

NAVY NEWS WEEK 4-1

23 January 2022

Caution urged despite lowest reported maritime piracy incidents since 1994

Maritime piracy and armed robbery attacks reached the lowest recorded level since 1994, the annual piracy report of the ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB), published today, reveals. IMB attributes the drop in incidents to vigorous action taken by authorities but has called for continued coordination and vigilance to ensure the long-term protection of seafarers. IMB Director Michael Howlett said: *"While the overall reduction in globally reported incidents is welcomed the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre urges coastal states to acknowledge the inherent risk from piracy and armed robbery and robustly address this crime within the waters of their exclusive economic zone. The IMB Piracy Reporting Centre remains committed to actively engage and exchange information with coastal states to promote safety for seafarers and trade."* In 2021, the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre received 132 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships. Incidents comprise 115 vessels boarded, 11 attempted attacks, five vessels fired upon and one vessel hijacked.

Gulf of Guinea remains world's piracy hotspot



The increased presence of international naval vessels and cooperation with regional authorities has had a positive impact – including, commended, robust actions of the Royal Danish Navy in neutralising a suspected pirate action group in late November. The overall reduction in reported incidents in 2021 is attributed to a decline of activity

reported within the Gulf of Guinea region which has seen a decrease from 81 reported incidents in 2020 to 34 in 2021. However, while kidnappings at sea dropped 55% in 2021, the Gulf of Guinea continues to account for all kidnapping incidents globally, with 57 crew taken in seven separate incidents. While the regional decrease is welcomed the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre warns that the threat to seafarers persists and continues to urge crews and vessels plying these waters to be cautious as the perpetrators remain violent and risk to crews remains high. This is evidenced by the kidnapping of six innocent crew from a container vessel in mid-December. *"The IMB commends the robust actions of the international navies and regional authorities in the Gulf of Guinea which appears to have positively contributed to the drop in reported incidents and ensuring continued safety to crews and trade,"* Mr Howlett said. *"While the IMB applauds these actions it further calls on the coastal states of the Gulf of Guinea to increase their collaboration and physical presence in their waters to ensure a long term and sustainable solution to address the crime of piracy and armed robbery in the region."*

Attacks on the rise in the Singapore Straits



Thirty-five incidents against vessels navigating the Singapore Straits were reported to the Piracy Reporting Centre in 2021, a 50% increase from 2020 and the highest number of reported incidents since 1992. Vessels were boarded in 33 of the 35 incidents, considered mostly to be opportunistic thefts, though two crew were injured in two separate cases. Knives were also

reported in 13 incidents and guns in a further two. The continued efforts of the Indonesian Marine Police are credited for maintaining reduced levels of incidents in the Indonesian Archipelagic, reports received in 2021 were down to nine from 26 in 2020 and the lowest since 1993. Of the reported incidents four were off Jakarta and knives were reported in at least five, in which one crew was threatened.

Two perpetrators killed in the Caribbean



In December, at Port au Prince, Haiti, four robbers disguised as fishermen and armed with guns and knives boarded a bulk carrier and threatened the duty crew. The locally appointed armed guards exchanged fire resulting in two perpetrators being killed. South American ports in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, and ports in Mexico and Haiti

continue to be affected by incidents of armed robbery at sea. Thirty-six incidents were reported in 2021 compared to 30 in 2020, with six crew threatened, four taken hostage and two assaulted. Thirty-one vessels were boarded in total, the majority at anchor, figures for the region include three reported attempted boardings and two vessels being fired upon. Incidents in the Peruvian anchorage of Callao have more than doubled from eight in 2020 to 18 in 2021.

Continued improvements off Somalia

While the direct threat of attacks from Somali based pirates appears to have decreased – along with a further revision and reduction of the High Risk Area in September – the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre continues to encourage vigilance among shipmasters, particularly when transiting close to the Somali coast.

IMB Piracy Reporting Centre



Since its founding in 1991, IMB Piracy Reporting Centre remains a single point of contact to report all crimes of maritime piracy and armed robbery, 24-hours a day. In line with ICC's purpose to enable business to secure peace, prosperity and opportunity for all, the Centre's prompt forwarding of reports and liaison with response agencies, broadcasts to shipping

via GMDSS Safety Net Services and email alerts to CSOs, all provided at no cost, help the response against piracy and armed robbery, promoting the security of seafarers globally and facilitating global trade. IMB encourages all shipmasters and owners to report all actual, attempted and suspected global piracy and armed robbery incidents to the Piracy Reporting Centre as a vital first step to ensuring adequate resources are allocated by authorities to tackle maritime piracy.

Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau

New Zealand Navy Ship Arrives in Tonga Carrying Fresh Water

By Praveen Menon, Kirsty Needham and Tom Westbrook

January 21, 2022

WELLINGTON/SYDNEY, Jan 21 (Reuters) –

Life-saving water supplies from a New Zealand navy ship were distributed across Tonga's main island on Friday, as other countries battled the logistics of delivering aid to one of the world's remotest communities. Six days after the South Pacific archipelago was devastated

by a volcanic eruption and tsunami that deposited a blanket of ash and polluted its water sources, the **HMNZS Aotearoa** docked in the capital, Nuku'alofa.



HMNZS Aotearoa departs to provide disaster relief and assistance to Tonga after a volcanic eruption and tsunami, from Auckland, New Zealand, January 18, 2022, in this still image taken from video. New Zealand Defence Force/Handout via REUTERS

The ship carried 250,000 liters of water and desalination equipment able to produce 70,000 liters more per day, New Zealand's High

Commission said. "Trucks ... have begun collecting and delivering water supplies from **Aotearoa**," the Commission said on its Facebook page. The first flights from Australia and New Zealand landed on Thursday with some water as well as shelter, communication equipment and generators. On Thursday, an Australian flight was forced to return to base because of a positive COVID-19 case on board, while on Friday technical problems delayed one of two Japanese C-130 transporters carrying 5,000 liters of drinking water, Japan's Self-Defence Forces said. Underlining the complexity of mounting a contactless international aid operation to one of the few countries free of COVID-19, the Australian plane was turned around mid-flight after PCR tests showed a positive result, an Australian defense spokeswoman told Reuters. All crew had earlier returned negative rapid antigen tests, she said. The supplies were moved to another flight that took off on Friday. The Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano <https://tmsnr.rs/3qCTwKY> eruption last Saturday triggered a tsunami that destroyed villages and resorts and knocked out communications for the nation of about 105,000 people. Three people have been reported killed, authorities said. The salt water from the tsunami spoiled most sources of water and Tongans have been struggling to find clean water as they clear away the ash. "We are cleaning the ash and have been since Monday," said Branko Sugar, 61, who runs a bottle shop and fishing charter business from Nuku'alofa. "Everything is so dusty, and we are running out of water," he said over a patchy telephone line. "We only have the tap water, and it's been contaminated. We... can hardly breathe for all the dust."

Urgent assistance needed

NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center has said the force of the eruption was estimated to be equivalent to 5-10 megatons of TNT, or more than 500 times that of the nuclear bomb the United States dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima at the end of World War Two. Astronaut Kayla Barron said she could see the volcanic ash in the atmosphere from the International Space Station. "I opened the window shutter to see if we could see any effects of the eruption, and saw this dramatic, high-altitude plume blocking out the sun," Barron said on Facebook. NASA released photographs showing a huge grey smudge over the blue Pacific. United Nations spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told a briefing Tonga had asked for urgent assistance. "We remain seriously concerned about access to safe water for 50,000 people ... Water quality testing continues, and most people are relying on bottled water," he said, speaking before the **Aotearoa** arrived. Dujarric said there were reports of fuel shortages, while some 60,000 Tongans have been affected by damage to crops, livestock and fisheries due to ashfall, saltwater intrusion and the potential for acid rain. Many have turned to social media to post images of the destruction by the tsunami and give accounts of their shock after [the massive explosion](#), while tales of incredible escapes from the disaster have also emerged. Sea-borne assistance was also en route for the archipelago. Australia's **HMAS Adelaide** was due in Tonga next week after leaving Brisbane. **Reliance**, a repair ship due to reconnect the undersea cable that links Tonga to international telecoms networks, left its Port Moresby mooring and was expected in Tonga on Jan. 30, according to Refinitiv data on shipping movements. The **Reliance**'s operator, SubCom, did not immediately reply to a Reuters request for confirmation. Telephone links between Tonga and the outside world were reconnected late on Wednesday, although restoring full internet service is expected to take a month or more. Tesla Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk asked in a post on Twitter if Tongans would like help from his Starlink project, which provides internet connection through satellites.

