariners Memorial at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire. Nearly 400 submariners past and present, family members, and VIPs converged on the site at Alrewas for the formal dedication of the monument. A national competition was launched to design the structure and more than £400,000 raised by an appeal to realise that vision. Prince William said the finished memorial - two halves of a conning tower split, allowing people to walk through, passing the statue of a submariner as they do – captured "*all the elements of the Submarine Service of which I am immensely proud to be the Commodore in Chief - the loneliness of separation, the anticipation of return, the fortitude and the*

sacrifice." The monument serves as a tribute to the 5,349 men lost in Royal Navy submarines in 121 years of the Silent Service.

Royal Marines Reserves carry out downed pilot exercise

Royal Marines Reserves carried out a mission to rescue a downed pilot at the end of two weeks of intensive exercises in Cyprus. It was the first exercise of its type for three years and was an opportunity for commandos from across the reserves to hone critical skills to keep them sharp for operations around the world. The sun-baked

Eastern Mediterranean provided a realistic and challenging environment, with the marines operating in the heat across the Dhekelia training areas.



Royal Marines Reserves take part in exercises in Cyprus

It started with refreshers in weapons skills before the marines were tasked with rescuing a pilot shot down in the final challenging workout of the fortnight. Griffin helicopters from the Royal Air Force's 84 Squadron, which operates out of RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, dropped the commandos in behind

enemy lines. Calling on the skills honed throughout the exercise – named Commando Phoenix – the marines moved in, taking out three 'enemy' positions before rescuing the pilot on what's known as a Joint Personnel Recovery (JPR) mission. JPR – rescuing downed aircrew, their passengers and, if necessary, their equipment from behind enemy lines – is a mission relatively new to the Royal Marines, brought about by the advent of the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers. A dedicated unit has been formed from 42 Commando based at Bickleigh near Plymouth specifically for the mission, a unit which has trained extensively around the world. RMR Bristol led Exercise Commando Phoenix, but marines from across the reserves were involved, including RMR London, RMR Merseyside, RMR Scotland and their 20 satellite detachments. The RMR is the elite amphibious element of the Maritime Reserves and is just 500 strong but must stay at the very top of their game physically and professionally to stay ready. Former regular Royal Marines are a fundamental part of the RMR, using their previous full-time military experience, while enhancing and developing those skills within the RMR. Ex-Bootnecks who left service less than two years ago are often eligible for seamless transfer into the reserves. Those with previous military experience outside the Royal Marines are also encouraged to apply, but will need to complete the same rigorous commando course as a regular or reserve recruit in order to earn their coveted green beret.

Babcock awarded 10-Year contract for HMS Queen Elizabeth-class Aircraft Carriers Dockings

Babcock, the international defence, aerospace and security company has been awarded a 10-year contract to provide dry-dock maintenance for the Royal Navy's Queen Elizabeth-class (QEC) aircraft carriers. The new £30m contract follows a previous maintenance period where Babcock completed the first docking for **HMS Queen Elizabeth** at the Rosyth site in 2019, and includes all routine maintenance and repairs that cannot be done when the vessel is afloat. In addition to the scheduled dockings, Babcock will provide facilities for any contingency dockings required over the 10-year contract duration while sustaining and supporting circa 300 jobs. The first planned activity will take place next year with a six-week work package. This is a significant milestone for big ship dockings at Rosyth, which was the integration site for the UK carrier build and assembly programme from 2008 to 2019. Babcock has invested more than £100million in skills, digitisation and site infrastructure over recent years at Rosyth. This is now one of the UK's most modern, capable and competitive manufacturing and repair facilities for large scale marine and energy programmes, with a circa 2000-strong workforce. Alongside traditional maintenance practices, the ships' docking period will further benefit from the digital transformation underway at

the Rosyth site, which is already in place to support the build and assembly of the Royal Navy's new Type 31 Inspiration Class frigates. With an expected service life of up to 50 years, the aircraft carriers are highly versatile and potent joint defence assets, able to meet the widest range of tasks around the world. They are the most capable and powerful surface warships ever constructed in the UK. As a key partner in the UK's Aircraft Carrier Alliance, Babcock optimised countrywide facilities and a wealth of specialised knowledge and experience to deliver the detailed design and whole ship assembly for the QEC programme from her keel to mast, ensuring this remains one of Babcock's flagship programmes. **Source:** www.navybooks.com

