

Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies

# Underwater/Maritime Domain Awareness and Technological Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific



Workshop Report  
25–27 February 2025

NEAR EAST SOUTH ASIA  
**NESA**  
CENTER FOR  
STRATEGIC STUDIES



## **Underwater/Maritime Domain Awareness and Technological Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**

**Near East South Asia (NESAC) Center for Strategic Studies**

**Workshop Report**

**25–27 February 2025**

**Location: San Francisco, California**

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**NESAC Center Leads: Jeffrey Payne and Nilanthi Samaranayake**

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### **SUMMARY:**

From 25 to 27 February, the Near East South Asia (NESAC) Center for Strategic Studies conducted a workshop devoted to cooperation on Underwater and Maritime Domain Awareness (UDA/MDA) in the Indo-Pacific. The workshop had a thematic focus on technological innovation, countering Chinese aggression, and facilitating more efficient information sharing for countering asymmetry at sea. The event had a particular focus on the regions where the Indian Ocean and Pacific Oceans meet.

NESAC welcomed forty-eight participants who hailed from seventeen different countries. Participants hailed from North America, Europe, South Asia, ASEAN, the Pacific, and Northeast Asia. A track 1.5 effort, the workshop featured official government representatives from ministries of defense and foreign affairs, navies and coast guards, port authorities, and air forces. Subject matter experts in maritime security, geopolitics, hybrid warfare, and technology also took part. Private corporate firms taking part represented the aerospace industry, venture capital, unmanned vehicles, sensing, analytics, and artificial intelligence/machine learning.

The event was the third in the Indo-Pacific MARSEC series that NESAC leads annually. The event featured formal panel discussions among participants, as well as a tabletop exercise that focused on overlapping UDA/MDA Maritime challenges. Key insights and recommendations follow, as well as a record of the agenda and the results of the tabletop exercise conducted.

**INSIGHTS:**

- Several participants from ASEAN and South Asia brought up the rising influence of CRINK (China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea) throughout the Indo-Pacific. Comments did not emphasize an emerging alliance, but increasingly echoed activities by all to undermine established rules and norms, particularly in the maritime domain, in similar ways.
- Data highlighted by several participants emphasized that China’s “island building” in the South China Sea (SCS) has a purpose tied to the underwater domain that is not widely understood. Specifically, China’s “island building” facilitates hubs for sensor deployments that can help to set up underwater monitoring nets and enables anti-submarine warfare (ASW). This process was described as an ASW “Cloud.”
- China’s partnership with Russia is also facilitating China’s access to the Arctic in ways that assist its military and government capability enhancement. This China/Russian version of maritime domain awareness (MDA) is facilitated by China’s mass technological lead, the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS), and is disguised as benevolent by being defined as related to climate change research.
- Several participants made the routine objection to the undervaluing of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) by the U.S. as part of its Indo-Pacific concept. While more attention is paid to those waters than before, there is a clear lesser emphasis on these waters. One participant overtly stated that the talking point of the IOR learning from the events of the Pacific can be reversed – asking, “what is the Pacific learning from the IOR?”
- Participants inquired about ways in which Japan and other regional actors can do more to enhance regional maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. Could innovative approaches or broader reforms be adopted to assist in regional-led efforts in the Bay of Bengal or within ASEAN?
- Participants remain confused as to the delays in forming the new U.S. administration. In their eyes, it takes too long for the U.S. to get back up to speed following a change in administration and causes them to rethink the reliability of the U.S. to maintain its capability building efforts in the Indo-Pacific. Related to this was speculation amongst participants about the long-term impacts current policy directions will have on existing U.S. alliances and partnerships.
- Participants were keen to discuss how MDA discussions in the Indo-Pacific can evolve beyond discussions of “white shipping” and other private sector considerations and move into state threats and aggression. This was part of a larger theme of questioning the long-term effectiveness, beyond network building among various officer corps of foreign countries, of the fusion centers to deliver real-time and effective data for countering threats. Participants wanted MDA efforts in the Indo-Pacific to help facilitate the breaking down of silos within each respective state and get a common buy-in of the priorities for a common operating picture.

