

Ports Seen as 'Vital Resource' for National Security



Rear Adm. John Mauger, Coast Guard assistant commandant for prevention policy, makes a point during a port security panel discussion at Sea-Air-Space 2022. *LISA NIPP*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The economic role U.S. ports play can't be overstated because they are a vital resource, a Coast Guard official said in an April 6 panel discussion at Sea-Air-Space 2022.

"Twenty five percent of U.S. GDP and employment for one in seven Americans are generated because of port-based activity," said Rear Adm. John Mauger, assistant commandant for prevention policy. "We also know this is a vital resource for our national security. It's how we project power and [provide] humanitarian aid around the globe."

Tony Padilla, a senior adviser for maritime trade and development at the U.S. State Department, agreed on the importance of ports.

“International trade in our nation’s ports support the employment of nearly 31 million people, provide about \$1.5 trillion in personal income and generate over \$5.5 trillion in economic activity, thereby accounting for one quarter of the nation’s GDP,” Padilla said. “Many of our ports safeguard government owned vessels and commercial sealift vessels, so our military can project power abroad. Simply put, without seaports, our economy would be crippled.”

There’s also a dark side to ports that is difficult to monitor said Christopher Hickey, a senior systems engineer at the Naval Research Laboratory.

“There are about 250,000 ship tracks worldwide on a good day,” Hickey said. “But you have to add in the hundreds of thousands of dark ships – the ships not emitting AIS [automatic identification system] – that traverse the globe. While a fair amount of illicit maritime activity takes place aboard AIS-compliant ships, it is these dark ships, or dark targets, that typically pose the greatest threats.

“Domestically, the United States has long maritime borders that for the most part are not monitored on a 24/7 basis, creating a permissive environment that enables massive amounts of illicit goods and cargos to be imported and exported. Drugs. Money. Weapons. And, worst of all, the trafficking of people – all of this moving illegally across our maritime borders every day,” he said.

COVID, War in Ukraine Complicate Global Supply Chain, Speakers Say



Maj. Gen. David Maxwell, vice director of logistics, Joint Staff, U.S. Marine Corps, speaks during a panel discussion on the global supply chain. *LISA NIPP*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. — The global shipping network is extremely fragile in the wake of the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine, speakers on a panel about supply chain logistics said April 6.

Maj. Gen. David Maxwell, vice director of Logistics, Joint Staff, U.S. Marine Corps, said current Navy and Joint Staff operations are focused largely on the Ukraine crisis and “the distribution side of the house,” while also addressing broader challenges.

“Over the last month and a half, what you see is U.S.

TRANSCOM's [U.S. Transportation Command's] ability to leverage really both the military capacity and capability that we have, as well as significant support from the commercial industry in being able to both deploy forces in a very dynamic, responsive time, but also to deliver material in support of Ukraine and the nation's efforts to sustain the Ukrainian forces," Maxwell said.

"As we have been spending that time delivering the forces, posturing them, as well as delivering material, [we are] stepping back into the next part of the question, which is, where do we reconstitute? How quickly can we reconstitute supplies and materials that not only have been drawn down out of Department of Defense resources but also that have been drawn down from partners and allies who have contributed? And how quickly and effectively and efficiently can we get back and reconstitute those materials for those partners and allies and U.S. forces?"

Kurt Wendelken, vice commander of Naval Supply Systems, said the military faces the same distribution issues as the commercial world, but the products are very different.

"A lot of these systems that we operate are built for us by key partners, and they are very complex pieces of equipment," Wendelken said. "Although we did get an education in supply chain during COVID about its general fragility, the products that we're dealing with are very complicated. They are not shampoo, they are not Snickers, they are not things from Amazon. [For] partners like [Lockheed Martin], it can take them a year to two years to go make those things for us, and that is assuming they understand what our demand signal is."