World News & Events

South Korea completes trials for the LIG Nex1 Tiger Shark Torpedo

The Defence Agency for Technology and Quality (DTaQ) of South Korea has announced that mass production of LIG Nex1's Tiger Shark wire-guided heavyweight torpedo has begun following the successful completion of quality trials. The trials for the Tiger Shark consisted of testing from the 1,800-tonne KSS-II submarine and the 3,000-tonne KSS-III submarine in March and May respectively. The torpedo was fired twice from each submarine, with all four tests being successful. The torpedo is 6.5 m in length and weighs 1,619 kg. It is said to be much more effective than other torpedoes currently in service with the Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN), including the surface and underwater target Mod2 and White Shark torpedo, with a range of around 50 km and a maximum speed of over 55 knots. However, at \$2.6m per unit, the system is also more expensive than its predecessors. The Tiger Shark uses an electric motor powered by a lithium battery, minimising noise produced during launch. The system is also highly maneuverable and can alter propellor speed at different points in its trajectory, allowing it to remain undetected for longer periods of time. Other features onboard the Tiger Shark include a wake homing system and an advanced computer which allows it to defeat countermeasures.

Source: www.navybooks.com

Planning on track for Exercise Oxide 2022

defenceWeb -
20th May 2022



Exercise Oxide 2013.

SA Navy (SAN) fleet headquarters in Simon's Town next week welcomes a three officer French Armed Forces delegation for an **Exercise Oxide** mid-term planning session. This year's exercise is set for November after cancellations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions. That there would be a joint Franco/South

African naval exercise this year was made known last month (April) when the French task force **Jeanne d'Arc 2022** ported in Cape Town during a five-month deployment focussed on training cadets from the French Naval College (École Navale). There has – to date – been no information from either the Joint Operations Division of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) or the SAN on exactly when and where the exercise will be held. In response to a defenceWeb enquiry, Captain (Navy) Alexandre de Lapeyriere, the French defence attaché in South Africa, said he and

two officer colleagues from the French Armed Forces in the Southern Indian Ocean would be at SAN fleet headquarters to further plan the conference which is "on track". Preferring to leave the nuts and bolts of the exercise as regards serials to the host country's national defence force, De Lapeyriere said the intention is to "dedicate" air and naval assets to **Oxide 2022**. *"South Africa and France, as Indian Ocean nations, share common interests including maritime security to a wide extent in their respective EEZs (exclusive economic zones and illegal trafficking. "This exercise is important to France and an opportunity to improve our ability to operate bilaterally on operations such as intervention, surveillance, disaster relief, anti-pollution and search and rescue (SAR) where military units are required,"* he said.

Source: <https://www.defencweb.co.za>

Taiwan Must Spend More On Maritime Defense, Says Top US Navy Admiral

By Daniel Flatley (Bloomberg)

May 19, 2022



Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Gilday meets with Sailors during a ship visit aboard the guided-missile cruiser **USS Princeton (CG 59)**. (U.S. Navy photo by Raymond D. Diaz III)

Taiwan must gird itself against potential Chinese aggression through military deterrence that includes acquiring the right weapons and proper training, the top US naval officer said on Tuesday. *"That is a big lesson learned and a wakeup call, particularly with respect to not only having the right kit but are people trained to use it the right way,"* Admiral Michael Gilday, the chief of naval operations, said at an event hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations that focused on knowledge gleaned from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. *"That shouldn't be lost on us with respect to Taiwan."* Gilday spoke on a panel of all six military service chiefs, including generals from the Army, Marine Corps, Air Force and Space Force and admirals from the Navy and Coast Guard. China has said it has no intention of attacking Taiwan, a self-governing island that Beijing views as its territory. It has regularly protested US arms sales to the island as provocative. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said Wednesday at a regular press briefing in Beijing that Gilday's comments amounted to interference his nation's affairs. *"China is firmly opposed to that,"* he said.

Ukraine Lessons

The military chiefs agreed that while it was too soon to tell what the long-term implications would be for the war in Ukraine, and that there were significant differences between the events unfolding in Europe and what could play out in Asia, there were lessons to be taken from the invasion and its aftermath.