- Regional participants want to emphasize the development of data that can be acquired to create a common operating picture. The software developers and private firms in the room countered that a common operating picture, defined as one screen with all your data, does already exist and can be built for every actor in the room. That is not the problem. The problem is the core processes of the data itself and how they are merged. One system may have parameters that emphasize certain variables over others based upon its design and creator. *The issue is less about a common operating picture and more about a common set of clear considerations and transparency on the coding of the data.* The same holds true for the integration of large language models (LLMs) in AI/machine learning.
- Different responses to maritime aggression were debated by the participants. The Philippines' transparency approach was pointed to as something that led to escalation, not deterrence, of China's actions. In the wider region, others pointed to the disconnect between public statements by civilian leaders of "all is well" when in fact a country's maritime forces are constantly confronting aggression at sea.
- Questions from the participants emphasized the difficulty in obtaining accurate data regarding undersea conditions. Where are accurate underwater charts available? How can bathymetry data be obtained, analyzed, and shared? What is the cost of obtaining said data?
- Related to the above, participants asked how states can gain entry into the developing MDA ecosystem of public and private efforts without having the financial resources to join. Can entry be facilitated through bilateral exchanges or other forms of foreign military/security assistance? Can costs be shared? When they do obtain, how can states be better trained and have the interfaces be more direct?
- Participants discussed what issues tied to the underwater domain should be kept under the banner of MDA and what should remain tied to other maritime conversations. Issues like protecting critical underwater infrastructure, forms of commercial sensing and scientific research, and protection of biomass are all examples that should be kept under the MDA banner. This is in relation to maintaining a common understanding of international MDA efforts and the diverse stakeholders. Some aspects of the underwater domain should remain firmly within the scope of government efforts.
- Conversation emphasized that information sharing among partnering nations, which is already lacking, remains bogged down in debates about information versus intelligence. Private sector actors detailed how much available information exists for potential consumers already, so keeping information sharing siloed only delays effective responses. Other participants detailed that information on the maritime domain is often tied to security operations that in turn become entangled with larger national security concerns. While participants discussed many downsides, a clear upside articulated is the fact that such a debate is being discussed is a sign of progress for MDA conversations.



- Representatives focused on cyber security considerations for maritime infrastructure; it emerged as one of their main worries. The growing divide between developing states and more technologically advanced states is widening and could impede the ability to cooperate on digital matters tied to the maritime domain and create new vulnerabilities for trade, infrastructure enhancement, and even international security cooperation.
- Minilaterals were discussed by the gathered participants, including existing minilaterals in the IOR and ASEAN. The Quad and its IPMDA effort were brought up as examples of the continued disjoint between the immediate benefits such minilaterals deliver to member states and what they can or should provide for the wider Indo-Pacific.
- Participants showed more interest in the events in the Middle East's waters than in previous gatherings. Partially driven by considerations about Gaza, they are also focused on the complications in the Red Sea due to Iran and the Houthis as well as what lessons can be potentially transferred from that area to the Indo-Pacific. Specific mentions of the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC), the GCC, the Abraham Accords, and Combined Maritime Forces were all noted.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE EFFORTS:

- Underwater issues should remain linked to MDA and thus, be a component of multilateral engagements. Priority issues to be discussed include the protection of critical underwater infrastructure (CUI) and seabed mining/mineral deposits. Additional topics include some aspects for sensing tied to private sector efforts and research, commercial applications for unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) and unmanned surface vehicles (USVs), and subsea cable protection.
- Participants need more outputs and coordination from the International Fusion Centers (IFCs) than ever before. There is increasing cynicism about the effectiveness of International Liaison Officers (ILOs) getting information quickly to facilitate effective regional responses. IFCs should retool to expand into helping to shape or lead exercises, conducting specific technical training, and expanding networking to key private sector stakeholders (shippers, certain technological firms, manufacturing firms reliant on maritime supply chains).
- Participants were keen on keeping alive the network created in this meeting through future efforts sponsored by NESAC or other partnering institutions present to dive deeper into ways to more effectively diagnose and collaborate on undersea challenges. Some distinct efforts for future collaboration and research include:
  - Ways to enhance partnerships among various regional stakeholders to improve capabilities where gaps exist. Examples include further Track 1.5 tabletop exercises, adding undersea components to existing exercises, or adding undersea topics to forthcoming regional security training.
  - Expand the focus beyond sub-regions of the Indo-Pacific to show common threats of concern in all regional waters. For example, participants frequently connected

incidents of sabotage to undersea cables and pipelines in Europe to lessons for Indo-Pacific waters. Thus, Middle East, East Africa, South Asia, ASEAN, Pacific, and Northeast Asia experiences need to be commonly shared for a broader understanding of maritime security.

- Facilitation of diverse stakeholder discussions on how to protect critical underwater infrastructure, protect undersea natural resources such as energy, and facilitate greater communication on undersea challenges.