Source: <https://gcaptain.com>

Royal Navy in the News

HMS Somerset welcomes new Commanding Officer



Devonport-based Type 23 Frigate **HMS Somerset** has taken another step forward in her regeneration by welcoming her new Commanding Officer, Commander Dave Mason.

HMS Somerset welcomes Commander Mason

Commander Mason took the reins on 11 January 22 in preparation for **HMS Somerset** proceeding to sea for the first time since 2018, generating her capabilities ready to re-join the Royal Navy's front-line fleet later

in 2022. The extensive refit package has included not only well needed repairs and updates to her hull and living spaces, but also significant improvements to her systems across the board. Most notably the ship has been upgraded with the more advanced Sea Ceptor missile capability, the latest in command system IT, a new suite of communication control methods, state-of-the-art satellite communications, and several other first-of-class fits which will pave the way for wider roll out across the Fleet in due course once fully tested. Cdr Mason assumes command of **HMS Somerset** having previously served on two other Type 23s, **HMS St Albans** as a Principal Warfare Officer, and **HMS Lancaster** as Executive Officer.

Priti Patel asks MoD to put Royal Navy in charge of policing small boats in Channel

Home Secretary Priti Patel has confirmed she has asked the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to put the Royal Navy in charge of policing small boats crossing the Channel. Under the plan, a navy rear admiral will have the power to ask Border Force, fisheries protection, the coastguard and customs and excise to carry out surveillance or intercept dinghies crossing with migrants from France to the UK. Rear Admiral Utley has been appointed to co-ordinate the move and be in command of government assets, which is understood to focus on data sharing and exploitation. It is thought the Navy will be a largely unseen presence, with Border Force still the public face of operations.

Source: www.navybooks.com

Ship photo of the week



Photos: US Navy

Earlier this week, the decommissioned carrier **USS Kitty Hawk** started her 16,000-mile journey, as she was towed from Bremerton, Washington and heading to a scrapyards in Texas. She is too large to fit through the Panama Canal and has to take the long way round to Texas which will take around 4 months. It appears that she was sold to International Shipbreaking Limited in Texas for 1 cent, despite the USS Kitty Hawk Veterans Association raising USD5 million to convert the ship into a museum to be stationed at Long Beach, California, next to

the retired ocean liner **Queen Mary**. The US Navy rejected the bid of the Association as it was estimated to be about half the amount needed for decontamination, development and maintenance of the ship as a museum. The 1 cent contract reflects the sale of scrap steel, iron and non-ferrous metal ores, while more sentimental pieces could end up on eBay.

Source: www.navybooks.com

World News & Events

Kingdom of Bahrain, IMSC conduct first maritime exercise of 2022

According to a press release issued by Commander, Coalition Task Force Sentinel Public



Affairs Office, the Coalition Task Force Sentinel (CTF Sentinel), the operational arm of the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC), participated in a bilateral exercise in the Arabian Gulf on Wednesday.

ARABIAN GULF (Jan. 19, 2022) — Royal Bahrain Navy Patrol Vessel 20 and CGC CHARLES MOULTHROPE (WPC 1141), with flags shown, participate in maneuvering tactics during an exercise in the Arabian Gulf. (Photo by Electronics Technician Petty Officer Third Class Warren Parker)

Royal Bahraini Naval Ship **Hawar (FPB 38)** partnered with US Coast Guard Cutters **USCGC Robert Goldman (WPC 1142)** and

USCGC Charles Moulthrop (WPC 1141) to conduct communications drills and tactical manoeuvres, which increased overall interoperability between coalition militaries to provide coordinated maritime stability in the region. *"Deterring state-based threats to maritime trade whilst also reassuring the commercial shipping industry, remains the core mission of IMSC. Regular training exercises are an essential enabler of that mission, both in terms of enhancing interoperability across and between our coalition members and by contributing to our at-sea presence and continued vigilance,"* said Royal Navy Commodore Don Mackinnon, the commander of IMSC. *"Our combined maritime presence in the Arabian Gulf—further enhanced by the great depth of understanding and local expertise our regional partners in particular bring to the coalition—gives us an unparalleled advantage as we collectively seek to ensure the uninterrupted free flow of international trade at sea."* As IMSC and CTF Sentinel approaches its third year of operations, the commanding officers of both USCG cutters reiterated how this maritime exercise builds on the vital partnership with the Kingdom of Bahrain and the overall coalition mission in the region. *"It was great to work alongside the Royal Bahraini Navy to further our shared goals and work with our partners to ensure maritime stability and Freedom of Navigation in the Arabian Gulf,"* said Commander Sam Blase, the commanding officer of **Robert Goldman**. CTF Sentinel is a multinational maritime effort that promotes maritime stability, ensures safe passage, and enhances freedom of navigation throughout key waterways in the Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb, and the Gulf of Oman. The coalition is comprised of eight member nations including Albania, Kingdom of Bahrain, Republic of Estonia, Lithuania, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Source: www.navybooks.com