"Geographically it's a different problem set than Ukraine," Gilday said. *"You're not going to get in there quickly or easily after the bullets begin to fly."* General Charles Brown Jr., the Air Force chief of staff, said one lesson that might apply from Ukraine is that *"the will of the smaller nation to fight, that has to be factored in. The reaction of the international community and how quickly they may or may not come together."* Their remarks come just days before President Joe Biden is set to visit Japan and South Korea as part of an effort to kick-off a long-awaited economic initiative for increasing US involvement in Asia.

Source: <https://gcaptain.com>

Senior academic reflects on history of the SA Navy

defenceWeb -

18th May 2022



SAS Tafelberg alongside in Simon's Town with a Daphne Class submarine in the foreground.

Senior Professor (Emeritus) and Research Fellow at the University of Free State (UFS) Andre Wessels compiled a brief history of the SA Navy (SAN) for the SA Naval Museum. It is reproduced with

attribution and appreciation to him and museum Officer-in-Charge, Commander Leon Steyn. Adding to its value is that the maritime service of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) is today (Wednesday, 18 May) taking the first of three new multi-mission inshore patrol vessels (MMIPVs) into service. Wessels writes: "The SA Navy of the truly democratic South Africa dates back to 1994 and since then there have been important developments and milestones, but the Navy can trace its history all the way back to 1922. "What has been achieved since 1994 has been built on work done in the course of many decades. In this article, a brief review will be provided of certain important events in the history of the SAN and its predecessors since 1922. "After all, the centenary of the Navy is an opportunity for all South Africans to reflect on its Navy's history, take stock of the Navy's present state of affairs, and look ahead and plan for the future. We need more constructive debate in our country with regard to military matters, including the relevance and role of our Navy. And South Africa needs to become a truly maritime nation. "Throughout the ages, the politics and strategy of sea power was (and still is) of crucial importance for littoral countries; and sea power had (and still has) a profound influence on the history of the world. To ensure the free flow of trade around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope, a naval presence was (and still is) necessary. The development of South Africa's naval forces has to be seen against this background. "The SAN is neither one of the oldest nor one of the major navies in the world, but nevertheless has a fascinating and proud history, albeit also a chequered one. South Africa is, everything taken into consideration, supposed to be a maritime nation. After all, with oceans forming three of South Africa's borders, the country is – geographically speaking – a large peninsula. It has a coastline of approximately 2 800 km and an exclusive economic zone that stretches 200 nautical miles from the coast into the oceans. When it is furthermore considered that at least 90 % of South Africa's trade flows through the country's harbours, it should be clear why the country should be a maritime nation, but in practice this is not necessarily the case. Too many South Africans suffer from what could be regarded as '**sea blindness**'. "In the course of the first century of its existence (1922-2022), South Africa's naval forces have, on several occasions, undergone a process of transformation. The South African Naval Service (SANS) was established on 1 April 1922 as a small coastal force, with one survey ship (**HMSAS Protea**) and two minesweeping trawlers (**HMSAS Sonneblom** and **HMSAS Immortelle**), but the world-wide Great Depression (1929-1935) led to the withdrawal from service of all three. As a consequence, from 1934 until 1939, the SANS existed only as a nominal naval force with only a few personnel and no ships. In the meantime, war clouds gathered in Europe and in September 1939, the Second World War broke out. "The SANS became the Seaward Defence Force (SDF) in 1939, which in turn, was transformed in 1942 to become the South African Naval Forces (SANF). Under the leadership of South Africa's wartime prime minister, General Jan Smuts, the Union Defence Force was expanded, including its naval forces. By the

