



MAKING WAVES

A maritime news brief covering:

- **MARITIME SECURITY**
- **MARITIME FORCES**
- **SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY**
- **MARINE ENVIRONMENT**
- **GEOPOLITICS**

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MARITIME SECURITY

U.S. SEIZES FOUR IRANIAN FUEL CARGOES

The U.S. government has convinced the owners of four product tankers carrying Iranian gasoline to alter their voyages and transfer the shipper's cargoes into American custody. The U.S. Justice Department filed suit to seize the Venezuela-bound cargoes in July. According to the complaint, the shipments were set up by Iranian national Mahmoud Madanipour, who allegedly has ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). "The profits from these activities support the IRGC's full range of nefarious activities, including the proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery, support for terrorism, and a variety of human rights abuses, at home and abroad," the Justice Department claimed in the filing. The vessels in question were identified as the *Bella*, *Bering*, *Pandi* and *Luna*, all registered with a U.S.-based open flag administration. All of these vessels are operated by two Piraeus-based ship managers.

According to the complaint, these four vessels took on a combined total of about 1.1 million barrels of gasoline for transport to Venezuela. The petroleum industries of Venezuela and Iran are both subject to stringent American sanctions. The complaint indicates that one of the shipowners involved in the transaction had misgivings about the arrangement and the risk of sanctions violations. According to the complaint, a co-conspirator texted Madanipour to let him know that "the ship owner doesn't want to go because of the American threat, but we want him to go, and we even agreed We will also buy the ship." Effective July 1, the name of the 24-year-old *Pandi* was shortened to *Andy*, a practice frequently seen in the run-up to a demolition sale and end-of-life voyage. Her Equasis record indicates that she has been broken up. While most analysts considered the cargo seizure proceeding to be unenforceable, since the shipments would not be transiting U.S. waters, the owners of the four tankers in question have agreed to transfer the Iranian cargoes to other, unspecified vessels and hand them over to the U.S. government, according to Reuters. The ships themselves and the crews will not be detained. Any agreement to transfer a shipper's cargo to a foreign government - arranged mid-voyage, while on the high seas, without the shipper's authorization - would be an exceptionally unusual decision for a shipowner. The motive was not disclosed, but in recent months the United States has taken a hard line with owners and flag states about ships carrying cargoes in violation of U.S. sanctions. Some owners have been sanctioned themselves, with their U.S.-domiciled assets frozen and their access to the U.S. financial system blocked.

According to Reuters, the Iranian military's boarding of the tanker *Wila* in the Gulf of Oman yesterday was in retaliation for a shipowner's decision to transfer Iranian cargoes to U.S. custody. The *Wila*'s ship manager shares a Piraeus address with the manager of the *Bering* and the *Pandi*.

Source: [maritime-executive.com](https://www.maritime-executive.com); 14 August 2020

COERCIVE TACTICS: CHINA, TURKEY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

- Constantinos Yiallourides

Two recent incidents – one involving China and Vietnam in the South China Sea and the other, Turkey and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean – have brought the limitations of international law and justice to the fore. Both incidents involve larger and militarily stronger nations imposing their will upon smaller neighbours. History tells us such intimidation is nothing new – in his account of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC), Thucydides says “Justice, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” What international law does provide in the 21st century is the basis for other nations to take collective action to support these weaker nations and bring the transgressors back into line.

The first incident concerns the unauthorized conduct of seismic exploration surveys by the Chinese Haiyang Dizhi 8 in the Vanguard Bank, an area well within Vietnam’s EEZ and far outside any potential Chinese maritime claims. China’s seismic survey vessel was accompanied by at least four China Coast Guard vessels, including a 12,000-tonne Haijing 3901 and a large number of anti-aircraft vessels, according to reports. The second incident concerns the conduct of drilling operations by Turkey in a maritime area well within Cyprus’ Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Turkey’s drilling vessel was escorted by the Turkish Naval Forces Command, both on the surface and underwater.

The majority of members of the international community, including the European Union, have largely sided with Vietnam and Cyprus in each case - citing the importance of acting in accordance with international law. The US State Department said in a statement on 20 July 2019: “The United States firmly opposes coercion and intimidation by any claimant to assert its territorial or maritime claims...including the use of maritime militia to intimidate, coerce, and threaten other nations, undermine the peace and security of the region”.

The choice of this particular language, particularly the use of the word ‘coercive’ to describe the actions in question is important and may carry far-reaching implications in international law. Coercion through the application of military means is amongst the key criteria by which the actions of a state can be deemed to be in violation of the universally established non-use of force principle, as embodied in Article 2(4) of the United Nations (UN) Charter which provides that: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state...” The obligation in Article 2(4) supplements Article 2(3) of the UN Charter requires states to settle their disputes through peaceful means. The same obligation is also corollary to the principle of non-intervention which, as defined by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in *Nicaragua v United States*, “involves the right of every sovereign State to conduct its affairs without outside interference.” Under this principle, a state is prohibited from interfering, either directly or indirectly, in the internal or external affairs of another state, whether

through military, subversive, economic, or even diplomatic means. The ICJ noted in the same case that an intervention which uses military means would be wrongful in light of both principles of non-use of force and non-intervention. Thus, while coercion through military means (e.g. deployment of military forces in the territory of another state and threats of use of force against that state to refrain from pursuing its energy policy agenda; see report here and briefing by Prof Thayer here) would engage both the prohibition on the use of force and the principle of non-intervention; non-forcible coercive conduct (e.g. mere economic coercion) only runs counter to the latter.

Whilst military coercion in and of itself is not specifically provided for in Article 2(4), there are good grounds to argue that an unlawful use of force does not necessarily have to be violent or lethal; the deployment of military force aimed at coercing and deterring other claimant parties from interfering with control over that territory would also be sufficient for a breach of the prohibition to be upheld. This is largely because, even in situations where no shots are fired and no damage is inflicted to people or property, the deployment of military forces in the territory of another state is likely create a fait accompli that coerces that party into accepting the new situation on the ground and, as Mikanagi explains, “makes it materially impossible for other claimants to restore the status quo ante without risking human injury or damage to property”.

This position, and particularly the focus on coercion through military deployment, appears to be evident in the *Costa Rica v Nicaragua* case. Costa Rica asked the ICJ to find that by deploying military forces in the disputed territory Nicaragua breached the prohibition of the threat or use of force under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter. The ICJ said: “The fact that Nicaragua considered that its activities were taking place on its own territory does not exclude the possibility of characterizing them as an unlawful use of force.” Although the ICJ avoided an explicit ruling on whether Nicaragua had actually breached Article 2(4), in his separate opinion, Judge Robinson considered that “non-violent use of force” is not exempted from the prohibition according to the ICJ’s jurisprudence: “no shots need be fired, no heavy armaments need be used and certainly no one need be killed before a State can be said to have violated the prohibition”. In this case, the combination of the “prolonged presence” of Nicaragua’s military camps and personnel, its refusal to withdraw its troops from the disputed territory and the “pointing of weapons” at the Costa Rican aircraft, clearly signalled Nicaragua’s “coercive purpose”, namely its “readiness to apply force, whenever Nicaragua considered it necessary” as a means “to challenge Costa Rica’s sovereign rights”. According to Judge Robinson, Nicaragua’s conduct warranted a finding of use of force in breach of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.

As a matter of law, one of the core features of the prohibition under Article 2(4) is the “application of military force as a means of coercion”. Coercion aims at “forcing the will of another state” to accept a new status quo with the use of military means, according to use of force expert Prof Roscini. Whether an act has a coercive purpose, it is to be inferred from the circumstances depending on the scale, prolonged character and nature of military deployment.