Russia to Hold Major Naval Drills Involving Entire Fleet

[Reuters](https://www.reuters.com)

January 20, 2022



The Russian Navy's guided missile cruiser **Moskva** and frigate **Admiral Grigorovich** are seen ahead of the Navy Day parade in the Black Sea port of Sevastopol, Crimea July 23, 2021. REUTERS/Alexey Pavlishak

MOSCOW, Jan 20 (Reuters) – Russia announced on Thursday

its navy would stage a sweeping set of exercises involving all its fleets this month and next from the Pacific to the Atlantic, the latest show of strength in a surge of military activity during a standoff with the West. The drills will take place in the seas directly adjacent to Russia and also feature maneuvers in the Mediterranean, the North Sea, the Sea of Okhotsk, the northeast Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific, it said. They will draw on 140 warships and support vessels, 60 planes, 1,000 units of military hardware and around 10,000 servicemen, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement. Russian military moves are being closely scrutinized as a troop build-up near Ukraine and a volley of hawkish rhetoric have rattled the West and sparked fears of a looming war. Moscow vehemently denies any plan to invade Ukraine. In a video posted on Facebook, the ministry showed its Pacific Fleet's newest diesel-electric submarine test-firing a Kalibr cruise missile at a land-based target from an underwater position in the Sea of Japan. The missile struck a coastal target in Russia's far eastern Khabarovsk region from a range of more than 1,000 km (620 miles), it said. Separately, China, Russia and Iran are set to hold joint naval drills on Friday, a public relations official from Iran's armed forces told the semi-official ISNA news agency. **Source:** <https://gcaptain.com>



Indonesian Government reportedly plans to sell two of its decommissioned +40 y/o South-Korean made Teluk-Semangka class LST **KRI Teluk Penyul (513)** and **KRI Teluk Mandar (514)**

Ghana Navy to protect offshore oil fields

Written by Guy Martin -
20th Jan 2022



GNS Volta.

The Ghana Navy has signed an agreement with Tullow Ghana Limited for Ghanaian Navy vessels to provide security services at the Jubilee and Tweneboa Enyenra Ntomme (TEN) oil fields off the country's coastline. Earlier this month the Ghana Navy received four Flex Fighter vessels from Penguin Shipyard in Singapore (**GNS Volta, Densu, Pra** and **Ankobra**), which were acquired to safeguard oil and gas activities in the Gulf of Guinea. Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), Rear Admiral Issah Adam Yakubu, officially received the vessels from the Vice President of Israel Shipyards, Oded Breier, on 10 January following their arrival at the Takoradi port on 8 January. Israel Shipyards is understood to have brokered the deal between Ghana and Penguin Shipyard. The Daily Graphic reported that only Ghana Navy ships will be allowed to protect offshore oil and gas infrastructure in the country, displacing private security vessels, which have proliferated with the growth of piracy in the region. The Ghana Armed Forces said the vessels, which have been acquired with funding from the Ghana Commercial Bank, will provide asset protection in the Exclusive Economic zone (EEZ) in the TEN and Jubilee fields. Tullow Ghana and the Jubilee partners will provide a

total of a \$23.5 million during the five-year contract period, which commenced on 1 January 2022 and will run until 31 December 2026. Tullow Ghana Limited Deputy Managing Director, Cynthia Lumor, said *"the Jubilee partners' commitment to support the retooling of the Ghana Navy is mutually beneficial to both parties. This partnership will ensure the protection of the Ghanaian waters by providing security services in the TEN and Jubilee fields and along the coast of Ghana. We believe that this will further strengthen the relationship between the Tullow Ghana and the Ghana Navy"*. Yakubu commended the Jubilee partners for the collaboration, saying *"Tullow Ghana and the Jubilee partners have demonstrated commitment to sustainable production by this collaboration. The Ghana Navy will ensure that we fulfil our contractual obligations to ensure a secured maritime space for the safe operation of the TEN and Jubilee fields"*.