end of the war more than 8 000 persons had served in the country's naval forces, inter alia on board 88 naval vessels – mostly fishing trawlers and whalers converted into minesweepers or anti-submarine vessels. It was only in 1944-1945 the SANF received its first 'major' warships, three British-built "Loch" Class frigates: **HMSAS Good Hope, HMSAS Natal** and **HMSAS Transvaal**. After the war in Europe ended, **Natal** was sent to the Far East to briefly serve in the war against Japan. "In the course of the war, South Africa's naval forces made a small but noteworthy contribution towards the Allied war effort, while approximately two thousand South Africans serving in the Royal Navy, saw action in all war zones. South Africa was spared physical attack, but 133 Allied merchant ships were sunk within 1 000 nautical miles of the South African coast. More than ever before, the importance of safeguarding the Cape sea route was emphasised. "After cessation of hostilities, the SANF (renamed the SA Navy in 1951) was downsized, but expanded from 1947 onwards. In 1947, the SANF acquired two ocean minesweepers from Britain (commissioned as **HMSAS Bloemfontein** and **HMSAS Pietermaritzburg**), as well as a Royal Navy corvette in due course converted to a hydrographic survey ship and commissioned as **HMSAS Protea**. Further expansion followed, with no fewer than 18 new or used ships acquired from Britain in the course of the 1950s: two "Wager" Class destroyers (commissioned as **SAS Jan van Riebeeck** and **SAS Simon van der Stel**), one Type 15 frigate (**SAS Vrystaat**), five "Ford" Class seaward defence (patrol) boats (**SAS Gelderland, Nautilus, Rijger, Haerlem** and **Oosterland**), and ten "Ton" Class coastal minesweepers (**SAS Kaapstad, Pretoria, Durban, Windhoek, East London, Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Mosselbaai** and **Walvisbaai**). This was mainly the result of the Simon's Town Agreement of 1955, which also led to Britain handing over the Simon's Town Naval Base to the SA Navy on 1 April 1957 with the handing over ceremony a day later. The SA Navy thus became a small, blue-water navy, capable of guarding the Cape sea route in the interests of South Africa and the West. "The Navy continued to expand in the 1960s and 1970s, acquiring, inter alia, three new Type 12 frigates from Britain (**SAS President Kruger, President Steyn** and **President Pretorius**; 1962-1964) and a replenishment ship (**SAS Tafelberg**) in 1967. In 1969, the locally built torpedo recovery and diver support ship **SAS Fleur** was commissioned. A Submarine Service was also established. The Navy wished to acquire British "Oberon" Class submarines, but in the light of a British arms boycott, had to buy three French-built Daphné Class submarines (commissioned as **SAS Maria van Riebeeck, Emily Hobhouse** and **Johanna van der Merwe** in 1970-1971) which in practice proved to be a better choice. As part of a continuing transformation process, the three submarines were respectively renamed **SAS Spear, Umkhonto** and **Assegaai** on 19 May 1999. The last British-built naval vessel to be acquired was the hydrographic survey ship **SAS Protea** in 1972 (which, fifty years later, still serves in the Fleet). "The Navy entered the missile age, thanks to the acquisition of nine missile-carrying strike craft in the years 1977 to 1986: **SAS Jan Smuts, P.W. Botha (renamed Shaka on 1 April 1997), Frederic Creswell (Adam Kok), Jim Fouche (Sekhukhune), Frans Erasmus (Isaac Dyobha), Oswald Pirow (Rene Sethren), Hendrik Mentz (Galeshewe), Kobie Coetsee (Job Masego)** and **Magnus Malan (Makhanda)**. The Navy also acquired four minehunters in 1981, commissioned as **SAS Umkomaas, Umgeni, Umzimkulu** and **Umhloti**. "For several decades, the SA Navy was guardian of the Cape sea route. But the National Party's policy of separate development (apartheid) led to ever-growing international isolation. Naval contact with other countries was limited. In 1977, in the wake of the mandatory United Nations (UN) arms embargo, delivery of two corvettes and two submarines was cancelled by the French government. By 1985, the SA Navy was reduced to a small ship navy that