Under international law, Vietnam and Cyprus exercise exclusive sovereign rights over the natural resources located within their EEZ and continental shelf. By virtue of these sovereign rights, they can authorize and regulate the conduct of geophysical surveys as well as construct, operate and use installations and any other structures necessary

for the exploration and exploitation of their natural resources in order to determine whether there is sufficient quantity of hydrocarbons or other mineral resources in place and, based on these findings, design their national energy policy agenda, free from any foreign interference. By resorting to means of military nature, China and Turkey have steadily sought in each of these cases, to prevent their opponents from pursuing their legitimate energy policy agendas. Displaying a closely-mirrored modus operandi, Beijing and Ankara have taken considerable steps to place the maritime areas in question under their control and enforce their legal positions by: a) projecting excessive maritime claims based on arbitrary legal grounds; b) steadily militarizing the maritime areas in question; c) restricting other states' freedoms, particularly those of their neighbours and d) creating a *fait accompli* which is very difficult to undo given that neither Vietnam nor Cyprus are able to militarily challenge their opponents in each case.

Indeed, by camouflaging intimidation and coercion as 'exercise of legitimate rights', China and Turkey present their opponents in each case with a Hobson's choice: endure the new status quo or face a costly war with a powerful state, strategically positioned in the region. Both China and Turkey have successfully made use of this coercive tactic in the past, for example, China's continuous militarization of disputed territorial features and surrounding waters causing its opponents to admit the loss of territorial control and Turkey's constant threats towards private-sector petroleum companies operating off Cyprus causing them to postpone operations.

Collective action is possible and necessary

The consequence of determining that the constant acts of coercion through military deployment by China and Turkey in the waters of other states violate Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which is that it would be a breach of an *erga omnes* norm (i.e. one owed to the international community as a whole) is that third states may invoke China's and Turkey's international responsibility. More importantly, such a violation would then permit third-party countermeasures as a matter of customary international law. This would mean that third states, other than the injured states, can seek to bring the breach to an end and are entitled to take non-forcible countermeasures against the transgressors, just as if they were directly injured by that violation. There are various examples of states responding to violations of obligations *erga omnes* by resorting to non-forcible countermeasures: the sanctions imposed by the United States against the Soviet Union because they regarded the latter as responsible for a threat to international peace by deploying its troops along the Polish border in 1981; the sanctions imposed by the European Community against Argentina following its forcible take-over of the Falkland Islands in 1982, which was condemned as a "breach of the peace" by the UN Security Council; and the sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States against Russia for annexing Crimea and intervening in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. While these sanctions were in response to acts of aggression, the prohibition of which has been recognized as *jus cogens*, it could be argued that the prohibition of the use of force is itself an *erga omnes* norm even if that prohibition standing on its own, as distinct from the prohibition of aggression, is not a *jus cogens* norm. Crucially - and perhaps more pertinently to the incidents reviewed in the present paper - after several warnings to Turkey to cease its provocative actions, the European Union has decided to impose a series of targeted, yet limited, sanctions

on Turkey for unlawfully sending its military and commencing drilling operations within Cyprus' EEZ, though it made no explicit reference to the UN Charter.

No state wishes to be coerced into silence and inactivity over its sovereign affairs. The mere possibility provokes strong emotions, especially when the use of armed force is used or threatened to be used. The universally-accepted provisions of the UN Charter impose affirmative legal obligations upon all nations to refrain from the threat or the use of force, or from any other means of military coercion for the settlement of their differences, to refrain from interfering with the internal affairs of other nations and to have recourse at all times to peaceful means of dispute resolution. Both the obligations to follow the dispute settlement procedures under the UN Charter and UNCLOS and the substantive obligations incumbent upon the international community to steer recalcitrant states towards obedience are equally important. That is why the international community needs to explicitly qualify the conduct of China and Turkey as a direct violation of the UN Charter and “make a clear case against coercion”, either by calling upon the Security Council to approve collective non-forcible countermeasures or by petitioning the UN General Assembly to request an advisory opinion on the legality and legal consequences under international law of China's and Turkey's conduct by the ICJ, or indeed both. Whilst an advisory opinion has no binding force on the parties, it will nonetheless provide a valuable authoritative statement of the law; one which will prompt the international community to take meaningful action to act on the advisory opinion and demand recalcitrant states to fall into line.

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Source: maritimeissues.com; 09 August 2020

GIANT NARCO SUBMARINE DISCOVERY REMINDS US OF THE GREATEST EVER

- H I Sutton

A narco submarine recently discovered in the Colombian jungle is the largest in recent years, and in design terms, it's probably the ultimate threat facing the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard's Enhanced Counter-Narcotics Operations. It represents a scaling-up of the current design trends and balances simplicity and cost effectiveness with survivability. It is likely to be more stealthy, and thus harder to interdict, than most others.

Yet there was one found in 2000 that was even more impressive in scale and sophistication. Law enforcement are careful not to glorify narco submarines, but there

is a certain begrudging respect for their designers. The largest and most innovative narco subs are an object of natural curiosity. Some, like the two discussed in this article, are engineering marvels. (Many are not.) On September 7, 2000, a narco sub was found in a workshop in the center of Colombia, hundreds of miles from the ocean. It was, and remains, the most elaborate and impressive narco submarine ever built. At least, that we know of.

The Facatativá Narco Submarine

It was discovered nearly complete in workshops in Facatativá, Colombia. Reportedly the authorities had suspected an illegal gas clinger operation and were astonished to discover a submarine. When finished it would have been approximately 120 feet long and capable of carrying 150 tons of cocaine. This is an order of magnitude more than any other known narco-sub. Its defining characteristic was that it was a ‘proper submarine’ made in a similar way to Navy boats. Most narco submarines are actually low profile vessels (LPVs) meaning that although they are very low in the water, they don’t fully submerge. This one could. Intriguingly its design had the hallmarks of Russian engineers.

The New Giant Narco Submarine

The latest example, discovered in the jungle by the Colombian Navy, is much simpler than the Facatativá sub. It is a LPV, but uses the VSV (very slender vessel) layout. This means that it is only about a tenth as wide as it is long. Combined with its inboard mounted engine it is likely to be more stealth than most other narco-submarines out there. At least the ones that get interdicted. There are several advantages of the newer layout compared to the Facatativá design. They are cheaper to build and can be constructed in makeshift ‘artisan’ boatyards hacked out of the jungle. Because they don’t fully submerge they can be crewed by fishermen. A true submarine by comparison requires properly trained crew. And while they may not be as stealthy as true submarines, they are evidently good enough because it has to be reasoned that most get through. So while the latest giant isn’t the biggest or most sophisticated ever, it is a standout example which will have the Coast Guard and Navy thinking. What else is out there?

Source: [forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com); 16 August 2020

BE PREPARED FOR THREATS IN INDIAN OCEAN: EASTERN NAVAL COMMAND CHIEF

VISAKHAPATNAM: A ceremonial parade comprising platoons of naval personnel from various ships, submarines, establishments and Defence Security Corps was held at the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) in the Command Gymnasium here on Saturday. Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, ENC, inspected a 50-man armed guard parade at the event, which was attended by all flag officers and commanding officers of various ships and establishments in Visakhapatnam. Speaking on the occasion, Jain conveyed the need to remember the sacrifices of the brave warriors who fought for freedom and those who laid down their lives in service of the

motherland. He reminded everyone of the challenging times the country is facing, primarily due to the coronavirus and the security situation. Jain highlighted various administrative measures, such as the setting up of wellness centres, awareness campaigns and quarantine centres for the naval community, and said they helped check the spread of Covid-19.

He also reminded the personnel on parade of the tense security situation, especially against the backdrop of the India-China standoff in Ladakh, and added that with the changing security dynamics, maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is vital, and everyone in the ENC must be prepared to face traditional and non-traditional asymmetric threats. Jain congratulated the personnel of Navy ships Jalashwa, Airavat and Shakti for bringing back over 3,500 Indians from many nations as part of Operation Samudra Setu during the Covid-19 pandemic. He also appreciated the efforts of the Naval Dockyard personnel for their innovation for in-house deployment and manufacturing of portable multi-feed oxygen manifolds, lung resuscitators, remote monitoring facility for ICU Patients, and preparation of masks and hand sanitisers.