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



The 33,675 tonne replenishment ship **A 387 Fort Victoria** closes on Buoy D in Plymouth Sound Jan12. She accompanied the **Queen Elizabeth carrier strike group** on their recent visit to the China Sea. Photo : Raymond Wergan, Newton Ferrers (c)

'Turkey's eyes, ears at sea': 1st intelligence ship joins naval fleet

by DAILY SABAH

ISTANBUL Jan 14, 2022



The **TCG Ufuk** is seen during the delivery ceremony in Istanbul, Turkey, Jan. 14, 2021. (IHA Photo)

The Turkish defense industry has made a promising start to 2022 with another breakthrough Friday as Naval Forces Command received the country's first intelligence collection ship. Defined as a test and training ship, **TCG Ufuk (A-591)** has been developed and built with national resources and capabilities, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said at the delivery ceremony in Istanbul Shipyard. Dubbed

"Turkey's ears and eyes at sea," the ship marks the latest effort by Turkey, one of the few countries that can build its own warships, to boost its naval power. **Ufuk**, meaning horizon in English, will be at the service of the security forces and is expected to fill a huge gap in Turkey's maritime capabilities. Erdoğan said the vessel would particularly rev up the capabilities of Turkey's intelligence services. *"Turkey is currently among the 10 nations in the world that can design, build and carry out maintenance of warships,"* the president noted. The ship was developed as part of the broader domestic ship design and development project MILGEM (National Ship) – under the scope of which four corvettes were delivered to the navy and a frigate was launched. **Ufuk** was launched in early February 2019. With its command control, electronic systems, test and training system equipment to be provided by Turkish defense giant Aselsan, the vessel is tailored to be used in signal and electronic intelligence missions (SIGINT/ELINT) as well as meeting the test and training vessel requirements of the Turkish navy. The vessel, whose main contractor is the prominent Turkish company STM, has a length of 99.5 meters (326.44 feet), a beam of 14.4 meters, a 10-ton

flight deck and can reach a maximum speed of 18 knots. It can cruise continuously for 45 days in international waters and under severe climate and sea conditions.

Source: <https://www.dailysabah.com>

Indian Naval Ships Conduct Maritime Partnership Exercise With Japanese Navy

In the Bay of Bengal, Indian Naval Ships *Shivalik* and *Kadmatt* participated in a Maritime Partnership Exercise alongside Japanese Navy Ships *Uraga* and *Hirado*.

Written By Anwasha Majumdar

The Indian Navy conducted maritime drill exercises with Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force on Thursday, January 13 to improve defence collaboration between the two nations. In the Bay of Bengal, Indian Naval Ships ***Shivalik*** and ***Kadmatt*** participated in a Maritime Partnership Exercise alongside Japanese Navy Ships ***Uraga*** and ***Hirado*** on Thursday.

According to the Indian Navy, this maritime drill between the two nations involved a wide variety of flying operations, replenishment approaches, as well as tactical manoeuvres. It is worth noting that the accuracy, coordination, and high degree of interoperability not only demonstrates the two fleets' high levels of professionalism and preparation to tackle challenges at sea but also their high standard of trust and understanding over time which they have built, ANI reported. The complicated maritime exercises would allow the two navies to expand their existing extensive strategic collaboration and, where necessary, would jointly secure their maritime interests while ensuring regional peace, stability, as well as security. Furthermore, last year in the month of October the 5th edition of the Japan-India Maritime Exercise (**JIMEX**) was conducted in the Arabian Sea. The maritime drill was held from October 6 to 8, and it was a joint military exercise between the two nations. Ships and planes from the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force undertook cooperative coordinating operations during the drill. Both armed forces performed high-speed marine operations focusing on the air, surface, as well as subsurface domains. As per media reports, the Indian Navy was represented by the Guided Missile Frigate **INS Teg** (with SAR skilled Chetak helicopter), **INS Kochi** (with Sea King MK 42B helicopter), and the indigenous Guided Missile Destroyer underneath the supervision of Rear Admiral Ajay Kochhar, Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet. A P8I, a shore-based maritime reconnaissance plane, as well as MiG 29K fighters had also been deployed. Meanwhile, the Japanese Navy's RAdm Ikeuchizuru, Commander, Escort Flotilla, was in charge on the Japanese side. The Izumo Class Helicopter Carrier **Kaga** as well as the Guided Missile Destroyer **Murasame** escorted them.