Abby Lilly, vice president of global supply chain at Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems, said human capital is also a big concern. In recent months, she said, there has been a 15% to 20% turnover in some companies that support Lockheed Martin.

“Those companies are struggling to hire new workers to train them to do what we need to do,” Lilly said. “Labor availability is one of the key things that we are concerned about. If you think about the great resignation that has happened in this country in the last several months and the number of people who have left the workforce, that is affecting the defense industrial base.”

Open-Source Data Brings Challenge and Opportunity



Megan Dane, director of plans and programs in the Office of Naval Intelligence, makes a point during a panel discussion on open-source data. *LISA NIPP*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Open-source data is a “fascinating,” if

vexing, issue that has transformed how information is disseminated and consumed, according IT professionals in an April 5 panel discussion at Sea-Air-Space 2022.

“When we say open-source intelligence and open-source information, it could be literally anything you see on the internet,” said moderator Shane Harris, a senior national security writer at the Washington Post. “It could be things that are produced by the press. It is tweets, it is YouTube videos. It is an overwhelming amount of information.”

Panelist Joseph Obernberger, a software engineer in Space & Intel for Peraton, said his interest is in “big data.” Peraton assists government agencies with global national security, enterprise IT and cyber solutions and supports missions that include cyber, digital, cloud, operations and engineering. Obernberger said the problem with scale and managing information is a priority for him. Furthermore, open source is a challenge because there is so much data – “a lot of stuff” – in which the intelligence community is not interested to have as open source.

“[Open source data] is huge problem,” said Obernberger. “The number of Tweets per day, the number of YouTube videos per day. Seven hundred and twenty thousand hours of YouTube videos are uploaded per day. If you were to watch that, it would take 82 years. So, how can we build systems that would scale to that level? If you consider just a billion records. If it takes a computer one millisecond to process a billion records, that is 11 and a half days for one system to do that. We need to deal with trillions of records.”

Panelist Megan Dane, director of plans and programs in the Office of Naval Intelligence, said, “We are really concerned with what types of information we are looking at and what we’re not looking at. We try to really leverage the commercial industry and what you are able to create through big data analysis and things of that nature, and then really pinpoint

through requirements what information sources and streams we need to ingest, and then really clear the way for our analysts so that they don't have to ingest or syphon through all the rest of it. That is really the most important part for us in that front-end proces."

Panelist Andy Henson, a senior vice president for artificial intelligence at SAIC, said it has "gotten harder to know what matters." He suggested a method for handling so much data involves knowing what to look for.

"My simple filter is, what question do we want to ask with the data?" Henson said. "That gets rid of a lot of noise. What question do we want to ask of the data, and then we can get to a real subset of the data and start getting at some of those challenges."

Early Days in the Sea Services Helped Focus Their Careers, Women Leaders Say



Rear Adm. Megan Dean, director of government and public affairs at the Coast Guard, makes a point during the Women's Leadership session. *LISA NIPP*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Senior-level women from across the sea services shared personal and professional insights and anecdotes about their earliest days in the military, and what helped guide them to the tops of their fields, in a panel discussion on Women's Leadership on April 5 at Sea-Air-Space 2022.

U.S. Navy Capt. Emily Bassett, serving as moderator of the panel, also hosted the event on behalf of the Sea Service Leadership Association. Bassett is president of SSLA, the only nonprofit, national, volunteer-driven organization dedicated to the promotion, advancement and mentorship of women in the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association.

"Today's event is a women's panel, but really it's about people," Bassett said. "It's not just about diversity of gender, it's about diversity of thought and it's about

bringing our whole selves to the table. Today's focus will be women leaders ... who have made it to the top of their teams [and] who are willing to share their story."

Maj. Gen. Bobbi Shea is the legislative assistant to the Commandant of U.S. Marine Corps. Shea described herself as a "distracted youth" when she was a child growing up.