In another event at the 'Victory at Sea' War Memorial on Beach Road, Vice Admiral Kalidoss Srinivas AVSM, NM, VSM, project director, Ship Building Centre, Visakhapatnam, paid tributes to those who sacrificed their lives to defend the nation. Two minutes of silence were observed as a mark of respect to the brave warriors. At NSTL, its director hoisted the tricolour on the occasion of Independence Day. He appealed to employees to change their lifestyles to fight the coronavirus crisis, and urged scientists and officials to reduce the delay in ongoing research projects.

Source: newindianexpress.com; 16 August 2020

IRANIANS RAIDED TANKER OFF UAE SEARCHING FOR 1M BARRELS OF PETROLEUM SEIZED BY U.S.; DOJ: 'THEY WERE LOOKING FOR THEIR GAS'

- Sam LaGrone

Iranian forces were looking for 1.1 million barrels in petroleum products seized by the U.S. Justice Department when they took over a merchant tanker in the Gulf of Oman earlier this week, DoJ officials confirmed to USNI News. On Friday, the DoJ announced the U.S. had seized more than 1.1 million barrels of petroleum, owned by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, from four merchant tankers bound for Venezuela.

"The government announced today that it has successfully executed the seizure order and confiscated the cargo from all four vessels, totaling approximately 1.116 million barrels of petroleum. With the assistance of foreign partners, this seized property is now in U.S. custody," reads a statement from the Department of Justice. "These

actions represent the government’s largest-ever seizure of fuel shipments from Iran.” The cargo came from four Liberian flagged and Greek-owned tankers — M/T Bella, M/T Bering, M/T Pandi and M/T Luna. “A seizure order for the cargo from all four vessels was issued by U.S. District Court Judge Jeb Boasberg of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia,” reads the statement. Neither the U.S. Navy nor the U.S. Coast Guard took control of the ships, two defense officials confirmed to USNI News. USNI News understands that at no time did U.S. officials take control of the ship. A Thursday report from The Wall Street Journal said the seizures happened on the “high seas.” Department of Justice officials would neither detail the current location of the seized crude, where it was seized nor the method which the U.S. used to remove it from the ships when asked by USNI News. It’s unclear the time frame of the seizures, but Tehran was on the hunt for seized missing petroleum earlier this week.

Iranian forces were in search of the seized petroleum from the four tankers when they seized the Liberian-flagged tanker M/T Wila off the coast of the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, officials said.

A special forces team fast-roped from an Iranian Navy SH-3 Sea King aboard Wila while the Iranian patrol vessel Hendijan came alongside the tanker. After about five hours, the Iranians left the ship, according to U.S. 5th Fleet. At the time, the nature of the reason behind detaining Wila was unclear, but U.S. officials confirmed it was related to the seizure of the Iranian cargo from the four tankers. “They were looking for their gas,” DoJ spokesman Marc Raimondi told USNI News on Friday. The tanker raided by the Iranians has connections to at least some of the ships that were interdicted by the Department of Justice. According to a report in The American Shipper, the management of Wila, Pandi and Bering are all registered to the same address in Greece. Maritime security firm Dryad Global indicated Wila could have been targeted by the Iranians due to its connection to a Greek shipping company that has dealt with Iran in the past. The location of the tankers from which the U.S. seized the cargo could not be determined via the shipboard automatic identification system as of Friday afternoon.

Luna’s last position recorded on AIS was on May 17, off Oman headed toward the Khor Fakkan anchorage off of the United Arab Emirates. Pandi was last known to be at anchor at Khor Fakkan on June 29. Bering and Bella were last recorded off Greece in mid-May. In addition to the July warrants for the seized cargo, the U.S. obtained a court order to seize the Iranian-flagged mega-tanker Adrian Darya, which was detained by the British Royal Navy on July 4, 2019 as it had been attempting to deliver two million barrels of Iranian crude oil to Syria. The whereabouts of the ship have been unknown for a year since it was released.

Source: [usni.org](https://www.usni.org); 14 August 2020

MARITIME FORCES

SATELLITE IMAGES SHOW PAKISTAN'S MILITARY BUILD-UP AT SEA, CHINESE NAVY SEEN NEAR AGOSTA-90B SUBMARINE: REPORT

Islamabad: Pakistan's camaraderie with China is not hidden from the world. Not that it affects the Islamic nation much, but this friendship has cost them many others, including the United States. Even after repeated warnings over the country's nefarious tactics with India along the Line of Control, as well as the Financial Action Task Force dumping it in the 'Grey List' following terror financing charges, Pakistan continues to engage with China and conduct military exercises not far away from India's coastal borders.

In a recent report by Forbes, Pakistani Navy submarines were seen parked right in the middle of Chinese Navy warships near Karachi, a clear indication that Pakistan is ramping up its naval fleet with assistance from 'all weather partner' China. At present, Pakistan is reportedly adding eight Chinese-made Type-039B Yuan Class warships to its fleet, and the submarines spotted now are clear indicators of collaboration between Islamabad and Beijing to share military knowledge and hardware. Satellite imagery picked up by private intelligence consultancy named ShadowBreak Intl confirmed that Pakistan Navy's Agosta-90B type submarine – Hashmat-class – was indeed docked next to Chinese ships near Karachi. According to the publication, the Chinese naval ships were on a joint exercise with the Pakistani fleet in January, called 'Sea Guardian-2020'. Interestingly, back then Pakistan's The Nation had reported that Pakistani warships were involved in the exercise along with other military equipment such as missile boats, helicopters, anti-submarine aircraft, frigates, etc., but the fact that submarines were also part of the exercise was hidden.

Likewise, the South China Morning Post too did not furnish concrete information about the grade of submarines, barring a mention that submarines were involved. To add to Pakistan's hideous acts, the submarine exercise was conducted in one of Karachi's cordoned-off commercial docks, not their usual ones. Islamabad operates five French-designed Agosta-class submarines, of which three are improved versions with the Air independent Power (AIP) technology, the kind seen near the Chinese vessels. According to the report, these class of submarines are potent and one of the more modern machines in the Pakistani arsenal. Besides the AIP, the subs have AS-39 Exocet anti-ship missiles and state-of-the-art combat systems. It's also expected to be the launchpad for the country's homegrown Babur-3 nuclear-capable cruise missile.

Source: ukdefencejournal.org; 07 August 2020

BRAZILIAN NAVY RIACHUELO SCORPENE- CLASS SUBMARINE CARRIED OUT FIRST INDEPENDENT NAVIGATION

According to a Tweet released by the Brazilian Navy on August 13, 2020, the Riachuelo Scorpene-Class submarine of the Brazilian Navy carried out the first independent navigation without the need of tugboats. The rudders, the navigation and propulsion system, the diesel generators, the battery charges, and the communication system were tested at sea. In 2009, Naval Group was entrusted by the Brazilian Navy with designing and transferring the technology for four conventional Scorpène® submarines, and for the design and manufacturing assistance for the non-nuclear part of Brazil's first nuclear-powered submarine. The contract also included support for the construction of a naval base and a shipyard in Brazil.

In December 2018, the Brazilian Navy launched its first Brazilian-built Scorpène® submarine, the Riachuelo. In September 2019, Navy Recognition has released news to announce that the Brazilian Navy has started the sea trials of its first Scorpene-class diesel-electric Riachuelo submarine. Scorpène® is the conventional submarine designed by the French shipyard Naval Group, formerly DCNS, for the export market. It demonstrates both Naval Group's ability to deliver the best in class submarines and to conduct successful transfers of technology. Today 14 Scorpène® submarines are in operational service or being built, for the Chilean Navy (2 units), the Malaysian Navy (2 units), the Indian Navy (6 units), and the Brazilian Navy (4 units).