**AGENDA:**

**Tuesday, 25 February 2025**

0700–0830 Breakfast at Leisure (for Foreign/Non-Local Participants)

0900–0930 **Welcome and Introductions**

Speakers:

- *Jeffrey Payne, Assistant Professor, NESAs*
- *Ambassador (ret.) John Desrocher, Director, NESAs*

0930–1100 **Panel 1: The State of the Indo-Pacific’s Waters – an Examination of Where Things Stand**

Our first panel provides a baseline for understanding the variables that shape the stability of the Indo-Pacific’s waters.

Questions Relevant to the Panel:

- What challenges afflict the waters of the Indo-Pacific?
- How effective are collaborative approaches to the challenges present?
- What is the state of cooperation in the maritime domain in the Indo-Pacific?

Moderator: *Jeffrey Payne, Assistant Professor, NESAs*

Speakers:

- *Dr. Sarah Kirchberger, Academic Director & Department Manager, Center for Asia-Pacific Strategy and Security, ISPK*
- *Admiral (ret) Karambir Singh, Chairman, National Maritime Foundation; Chief of the Naval Staff (former), Indian Navy*
- *VADM (ret) Tokuhiko Ikeda, Director of National Security Institute, Fujitsu Defense and National Security*

1100–1130 Coffee/Tea Break

1130–1300 **Panel 2: Maritime and Underwater Domain Awareness – Beyond Catchphrases and Hyperbole**

The second panel seeks to dive into what presently constitutes MDA and UDA, with a particular interest in moving beyond mere talking points and traditional strategic formulations.

Questions Relevant to the Panel:

- What issues are the focus of current UDA efforts and is that focus sufficient?
- Are MDA processes in the Indo-Pacific advancing?
- What needs to be prioritized in our MDA/UDA efforts?

Moderator: *Ms. Nilanthi Samaranayake, Adjunct Professor, NESAs*

Speakers:

- *Dr. Bich Tran, Postdoctoral Fellow, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore*
- *Ms. Jane Chan, Senior Fellow, Coordinator of Maritime Security Programme, IDSS, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University*
- *CAPT (ret) Sarabjeet Parmar, Distinguished Fellow, CSDR; Distinguished Fellow, United Service Institution of India*

1300–1400 Lunch

1400–1530 **Panel 3: UDA/MDA and the Data Needed**

The third panel examines the data we rely upon to gain awareness in the maritime domain.

Questions Relevant to the Panel:

- Is there a substantial data divide among the nations of the Indo-Pacific?
- What data is proving more beneficial to maritime security efforts?
- What data must be further integrated into our efforts?

Moderator: *Jeffrey Payne, Assistant Professor, NESAC*

Speakers:

- *Ms. Jen Parker, Adjunct Fellow in Naval Studies, UNSW Canberra; Expert Associate, National Security College, Australian National University*
- *Mr. Olivier Blarel, Visiting Scholar, Europe Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*
- *Dr. Arzan Tarapore, Research Scholar, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University*

1530–1545 Coffee/Tea Break

1545–1645 **Breakout Session 1:**

Participants will be broken down into one of three small groups to examine different aspects of the same tabletop scenario.

1645 Conclusion of Day 1

**Wednesday, 26 February 2025**

0700–0830 Breakfast at Leisure (for Foreign/Non-Local Participants)

0900–0910 **Announcements**

Speaker: *Jeffrey Payne, Assistant Professor, NESAC*

0910–1040 **Panel 4: Tools/Technologies for MDA/UDA/MARSEC**



The fourth panel looks to the technological tools that assist in efforts at MDA/UDA and their applicability across the Indo-Pacific.

Questions Relevant to the Panel:

- How are the fusion centers performing?
- Does there exist a competitive environment for MDA/UDA applications and if so, does such competition assist or degrade effectiveness?
- What is the learning curve associated with adopting new technological tools?

Moderator: *Jeffrey Payne, Assistant Professor, NESAS*

Speakers:

- *Dr. Jared Dunnmon, Senior Advisor for Strategic Initiatives, Defense Innovation Unit, U.S. Department of Defense*
- *Mr. Ray Powell, Director, SeaLight*
- *Dr. Prashanth Parameswaran, Fellow, Asia Program, Wilson Center*
- *Mr. James McAden, Senior Director, Asia-Pacific Sales, HawkEye 360*

1040–1100 Coffee/Tea Break

1100–1230 **Panel 5: Commercial Dimensions of Maritime Security Efforts**

Our fifth panel examines the private sector interests in MDA/UDA. This includes research laboratories, start-ups, and private sector technological or MARSEC firms.