concentrated on defence of South Africa's harbours and coasts, albeit the Navy did play an important (some will say controversial) role in the War for Southern Africa (which included the so-called Border War), especially between 1975 and 1988. In 1987 the SA Navy commissioned a second combat support ship **SAS Drakensberg** – the largest ship of any kind of thus far designed and built in South Africa. “After the combat support ship, **SAS Tafelberg** was withdrawn from service in 1993, she was same year replaced by Ukrainian-built Arctic support ship, **Juvent**, transformed by the SAN into a combat support ship and commissioned as **SAS Outeniqua**. “The run-up to and dawn of a new and democratic South Africa in 1994 created new opportunities for the SA Navy. In 2000, six used Type 351 minesweepers were bought from Germany and two of them were in due course commissioned (**SAS Kapa** and **SAS Thekwini**) and briefly served in the Navy. Thanks to the commissioning of four new frigates (**SAS Amatola**, **Isandlwana**, **Spioenkop** and **Mendi**) and three new submarines (**SAS ‘Manthatisi**, **Charlotte Maxeke** and **Queen Modjadji I**) from 2006 to 2008, the Navy regained its blue-water status, and enhanced its power. “In the course of a century since 1922, South Africa's naval forces provided support to other government departments, took part in numerous search and rescue (SAR) operations, as well as humanitarian and other support operations. Navy ships and submarines successfully took part in many exercises, from the “**DURBEXs**”, “**CAPEXs**” and “**SANEXs**” of the 1940s to the 1960s, to the “new” SA Navy's participation in, for example, “**ATLASUR**”, “**IBSAMAR**”, and “**Good Hope**”. Other achievements include that at crucial times in its history, its leaders were able to convince politicians money had to be allocated to expand the Navy, including new submarines and frigates. The last-mentioned acquisitions were not only necessary lifebuoys for the then ailing Navy, but indeed gave it more tools and confidence to fulfil its mandate. They have also played an important role in the Navy's counter-piracy “**Operation Copper**” in the Mozambique Channel. Since 1922, South Africa's naval forces have also done excellent survey work along the country's coasts, making it safe for ships to sail and enter and exit ports. “Everything considered, the major achievement of South Africa's naval forces since 1922, and in particular since 1988, has been via its diplomatic outreach actions. Throughout the ages it has been the practice of seafaring countries to send warships to one another from time to time; sometimes to take part in joint exercises, but usually to establish better relations or to strengthen ties that already exist. In this regard our Navy is no exception. Since the end of the Second World War, 60 of the country's 68 major warships conducted approximately 100 flag-showing cruises, visiting more than 100 ports in approximately 50 countries. Of particular importance in this regard has been the role played by the SA Navy in the African context, as well as in the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean rim areas. “In accordance with the SA Navy's core business, ‘**To fight at sea**’, its mission ‘**To win at sea**’ and its vision ‘**To be unchallenged at sea**’ it is of the utmost importance for South Africa to have a well-equipped, well-balanced, well-trained and disciplined navy. There are those who (erroneously) argue South Africa is under no military threat. What about terror groups and other threatening organisations? What about piracy? What about the unstable international situation, especially thanks to super/great power rivalry in the Far East and now again in Europe? “South Africa as a political entity is the product of rivalry between seafaring nations (The Netherlands, France and Britain) for control over the world's most important trade routes, including the Cape sea route. Most South Africans however have a land-bound culture. Small wonder there are people who do not appreciate the value of the country's navy. “In the years 1922 to 2022, South Africa's naval forces developed a proud tradition with regard to support and assistance to South Africa and all its

inhabitants. The SA Navy must build on this tradition and hopefully, all South Africans will appreciate and support their navy. After all, the SA Navy has indeed been transformed into a navy of and for all the people of South Africa."

André Wessels is the author of several publications dealing with the history of the SA National Defence Force, including its Navy. His latest book is **A century of South African naval history: The South African Navy and its predecessors 1922-2022** (Naledi, 2022).

Source: <https://www.defencweb.co.za>

I think you will agree with me that this book is a "must" for Naval men and women.

China Has Militarized Seafarers Says US Navy Report

by [Captain John Konrad](#) (gCaptain)

May 20, 2022



A Chinese flag is seen in front of the Friendship bridge over the Yalu River connecting the North Korean town of Sinuiju and Dandong in China's Liaoning Province on April 1, 2017. REUTERS/Damir Sagolj/File Photo

Over the many years of reporting maritime news, the idea that China could militarize its commercial maritime fleet has been dismissed by most of the shipping community, but a [new report](#) published by the US Naval War College shows that this is not only a possibility but has already been accomplished. This report comes weeks after a CSIS report detailed how [China militarized its commercial shipyards](#). The report – **[Civilian Shipping and Maritime Militia: The Logistics Backbone of a Taiwan Invasion](#)** – by Lonnie Henley, a former Rhodes Scholar and senior Army intelligence officer, looks at the integration of commercial shipping and China's seafarers with the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), along with the use of Chinese seafarers – aboard both China flagged ships and Non-Chinese flagged ships – during a planned invasion of Taiwan. In [2019 we spelled](#) out the importance of training and integration between the US Navy and US Merchant Marine and how broken the current United States commercial shipping system is. Despite receiving [high-level attention](#), little was done to remedy the problem. China however, has taken these lessons to heart. "Civilian shipping is the central feature of the PLAN approach to an invasion of Taiwan," [says](#) Henley. "The PLA has spent over two decades developing the bureaucratic apparatus, laws, and regulations to organize, train, and manage this force (of civilian seafarers). This seems to be how Chinese leaders, civilian and military, think the PLA should function, **leveraging the enormous resources of China's civilian economy** to support military operations." The report does mention some weaknesses of the Chinese system to leverage commercial shipping but overall paints a picture in stark contrast to how American and Western merchant mariners are integrated with Naval command.

