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Warramunga does it Again!

Australian frigate seizes heroin on deployment's 11th drug haul



HMAS Warramunga's boarding party prepares to board a vessel during the ship's deployment to operation Manitou. **Photo: Royal Australian Navy**

Royal Australian Navy frigate **HMAS Warramunga** has seized 295 kilograms of heroin from a vessel in the Arabian Sea.

Following the detection of a suspect vessel in the Arabian Sea by Warramunga's Seahawk Romeo helicopter, a boarding party search uncovered a number of packages containing heroin. After being transferred to **Warramunga**, the narcotics were disposed of at sea, the Navy said. The narcotics are valued at about AU\$88.5 million and represent Warramunga's 11th seizure in the seven months since deploying to the region in November 2017. Warramunga's illicit drug interceptions now total 19.5 tons of hashish and almost two tonnes of heroin, valued at approximately \$1.56 billion. The Commanding Officer of **Warramunga**, Commander Dugald Clelland, RAN, said the successful boarding and interdiction has been another boost for the ship's already high morale. "To have a successful interdiction on this latest patrol means a lot to the crew and reinforces the importance of our mission here in the Middle East region," Commander Clelland said. **Operation Manitou** is the Australian contribution to support international efforts to promote maritime security, stability and prosperity in the Middle East Region. Combined Taskforce 150, of which Australia assumed command of in December 2017, is one of three task forces operating under Combined Maritime Forces. **Source: Naval Today**

Angel comments: I doubt whether anyone aboard will pass a drugs test for a while, having 'handled' 21.5 tons of the stuff.

French Rafales keep training edge on US aircraft carrier

AFP | Updated: May 14, 2018, 01.03 PM IST



On the **Charles de Gaulle**, it is impossible for planes to land and launch at the same time but that is the name of the game on the US ship. In scorched trails of exhaust, US F/A-18 fighter jets and French Rafales take off and land at a frantic pace, all from the same US Navy aircraft carrier. Since France's only aircraft carrier, the **Charles de Gaulle**, is undergoing a major renovation project until autumn, French pilots have been invited to hone their skills on one of the US Navy's 11 carriers. After a month of training on shore in Virginia, more than 300 crew from the French airborne group -- pilots, mechanics flight deck staff -- have just joined the **USS George H.W. Bush** in the Atlantic. Twelve Rafales and a Hawkeye surveillance aircraft are with the crew on their ten-day deployment. With the **George H.W. Bush**

twice the size of France's carrier, "it's up to us to adapt," says French Commander Vincent Isorce. On the **Charles de Gaulle**, it is impossible for planes to land and launch at the same time but that is the name of the game on the US ship. Assisted by a catapult, an American F/A-18 rushes to full speed from zero to 155 miles per hour (250 kilometers) in less than two seconds, while a Rafale has just landed, braking with brutal force thanks to an arresting wire on the flight deck. "This sport is not exactly for everybody," laughs a French pilot. In this deafening and perilous universe, everyone communicates with hand signals and raised fists. The flight-deck crew dresses in shirts colored for their missions: supply (purple), armament (red), safety (white). Yellow is for those who direct the aircraft. Nigel, an American, shows a bit of a dance move as he gives the "go" signal to a pilot. "I put a little of my style in all this," he laughs. "We are more sober," says Bruno, a French lieutenant who heads the **Charles de Gaulle** flight deck. Although the two naval forces have years of

joint operations behind them, particularly in the Middle East, this is "our first opportunity to work with the French on a flight deck," said Captain Sean Bailey, commanding officer of the **George H.W. Bush**. "It's been a great exercise so far. The way we've integrated pretty seamlessly is remarkable."