The Scorpène® design is adapted to fit each navy's specific requirements. Thus, the Brazilian Scorpène® will be slightly longer to carry a larger crew, almost double the patrol range, and be able to cover greater distances. Scorpène® is ideally suited for action and operational effectiveness. Robust and enduring, it's an ocean-going submarine also designed for shallow waters operations. Multipurpose, it fulfills the entire scope of missions such as anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, special operations, offensive minelaying and intelligence gathering. Integrating improvements from French Barracuda-Class fast-attack submarine, Scorpène® has cutting-edge capabilities.

The Brazilian Scorpene has a surface displacement of 1,870 t while its overall length is 72 m. It has a diving depth of 300 m and autonomy of 45 days. The submarine has a crew of 31 people including 6 officers and 25 sailors. The armament of the Scorpene-class submarine includes six 533 mm (21 in) torpedo tubes for 18 Whitehead Alenia Sistemi Subacquei Black Shark heavyweight torpedoes and SM-39 Exocet anti-ship missiles and 30 mines in place of torpedoes.

Source: navyrecognition.com; 15 August 2020

AUSTRALIA INVESTING US\$932 MILLION IN NEW MARITIME UAS PROGRAM

- Eyal Boguslavsky

In a press release, the Australian Department of Defence announced that the government is investing up to AUD\$1.3 billion (US\$932 million) in a new Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) development program to enhance situational awareness across Australia's vast maritime environment.

Minister for Defence Linda Reynolds said defence requires leading-edge maritime surveillance capabilities to better understand and adapt to the complex and rapidly changing maritime domain. "As detailed in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update, launched by the Prime Minister and I in July, Australia is at the center of a dynamic strategic environment," Minister Reynolds said. "Now, more than ever, Defence requires an agile acquisition strategy to take advantage of state-of-the-art technology. This acquisition heralds a new intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting capability for Defence to ensure Australia keeps pace in this rapidly developing technology domain." Navalnews.com reported that through this program the Australian department plans to acquire air vehicles ranging from approximately 25kg to 300kg in size that will enhance the situational awareness and response options of Royal Australian Navy ships. To keep pace with rapidly developing technology in this domain, the department will adopt a five yearly investment cycle to upgrade the maritime UAS capability commencing in 2024.

Source: israeldefense.co.il; 16 August 2020

SHIPPING, PORTS AND OCEAN ECONOMY

PM MODI TO LAUNCH SUBMARINE FIBRE CABLE CONNECTING CHENNAI AND PORT BLAIR; BOOST TELECOM IN ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

- Huma Siddiqui

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) connecting Chennai and Port Blair on August 10 through video conferencing. He had laid the foundation stone for this project on December 30, 2018, at Port Blair. The submarine fiber cable connectivity will enable the delivery of faster and more reliable mobile and landline telecom services to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, on par with other parts of India. "Enhanced telecom and Broadband connectivity will boost tourism and employment generation in the Islands, give an impetus to the economy and raise standards of living," the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) tweeted on this day.

Adding, "Better connectivity will facilitate the delivery of e-Governance services like telemedicine and Tele-education. Small enterprises will benefit from opportunities in e-commerce, educational institutions will utilize enhanced availability of bandwidth for learning & knowledge sharing." The Prime Minister interacted with BJP workers of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, through video conference in the presence of BJP president J P Nadda. "I am sure that high-speed broadband connectivity that will be launched tomorrow will help people of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to have a virtual connection with other parts of the country. Everyone will be able to avail the benefits of all kinds of online services, amid pandemic" Prime Minister Modi said.

A submarine optical fiber cable connecting Chennai and Port Blair will be inaugurated on August 10. The cable will also connect Port Blair to Swaraj Dweep (Havelock), Little Andaman, Car Nicobar, Kamorta, Great Nicobar, Long Island, and Rangat of the Island group. The Prime Minister said that the internet connectivity in Andaman and Nicobar Island after its inauguration will facilitate online education, tourism, and business on the island. "India is fortunate that we have various things in different areas which can be developed. In Andaman and Nicobar we are going to lay emphasis on industries related to sea-food, organic products, and coconut-based products," Modi said. "Twelve islands of Andaman and Nicobar have been chosen for the expansion of high impact projects," added the Prime Minister. He said that the entire nation needs to progress and work done by the government should reach the people at the end of the queue. "For the development of New India, the entire nation needs to progress.

The government may function from a specific point, but its work should reach out to everyone and more importantly, to the person at the end of the ladder. Be it a pandemic or any other problem, we all have to work together and stay connected with the people. We have to provide assistance to all," Modi said.

Source: [dna.com](https://www.dna.com); 09 August 2020

WORLD'S BIGGEST CONTAINER SHIP IS ALMOST READY TO BE LAUNCHED

The Samsung Heavy Industries shipyard in South Korea is at present working on what will soon be the biggest container ship in the world with a capacity of carrying 24,000 containers at once.

The HMM St. Petersburg built by the Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering is the last of the 12 in the new 24,000 TEU class of vessels that contributes to South Korea's 5-year plan to revive its shipping industry. Each vessel costs anywhere between \$140-151 million each. The container ship is scheduled to be delivered in mid-September following which it will begin its voyage to Chinese ports, sailing through the Suez Canal to Rotterdam, Antwerp and London. Once it begins, HMM is likely to rise the charts to be the 8th biggest shipping firm worldwide. In an announcement, HMM declared that the pandemic and its consequences on the shipping industry hadn't affected its business as it recorded its first surplus in 21 quarters.

Over the years, its industry that was previously a strong source of the country's economic growth slowly began to lose its foothold due to competition from China. Even though it is one of the world's biggest, the Chinese rose through the ranks due to cheaper competition and global oversupply. The collapse of Hanjin Shipping, a top container line when it filed for bankruptcy, plummeted the business down even further. HMM St.Petersburg is 400 metres long, 61 metres wide and 33.2 metered high. It has not been described as longer than the Eiffel Tower, but also as a vessel that can carry up to 7 billion Korean choco-pies (Choco pie is a popular snack in Korea), meaning one for each in the worlds' population. As per the Korean Herald, the engine room consists of 5 decks. There are 5 huge generators inside that will power the vessel and the refrigerated containers. The upper deck are residential accommodations with a bed, bathroom, desk and closet for each. The captain is to reside on the F floor, which is the highest of all.

The N or navigation floor holds a wheelhouse. However, the automatic features of the container ship will primarily run in autopilot and hence will not require manual control constantly. The 12-week sail undertaken by the ship will host just 10 engineers in the engine room as most of the processes are performed automatically. The other half of the crew, about 12 seafarers will be involved in handling the wheelhouse and containers.

Source: marineinsight.com; 13 August 2020

NIGERIA CONVICTS FIRST PIRATES UNDER NEW ANTI-PIRACY LAW

- RFI

A Nigerian court in Port Harcourt has fined three men 44,000 euros each for hijacking a ship in the Gulf of Guinea in March and collecting a 169,000 euro ransom for the crew. The new measures were used for the first time in an effort to curb piracy, which is endemic in the Gulf of Guinea, representing 90 percent of all sea abductions worldwide, according to the UK-based International Maritime Bureau (IMB).

Although the three men were handed down sentences under the new statute, Nigerian press reported that they were not pirates in the traditional sense, but employees of a private security company. Nine men were charged in July in connection with kidnapping the crew of the MV Elobey VI off the coast of Equatorial Guinea. They had seized the boat and the crew in March, but released them in May after the ransom was paid. Three of the defendants pleaded guilty to charges related to piracy and will pay the fine but will serve no additional jail time. The other six pled not guilty and will go to trial. "Piracy is rife off the Gulf of Guinea," Karl Sykes, Managing Director of Neptune Maritime Security told RFI. "Will it deter the other pirates? I very much doubt it, they are very desperate people and out to make money," he says. "It's not going to be an overnight thing, but it's a positive move in the right direction," he adds.