China's Merchant Marine Training

The report [states](#) that unlike the [U.S. Merchant Marine model](#), where government officers and crews take control of leased ships, regular crews of civilian ships are inducted as militiamen and required to attend military training under the direction of the China's National Transportation War Preparedness Office. Training includes the following topics:

- marshalling, assembly, and sailing in formation;
- use of military communications equipment and procedures;
- self-defence and mutual defence; rescue and first aid;
- military loading and unloading techniques;
- basic knowledge of the operating environment from a military perspective;

- operation of equipment particular to their assigned support tasks;
- knowledge about their supported unit and their role in that unit's mission;
- knowledge about enemy threats they will face; and topics such as "dock less unloading"

This is the type of training that has not been provided to US Merchant Mariners since the US Maritime Administration [closed down the Global Maritime and Transportation School](#) in 2012. China's War Preparedness Office also provides guidance and training in more specialized topics, including **"Modifying Civilian Ships for Military Transportation."** This guidance instructs seafarers on how to mount and interface specialized military equipment, including reconnaissance and surveillance gear,



medical treatment facilities, firefighting gear, and emergency repair facilities.

Marine Pfc. Matthew Bell aims an FGM-147 Javelin as part of a simulated small boat attack on amphibious transport dock ship **USS Arlington (LPD 24)** (U.S. Navy photo by Brandon Parker/RELEASED)

gCaptain [reported last week](#) that the dangers of militarized commercial ships have grown considerably in scope in the wake of the Ukraine war, which has

proved the effectiveness of man-operated weapons and reconnaissance equipment. If those PLAN-trained seafarers are armed with drones, javelins, and other small missile systems weapons, they will be a formidable force. If those weapon systems are centrally coordinated and share data, as this report suggests, a weaponized merchant marine could be a force multiplier for China. *"The US has less than 80 commercial ships in international service, while China has over 5,500 merchant ships sailing today,"* one senior US Navy officer told gCaptain. *"What happens if China issues Javelin type missiles to each commercial ship? What would happen if China issued a portable missile to the 122,034 Chinese seafarers serving on all types of ships? Or the potentially hundreds of thousands are [displacing Filipino seafarers](#)."* Some think it would be difficult for China to weaponize its commercial fleet, but recent testing by the US Marine Corps suggests it's possible. Last year [teams of Marines armed with Javelin anti-tank guided missiles](#) riding in small inflatable boats trained to engage enemy naval forces for the first time as part of a major exercise on and around the Japanese island of Okinawa. The test was successful against some targets, but it remains unclear how much damage a Javelin missile would do to a large commercial ship. And it's not just ships and shipbuilding but commercial ports too:

Disable Or Destroy?

The ability of these weapons to sink a commercial ship may not matter. As gCaptain [reported](#) early this month, the US Navy has a serious shortage of working ships, including salvage ships, ocean tugs, and fireboats. Worse still, top navy leaders, including the Secretary of the Navy, [continues to deny the importance of these essential ships](#). Further, the [Bonham Richard fire proved](#) it's not just fireboats and salvage ships the United States is lacking but damage control training and equipment that have been [outsourced to foreign-controlled companies](#). What this means is China doesn't need to sink American ships, they just need to disable them. Disabling an American warship may sound difficult, but when the [USS Fitzgerald collided with an unarmed cargo ship](#) in 2017 damage control crews were able to prevent her from sinking but could not call for help. *"A sailor had to call Destroyer*

Squadron 15 on a personal cell phone," [said](#) the official NTSB report but that was after the ship hobbled into cell phone range.

Can US Ships Even Get To China In A Fight?