Source: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>

Navy names new attack sub HMS Agincourt

The last one was named after a Dickensian thief, to be fair

By [Gareth Corfield](#) 14 May 2018 at 14:11

The Royal Navy, always keeping up with the times, has named its newest attack submarine **HMS Agincourt**, after the 1415 battle where an English army beat French troops led by its nobility. **Agincourt** the boat is the seventh and final *Astute*-class attack sub. The nuclear-powered vessels are used primarily to defend British interests from underwater, including seeing off marauding Russian vessels near British waters and also for sneaky-beaky missions of their own into foreign waters. The £1.5bn submarine is under construction at BAE Systems' yard in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria. Defence equipment minister Guto Bebb joyously declared: "Today's announcement includes a £60m contract for Rolls-Royce, supporting over 700 jobs here in Derby as the factory continues to make the reactors that will power our state-of-the-art Dreadnought subs into the 2060s." While naval-gazers had enthusiastically discussed rumours that the seventh *Astute* boat might fall victim to defence cuts, rumours fed by an increasingly ominous silence from the Ministry of Defence, a [scoop](#) by defence trade news website *Shephard* confirmed that construction was indeed going ahead, the contract having been signed back in March. All of the *Astute* class are fitted with the BAE Systems-developed Core Combat System, which runs on VMware and Dell hardware inside the boat as a "miniature data centre". The name Agincourt is mildly controversial, inasmuch as it brings to mind the famous victory of King Henry V over France at a time where the English army, which was blundering around the Pas-de-Calais countryside, was largely thought to be on its last legs and cut off from its chances to retreat back home. In the words of the king's (fictional, thanks to Shakespeare) eve-of-battle speech, it was "we few, we happy few, we band of brothers" up against the very best France had to offer. Through "yew bow and cloth yard shaft", as the chroniclers of the day put it, the English and Welsh longbowmen shot a torrent of arrows into the heavily armoured French knights. The arrows' steel points penetrated the plate armour of the French nobles and the lightly equipped English then set about the bogged-in Frenchmen, whose weighty suits of armour were totally unsuited to the heavy mud of the battlefield. In today's world, where the UK and France are close allies and England has given way to the United Kingdom, naming the submarine **Agincourt** may be seen by some as a bit of an unintentional snub, bringing to mind Henry V's slaughter of French prisoners of war and the failed negotiations that preceded the battle over Henry's disputed claim to the title of King of France. Though the name has historical connotations of success for England, its Royal Navy history is rather more chequered. Five ships of the fleet have been named **Agincourt** throughout the centuries, most recently a Second World War-era destroyer converted to carry one of the Navy's first anti-aircraft guided missile systems, as well as a First World War dreadnought battleship seized by the British government from the Ottoman Empire at the war's outbreak – an act that seriously hacked off Turkey, not least because it had paid for the ship in full and was awaiting her delivery. **Agincourt** will take her place in the fleet alongside sister sub HMS *Artful* - which brings to mind the Artful Dodger, a pickpocket in Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*. ®

Source: <https://www.theregister.co.uk>

Is Doklam the reason why Australia is kept out of Malabar 2018?

The Quad has a combination that worries China, and there are good reasons for it.

14-05-2018

[Brig SK Chatterji \(retd\)](#)

That the Australians will not take part in the [Malabar 2018](#) naval exercises isn't exactly the stance that was anticipated of the Indian government. In fact, there were enough reasons to expect the opposite, though Australia has participated in the Malabar series of the annual exercises only once. Malabars have been limited mostly to the [US and India](#), to start with, and Japan joining it, thereafter. There were strong reasons for an Australian participation this year. With the Chinese threat becoming larger, it was expected that the navies of all four constituents of Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue (Quad) – the US, Japan, Australia and India – will field their ships together for the Malabar 2018 exercise. It would have driven the message to China that the Quad's coming together in no uncertain terms. The Quad has a combination that worries China, and there are good reasons for it. If the navies of these four nations were to field a coalesced force, they can quite bottle up China. The fact that the Chinese have created islands in the South China Sea, built facilities in the Indian Ocean and deployed their forces, the combined capabilities of these four countries must be of apprehension to them. However, the Malabar story ran contrary to the expectations and the Indian government chose to let status quo prevail rather than allow the Australians to get on board and raise the Chinese hackles further. The Quad has had a spluttering run so far. It had started as a dialogue mechanism in 2007, with Shinzo Abe giving the push during his first term as the Prime Minister of Japan. It skidded off the rails when the Australian PM, Kevin Rudd, walked out of it. However, the steep growth in Chinese military capability, the gradual shift of global centre of gravity to the east, the need to keep sea lanes and airspace of Indo-Pacific free for use by all, and relentless Chinese belligerence continued to stoke the necessity of the Quad evolving. The naval exercises between the quad partners have gathered strength gradually. The **Malabar** series precedes Quad. It had started in 1992 with only Indian and US participation. These ground to a halt in 1998 after the Indian nuclear tests, but restarted with the US looking for partners in its global war against terror after the twin towers were brought down. In 2007, Australia participated in

the naval exercises. But, the participation petered out with Kevin Rudd leading Australia out of the Quad arrangement. The Japanese have been participating for years, and were formally made permanent members in 2015.