Gulf of Guinea piracy on the rise

In most cases, piracy involves armed robbery at sea and holding the crew for ransom, but can also include piracy where assailants steal crude oil from tankers. Although piracy dropped in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia after 2013, when combined Somali and international efforts were made to patrol the waters, it has continued to rise in the Gulf of Guinea, which covers a 6,000 kilometre-long coast from Senegal to Angola. According to the International Maritime Bureau, violent attacks against seafarers have risen in 2020, with the IMB logging 49 crew members being kidnapped for ransom in the Gulf of Guinea alone in 2020.

Although typically kidnapping or seizing a ship occurs closer to the coastline, IMB reports a new phenomenon - many violent acts by pirates are taking place further out at sea. "Two-thirds of the vessels were attacked on the high seas from around 20 to 130 nautical miles off the Gulf of Guinea coastline," according to the report. The report cited the Nigerian Navy with intercepting and preventing a number of would-be kidnappings. "Along with corruption, employment is also driving piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, and the Niger Delta [in Nigeria] in particular," according to Abhishek Mishra in an article for the World Economic Forum. "Due to lack of jobs, when people see there is nothing on the ground for them to benefit from, they go to any length and use any means to disturb the economic activities that bring money into the nation," he added.

Source: sierraleonetimes.com; 15 August 2020

JAPAN TO SEND EXPERT TEAM TO MAURITIUS

Japan is to send experts from its international emergency relief team to Mauritius on Monday at the request of the island nation's government.

A large amount of fuel has been spilling from a bulk carrier, the Wakashio, which ran aground on July 25. The ship was chartered by Mitsui O.S.K. Lines. The team's six members are from Japan's Coast Guard, the foreign ministry and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, or JICA. They will take part in the cleanup operation. The government says it hopes the experts can help to prevent contamination that could damage the marine environment and the tourism sector.

Source: nhk.or.jp; 09 August 2020

MARINE ENVIRONMENT

RACE IN MAURITIUS TO EMPTY OIL TANKER BEFORE IT BREAKS UP

- Andrew Meldrum, Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG -- Urgent efforts increased in Mauritius on Monday to empty a stranded Japanese ship of an estimated 2,500 tons of oil before the vessel breaks up and increases the contamination of the island's once-pristine Indian Ocean coastline. Already more than 1,000 tons of fuel has washed up on the eastern coast of Mauritius, polluting its coral reefs, protected lagoons and shoreline. High winds and waves are pounding the MV Wakashio, which was showing signs of splitting apart and dumping its remaining cargo oil into the waters surrounding Mauritius. The bulk carrier ran aground on a coral reef two weeks ago. "We are expecting the worst," Mauritian Wildlife Foundation manager Jean Hugues Gardenne said.

"The ship is showing really big, big cracks. We believe it will break into two at any time, at the maximum within two days," Gardenne said. "So much oil remains in the ship, so the disaster could become much worse. It's important to remove as much oil as possible. Helicopters are taking out the fuel little by little, ton by ton." French experts arrived from the nearby island of Reunion and were deploying booms to try to contain any new oil spill, Gardenne said. France sent a navy ship, military aircraft and technical advisers after Mauritius appealed for international help Friday. "The booms should be in place within hours, which we hope will help to protect the coastline from further damage," he said. The booms will boost the improvised barriers that thousands of volunteers in Mauritius created from fabric tubes stuffed with straw and sugar cane leaves. Amid the rough seas, efforts were also underway to get other ships close enough to pump large amounts of oil out of the MV Wakashio. "The danger of the ship breaking into two is increasing hour by hour," environmental consultant Sunil Dowarkasing, a former member of parliament in Mauritius, said. "The cracks have now reached the base of the ship and there is still a lot of fuel on the ship. Two ships are headed to the site so that fuel can be pumped into them, but it is very difficult." The ship ran aground on July 25 but work to remove the oil it was carrying only started last week when the hull cracked and started emptying the fuel into the sea, according to Dowarkasing.

The MV Wakashio's owner, Nagashiki Shipping, said Monday that two ships arrived at the scene to pump oil from the endangered vessel. "A hose connection has been successfully established ... and the transfer of fuel oil is underway," said the company in a statement. It said it is working with Mauritian authorities "to mitigate the spill. The primary focus at this time is reducing the effects of the spill and protecting the environment." Pressure is mounting on the government of Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth to explain why it did not take immediate action to avert the environmental disaster. Jugnauth has declared the oil spill a national emergency, but some residents say he acted too late. The opposition and activists are calling for the resignation of the environment and fisheries ministers. Volunteers have ignored a government order to

leave the clean-up operation to local officials. Japan said Sunday it would send a six-member expert team to assist.

Source: abcnews.com; 11 August 2020

CLIMATE CHANGE: SATELLITES RECORD HISTORY OF ANTARCTIC MELTING

- Jonathan Amos

Twenty-five years of satellite observations have been used to reconstruct a detailed history of Antarctica's ice shelves. These ice platforms are the floating protrusions of glaciers flowing off the land, and ring the entire continent. The European Space Agency data-set confirms the shelves' melting trend. As a whole, they've shed close to 4,000 gigatons since 1994 - an amount of meltwater that could all but fill America's Grand Canyon.

But the innovation here is not so much the fact that the shelves are losing mass - we already knew that; relatively warm ocean water is eating their undersides. Rather, it's the finessed statements that can now be made about exactly where and when the wastage has been occurring, and where also the meltwater has been going. Some of this cold, fresh water has been entering the deep sea around Antarctica where it is undoubtedly influencing ocean circulation. And this could have implications for the climate far beyond the polar south. "For example, there've been a couple of studies that showed that including the effect of Antarctic ice melt into models slows global ocean temperature rise, and that can actually lead to an increase in precipitation in the US," explained Susheel Adusumilli from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego. Mr Adusumilli and colleagues analysed all of the observations made by Esa's long series of radar altimeter missions - ERS-1, ERS-2, EnviSat and CryoSat-2. These spacecraft have tracked the change in thickness in Antarctica's ice shelves since the early 1990s. Combining their data with ice velocity information from other sources, and the outputs of computer models - the Scripps group has gained a high-resolution view of the pattern of melting during the study period. As might be expected, there's been quite a lot of variation, with mass loss and gain, even within the same individual shelf. And the rate of mass loss over time has also gone up and down. But the overall picture is clear: the shelves are wasting.

"We see that melting is always above the steady state values," Mr Adusumilli told BBC News. "You need some amount of melting just to keep the ice sheet in balance. But what we've seen is an amount of melting by the ocean that is more than is needed to keep it in balance." The fascinating aspect to this study is that the scientists can also now trace precisely where at depth the melting is occurring. Some of these floating platforms of ice (the biggest is the size of France) extend many hundreds of metres below the sea surface. The researchers can tell from the satellites' data whether the wastage is happening close to the thinnest parts of the shelves or at their fronts, or deep down in those places where the glacier ice coming off land first becomes buoyant and starts to float. "That kind of information can tell us a lot about the melting processes involved, how they're working - and the effects that meltwater can have,"

said Scripps' Prof Helen Fricker. "So, it's not just that the shelves are melting. It's how they're melting - and where their meltwater is being injected into the ocean."

Thinning ice shelves do not contribute directly to sea-level rise. That's because the floating ice has already displaced its equivalent volume of water. But there is an indirect consequence. If the shelves are weakened, the land ice behind can flow more quickly into the ocean, and this will lead to sea-level rise. This is happening, and has been measured by other satellites. Prof David Vaughan is the director of science at the British Antarctic Survey. He was not connected with the study which is published in *Nature Geoscience*. He told BBC News: "The Scripps team has produced a map of Antarctica that shows thinning around the margin in a strip of mottled red and blue colours. The detail at the coastline is absolutely phenomenal. "We really can now identify the parts of ice shelves that are most crucial to the story of thinning. There'll be a lot of oceanographers spending a lot of time looking at where the melting and the thinning is actually occurring, and trying to work out exactly why those areas have been affected."