Questions Relevant to the Panel:

- What is the relationship between public and private sector actors in MDA?
- What is the degree to which private sector actors are trusted as providers for MDA/UDA?
- How can private sector actors do more?

Moderator: *Ms. Nilanthi Samaranayake, Adjunct Professor, NESAS*

Speakers:

- *Mr. Daisuke Kawai, Project Assistant Professor, and the Deputy Director of the Economic Security Program, Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology (RCAST), University of Tokyo*
- *Dr. Paul J. Lyons, Defense Panel Lead, Senior Director for Defense, Special Competitive Studies Project*
- *Mr. Vincent “Vinnie” Nguyen, Business Development and Enablement Manager, North America, Starboard Maritime Intelligence*

1230–1345 Lunch

1345–1530 **Breakout Session 2**

Participants will continue the conversations begun in their small groups.

1530 Conclusion of Day 2

**Thursday, 27 February 2025**

0700–0830 Breakfast at Leisure (for Foreign/Non-Local Participants)

0900–0910 **Announcements**

Speaker: *Jeffrey Payne, Assistant Professor, NESAS*

0910–1040 **Panel 6: The Trajectories of MDA/UDA**

Our final panel serves as a horizon scan for where MDA/UDA is heading, along with recommendations as to where our efforts should be directed.

Questions Relevant to the Panel:

- What challenges are emerging that are not being sufficiently tracked?
- How can coordination and cooperation among willing stakeholders be enhanced?

Moderator: *Jeffrey Payne, Assistant Professor, NESAS*

Speakers:

- *Mr. Eric Ang, YCAPS, and Graduate Student, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University*
- *Commodore Jay Tarriela, Spokesperson on West Philippine Sea Concerns, Philippine Coast Guard*
- *Dr. Frederic Grare, Senior Research Fellow, National Security College, Australian National University*

1040–1100 Coffee/Tea Break

1100–1200 **Breakout Session 3**

Participants will continue the conversations begun in their small groups.

1200–1300 Lunch

1300–1400 **Breakout Session 4**

Participants will conclude their small group discussions and compile their findings/results/recommendations.

1400–1415 Coffee/Tea Break

1415–1500 **Panel 8: Breakout Presentations**

Moderator: *Jeffrey Payne, Assistant Professor, NESAS*

1500–1530 **Conclusions, Review, and Farewell Remarks**

1530 Conclusion of Event

## **BREAKOUT SCENARIO AND RESPONSES:**

The following scenario is built upon real world examples of maritime challenges, and you are charged with reaching a set of recommendations that represent the consensus of your group. These recommendations can be diplomatic, economic, legal, or military in nature.

### INITIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Each of you is assigned to one of two breakout groups. Each group will have one of the two program leaders in the room to assist you with any clarifying questions.

NOTE: Part of the tabletop included one “spoiler” in each respective group that was charged with casually seeking to disrupt agreement and encourage a change in approach. Only the program leaders, not the groups themselves, were aware of the spoilers.

Your first task is to assign two roles among the group. Each group must have a rapporteur who will track the discussions and build the PowerPoint slides that will be shared to the larger plenary at the end of the event. Each group must also elect a spokesperson/representative who will present the group’s conclusions to the larger plenary.

After these roles are determined, your group will begin discussion of the maritime security challenge you face.

- Group 1: Represent one of the largest economic and military/security powers in the region. You are predominately a regional power but have a developing global footprint. You have an adversarial relationship with the largest regional power (called Country C). You are an immediate neighbor of Group 2’s country who you have friendly relations with but are not an ally. You call yourself Country A. Your group represents a “crisis response group” brought together by the chief executive of Country A.
- Group 2: Represent a developing regional economic power that seeks to enhance its military/security capabilities. You do not have an adversarial relationship with any regional actor, including Country A (Group 1’s country). You are the immediate neighbor of Country A. You call yourself Country B. Your group represents a “crisis response group” brought together by the chief executive of Country B.

### THE SCENARIO, PART I:

NOTE: Each Group is NOT Allowed to Engage with Each Other during Deliberations

Late on the evening of the 23rd of February, Country B experienced a sizeable disruption to the capital region’s internet connectivity and communications due to damage to the primary subsea cable serving this part of the country. The cable connects to Country A across a narrow body of water that separates both neighboring states, though Country A did not experience substantial interruptions to its communications. An initial check revealed no problem with either cable landing station. Indicators pointing to the cable being damaged somewhere between both coasts were narrowed to a point near the primary vessel transit corridor between Country A and Country B.