And that's if the US Navy can even get to the fight. In March US Secretary of Defence Lloyd J. Austin issued an order to [close the massive Red Hill ship bunker fuel tanks in Hawaii](#) after they leaked, poisoning the local water supply. In doing these sources tell us he did not discuss the problem or develop working solutions, with the help of US Maritime Administration or US Merchant Marine Captains. Had he done that US Merchant Marine experts say [refuelling US Navy ships in a conflict is nearly impossible](#). Impossible considering the age and status of the United State's [Military Sealift Command](#) tanker fleet, which are the ships responsible for at-sea refuelling of both ships and aircraft. Shipbuilding experts find it very unlikely that Austin will be able to find the funding or the shipyards need to build a fleet of merchant tankers with "equally advanced and resilient fuelling capability."

Ukraine Lessons In Logistics

Logistics and Supply chain are the new hot topics. Today you can't turn on a news program without them being mentioned at least once. Few Americans recognize, however, that 90% of the supply chain is aboard ships. The United States Joint Chiefs of Staff does not seem to understand this either. Yesterday, in a Council of Foreign Relations [interview with six pentagon service chiefs](#), the heads of America's military echoed the maximum "**Soldiers Win Battles, logistics wins wars**" several times but none said that 90% of transport happens on ships. Not one uttered the words "**US Merchant Marine**." Worse still was the fact that our nation's 7th service chief – [Commandant Ann Phillips, of the US Maritime Administration's \(MARAD\) Maritime Service](#) – was not invited to speak. This is not surprising. The [last three MARAD chiefs have all been US Navy officers](#). The United States government distrusts the US Merchant Marine so much that it's the only service (and one of the few government agencies) that's not run but a member of its own ranks but a flag officer from another service. It would be unthinkable for the US Surgeon general not to be a doctor or the Army Chief of Staff never to have served in the Army but the US Maritime Administration has not seen a US Merchant Marine officer in charge of the service since Captain William Schuber retired in 2005. The US Maritime Administration is under the tight control of Naval Officers. Naval Officers that come from an organization that has clearly and repeatedly proven it does [not respect the importance of working ships](#). Officers from a US Navy that does "it's own thing", remains stubbornly insular, and [does not play well with other](#) maritime organizations. China's People's Liberation Army Navy trains merchant mariners, the US Navy – apart from very specific programs like the Strategic Sealift Officer program – does not offer any free training to mariners, does not invite merchant ship captains into strategy meetings, and does not invite them to the US Naval War College. Some merchant ship captains work overseas for [Naval Coordination and Protection of Shipping](#) or Fifth Fleet, but these are usually Military Sealift Command "**CIVMARS**" – who work for a US Navy Admiral ([currently a naval aviator without shipping experience](#)), not merchant ship captains familiar with foreign-flag shipping. gCaptain is unaware of a single US Merchant Marine captain working in the Pentagon or for a major Think Tank or strategic defence agency. *Note on the term CIVMAR: The US Navy currently treats Merchant Mariners poorly, denies them thanks or basic veteran status, [locks them down aboard their own ships](#), and calls them by the ostracizing and **derogative acronym** CIVMAR, which outrightly denies the fact they – people who are correctly called US Merchant Mariners not CIVMARS – are not members of the team are equals. It is a derogatory term CIVMAR because, while the*

Navy claims it's because these mariners are civil servants, most assume it means they are civilians. Civilians in military culture do not take risks and are not part of the team. Civilians are not subject of the UCMJ during war, [CIVMARS are](#). Even this report, one of the few that does mention the US Merchant Marine, does not mention the failures of MARAD or the fact the United States simply does not have a comprehensive and combined Naval AND Merchant Marine [Mahanian](#) maritime strategy. Note: Rear Admiral Buzby did author a new Maritime Strategy of the [US Merchant Marine in 2020](#) but was not allowed to release it. Instead, he was forced to release a crippled version of an old failed strategy. A strategy was also developed by Maritime planners in the White House, but that was lost when President Biden closed the maritime desk in the White House. PLAN's naval strategy puts Commercial shipping first in its Naval strategy, while the United States ignores it altogether.