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer **USS Kidd (DDG 100)** during **Malabar 2017** (Photo: Reuters)

The **Malabar 2018** exercises are scheduled to be held in June, 2018, off the coast of Guam in western Pacific. **USS Ronald Reagan**, a Nimitz class super carrier, will participate along with Indian and Japanese

naval assets. A variety of reasons have been ascribed to India shying away from giving Australia an entry into the exercises. The most articulated opinion is India's recent pursuit to stabilise its relations with China. After the 73-day stand-off at Doklam, Indian doesn't want to add fuel to the fire. The Chinese are hugely sensitive about the Quad and had objected to the concept even when it was initially formulated. However, to view Australia being excluded from the **Malabar** exercise as an Indian comedown may well be oversimplification. It could have been a part of the give-and-take arrangement that the Indian PM and Xi Jinping might have decided at Wuhan recently. But, the decision perhaps was also influenced by

American stakes.



INS Shivalik in **Malabar 2017** (Photo: PTI)

The Americans would not want to up the ante against the Chinese any further, having already fired a huge salvo in their trade war with China. With Australian participation in the Quad, over and above the sanctions, it could have led the Chinese to deduce that this was an all-out attempt to push them right to the wall. Ahead the 2019 elections, the Indian

sensitivity rests in stabilising the borders. Another [Doklam](#) interests none. The readiness of both the parties to avoid such a situation is reflected in the Wuhan communiqués, with both parties giving strategic directives to their forces to build trust on border affairs. As far as the Australians are concerned, they had requested for participation. Over the years, Australia has realised that hitching its future to the other three-Quad constituents is a safer bet than all their bridges with China amount to. The Japanese, in any case, are close American allies and understand the role of India in keeping the Asian continent's geo-political balance. Of course, the Quad as a multilateral group retains its relevance in the long term, but pursuing it to the point of an Australian participation in Mallabar 2018 could have reduced the margins for adjustments between the US and China, just as it would have affected India-China relations. Even without Australia, the **Malabar** with its India, US and Japan components is quite adequate to make waves as far as the Chinese coasts.

Source: <https://www.dailyo.in>

NATO Ships Complete Romanian Naval Exercise

Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) completed annual Romanian multinational exercise Sea Shield 2018 today in the Black Sea. The NATO Group includes flagship Royal Navy destroyer **HMS Duncan**, Spanish frigate **SPS Victoria**, Bulgarian frigate **BGS Drazki**, Romanian frigate **ROS Regele Ferdinand** and Turkish frigate **TCG Gimlik** and joined ships, submarines, aircraft and soldiers from Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and the United States to conduct the exercise off the coast of Romania in the Black Sea. The exercise participants enhanced interoperability by practicing NATO standard procedures for defence against aircraft, ship or submarine attack as well as asymmetric threats that can take many forms. NATO ships **ROS Regele Ferdinand** and **ESPS Victoria** conducted a boarding operation drill on May 8th. During the exercise the Romanian Air Force provided three MiG 21 Lancers and the Royal Air Force contributed three Typhoon jets to serve as simulated air threats. Romanian Land Forces participated in the exercise for the first time with a detachment of

infantry from the Mechanized Brigade 9 in Mărășești. A specific period of the exercise focused on honing anti-submarine



warfare skills in a coordinated effort by ships and maritime patrol aircraft from Turkey and the United States. Commander Utley, Commander of SNMG2 said: "This Exercise enables the NATO Allies to work together and build individual and collective capability whilst delivering reassurance to Allied nations bordering the Black Sea. Closer cooperation and communication is one key element of this interoperability, an example of that is demonstrated today in that I

arrived via a UK Navy helicopter which landed on a Romanian warship, whilst conducting an Anti-submarine exercise against a Turkish submarine, all this activity being safely controlled by a multinational staff." **Source: UK Defence Journal**

Extreme risk in \$89b navy ship building plan: Auditor-General

May 14 2018 at 11:00 PM

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by [Andrew Tillett](#)



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at the November announcement of the OPV winning bid. AAP

Taxpayers are paying billions of dollars more and face further blowouts because of the "high to extreme" level of risk in building new ships and submarines in Australia in the Turnbull government's rush for voter-friendly announcements to get projects started, the Auditor-General has warned. Demanding the Defence Department provide an update on the cost of the \$89 billion naval shipbuilding plan, the Australian National Audit Office issued a scathing report on Monday attacking key elements of the government's drive to establish a local industry and shore up jobs in Adelaide and Perth.