A review by your own intelligence services, as well as several private sector vessel tracking/analysis services revealed a feeder container ship loitering in the general area of the cable damage since 19 February. Besides local fishing vessels of much smaller scale, no vessels were in proximity to the cable disruption at the suspected time. The vessel's history reveals it be flagged continuously to non-regional states that are known to provide flags of convenience. Its current ownership is in a major non-regional power, and it is the only vessel owned by that company. Several of the private sector firms in their analysis have pointed out that this vessel has run "dark" in the past and has often taken odd courses or extended journeys longer than they normally would in the past as well. The vessel is not in the territorial waters of either country, but it still is sailing inside Country A's Exclusive Economic Zone. The cable in question is owned by a group of investors, but was deployed and is serviced by a company in Country A. Country B's communications are still limited due to the cable damage and delays are compounding the costs associated with this incident.

As a crisis response group for each of your countries, please discuss what the proper response should be to this incident – including what government resources should be brought to bear, what government operations need to be directed, what diplomatic overtures must be made, and what role additional stakeholders play. Be as precise and detailed as you can in your conclusions and remember that your group should aim for consensus.

#### THE SCENARIO, PART II – COUNTRY B:

NOTE: Each Group IS Allowed to Consult with Each Other but can only Send TWO Representatives at a Time to Talk with Your Neighbor. It is RECOMMENDED that you determine ahead of time what to share with and what to request from your Neighbor ahead of sending representatives.

In the course of patrolling the area where the cable was damaged, Country B's navy recovers an autonomous underwater vehicle (an ocean glider) that has indicators that it hails from your region's largest power. It was recovered yesterday evening in your Exclusive Economic Zone. Based off commercial-off-the-shelf technology and modular in its design, the glider is primarily used for oceanographic research. The region's dominant power also is currently operating an ocean survey mission in the high seas just outside the Exclusive Economic Zone of Country A. Country B's navy has never encountered a glider from this country previously.

Country B has positive economic relations with both Country A and Country C, with Country C serving as the largest regional trading partner that provides substantial quantities of the country's petroleum.

As a crisis response group for each of your countries, please discuss what the proper response should be to this incident – including what government resources should be brought to bear, what government operations need to be directed, what diplomatic overtures must be made, and what role additional stakeholders play. Be as precise and detailed as you can in your conclusions and remember that your group should aim for consensus.

THE SCENARIO, PART II – COUNTRY A:

NOTE: Each Group IS Allowed to Consult with Each Other but can only Send TWO Representatives at a Time to Talk with Your Neighbor. It is RECOMMENDED that you determine ahead of time what to share with and what to request from your Neighbor ahead of sending representatives.

Country A's navy is not keen on assisting Country B in patrolling the area where the cable was damaged to investigate possible causes and other possible activities in the area. This is because Country C is currently operating an ocean survey vessel just outside Country A's Exclusive Economic Zone (and in proximity to the suspected vessel involved in damaging the undersea cable). Country C has long operated such survey vessels in proximity to Country A and the navy considers them to be doing more than simple surveying. Such survey vessels have never acted divergently from the standard pattern of research vessels.

Other ministries (including the defense and foreign affairs ministries) within Country A want resources directed towards assisting Country B with all speed, as Country C has long been a larger economic partner. The fear is that not responding sufficiently to the harm caused to Country B will push them closer to Country C.

As a crisis response group for each of your countries, please discuss what the proper response should be to this incident – including what government resources should be brought to bear, what government operations need to be directed, what diplomatic overtures must be made, and what role additional stakeholders play. Be as precise and detailed as you can in your conclusions and remember that your group should aim for consensus.

THE SCENARIO PART III – COUNTRY B:

NOTE: Each Group IS Allowed to Consult with Each Other but can only Send TWO Representatives at a Time to Talk with Your Neighbor. It is RECOMMENDED that you determine ahead of time what to share with and what to request from your Neighbor ahead of sending representatives.

Country C, knowing that you are in possession of their ocean glider, has requested its return. You also know that Country A wants the glider. You are not interested in getting embroiled in any of the tensions between either of your neighbors.

As your navy continues to assist in the aftermath of the damaged cable, reports from local fishermen received yesterday detail a sizeable foreign fishing fleet, seemingly marked in a way consistent with Country C's commercial fishing fleets, entering your Exclusive Economic Zone and actively fishing. These foreign fishing vessels are currently not running AIS so you cannot confirm their location or identity and have no evidence that the reports from local fishermen are accurate.