source : republicworld

Navy: More than 8000 Active and Reserve Sailors Are Unvaccinated Against COVID-19

By: Heather Mongilio

While the total force of the US Navy continues to see more than 8,000 unvaccinated members, the number has continued to decrease, according to the latest COVID-19 update from the sea service. As of Jan. 12, there are 5,209 active-duty sailors who are not vaccinated — although this number includes those who are partially vaccinated, have an exemption or waiting for an exemption request to be adjudicated — a decrease of 59 since last week and decrease of 119 over the past two weeks. There are 2,968 Ready Reserve members who are not vaccinated, as of Jan. 12, which is a decrease of 12 over the past week. There have not been any additional separations in the past week. Last week, the Navy announced 20 entry level separations of sailors who were all within their first 180 days of service. The Navy has, so far, received 3,038 religious exemption requests from active-duty sailors and 702 from reservists. The Navy has yet to grant a religious exemption to the COVID-19 vaccine, consistent with its history. The Navy has granted eight permanent medical exemptions for active-duty sailors, as well as 244 temporary medical and 68 administrative ones. For Ready Reserve, the sea service granted nine temporary medical exemptions and 37 administrative ones. A federal judge granted an injunction against the Navy over the vaccine mandate last week. The lawsuit, brought by members of the special warfare community, raised concerns about what the plaintiffs said was a blanket denial of religious

exemptions by the sea service. The Department of Defense is consulting with the Department of Justice to determine how the injunction will affect the vaccine mandate, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby previously said.

Source : USNInews



United States Coast Guard Sentinel Class Fast Response Cutters **WPC 1144 USCGC Glen Harris** commissioned in August 2021 and **WPC 1145 USCGC Emlen Turnell** commissioned in October 2021 entering Grand Harbour, Malta on Friday 14th January, 2022. Both cutters are during their maiden call and even as a Class first time to be seen in Malta.

Photo : Capt. Lawrence Dalli - www.maltashipphotos.com (c)

The Pandemic Has Done Little to Check China's Geostrategic Ambitions

Dr Andrew G Ross

18 January 2022



Military medics salute outside the Huoshenshan Hospital in Wuhan, China in April 2020. Courtesy of Fei Maohua / Alamy Live News

Given the lack of joined up thinking by China's geopolitical adversaries, the biggest threat to China's growing economic

and geopolitical dominance may actually be itself. For a country considered by many to have been the source of a global health pandemic resulting in over [5.3 million](#) deaths globally, it is noteworthy that COVID-19 appears to have done little to check China's geostrategic standing. If anything, it can be argued that China's geostrategic reach may actually have increased. This is particularly the case as Western governments have presided over a series of geostrategic errors allowing Beijing to extend its sphere of influence almost unchallenged. The most significant of these strategic errors has allowed China to fill the void emanating from the unnecessary and chaotic withdrawal of the US and its allies from Afghanistan. In recognising the Taliban regime, China has managed to potentially secure preferential access to \$1 trillion of [rare earth minerals](#) which are critical to hi-tech manufacturing. Such a move also allows China to further reduce its dependency on the global supply chains of industrialised countries, or more precisely those it considers to be its strategic competitors. Of course, like any other country, China is allowed to pursue [strategies and policies](#) that it considers to be in its national interest. However, the long-term geopolitical implications of allowing China to become more self-reliant ultimately give China greater leverage and scope to challenge the status quo in the form of the US-led Washington Consensus. Should China succeed in implementing its interpretation of [global governance](#), the fundamental principles underpinning the rule of law, the rules-based [global trading system](#), and market economics as understood by the advanced industrialised countries will be at stake. The failure of the US geopolitical strategy in Afghanistan and doubts about the