Source: <http://www.afr.com>

US Navy sees 'period of uncertainty' in Gulf

Tue, May 15, 2018 - 9:36 AM



Iranian behaviour in the Gulf is entering a "period of uncertainty," the head of the US Navy said on Monday following President Donald Trump's decision to quit the Iran nuclear deal. PHOTO: AFP

[ABOARD USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH, United States] Iranian behaviour in the Gulf is entering a "period of uncertainty," the head of the US Navy said on Monday following President Donald Trump's decision to quit the Iran

nuclear deal. US officials have in recent months credited the Iranian military for stopping years of "unsafe and unprofessional" interactions that had included Iranian vessels zooming within a close distance of US warships. But on May 8, Mr Trump yanked America from the Iran nuclear deal, leading to questions about how Tehran will react. "It's a period of uncertainty that we are entering into," Chief of Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson said. "We certainly have to remain alert, even more alert than usual to just be open to any kind of response or new development or something like that." He noted that so far, there had been no change in Iranian behaviour. "The interactions there continue to be professional and safe," he said. Last year and in 2016, the US Navy complained repeatedly about the behavior of Iranian Revolutionary Guard vessels, which would often shadow and steer toward US ships. In at least one incident, US sailors had to fire flares and warning shots before the Iranians turned away. Adm Richardson spoke to reporters during a daylong visit to the **USS George H.W. Bush**, which was conducting exercises with an embedded crew of more than 300 French sailors and pilots

about 160km off the coast of Virginia. The French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle is currently undergoing maintenance, so its Rafale pilots and crew are keeping current on their flight hours and training by working with the Bush.

Source: <https://www.businesstimes.com.sg>

Submarines are increasingly lurking in seas around the world, and the US Navy's high-tech Poseidon is there to hunt them

[Christopher Woody](#)

May. 14, 2018, 5:40 PM



A P-8A Poseidon flies over the **USS Zumwalt**, as the ship travels to its new home port of San Diego, California. US Navy/Erik Hildebrandt

- Submarine activity has increased worldwide, especially in the waters of Europe and Asia.
- That has led navies to increase maritime patrols and to renew their focus on antisubmarine warfare.
- Interest is growing in the US-made P-8A Poseidon, one of the most sophisticated maritime-patrol aircraft in the air.

The US Navy announced this month that it was [restarting the 2nd Fleet](#) to oversee the western Atlantic Ocean, including the North Atlantic and the US East Coast. The decision comes after several years of tensions between NATO members and Russia — and several warnings from Western officials [about growing Russian naval activity](#), including more sophisticated and more active submarines. NATO has responded in kind, with a special focus on antisubmarine warfare — a capability that has [waned](#) among Western navies since the end of the Cold War. For NATO members and other countries, augmenting antisubmarine abilities means not only adding ships but also advanced maritime-patrol aircraft to scour the sea. A number of aircraft on the market fill this role, but the US-made [P-8A Poseidon](#) is among the most sophisticated. "What it can do from the air, and tracking submarines, is almost like Steven Spielberg," Michael Fabey, author of the 2017 book "[Crashback](#)," about China-US tensions in the Pacific, told Business Insider earlier this year. "I went up on a training flight," he said, "and basically ... they could read the insignia on a sailor's hat from thousands of feet above." "It's not the aircraft itself of course," he added, but "all the goodies they put in there."

'The best ASW ... platform in the fleet'



Boeing and Raytheon employees complete installation of an APY-10 radar antenna on P-8A Poseidon test aircraft T2, November 2009. [Boeing](#)

In 2004, the US Navy picked [the P-8A Poseidon](#) to succeed the P-3 Orion, which had been in operation since the 1960s. The first Poseidon entered service in 2013, and more than 60 are in service now. The jet-powered

P-8A is based on [Boeing's](#) 737 airliner, but [it is specialized](#) to withstand more strain, with aluminum skin that is 50% thicker than a commercial 737. Every surface is equipped for deicing. A commercial 737 can be built in two weeks, but a P-8A takes roughly two months. It has a ceiling of 41,000 feet, and, unlike the P-3, is designed to do most of its work at high altitude, where it has better fuel efficiency and its sensors are more effective. The Poseidon's top speed of 564 mph is also 200 mph faster than the older Orion, allowing it to get to its station faster and reposition more quickly. Among [its sensors](#) is the APY-10 radar, which can detect and identify ships on the surface and even pick up submarine periscopes. It can also provide long-distance imagery of ports or cities and perform surveillance along coasts or on land. An electro-optical/infrared

turret on the bottom of the plane [offers](#) a shorter-range search option and can carry up to seven sensors, including an image intensifier, a laser rangefinder, and [infrared](#), which can detect heat from subs or from fires.