Source: bbcnews.com; 10 August 2020

GREENLAND'S MELTING ICE SHEET HAS PASSED THE POINT OF NO RETURN, SCIENTISTS SAY

- Doyle Rice

Greenland's melting ice sheet has passed the point of no return. In fact, glaciers on the island have shrunk so much that even if global warming were to stop today, the ice sheet would continue shrinking, a new study suggests. "Glacier retreat has knocked the dynamics of the whole ice sheet into a constant state of loss," study co-author Ian Howat, an earth scientist from Ohio State University, said in a statement. "Even if the climate were to stay the same or even get a little colder, the ice sheet would still be losing mass."

This "tipping point" means the snowfall that replenishes the ice sheet each year cannot keep up with the ice that is flowing into the ocean from melting glaciers. "The ice that's discharging into the ocean is far surpassing the snow that's accumulating on the surface of the ice sheet," said study lead author Michalea King, a researcher at Ohio State University. Overall, according to NOAA, ice loss from the Greenland ice sheet increased sevenfold from 34 billion tons a year from 1992 to 2001 to 247 billion tons a year from 2012 to 2016. For the study, scientists analyzed 40 years of satellite data from more than 200 large glaciers draining into the ocean around Greenland.

Greenland's shrinking glaciers are a problem for the entire Earth. Melting ice from the island is a leading contributor to sea-level rise worldwide: The ice that melts or breaks

off from Greenland's ice sheets ends up in the Atlantic Ocean – and, eventually, all of the world's oceans. Greenland's ice sheet now dumps more than 280 billion metric tons of melting ice into the ocean each year, making it the greatest single contributor to global sea level rise, King told CNN. By the end of the century, global sea level is likely to rise at least one foot above 2000 levels, even if greenhouse gas emissions follow a relatively low pathway in coming decades, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said. How much it will rise depends mostly on the rate of future carbon dioxide emissions and global warming. The Greenland study was published recently in the peer-reviewed British journal *Communications Earth and Environment*.

Source: [usatoday.com](https://www.usatoday.com); 17 August 2020

COULD A SOLUTION TO MARINE PLASTIC WASTE THREATEN ONE OF THE OCEAN'S MOST MYSTERIOUS ECOSYSTEMS?

- Ute Eberle

In May 2017, shells started washing up along the Ligurian coast in Italy. They were small and purple and belonged to a snail called *Janthina pallida* that is rarely seen on land. But the snails kept coming – so many that entire stretches of the beach turned pastel. An unusual wind pattern had beached the animals. And for the people who walked the shore, this offered a rare encounter with a wondrous ecosystem that most of us have never heard about: The neuston.

The neuston, from the Greek word for swimming, refers to a group of animals, plants and microorganisms that spend all or large parts of their life floating in the top few centimeters of the ocean. It's a mysterious world that even experts still know little about. But recently, it has been the source of tensions between a project trying to clean up the sea by skimming plastic trash off its surface, and marine biologists who say this could destroy the neuston.

A World Between Worlds

The neuston comprises a multitude of weird and wonderful creatures. Many, like the Portuguese man-of-war, which paralyzes its prey with venomous tentacles up to 30 meters long, are colored an electric shade of blue, possibly to protect themselves against the sun's UV rays, or as camouflages against predators. There are also by-the-wind sailors, flattish creatures that raise chitin shields from the water like sails; slugs known as sea dragons that cling to the water's surface from below with webbed appendages; barnacles that build bubble rafts as big as dinner plates; and the world's only marine insects, a relation of the pond skater. They live "between the worlds" of the sea and sky, as Federico Betti, a marine biologist at the University of Genoa, puts

it. From below, predators lurk. From above, the sun burns. Winds and waves toss them about. Depending on the weather, their environment may be warm or cool, salty or less so. But now, they face another — manmade — threat from nets designed to catch trash. A project called The Ocean Cleanup, run by Dutch inventor Boyan Slat, has raised millions of dollars in donations and sponsorship to deploy long barriers with nets that will drift across the ocean in open loops to sweep up floating garbage.

Collecting With the Current

"Plastic could outweigh fish in the oceans by 2050. To us, that future is unacceptable," The Ocean Cleanup declares on its website. But Rebecca Helm, a marine biologist at the University of North Carolina, and one of the few scientists to study this ecosystem, fears that The Ocean Cleanup's proposal to remove 90% of the plastic trash from the water could also virtually wipe out the neuston. One focus of Helm's studies is where these organisms congregate. "There are places that are very, very concentrated and areas of little concentration, and we're trying to figure out why," says Helm. One factor is that the neuston floats with ocean currents, and Helm worries that it might collect in the exact same spots as marine plastic pollution. "Our initial data show that regions with high concentrations of plastic are also regions with high concentrations of life."

The Ocean Cleanup says Helm's concerns are based on "misguided assumptions." "It's true that neustonic organisms will be trapped in the barriers," says Gerhard Herndl, professor of Aquatic Biology at the University of Vienna and one of project's scientific advisors. "But these organisms have dangerous lives. They're adapted to high losses because they get washed ashore in storms and they have high reproductive rates. If they didn't, they'd already be extinct."

Helm says they just don't know how quickly these creatures reproduce, and in any case recovering from passing storm is very different from surviving The Ocean Clean Up's systems which could be in place for years.

Communication Breakdown

The Ocean Cleanup invited Helm to a symposium on the topic in December, where both sides presented their points of views and didn't seem to find much common ground. Since then, direct communication between them has stopped, says Helm. "They're not interested in talking to me anymore." Both sides agree that much is still unknown about the neuston. But one thing that has been established is that most of the oceans' fish spend part of their lifecycle in the neuston. "More than 90% of marine fish species produce floating eggs that persist on the surface until hatching," Betti says. The Ocean Cleanup has undertaken one of the few studies into this ecosystem, collecting data on the neuston on the relative abundance of neuston and floating plastic debris in the eastern North Pacific Ocean during a 2019 expedition to the Pacific Garbage Patch, an area where plastic pollution has accumulated on a vast scale. But it is not yet sharing what it has found. The information was being prepared for publication in an as of yet unspecified journal, probably some time next year, an Ocean Cleanup spokesperson said.

Inshore Solution?

Helm believes the best way to tackle the marine plastic problem would be to position the barriers closer to land — across river mouths and bays — to catch garbage before it reaches the sea. "Stopping the flow of plastic into the ocean is the most cost-effective — and literally effective — way to ensure that it's not entering our environment," she says. As for the plastic already floating in open waters, she does not believe it is worth sacrificing parts of neuston and wants to see more research first.

The Ocean Cleanup has made barriers across rivers a part of its mission. But it is also going ahead with its original vision of pulling trash from the open water. In late 2018, the project deployed a 600-meter, u-shaped prototype net into the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. The system ran into difficulties, failing to retain plastic as hoped, and needing to be brought shore for repairs and a design upgrade, after which Ocean Cleanup says it gathered haul of plastic that it will recycle and resell to help fund future operations. Over the next two years, the project hopes to deploy up to 60 such barriers to collect drifting flotsam. Helm isn't the only one concerned about these plans. "We should think twice about every action we take in the sea," Betti says. "In nature, nothing is as easy as we think, and often, we've done a lot of damage while trying to do a good thing."

Reposted with permission from Deutsche Welle.

Source: [ecowatch.com](https://www.ecowatch.com); 15 August 2020

GEOPOLITICS

NATIONAL SECURITY LAW: HONG KONG'S US EXPORTS TO BE RELABELLED 'MADE IN CHINA'

- Finbarr Bermingham

Goods made in Hong Kong for export to the United States will have to be labelled "Made in China" after September 25, according to a US government notice. The move, in accordance with the suspension of the Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 and the invoking of US President Donald Trump's executive order on "Hong Kong Normalisation", will see Hong Kong companies subjected to the same trade war tariffs levied on mainland Chinese exporters, should they make products subject to these duties.