Communications And Supply Chains

The Ukraine war has proved the importance of [Mission Command](#) – the empowerment of small units that are well equipped and coordinated with military assets. This Naval War College report shows how PLAN has embraced joint communication and has trained its seafarers “in the use of military communications equipment and procedures.” Communication between the US Navy, United States Maritime Administration, and the US Merchant Marine, however, is so broken that updates on the dangers to commercial shipping in the Black Sea have not been updated in 73 days. 73! NATO's shipping reports are [not much better](#). This is especially frustrating considering that MARAD, who is supposed to publish [these maritime intelligence reports](#) in coordination with the US Navy, is represented in the US Cabinet by Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, who is a former US Naval Intelligence officer.

World Famine

The situation is so bad in the Black Sea that the latest cover of the Economist contains [43 skulls strung up on stalks of wheat](#), warning that War is tipping a fragile world towards mass hunger. “If the bulk of Ukraine's grain is to get out, it must be by sea. But how?” writes the economist. “Some people are now exploring the idea of naval convoys to escort merchant vessels in and out of Odessa and nearby ports. Stavnitser, owner of Ukraine's largest private shipping terminal, hopes for a UN convoy led by Turkey. Admiral [James Stavridis](#), NATO's former supreme allied commander, has suggested taking a leaf out of the operation by America and some allies to protect oil tankers in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s.” Admiral Stavridis is a friend of gCaptain, and so is [Admiral Foggo](#), who runs the newly formed [Maritime Strategy center of the US Navy League](#), which has been working with gCaptain and other Merchant Mariners to include better Merchant Marine policy. Still, the Economist did not interview any ship captain or MARAD or NATO's shipping coordination center. “Unblocking Odessa is as important as providing weapons to Ukraine,” says Stavnitser. If the US Pentagon can give billions of dollars of weapons, then why can't it update the shipping community on risks in the Black Sea daily instead of once 73 days ago? How can ship owners plan if MARAD and the US Navy does not provide the information they need to plan? U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said on Monday they are doing everything they can to move Ukrainian grain shipments. But are they? The fact is they are not even providing ship captains like me with credible and timely naval intelligence reports... reports that captains, ship owners, and marine insurers need before even considering entering a dangerous location like the Black Sea.

Conclusion

Note: gCaptain first reported on the potential disruption to grain on [January 31st](#), we were the first organization, with the help of our friends at Reuters, to [report](#) on the US Navy leaving the black sea undefended, the first organization in the world to notice [the Russian Blockade](#), and the first to warn that [millions may soon starve](#). But even the best journalist, like the Economist, assume that the Navy and US Merchant shipping work well together, so they interview Navy Admirals instead of Merchant Marine captains. This is a mistake. It was gCaptain that drove to Washington last month to alert Admiral Foggo, the Secretary of the Navy, US Navy CNO, and US Maritime Administrator of the potential for famine. We did that in person and nothing was done. On April 26th, we made a formal request to MARAD about the lack of merchant shipping advisories. Nothing was done. The information for these articles about dangers in the Black Sea did not come from us. The information came by doing something the US Navy simply is not: asking commercial ship captains pointed questions, providing a modicum of empathy, and **listening** to their concerns.

Authors note: *Not only did we travel to Washington to address the CNO, SECNAV, and USCG Commandant, but I literally cried in several of the meetings because of these issues. Without the gallant efforts of Admiral Foggo and Stravidis (both retired) – who we owe a debt of gratitude after bugging them insistently on Black Sea security for months – and the world might not even be aware we are facing famine conditions. None of this is written to give ourselves credit for the early warning. We are writing this to say – in as clear terms as possible – the system that connects the Navy with Commercial Shipping is broken. We are writing this to show the clear difference between how China and the United States each treat their Merchant Mariners. If the US Navy won't listen to the tears of US Merchant Marine ship captain in frustration over famine in the Black Sea and the state of our US Merchant Marine, how can we expect to keep the 90% of our military supplies that are transported by US Merchant Mariners aboard ships safe against Chinese aggression? Things are so out of control, in fact, that US Merchant Marine leaders today seemingly operate almost completely disconnected from Pentagon policy and [free from accountability](#). How will the Navy, or the world, keep shipping safe if The People's Liberation Army Navy has done the exact opposite and integrated and trained their **much** larger contingent of Merchant Mariners?*

Source: <https://gcaptain.com>

What is it with the Naval superior attitude towards the Merchant Navy? I found the same attitude while serving on the Commission of Inquiry into the Establishment of a National Maritime Policy. Both are necessary for the economic well-being of a maritime nation.