Country C, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has announced a new regional maritime domain awareness software package that fuses various data streams into one visual display. It has offered it to most of the region at no cost and will offer training on how to use it. The software requires particular uploading that can only be offered by government-approved engineers from Country C. Country C is not offering the software to Country A, as they believe



that Country A is actively engaging in misinformation designed to harm relations with your country. Their offer of the software implies the rumored illegal fishing fleet is actually from Country A.

As a crisis response group for each of your countries, please discuss what the proper response should be to this incident – including what government resources should be brought to bear, what government operations need to be directed, what diplomatic overtures must be made, and what role additional stakeholders play. Be as precise and detailed as you can in your conclusions and remember that your group should aim for consensus.

THE SCENARIO PART III – COUNTRY A:

NOTE: NOTE: Each Group IS Allowed to Consult with Each Other but can only Send TWO Representatives at a Time to Talk with Your Neighbor. It is RECOMMENDED that you determine ahead of time what to share with and what to request from your Neighbor ahead of sending representatives.

Country B has recovered an ocean glider deployed by Country C and you suspect that the glider was intended to acquire data in your Exclusive Economic Zone and Territorial Waters. Country C is aware that the glider was recovered and is demanding its return.

A longtime worry of your country has been the overlapping threats posed to your maritime security by Country C. Beyond survey vessels operating in proximity to your waters, Country C's distant fishing fleets have often operated near your Exclusive Economic Zone. These fleets often turn off their AIS. When they do, your own dark vessel detection software shows they are engaged in illegal fishing or activities not consistent with simple transit through your waters. These fishing fleets have also engaged in such actions near Country B – in fact, one such fleet is near Country B's waters at this moment.

Country C's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced today a new maritime domain awareness package for regional states (not offered to you) at no cost and that provides free training. This software fuses various forms of data into one real-time display. During the announcement, Country C claims that the fishing fleet currently near Country B's waters is actually one of your fleets "pretending" to be their fleet. You can show this as untrue but only by revealing propriety data of your state to Country B. Your maritime domain awareness tools are generally not approved to be shared with any foreign actor.

As a crisis response group for each of your countries, please discuss what the proper response should be to this incident – including what government resources should be brought to bear, what government operations need to be directed, what diplomatic overtures must be made, and what role additional stakeholders play. Be as precise and detailed as you can in your conclusions and remember that your group should aim for consensus.

**GROUP RESPONSES:**

## Country “B”

- Initial Crisis: Fixing the damaged cable to end the disruption to capital’s business and government sectors
- Priorities to Take:
  - Fixing the cable comes first and foremost
    - Determine the scale of the damage – a complete cut, multiple cuts, other forms of damage
    - Determine the conditions of where the damage is – depth of cable and difficulty of repair
    - Determine ownership of cable and responsible party for repair; engage with said private sector entity to repair
    - Work to fix the cable
  - What to do with the container ship suspected of damaging the cable
    - Investigation to attribute: get all information available
    - Satellite images must be obtained
    - Sensors/dash units on subsea cables,
    - Request country A to get on board and inspect the ship as it is still reachable for them
    - Reach out to non-regional friends/allies for more info/intelligence
    - Ask flag state for information and consent to board the vessel in question
      - Open registry willing to cooperate with investigation, but flag of convenience may not reply soon
  - Clarifications upon more information received
    - Country A agreed to repair the cable quickly in cooperation with “us”
    - Media announcement of the damage to the cable and joint effort by A and B to repair the cable, investigate its cause, and respond to the incident
    - Accomplished A reaching out to flag state of suspect vessel to board the ship for inspection
    - A temporary hotline established between A and B
    - Investing in a regional mechanism for greater maritime understanding and information sharing being discussed.
  - Presence of glider in area of damage to cable
    - Glider seems commercial off the shelf in nature and has modular design. No confirmation of its programming language
    - Origin of glider must be investigated
    - Determination to study glider, deconstruct it, and potentially use for domestic use.
  - Further Clarifications upon final additional information
    - Hotline from A declared that it will lead a mission to inspect the seabed and welcomes “us” to be involved for transparency
    - Push for greater speed and regular updates on status of repair through A
    - Inform C that glider will be returned and announce to A that glider is being sent back to original owners.