US Navy crew members on board a P-8A Poseidon assist search-and-rescue operations for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in the Indian Ocean, March 16, 2014. US Navy



Naval Aircrewman (Operator) 2nd Class Karl Shinn unloads a sonobuoy on a P-8A Poseidon to prepare it for use, April 10, 2014. US Navy/Chief Mass Comm. Specialist Keith DeVinney

The Poseidon's ALQ-240 Electronic Support Measure acts as an electromagnetic sensor and can track radar emitters. Its Advanced Airborne Sensor can do 360-degree scans on land and water. Other electronic surveillance measures allow it to passively [monitor](#) a wide area without detection. The original P-8A design did not include the Magnetic Anomaly Detector that the P-3 carried to detect the metal in sub's hulls. The MAD's exclusion was [controversial](#), but the P-8A can deploy sonar buoys to track subs, and recent [upgrades](#) allow it to use new buoys that last longer and have a broader search range. It also carries an acoustic sensor and a hydrocarbon sensor designed to pick up fuel vapor from subs. The P-8A's cabin can have [up to seven](#) operator consoles, and onboard computers compile data for those operators and then distribute it to friendly forces.



Crew members load an AGM-84K SLAM-ER missile on a P-8A Poseidon, April 4, 2014. US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jason Kofonow

The P-8A carries its own [armaments](#), including Harpoon antiship missiles, depth charges, MK-54 torpedoes, and naval mines. It can also deploy defensive countermeasures, including a laser and metallic chaff to confuse incoming missiles. A dry-bay fire system uses sensors to detect fires on board and extinguish them, a P-8A pilot [told The War Zone](#) in early 2017. *"The P-8 is the best ASW localize/track platform in the fleet, one of the best maritime [Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance] assets in the world, with the ability to identify and track hundreds of contacts, and complete the kill chain for both surface and subsurface contacts if necessary,"*

the pilot said. *'The next front-line, high-end maritime-patrol aircraft'* Russia's submarine fleet is a [fraction](#) of its Cold War size, but its subs are more sophisticated and have been deployed as US and NATO attention has shifted away from antisubmarine efforts. *"We have found in the last two years we are very short of high-end antisubmarine-warfare hunters,"* Royal Navy Vice Adm. Clive CC Johnstone, commander of NATO's Allied Maritime Command, [said](#) in January. Along with interest in buying subs, *"you see an increased focus on other types of antisubmarine, submarine-hunter platforms, so frigates and maritime-patrol aircraft and stuff like that,"* Magnus Nordenman, director of the Transatlantic Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council, told Business Insider earlier this year. In 2016, the UK announced it would buy nine P-8As. In 2017, Norway [announced](#) it was buying five. Those purchases are part of efforts by the US, UK, and Norway to [reinvigorate](#) the Cold War maritime-surveillance network covering the sea between Greenland, Iceland, and the UK, known as the GIUK gap, through which Russian subs are traveling more frequently between their Northern Fleet base and the Atlantic. In June 2017, defense ministers from France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Turkey [agreed](#) to cooperate on *"multinational maritime multimission aircraft capabilities."* The US Navy has increased its antisubmarine activities in Europe, leading with the P-8A. The US's 2018 defense budget included [\\$14 million to refurbish](#) hangers at Naval Air Station Keflavik in Iceland, where antisubmarine forces hunted German U-boats during World War II and patrols scoured northern latitudes during the Cold War. The US Navy decided to leave Keflavik in 2006, but recent modifications would allow P-8As to be stationed there, though the [Navy has said](#) it doesn't currently plan to reestablish a permanent presence. Poseidons [operate over](#) the Black Sea to track the [growing number](#) of Russian subs there. P-8As based at Naval Air Station Sigonella in Italy have reportedly helped [hunt](#) Russian subs lurking near NATO warships and [taken part](#) in antisubmarine-warfare exercises around the Mediterranean. These operations around Europe have also put Poseidons in [close— sometimes dangerous—](#) proximity to Russian aircraft. *"The Poseidon is becoming the next front-line, high-end maritime-patrol aircraft,"* Nordenman said. *"Not only for the US, but increasingly for our allies in Europe, too."* *"I wouldn't be surprised if we see more US rotations to Keflavik and deeper cooperation between the US, the UK, and Norway on maritime-patrol-aircraft operations in the Atlantic,"* he added. *"I would say this is just a first step."*

'There is a requirement need out here'

Like Russia, China has been [investing in submarines](#), and its neighbors have growing interest in submarines and antisubmarine-warfare assets — including the P-8A. India made its first purchase of the P-8I Neptune variant in 2009, buying eight that deployed in 2013. New Delhi bought four additional planes in 2016, and India's navy chief said in January that the service was [looking to buy more](#). In early 2014, Australia agreed to buy [eight P-8As](#) for \$3.6 billion. They are expected to arrive by 2021, and Canberra has the option to buy four more. India and Australia are [the only buyers](#) in Asia so far, but others, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam, are interested. South Korea said in February it would buy maritime-patrol aircraft from a foreign buyer — Boeing and Saab are reportedly [competing](#) for a contract worth [\\$1.75 billion](#). *"There is a requirement need out here in the Asian region for P-8s,"* Matt Carreon, Boeing's head of sales for the P-8A, [said in February](#), pointing to the high volume of shipping, threat of piracy, and the *"current political climate"* as reasons for interest. But overall sales have been [underwhelming](#), likely in part because the Poseidon and its variants are relatively expensive, and their specialized features require a lengthy procurement process. US Navy P-8As have also been [more active](#) around Asia, where their crews work with non-US military personnel, take part in search-and-rescue operations, and perform maritime surveillance over disputed areas, like the South China Sea, where they have monitored Chinese activity.