"I spent a lot less time in high school than ... I should have," Shea said. "So, I enlisted in the Marine Corps really not knowing what I was getting into. But I will tell you when I put my feet on those yellow footprints in Paris Island, I tell people it was like coming home. Coming home to place that I had never been before. The discipline, the challenges, the rigor, the teamwork – all of these standard, base concepts quite frankly were foreign to me growing up."

Shea said what she learned early on at boot camp was that meeting the challenges and standards was not so much about personal ambition, but "what you could bring to the team." She said this thinking, more than personal ambition, drove her behavior and informed how hard she worked and how hard she tried.

Rear Adm. Megan Dean, director of government and public affairs for U.S. Coast Guard, said she wasn't sure she was a good fit for the Coast Guard when she attended the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Her feelings changed shortly after she graduated.

"I will tell you, I graduated, I got my commission. I showed up to my first unit, which was a 210-foot Coast Guard Cutter," Dean said. "Our mission was mainly search and rescue and law enforcement all up and down the East Coast to the Caribbean, and I will tell you that I felt like I fit – that my talents matched those of my chosen profession."

Navy Budget Should be Driven by Strategy, Not the Reverse, Del Toro Says



In his speech Del Toro reiterated his support for Adm. Mike Gilday's vision for distributed maritime operations. *LISA NIPP* NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The U.S. Navy budget “should be driven by strategy and not the strategy driven by the budget itself,” said Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro at the April 5 luncheon keynote at Sea-Air-Space 2022. “That’s why we’ve put together a clear strategy to deliver the lethal, resilient, sustainable, survivable, agile and responsive course called

for in the 2022 National Defense Strategy.”

The budget faces likely headwinds in Congress, where some lawmakers say it doesn’t do enough, but Del Toro emphasized the importance of maintaining the trust and support of American taxpayers so each dollar reaches the American warfighter in the most efficient and effective way, while also ensuring the warfighter is equipped with the most effective platforms and equipment.

Del Toro said the Navy Department’s strategy is rooted in three guiding principles.

The first, he said, is to maintain and strengthen the nation’s maritime dominance, so forces can deter potential adversaries and fight and win if necessary. The second deals with empowering U.S. Sailors and Marines by fostering a culture of warfighting excellence founded on treating each other with dignity and respect. Del Toro said the third principle is to strengthen strategic partnerships across the Joint Force with industry and with international partners around the globe.

“It’s clear, it’s direct, it’s concise,” Del Toro said. “In order to maintain our maritime dominance, we have to be serious about building and maintaining the right capabilities to win tomorrow’s wars. The National Defense Strategy for integrated deterrence requires us to campaign forward from the South China Sea to the Arctic to the Mediterranean and to the Gulf. And that is indeed what we are doing.”

Del Toro said right now the Navy has 74 ships deployed around the globe, including four aircraft carriers and two assault ships. Furthermore, he said, every one of these ships operates as part of a fully networked, agile and survivable fleet capable of delivering coordinated, long-range fires and unmatched lethality from many points at once.

“That’s the power of distributed maritime operations,” said Del Toro. “I strongly support, let me be clear, I strongly

support Adm. [Michael] Gilday's vision for distributed maritime operations and all aspects of the Navy's navigation plan."

He said the Navy plans to continue progress on new programs such as the Columbia-class submarine and Constellation-class frigate, and "we will also invest in our amphibious fleet, fully funding an additional LHA and an additional LPD [landing platform/dock] this year," Del Toro said. "These warships are vital for the organic mobility and persistence of our Marine Corps. Always in high demand as a Swiss Army knife to meet the needs of the Joint Force, the modern amphibious ready group and marine expeditionary unit are indeed the '911 call' for combatant commanders in the most dynamic and volatile situations, humanitarian disasters and combat."

Del Toro said he is intent on maintaining as much fiscal transparency as possible – something he said is informed by "an abiding respect for the American taxpayer of today and tomorrow."