- Initial draft of a joint declaration between A and B regarding cooperation on repairing the cable is confirmed and that investigation into responsible parties will be pursued cooperatively.
- Additional amendment to joint statement proposed by A rejected as “we” do not wish to speak publicly on the glider and its recovery.
- C’s offering of the MDA tool is declined until a demonstration of the tool is provided by C for evaluation. C agreed to request.
- Suspected fishing fleet illegal operating in “our” EEZ to be monitored by aircraft and surface ships to be deployed to suspected area of operation of the illegal fishing vessels.
- Work long-term of standing up a fusion center of our own to assist in receiving more data from a variety of sources and facilitate building of partnerships to enhance “our” capabilities.
- Consider, but not accept A’s offer of an MDA package as there are no details of its depth, its cost, or how it assists “us”

Country “A”

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## Crisis Response: Disruption to Country B’s Submarine Cable Connectivity

Group 1 – Country A

**Scenario-1**  
**25 FEB 2025**



## BLUF - Bottom Line Up Front

- Investigate based on the past incidents: Accidental? Intentional?

- Present actions on priority (National Interest):
  - Media Campaign?
  - Support Initiative through Diplomatic and Military Channel, Coordination meeting for stakeholders
  - Plan for resource management (as per existing SOPs)

- Joint Security based proposed security frame, agreement
- Feedback on planned actions and revision on SOPs



## Scope – full details

- Government Resources
- Government Operations
- Diplomatic Overtures
- Role of Additional Stakeholders





# Government Resources

- **First order to answer.** Is it really about the cable or to find out what are the capabilities you have - Vulnerabilities and what type of capabilities to bring for fast responses
- **Foreign Affairs.** First time happens is different from subsequent ones – if it the first time – targeted or accident?
- **Legal.** EEZ – legal implications? Does it apply here, is there legislation that can be applied
- **Operational response.** Military or Whole-of-Government?
  - Give priority – to repair and establish communication, then investigate whether it is accidental or on purpose. Doesn't mean that the ship was there means it is involved.



# Government Operations

- Public or Non-public responses – need to determine!
- Crime Scene Response at Whole-of Government level – treat as MARPOL case?
  - Collect data – Vessel movement history, Company & FOC check; pick up as much data as possible
  - Determine all other possibilities – tick all boxes before action
  - Evidence collection – swift action to collect evidence before fading– e.g. drag marks of vessel's anchor on seabed, presence of anchor access to the crew.
  - Detainment of vessel backed by evidence – flag state approval, clear evidence to detain the vessel access to crew, confiscation of ship logs and communication devices
- Key concern – Adversary can drive the vessel away and obscure evidence – need inter-service coordination (coast guard, police, private entities) acting at the fastest possible time
- Media Operations





## Diplomatic Overtures

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- What does country B want to do – reach out to Country B to share information to greatest extent
- Do not want Country B to accuse Country A of being complicit as not affected by cable cut
- Provide resource to Country B as gesture of goodwill (A is regional power, while B is less capable)
- Inoculate going into the future – explore contingencies and options with Country B
- Regional bloc responses – regional legislation
  - Inspect vessels and reject travel into waters if unsafe
  - Collect fees to insure against damage



## Roles of Additional Stakeholders

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- Media Response
- Private companies
  - Add sensors on cables and monitoring data
- Insurance
  - Private companies would want to be reimbursed