As in Europe, this can lead to dicey situations.

A Chinese J-11 fighter jet flying near a US Navy P-8 Poseidon about 130 miles east of China's Hainan Island, August 19, 2014. Thomson Reuters

In August 2014, a P-8A operating 130 miles east of China's Hainan Island had a close encounter with a Chinese J-11 fighter jet, which brought one of its wings [within 20 feet of the P-8A](#) and did a barrel roll over the patrol plane's nose. The jet also flew by the P-8A with its belly visible,

"to make a point of showing its weapons," the Pentagon said. While naval competition is heating up in the waters around Europe, some believe the Asia-Pacific region — home to [five of the world's 10 most powerful militaries](#)— will drive demand for assets like the Poseidon. *"I think the maritime mission is going to be as big as the land mission in the future, driven by*

Asian customers like Australia, India, Japan, Korea, and ... other countries will certainly play a role," Joseph Song, vice president for international strategic development at General Atomics Aeronautical, [told Reuters](#) earlier this year.

Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com>

China's play for military bases in the eastern Indian Ocean



China's PLA Navy drill in April (Photo: Getty Images)

By [David Brewster](#)

15 May 2018 10:45 AEDT

China is moving to establish a network of naval and air bases in the Indian Ocean to support its growing strategic imperatives in the region. This likely includes plans to build bases in the eastern Indian Ocean, in waters much closer to Australia. Australia cannot afford to play onlooker to these developments. In July 2017, China opened its first overseas military base in [Djibouti](#), and Beijing is currently in negotiations with Pakistan to establish an additional base at or near Gwadar on the Arabian Sea. But it will not be enough for China to only have capabilities in the north-west Indian Ocean, far from Australia. China's strategic imperatives, and the Indian Ocean's distance from Chinese territory, mean that Beijing will likely see a need to develop a network of military facilities of various types across the ocean, including in its central/eastern zone. These bases will be required if China wants to be able to protect the entire length of its east-west sea lines across the Indian Ocean. Just as importantly, Beijing has growing political imperatives to protect the large number of Chinese nationals and assets across the region. Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean is forecast to grow from the current 4–5 vessels to around 20 or more surface vessels and submarines in coming years. This will require a network of naval logistics facilities, including submarine support facilities, particularly if China is to pursue a serious sea denial or sea control strategy across the northern Indian Ocean. It is not only about naval bases. China will also require air bases in at least three quadrants of the Indian Ocean (north-west, north-east, and south-west) to provide adequate air cover for its Indian Ocean fleet. The People's Liberation Army Air Force will not be able to provide adequate coverage with long-range maritime surveillance aircraft (let alone short-range strike aircraft), based in southern/western China. The deployment of aircraft carriers to the Indian Ocean or the use of air tankers based in China are unlikely to be enough to bridge the gap. China's eastern Indian Ocean gambit has been playing out for a while, with Beijing preparing the ground in the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and/or Myanmar. This is a percentages game. China's ability to achieve its goals is far from assured, and there will probably be pushback, to different degrees, from potential host governments as well as from others. The jostling for influence in those countries between China and India is already highly reminiscent of US–Soviet competition for influence during the Cold War, and will likely grow in the future. There has been much controversy over the port of Hambantota in Sri Lanka. This sits close to sea lanes across the northern Indian Ocean and would make a fine logistics facility. The takeover of Hambantota by a Chinese company in an equity-for-debt swap last year heightened concerns that the uneconomic port may be converted into a naval base. Sri Lanka has gone to great lengths to reassure India that Hambantota would not be used for this purpose. But Delhi remains sceptical of Sri Lanka's claims, fearing that Chinese economic power will eventually force that country to bow to its demands. The Maldives archipelago, located in the central Indian Ocean, would also make it an ideal location. Concerns about growing Chinese influence there came to a head early this year during a "self coup" by President Abdulla Yameen, who is seen as a close friend of Beijing. But although the Maldives has long been within India's sphere of influence, Delhi could do little about the coup. Despite conducting large military exercises nearby to show its displeasure, in fact [Delhi's options were limited](#). India had weak grounds on which to intervene under international law (something important for Delhi), and there were real concerns that Beijing might step in to protect Yameen if it did. Indeed, China publicly [warned against any intervention by India](#), stating that it did not want the coup to become another "flashpoint". Concerns about a possible unintended shooting match may have been heightened by the likely presence of Chinese security personnel in the Maldives capital. India was less concerned about restoring democracy in the Maldives and more about the potential for a Chinese base there, particularly on the island of Gan at the southern end of the archipelago. This is the location of an old British naval and air base which was used up until the 1970s. Its position, relatively close to the US base on Diego Garcia, makes it well placed to cover the central Indian Ocean. For a decade the Indian navy has, with the consent of the Maldives Government, maintained a small maritime surveillance presence at Gan. But the Indian presence may now have become a bargaining point. In April, Yameen [ordered the withdrawal of an Indian naval helicopter from Gan](#). There are strong suspicions this was done to make way for China. Indeed, the development of a Chinese naval and air base on Gan or elsewhere in the Maldives would be a game changer in the Indian Ocean, potentially threatening the US military presence at Diego Garcia. The [announcement](#) a few days ago that an Indian naval vessel would be permitted to

