

2019

President's Forum

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PRESIDENT'S FORUM



*International Seapower Symposium:
Security, Order, Prosperity*

THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE once again demonstrated its unique capability to enhance global maritime partnerships when naval leaders from more than a hundred nations converged in Newport, Rhode Island, at the Chief of Naval Operations' twenty-third International Seapower Symposium (ISS) in mid-September 2018. They met to discuss cooperative strategies for enhancing global security, order, and prosperity. ISS is the world's premier naval gathering, bringing together delegations from maritime services around the globe to bolster maritime and national security by discussing common challenges and facilitating shared opportunities.

The College was honored to be the location for this extraordinary event sponsored by the U.S. Navy's Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral John Richardson. The symposium participants included ninety-seven Heads of Navies or Coast Guards and the Presidents of nine Naval War Colleges around the world. Keynote speakers included U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis; Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer; Admiral Timothy J. Keating, USN (Ret.); and Peter W. Singer, strategist and senior fellow at New America.

Secretary Spencer noted: "We seek a true partnership based upon the concept of shared risks producing shared rewards; a partnership in which no single nation is the expert, and the ability to lead resides within all of us. When we work together this way, we can produce an equation where $1+1 = 3$, and everyone benefits."

Panelists and speakers at ISS frequently expressed a shared goal to improve interoperability among the world's navies, acting on the principle that "we are stronger together." Working together in exercises and joint deployments, participating in personnel exchanges and exchange enrollments in schools, and

gathering at events such as ISS enhance mutual security, protect the rules-based order that benefits all nations, and contribute to global prosperity.

In a crisis, the ability to respond quickly and collectively relies on these preexisting bonds among navies and nations. It often is said that you can surge forces to meet a contingency, but you cannot surge trust and confidence among allies. “Every day, our allies and partners join us in defending freedom, deterring war, and maintaining the rules that underwrite a free and open international order,” said Secretary Spencer.

Oceans that once were the physical and psychological barriers that kept nations apart are now the maritime superhighways that bring nations together. Strong maritime forces are uniquely suited to help manage the increasing pace and complexity of change—they make uniquely productive relationships possible. And they have a long history of behaving in accordance with a well-understood and agreed-to set of rules, and of advocating for such behavior.

“ISS-23 is a manifestation of this desire to strengthen the bonds of trust and confidence among partners, and to explore new opportunities on which we can collaborate and from which we can learn,” said Admiral Richardson. “Make no mistake, this desire to sail together in support of our fellow citizens—regardless of the winds, waves, and weather around us—is the current that has drawn us here to Newport.”

Panel discussions, presentations, and one-on-one conversations among the delegates addressed common issues inherent in the maritime domain. These included combined operations, communication at sea, drug trafficking, piracy, smuggling, natural disaster relief, and methods of securing free and open ocean spaces.

The symposium also provided the opportunity to showcase some of the most modern ships in the U.S. fleet. The amphibious transport dock USS *New York* (LPD 21), the guided-missile destroyer USS *Lassen* (DDG 82), the expeditionary fast transport USNS *City of Bismarck* (T-EPF 9), and the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Lawrence Lawson* (WPC 1120) hosted visits and social events aboard the ships for delegates and over one hundred spouses; the latter also participated in portions of the symposium program.

The first biennial ISS was held here in Newport in 1969. It was designed then, and continues now, to allow naval leaders from around the world to meet and discuss common issues and ways to address shared challenges. Previous years’ symposia have resulted in enhanced cooperation in countering piracy, providing disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, coordinating search and rescue at sea (including submarine rescue), and countering arms/drug/human trafficking and fishery/pollution violations.

Long-range planning already has begun for ISS-24, which will take place here at the Naval War College in 2020. Working seamlessly with our global partners takes a steady hand on the helm and constant vigilance to remain on course. We take this responsibility seriously, and there is no more important task as we contribute to the peace and security of our nation and those of our allies.

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(Portions derived from Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kristi Nanco, "Global Leaders Assemble at 23rd International Seapower Symposium," America's Navy, September 23, 2018, www.navy.mil/.)