A notice will be published on the US Federal Register on August 11, stipulating that "45 days after the date of publication", goods "must be marked to indicate that their origin is 'China'". The move is "due to the determination that Hong Kong is no longer sufficiently autonomous to justify differential treatment in relation to China". The confirmation of a move implied by Trump's previous legislation is another blow to Hong Kong's struggling economy and to the high-value, if low-volume base of exporters in the city. Goods that fail to comply will face a punitive 10 per cent duty at US ports. The Hong Kong government said in a statement on Tuesday evening that it was mulling filing a claim at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), of which it is a separate member, accusing the US of sowing "confusion and harming the interests of all parties, including the United States itself". The statement said the US move to reclassify Hong Kong's exports "reflected the US' disregard for Hong Kong's status as a separate member of the WTO", adding that the ruling "may not comply with WTO regulations". "If necessary, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will not rule out taking actions in accordance with WTO rules to safeguard Hong Kong's interests."

Hong Kong has a higher trade deficit with the US than with any other economy, though this dropped by 16 per cent last year to US\$26 billion. From January to May this year, Hong Kong's exports to the US fell by 22.3 per cent in volume from a year earlier. Hong Kong is much more significant as a re-export hub than a direct trading hub in its own right. Its economy is a much different beast than in the 1970s and '80s, when it was a manufacturing stronghold. Now, only 1 per cent of goods shipped from Hong Kong are made in the city, which instead serves as a logistical gateway to mainland China for both goods made there and going there.

Domestic exports to the US in 2019 were US\$471 million, or 0.1 per cent of total outbound shipments including re-exports, data from the city's Trade and Development Council shows. Within this, 48.5 per cent of Hong Kong's home-made

exports to the US in value terms over the first half of the year were jewellery items. The second most valuable sector was edible products, accounting for 10.7 per cent of domestic outbound shipments. Under the current tariff regime, jewellery is subjected to a 7.5 per cent tariff when exported to the US from China – a duty that was halved from 15 per cent with the January signing of the phase one trade deal.

John Marrett, lead analyst for Hong Kong at the Economist Intelligence Unit, said that “in the grand scheme of things, this obviously is not good, but it does not mean that much because overall the value is marginal”. The city’s economy shrank by 9 per cent in the second quarter of 2020 from a year earlier, just shy of the first quarter’s record slump of 9.1 per cent. Now, under strict social-distancing and coronavirus-containment measures, the economic pressure continues to pile on the city. “This change also raises concerns that goods produced or substantially transformed in Hong Kong will be treated as having originated in China for purposes of the Section 301 tariffs the US currently levies against products of China,” wrote trade law specialists Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg in a note on Tuesday.

At the moment, there are US tariffs applied exclusively to US\$550 billion worth of Chinese goods. The addition of Hong Kong-made goods would expand this, albeit not significantly. Analysts have said that the more significant among the flurry of US trade actions against Hong Kong in recent weeks has been the rolling out of export controls, which means importers in the city cannot access certain sensitive American technology. This could hamper university research and even access to consumer technology, analysts and industry figures have warned. Arthur Lee Kam-hung is the CEO of Hong Kong X’tals, a manufacturer of hi-tech components used in 5G base stations and autonomous vehicles. His firm sells some products out of Hong Kong, but he said the new rules will not affect him much, since the company has already distanced itself from an “outdated” and “volatile” American market.

“For our traditional [quartz crystal] components that are manufactured on the mainland, the US’ 25 per cent tariffs [already] applied to our products [and] were borne by our customers in the US. But the US market is very small for our business as we are focusing on Chinese and European clients,” he said. Lee added that the trade war made him diversify some material sourcing away from the US, but that Trump’s policies and sanctions make him “very worried” about dealing with the US. “We will hold off on any investment or sourcing on the US market,” he said. The company had already planned to introduce some backup production facilities to its Hong Kong operations to counter the risk of a major coronavirus disruption to the city.

“These plans are unlikely to change, no matter if the US applies new tariffs and changes the ‘Made in Hong Kong’ label to a ‘Made in China’ or not,” Lee said. The US last week moved to sanction leading Hong Kong officials, including Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, for the roll-out of the national security law, which has been slammed as an infringement on the “one country, two systems” model of governance. The Hong Kong Police Force this week also arrested pro-democracy figures in the city under the sweeping new law, including high-profile media mogul Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, who was detained on Monday.

The Chinese Manufacturers’ Association of Hong Kong (CMA) said that the US customs authority’s move would prove costly and “inconvenient” to Hong Kong

exporters, who will have to pay for new packaging and certificates of origin. "This series of so-called sanctions on Hong Kong, by the US, is unreasonable and ignores the basic principles of international trade and economics," the CMA statement said.

Source: scmp.com; 11 August 2020

ISIS-LINKED FIGHTERS SEIZE MOZAMBIQUE LNG PORT TOWN AS INSURGENCY ESCALATES

- Reuters/KV

MOCIMBA DA PRAIA, MOZAMBIQUE (BLOOMBERG) - Fighters linked to militant group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) took control of a northern Mozambican port town that's been a key logistics link for a US\$23 billion (S\$31.5 billion) natural-gas project that French oil and gas company Total is building, according to Risk Advisory Group. It's the third time this year the insurgents have seized Mocimboa da Praia, located about 60km south of the LNG project and the closest harbour.

About three months ago, fighters that first pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2018 occupied it for as long as three days. The site of Total's project is in the preparation stage, with the company having recently finalised an initial US\$15 billion of financing and the town is among several access points to bring in supplies, including a port and airport at the development. The fighting, though, shows an escalation of insurgent attacks in the region that authorities are battling to contain. "The capture of Mocimboa da Praia, as well as the previous assaults on district capitals since March, shows that the capabilities of IS militants has improved," Mr Tristan Gueret, an analyst at RAG in London, said by e-mail on Wednesday (Aug 12). Total didn't immediately respond to emails seeking comment. Gas projects in the country's northernmost Cabo Delgado province are central to plans to transform the impoverished southeast African nation. Projected revenue from the developments are estimated at more than three times its current gross domestic product. Mocimboa is where Islamist militants started a war in 2017 that has left more than 1,500 people dead, according to estimates from the Madison, Wisconsin-based Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, which tracks global violence. The conflict has displaced 220,000 people in the region.

'DEDICATED FORCE'

"Although it is another indication of the fast deterioration in the security environment in Cabo Delgado, the success of the attack in Mocimboa da Praia does not necessarily have major or immediate implications for LNG operations," Mr Gueret said. The Total project area is "currently secured by a dedicated force, and this means that mounting a successful raid there would be much more challenging for the group", he said. Even with the help of private military contractors flying helicopters armed with machine guns, the Mozambican government has struggled to curb the insurgency, which has grown increasingly brazen in its attacks this year. Security forces have in the past seven

days killed 59 fighters in the region and destroyed six of their camps, the government said in a statement. Fighting is continuing in order to "neutralise" the militants, it said.

Source: straitstimes.com; 13 August 2020

INDIA BARS CHINA SHIPS FROM OIL TRADE AS TIES STRAIN FURTHER

- Debjit Chakraborty , Saket Sundria , Dhvani Pandya , Bloomberg

India's state-owned oil majors have stopped hiring Chinese tankers to ship their crude and petroleum products after relations deteriorated between the two countries, although the move is unlikely to impact trade flows. China-flagged and owned vessels have been barred from bidding on tenders for chartering tankers to import crude into India, or export products such as diesel out of the country, according to people familiar with the matter. The ban followed India's implementation last month of regulations on business with nations sharing its border, referring to China and Pakistan without naming them, the people said, asking not to be named because they're not authorized to speak to the media.

The state-run majors are also planning to ask oil traders and suppliers not to send shipments to India using Chinese vessels, they said. The move is poised to further strain relations between two of Asia's largest economies after a deadly Himalayan border clash left 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese troops dead. However, India's oil companies are not expecting a significant hit to trade.