# Crisis Response: Disruption to Country B's Submarine Cable Connectivity

Group 1 – Country A

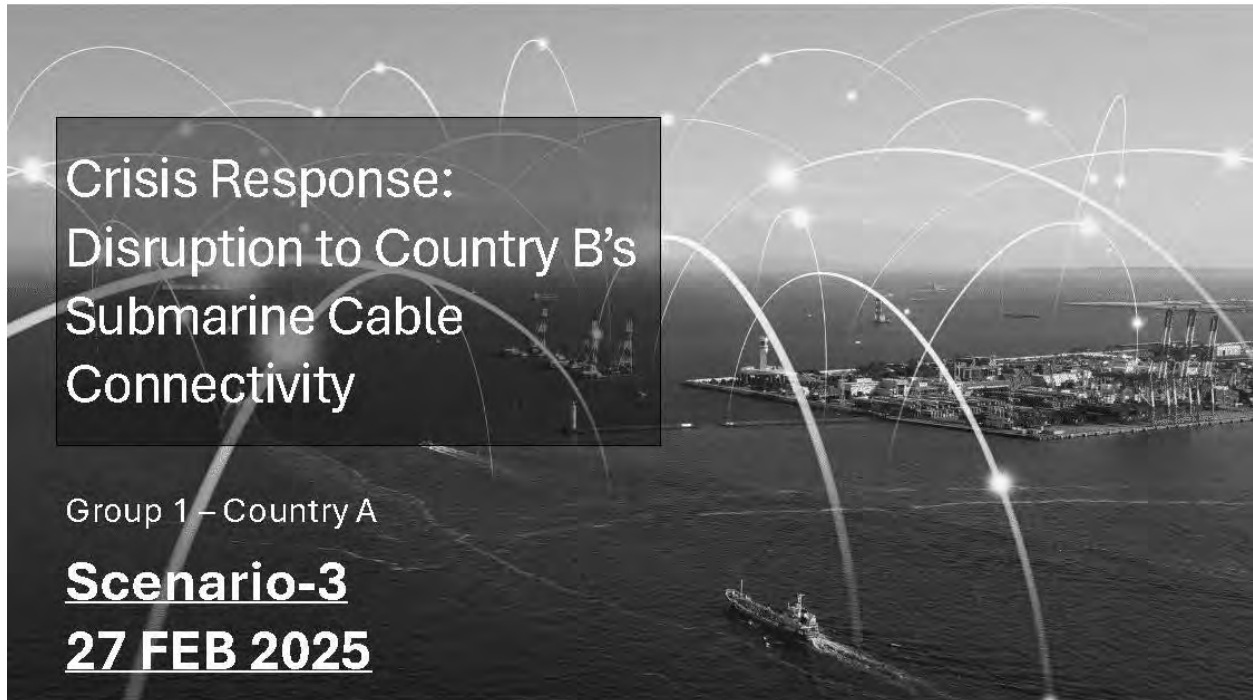
**Scenario-2**

**26 FEB 2025**



- Bilateral talk through diplomatic channel
- Agreement to share information for investigation on captured drone, cooperate to repair, approach for joint boarding operation
- Media briefing on neutral ground maintaining transparency and sensitivities
- Assets management (Military and non-military efforts)
- Actions against survey vessel (through diplomatic channel and military presence)
- Feeder Container through same process





**Government Resources:**

Country A to explore offering Maritime Domain Awareness tools to Country B – caveat not to share info with C.

**Government Operations:**

Leak to media story - Suspicion – create the need for MDA tool; scapegoating Country A – Glider in EEZ, Journalist can cast doubt. – relationship with B is a bit fragile...

Speak to B:

1. Submarine cable doing us best to get operational (two weeks in general)
2. Address dark fleet: (1) Send defence attache to show tracks of fishing fleet - encourage B to board. Encourage to verify via independent commercially available data, (2) Joint patrols with B to see what fishing vessels are? Fisheries patrol aircraft - Examine fisheries record
3. Ask about the MDA software package, then see if can offer parallel/different MDA outfit – willing to participate? Capability of future UDA.

**Diplomatic Overtures:**

Not to draw C into the argument

Requests from Country B:

- (1) Update on timeframe to repair cable – 2 week; cannot be done faster, we are doing as fast as we can,
- (2) Show draft of media release – drafted for consideration,
- (3) Assurance of no bargaining chip,
- (4) Specifics of MDA package



Proposed Statement	Released Statement
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DRAFT IMMEDIATE RELEASE</b></p> <p><b>Joint Statement by Country A and Country B on Incident in EEZ</b></p> <p>Feb. 27, 2025  </p> <p>Country A and B have a long term and good standing relationship. While there has been an unfortunate incident of a damaged submarine cable with investigations are ongoing, Country A has taken all possible steps to repair the cable and restore connectivity at the earliest point possible; at this point of time, 2 weeks is required for full repair of the cable.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px;"><p>In addition, through appropriate and legal mechanisms, and information sharing between Countries A and B, independent observations and boarding verifications by joint operations with representatives from Country A and B, it has been irrefutably proven that Country A is not involved in any IUU fishing endeavour.</p></div> <p>These incidents underscores the need for regional MDA to help us keep track of nefarious incidents occurring in our waters, promote further cooperation and ensure a safe and secure environment for the region.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DRAFT IMMEDIATE RELEASE</b></p> <p><b>Joint Statement by Country A and Country B on Incident in EEZ</b></p> <p>Feb. 27, 2025   _</p> <p>Country A and Country B share a longstanding and positive relationship. Following the unfortunate incident involving the damaged submarine cable, investigations are currently underway. These efforts involve joint operations, including boarding verifications conducted by representatives from both nations. In the meantime, Country A is taking every possible measure to repair the cable and restore connectivity as swiftly as possible. At this stage, full repairs are expected to take approximately two weeks.</p>

## Things to Avoid

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Be MEASURED – need legal basis to justify actions – or it CAN BACKFIRE!!





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