sustainability of the Washington Consensus are now understandably raising questions in capitals around the world regarding US leadership, and whether the US can be trusted to support its allies in ways it has previously promised. Indeed, the ripple effects of the strategic errors made in Afghanistan have arguably already emboldened China, as demonstrated by the increasingly frequent excursions of its warplanes into the [Taiwanese Air Defence Zone](#), and the recent acknowledgement by the US that it was caught off guard by both the firing and advanced [stage of development](#) of China's hypersonic weapon systems. Moreover, while the developed economies of the West squabbled over vaccine contracts and supplies, the Chinese government deftly extended its geostrategic reach in the form of [vaccine diplomacy](#), making large quantities of its domestically produced vaccines available to developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Most significantly, China was able to employ its soft power and geopolitical reach to infiltrate the healthcare systems of an EU member – Hungary – as well as Turkey and Serbia, both candidates for EU accession. Irrespective of the doubts raised about the efficacy of some Chinese vaccines, recipient countries will remember who helped them in their time of need. It was not the Western democracies as they might have expected. The West is trying to address China's growing dominance via economic policy, when what is needed is a geopolitical strategy. Important as vaccine diplomacy may be, China's soft power and global reach is largely conveyed via its outward-facing policy in the form of the [Belt and Road Initiative](#) (BRI). After years of apparent inertia, the [US](#), the [EU](#) and the [UK](#) have recently launched separate investment initiatives to counter Beijing's BRI. While China's adversaries will welcome such moves, China is unlikely to be feeling any immediate threat to its geostrategic ambitions, given that the new counter-initiatives will largely rely on private sector money – yet to be raised – to challenge the might of the world's foremost geopolitical investor. Basic economics should suggest that the new Western initiatives will not work when up against a geopolitical investor – which, unlike private sector investors, does not necessarily require economic returns. Indeed, China's Western rivals need to recognise that China makes *geopolitical* and *geostrategic* decisions, whereas private sector investors make *economic* decisions. These entities are quite different – one can survive without economic returns, the other cannot. Moreover, as the US, the EU and the UK *talk* about the relative merits of their BRI alternatives, China continues to provide countries with hard cash now. According to the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#), both trade and non-financial investments in the BRI increased by 38% and 13.2% respectively in 2021. In essence, the West is trying to address China's growing dominance via economic policy, when what is needed is a geopolitical strategy. While there is some evidence of a tangible geopolitical strategy emerging in the form of [AUKUS](#), this trilateral defence alliance is very much in its infancy. In operational terms, the new fleet of Australian nuclear-powered submarines is not expected to enter service until the late 2020s at the earliest. Moreover, AUKUS is largely expected to address the Indo-Pacific region alone. Ironically, given the lack of joined up thinking by China's geopolitical adversaries, the biggest threat to China's growing economic and geopolitical dominance may actually be itself. While the BRI has undoubtedly extended [China's sphere of influence](#), recent data published by [AidData](#) highlights potential concerns that many countries are falling into exploitative debt traps in exchange for Chinese debt relief. In addition, data published by [Pew Research Center](#) reveals that in terms of global public opinion, unfavourable views of China are reaching historic highs. These are important concerns the Chinese government must navigate at a time when [resentment](#) is growing towards China in certain countries, as evidenced by [attacks](#) on Chinese interests and officials in Pakistan recently. Western governments must recognise that the private sector is not a match and cannot address the geostrategic challenges posed by an increasingly assertive China. However, a more pressing set of issues for the Chinese government will likely concern how the [domestic economic situation](#) evolves. Specifically, how it can address a slowing economy; the sustainability of its [isolationist](#) zero-COVID policy; and the increasing potential for contagion in the overheated Chinese property market – a sector which accounts for 25% of GDP – following the default of property developer [Evergrande](#), a company with \$300 billion in liabilities. Irrespective of whether China's economy stalls and a period of self-inflicted isolationism backfires, Western governments must recognise that the private sector is not a

match and cannot address the geostrategic challenges posed by an increasingly assertive China. A multistate geopolitical solution is the only option.

The views expressed in this Commentary are the author's, and do not represent those of RUSI or any other institution.

Source: <https://rusi.org>

The military and strategic implications of Indonesia's new capital

20 Jan 2022

[Evan Laksmang](#)

Editors' note: This piece was originally published in November 2019; we are republishing it in light of the Indonesian parliament's [passing of key legislation](#) for the creation of the new capital and President Joko Widodo's choosing of the name Nusantara for the city.

Since it was [announced](#) in August, Indonesia's plan to relocate its capital to East Kalimantan in Borneo has engendered much debate, but few have examined the potential military and strategic implications of the move. The Indonesian military (TNI) will significantly increase its presence across Kalimantan—effectively 'militarising' Borneo. The map below shows the

current deployment of most major TNI assets and bases across Kalimantan.



Image: [Moses Ceaser/CIFOR/Flickr](#).