undertake a short patrol in Maldives waters is probably part of an effort by Yameen to play Delhi and Beijing against each other. Myanmar is another good location. A Chinese naval base there would be well placed to threaten India's naval dominance of the Bay of Bengal and protect (or threaten) the sea lanes that cross the bay and transit the Strait of Malacca. Although Myanmar's previous military regime was a close collaborator with Beijing for almost three decades, it was able to successfully resist Chinese efforts to build a military presence in its country (despite some reports to the contrary). But Myanmar's new government may not be able to resist Chinese approaches forever. Chinese companies have built a new port at Kyaukpyu in Rakhine State as the terminus of a road and pipeline that links China's Yunnan province with the ocean. Last October, China acquired a [70% stake in the port](#) and might well increase that share if Myanmar can't come up with further funding. China's plans for Kyaukpyu port, however, may include elements consistent only with naval requirements, not commercial use. For several decades, Australia has expended a lot of defence resources in the western side of the Indian Ocean, including on having a significant part of the Australian Navy chase pirates and drug smugglers. But these new challenges present more fundamental threats. It is time to pay much more attention to the strategic environment in the eastern Indian Ocean, much closer to our shores. The bad news is that this will require a much greater commitment of defence, diplomatic, and financial resources by Australia to countries in this region. **Source:** <https://www.lowyinstitute.org>

US Warns of Consequences for China's South China Sea Militarization

By : [David Brunnstrom and Idrees Ali](#) | on 11:00 AM May 05, 2018



The United States has raised concerns with China about its latest militarization of the South China Sea and there will be near-term and long-term consequences, the White House said on Thursday (03/05). (Reuters Photo/US Navy)

Washington. The United States has raised concerns with China about its latest militarization of the South China Sea and there will be near-term and long-term consequences, the White House said on Thursday (03/05). US news

network CNBC reported on Wednesday that China had installed anti-ship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missile systems on three manmade outposts in the South China Sea. It cited sources with direct knowledge of US intelligence. Asked about the report, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders told a regular news briefing: "*We're well aware of China's militarization of the South China Sea. We've raised concerns directly with the Chinese about this and there will be near-term and long-term consequences.*" Sanders did not say what the consequences might be. A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said US intelligence had seen some signs that China had moved some weapons systems to its artificial islands in the Spratly Archipelago in the past month or so, but offered no details. CNBC quoted unnamed sources as saying that according to US intelligence assessments, the missiles were moved to the Spratlys within the past 30 days to Fieri Cross Reef, Subi Reef and also Mischief Reef, which is 216 kilometers from the Philippines, well within Manila's exclusive economic zone. They would be the first Chinese missile deployments in the Spratlys, where Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei have rival claims. China's Defense Ministry did not respond to a request for comment. Its Foreign Ministry said China has irrefutable sovereignty over the Spratlys and that necessary defensive deployments were for national security needs and not aimed at any country. "*Those who do not intend to be aggressive have no need to be worried or scared,*" ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

'Unique Responsibility'