Most of the foreign tankers they use or charter are flagged in Liberia, Panama and Mauritius, said two Indian oil executives, asking not to be named because they're not authorized to speak on the matter. The use of Chinese vessels is limited and mostly used in the transport of liquefied petroleum gas, they said. Spokespeople for the three state-owned oil refiners -- Indian Oil Corp., Bharat Petroleum Corp. and Hindustan Petroleum Corp. -- did not immediately comment on the development. India's new trade curbs on some of its neighbors is seen aimed primarily at limiting participation of Chinese groups in orders and tenders offered by government-owned companies. India -- which imported goods worth over \$70 billion from China in 2019 -- has already banned scores of Chinese mobile phone applications in an attempt to reduce dependence on its products.

This story has been published from a wire agency feed without modifications to the text. Only the headline has been changed.

Source: livemint.com; 13 August 2020

AFTER ISRAEL-UAE-US DEAL: GAINERS AND LOSERS, AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

Israel and the United Arab Emirates, helped by the US, have arrived at an important peace agreement that has the potential to change the geopolitics of West Asia and beyond.

What is the big deal?

The announcement by the White House on Thursday took the world by surprise, Palestinians included. The deal: the UAE will establish diplomatic relations with Israel in return for President Binyamin Netanyahu committing to give up a stated plan to annex the West Bank, the main territory of a state that the Palestinians want. The UAE becomes the third Arab nation to recognise Israel after Egypt (in 1979) and Jordan (1994). In the coming week, according to the White House statement, delegations from the two countries will meet to set in motion bilateral ties in investment, tourism, direct flights, security, telecommunications, tech, energy, healthcare, culture, the environment, etc. On priority, Israel and UAE will work together to find a treatment and a vaccine for Covid-19. The agreement, hailed by President Donald Trump, Netanyahu, and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE, as a breakthrough, has been cast as the coming together of two nations with strong economies for the good of the region.

What about the Palestinians?

President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, which seeks a two-state solution, lashed out against the deal as a “betrayal” by the UAE. He has been disengaged from the Trump administration for the last two years for its pro-Israel stand. “The Palestinian leadership rejects and denounces the UAE, Israeli and US trilateral, surprising, announcement,” a senior adviser to Abbas said. It was a “betrayal of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa and the Palestinian cause,” he said. The Hamas, a Palestinian Islamist militant group that de facto runs the Gaza strip, and views the relationship with Israel as a fight to the finish, called it a “stabbing in the back of our people” by the UAE. For the Palestinians, the Israeli commitment that it will not pursue its plan to annex the West Bank, is an empty concession – the deal does not address the Palestinian demand for statehood. Netanyahu floated the annexation plan recently – it means Israel will claim sovereignty of all land in the West Bank on which Jewish settlements have come up, literally cutting up the dream of a Palestinian state. It was not certain if Netanyahu would have gone ahead with it even without the UAE deal. Now, by agreeing not to, he has enabled the UAE to talk it up to its Arab allies as a major concession extracted from Israel, while Netanyahu himself can project it elsewhere abroad as a big give on his part, without compromising on the core issues of the conflict. An extreme pro-annexation section of the settler lobby in Israel is angry, but he has mollified domestic audiences that this is a “temporary” hold on the plan.

How have the Arab states reacted?

Saudi Arabia has said nothing so far, although the ruling family’s Prince Turki al-Faisal had strongly rejected the proposals for Israel-Palestine peace unveiled by the US in

January this year, which included a plan to hand over Jerusalem to Israel and permit it to extend its sovereignty to all Jewish settlements in the West Bank. But Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) has been hailed as an ally by the Trump administration. He has formed a solid friendship with Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the President's pointman in the Middle East, tasked with finding a solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict. There is bound to be speculation that the UAE could not have taken its extraordinary decision on Israel without the backing and support of the House of Saud. Over the years, the Saudis have seen both the US and Israel as insurance against Shia Iran. But as the leader of the Arab world, and the custodian of Islam's holiest shrines, it might have preferred someone else to take the revolutionary first step on this. The smaller Gulf states of Oman and Bahrain have quickly fallen in line behind UAE, and it could be a matter of time before the others, including Saudi, do as well. That is the hope Trump expressed on Thursday.

How does the region's geopolitics change?

If the Arab states do fall in line, it would dramatically bring all Sunni nations in the region in an anti-Iran alliance with Israel that they have secretly wished for all these years. Iran and its proxies and allies – in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, the Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen – have been weakened and broken by war, the ISIS and al-Qaeda. Hezbollah, which Israel has treated as enemy number 1 after Iran, faces a domestic backlash in Lebanon after the explosion that has destroyed Beirut. Russia, a staunch ally of Syria, has not yet reacted; neither has China.

The deal will send ripples through other parts of the world. In South Asia, it will put Pakistan in a bind. Despite having toyed with the idea of establishing diplomatic ties with Israel for nearly two decades, Pakistan could never take the plunge for fear of a domestic backlash. The weak government of Imran Khan – who knows what it is to be accused of being part of a Jewish conspiracy after his first marriage to London socialite Jemima Goldsmith, the daughter of a Jewish millionaire – is already facing criticism at home for not being able to take on India over its 2019 decisions in Kashmir. Imran is unlikely to be seen as joining an Arab alliance that has effectively abandoned another “Islamic” cause dear to Pakistan, that of Palestine.

But then, UAE is a good friend. Pakistan has already annoyed Saudi Arabia, another “biradar country”, by showing its teeth at the OIC because it did not agree to hold a special session on Kashmir. The kingdom responded by asking for immediate repayment of a \$3 bn loan given in 2018, and it has frozen a \$3.2 bn line of credit for oil purchases. Even if Pakistan does not join the Arab stampede towards Israel, it cannot rail against them for it. In Kashmir too, where pro-independence lobbies have compared stone pelting agitations of the last 10 years with the intifada, the isolation of Palestine is certain to mirror the isolation of Kashmir today.

And how does Trump gain?

The deal has salvaged something resembling an achievement for Trump from the ruins of his foreign policy. His attempts to create a lasting legacy in the Koreas bombed, while the Afghanistan peace process is still struggling to get on its feet. US-China relations are on the rocks. Traditional NATO allies in Europe have been sidelined. Even if the UAE-Israel agreement does not bring Israel-Palestine peace, the new equations that it will give rise to, including the isolation of Iran, are already being

heralded in the US as an achievement. Joe Biden, who is hoping to win the presidential race against a post-Covid weakened Trump, had no choice but to praise the deal as “a historic step”.

Source: [indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com); 15 August 2020

TRUMP SAYS WILL TRY ‘SNAPBACK’ TO FORCE RETURN OF UN IRAN SANCTIONS

- Agence France Press

Donald Trump said Saturday he will try a controversial “snapback” to force a return of UN sanctions against Iran, after the Security Council rejected Washington’s bid to extend the arms embargo against the Islamic republic. “We’ll be doing a snapback,” the president said, referring to the contested argument that the US remains a “participant” in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal — despite Trump’s withdrawal from it — and therefore can force a return to sanctions if it sees Iran as being in violation of its terms. The president added that the US will make its move next week.

Washington’s defeat at the Security Council on Friday highlighted its isolation on Iran since Trump withdrew from the accord in 2018. Only two of the Council’s 15 members voted in favor of the US resolution. Washington’s European allies all abstained, Russia and China voted against it, and Iran mocked the Trump administration for winning the support of just one other country, the Dominican Republic. Trump argued Saturday that Iran was a “different ballgame” now, and that the country no longer has the funds to sponsor terror. “Iran wants me to lose so badly” in November’s presidential election, he added.

If Trump follows through, the snapback could plunge the Council into one of its worst-ever diplomatic crises, experts warn. European allies have been skeptical on whether Washington can force sanctions and say the attempt may delegitimize the Security Council. The embargo on conventional arms is due to expire on October 18.

Source: mb.com.ph; 16 August 2020

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