Map created by the author using Google Maps.

The deployment suggests the clustering of current TNI forces—roughly around 20,000 personnel—in the eastern, western and northern parts of Kalimantan. It is also army-

heavy at the moment. The few naval and air force bases are relatively small and underdeveloped for major platform deployments; the air force has only one major base, while the navy has two. This posture will change significantly as major leadership and force elements move to Kalimantan with the new capital. The TNI General Headquarters will move, along with its supporting staff and units, from intelligence groups and military police to special forces and press officers. The army leadership and its supporting infrastructure will follow suit. To supplement the two existing regional commands (KODAMs), the army will create a new Capital Security Regional Command (KODAM PIK). The new army headquarters and KODAM PIK will require around 15,000 personnel, including an infantry and a cavalry brigade as well as special forces units. While most of these troops are territorial forces, the proposal will eventually bring the total number of combat-ready troops across Kalimantan to three brigades (around 7,000–8,000 personnel). Army analysts have also [suggested](#) that Kalimantan needs new forces across the island, including one KODAM and its accompanying units for each of the five provinces. The navy will also move its headquarters and supporting units. Current proposals call for a new 'armada-level' force, a new division-level marine unit and a third primary naval base in Kalimantan. The area also needs new port facilities and bases to host and maintain major platforms as well as a new naval airfield. The navy's transport command and hydrographic service could possibly be relocated there as well. The air force will move its headquarters and supporting units and create major bases and facilities. Radar and missile defence units along with a special forces battalion and two aviation squadrons could be established near the new capital. Major platforms will be deployed in the area, including possibly up to [16 new F-16V fighter aircraft](#). The government would need to spend more than US\$9 billion—almost equal to next year's total defence budget—to pay for these shifts in the coming years. If the plans materialise, Kalimantan will be the first ever non-Java military centre of gravity for Indonesia. But the new capital will also be closer to potential conflict flashpoints. It will share borders with Malaysia and Brunei. It will also be closer to the tri-border area (with Malaysia and the Philippines) that

analysts have called a '[key hub](#)' for transnational terrorist and criminal activities. Eastern Kalimantan also sits at the heart of the Makassar Strait—a central feature of the second of Indonesia's three strategic archipelagic sea lanes (ASL II), which includes the Lombok Strait. Some consider the Lombok and Makassar straits as an alternative to Malacca Strait as a direct route between the Indian and Pacific oceans. The Makassar Strait stretches about 400 nautical miles from its northern gateway to its southern access. Each year, [420 mostly large ships](#) (over 100,000 tonnes deadweight) travel through the Lombok and Makassar passageway carrying around 36 million tonnes of cargo worth US\$40 billion. Given these interests, the TNI arguably needs to increase its presence across Kalimantan. That would complement its growing presence in Sulawesi in recent years, which includes a new submarine port in Palu and a third infantry division of the army's Strategic Reserve Command near Makassar. Control and safety over ASL II will thus come from the TNI's presence in both Kalimantan and Sulawesi. But military presence alone is insufficient. Indonesia should also boost its defence diplomatic engagement and activities. Indonesia should put more resources into expanding and institutionalising its [trilateral cooperation](#) with Malaysia and the Philippines. That will not only be crucial for the new capital's security but also assuage concerns over the TNI's heavy presence. Indonesia should have regular consultations with Malaysia and Brunei. It might also consider starting a dialogue with the members of the Five Power Defence Arrangements: Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and the UK. Indonesia certainly has no expansionist designs, but historical acrimonies cast a long shadow on both sides. To avoid starting another round of security dilemmas, the TNI's shift to Kalimantan should be paired with opening up new avenues of dialogue and cooperative activities. Finally, if Jokowi (and presumably his successor in 2024) carries on with the move, Indonesia's defence policy will be hamstrung for the next decade. Any available resources for procurement, welfare improvement and organisational development will be diverted to the Kalimantan deployment plans. For now, the TNI will focus on organisational restructuring. In September, it appointed the first [three commanders](#) of the new Joint Regional Defence Commands, which aren't yet fully staffed and operational, much like other [newly created units](#) in recent years. But Indonesia's regional power and profile will be significantly boosted if all of the plans for the TNI outlined above materialise. The new capital will have significant strategic implications. The TNI and the Indonesian political leadership should carefully assess their options in Kalimantan and consider the broader regional—not just the bureaucratic or domestic—circumstances.

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