Close US ally the Philippines, which is now pursuing strong ties with its historic rival China, gave a cautious response on Friday to the reported deployment. "*With our recently developed close relationship and friendship with China, we are confident that those missiles are not directed at us,*" said Harry Roque, spokesman for President Rodrigo Duterte. "*Be that as it may, we would explore all diplomatic means to address this issue.*" Julie Bishop, the foreign minister of US ally Australia, said the report, if accurate, would be a concern as the actions would be contrary to China's stated aspiration not to militarize features it controls. "*China, of course, has a unique responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council, to uphold peace and security around the world,*" Bishop told reporters in Australia. "*Any action to militarize unilaterally features in the South China Sea would go against that responsibility and that role.*" CNBC said the YJ-12B anti-ship cruise missiles allowed China to strike vessels within 295 nautical miles. It said the HQ-9B long-range, surface-to-air missiles could target aircraft, drones and cruise missiles within 160 nautical miles. Eric Sayers, a former consultant to the commander of the US Pacific Command, called the missile deployment "*a major escalation*" and said one immediate US response could be to rescind Beijing's invitation to this year's Rimpac multilateral naval exercises beginning in Hawaii in July. "*When China sees that it can get away with these types of actions with little cost – as they did all through 2015 and 2016 – it only makes it more likely they will keep pressing,*" said Sayers, an adjunct fellow at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies. "*China sees its participation in the exercise as a sign of its acceptance among the*

world's maritime powers but Beijing should not be allowed to militarize this open maritime domain and still be honored as a welcomed member of the maritime community." Last month, Adm. Philip Davidson, nominated to head US Pacific Command, said China could use its "forward operating bases" in the South China Sea to challenge the US regional presence and "would easily overwhelm the military forces of any other South China Sea claimants."

Source: <http://jakartaglobe.id>

Really? Or just another idle Trump threat?

Ocean's Monopoly: How Nations Use Science to Conquer the Sea

A look into the complex world of ocean bed ownership and how nations are vying for their own piece of the puzzle.

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What if a country didn't end at the coastline but would simply continue under water? A territory the size of a continent would come up - a territory uncontrolled and open for seizure. But who owns the sea bed, is it territory still to be claimed? The fact that the world's oceans cover three-quarters of the earth's surface once meant very little to governments around the world. This changed when water exploration teamed with demand for specific resources and the need for power. The first scientific study of the ocean floor was undertaken by German survey vessel *Meteor*, which saw it conduct research on the Atlantic Ocean between 1925 and 1927. The information uncovered about the ocean bed changed how nations viewed their once complacent takes on the importance of the ocean - politically and otherwise. In 1945, spurred on by a demand for oil that could not be met by land resources, US President Harry Truman pioneered the idea of owning oceans by promoting the theory of extended continental shelf of submerged landmass - claiming a continent did not end at the shoreline but ownership by a nation extended into the ocean. Prior to this, countries could only lay claim to the land extending 22 nautical miles (22km) from land's end. Using the theory of 'continental drift' - the belief that the continents' movement in relation to each other did so across ocean beds - and the 'legitimate' nature of science as evidence to prove his point, Truman's idea was systemised under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act of 1953, starting a war of laws. How fair mother nature had been to landlocked nations was another issue to contend with. "For instance, Russia has a wide [continental] shelf of more than 200 nautical miles, or over 400km. By contrast, South East Africa has a continental edge of only 20km. These features are the result of geological evolution. Some countries are lucky. Others are not," says geophysicist Wilfried Jokat. Over 40 percent of the world's oceans have already been assigned to legal continental shelves, i.e. a land mass extended from the continent itself to the continental margin which is between the shoreline and the shelf break (where land slopes further into the water). Claims on expanded geological continental shelves make up another 10 percent of the ocean - a process riddled with loopholes, allowing countries. It is now projected that around 57 percent of the oceans will eventually be under the control of coastal states. As new discoveries of oil and gas continue to further nations' desires to claim their own piece of the ocean bed, geologists have been propelled into the role of decision-makers, proving - or nullifying - claims to these desired areas. The objectivity of the scientists involved in these processes has also come into question, with economic and strategic gains at stake. "Science is decisive for expanding the continental shelf, because all the petitions are based on science. Geological data, seismic data, scientific studies. Everything depends on this information," says head of the French maritime law commission, Elie Jarmache. "You can't go to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and say, 'I am a member of the Security Council and want to expand my country's continental shelf.' That's not how it works. Politics has no place here." As states attempt to extend their maritime zones as far as possible, many international conflicts have arisen. In the South China Sea, eight countries are fighting for oil reserves valued at \$100 billion. "There is no part of the world that is safer than any other," says Robert van de Poll, a maritime law expert. "In other words, with 53 percent of all maritime boundaries within the Exclusive Economic Zone unresolved, we are seeing conflicts rising to volatile levels driven predominantly by resource development for the offshore."

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

Workhorses of the sea



The Malaysian flagged offshore supply ship *Nautical Aliya* approaching the anchorage at Labuan.

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