"We must build and prepare the most powerful and agile force that we can in the most efficient way possible while preserving options for future leaders to adjust to a changing security environment," Del Toro explained. "We have not always done that in our past. I don't want tomorrow's secretary of the Navy to have to choose between building the right capabilities or maintaining high-cost legacy platforms that don't meet our needs today."

Working With Allies and

Partners Key to Maintaining Deterrence in Indo-Pacific, Speakers Say



Adm. Samuel Paparo, commander of the U.S. Navy's Pacific

Fleet, said it's critical to continue to build strong partnerships around the world. *LISA NIPP*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The U.S. military, and its allies and partners, should make sure countries that would upend the international order in regions like the Indo-Pacific pay a steep price so it's not worth the effort, Adm. Samuel Paparo, commander of the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet, said April 4.

"Everything that we do must be underpinned by a profound and real capability to bring to bear overwhelming costs that exceed that which can be gained by those who would upend the international rules-based order," he said at a panel on the Indo-Pacific region.

He added that "deterrence is not an activity, but it is an outcome."

Paparo reinforced the importance of allies and partners. A critical line of effort is to continue to build strong partnerships around the world, and these relationships inform the Navy's posture and presence in the Indo-Pacific region, he said.

"There is a saying that we can judge our character by the friends that we keep. And, I along with everyone in this room, are pretty proud of the wide-ranging international solidarity of actors with whom we are allied and partnered," Paparo said. "... It is the fact that our allies and our partners come as they are in accordance with their sovereign desires, in accordance with the international rules-based order, and we find ways that we can team together."

Paparo said the final line of operation and the one that "encompasses all" is the importance of communicating effectively. He said our adversaries must know what our intentions and what our capabilities are to build that deterrent force.

"We must be aligned along with our allies and partners, and

then the American people who support us with their hard work every day, who pay the bills for the security and the well-being that the joint force and all of government delivers, must know what we're doing," Paparo said.

Vice Adm. Michael F. McAllister, commander of Pacific Area and U.S. Coast Guard Defense Force West, said the Coast Guard's role underscores Paparo's emphasis on the importance of partnerships in and around the Indo-Pacific region. He said the Coast Guard has worked successfully to contribute to regional stability and security.

"While we are a military organization, we also act as a civilian organization, we are law enforcement authorities, regulatory authorities, and, we are good at disaster response," McAllister said. "The types of activities that would be familiar are capacity building in the region, joint operations, shared education and training, [and] information sharing, particularly in the unclassified realm, which allows us to engage with more partners. But we are really big on trying to build those bilateral and multilateral relationships that build confidence and capacity for regions in the nation to be able to exert sovereignty in their waters as best they can."

Representing the State Department on the panel, Camille P. Dawson, deputy assistant secretary, Office of Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy, said the recently-released Indo-Pacific Strategy is the Administration's policy that lays out the U.S. vision for the region. That is a vision of "a free and open Indo-Pacific that is connected, prosperous, secure and resilient," she said.

Dawson said the State Department plays a fundamental role in the implementation of virtually every aspect of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. She described the five key pillars of the plan, which are to advance freedom and openness; build collective capacity within and beyond the region; promote

shared prosperity; bolster Indo-Pacific security; and, build regional resilience.

Russia is Acute Threat, China is Priority Threat, Speakers Say



Brig. Gen. Sean Salane called the United States a “Pacific nation.” *LISA NIPP*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The U.S. Defense Department will continue to have a priority focus on China despite the global military community’s recent attention to the war in Ukraine, said Elbridge “Bridge” Colby, a former U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy and force development, in a

one-on-one April 4 discussion with U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Sean Salene.

“The China problem remains very grave,” said Colby. “In a lot of respects, this to me is really going to be the core of the defense strategy going forward. We see China continue to be named as the priority challenge. China is the long-term challenge, and the only one that can challenge the United States and our interests in a really sustaining and global way.”

As he prepared to introduce Salene, Colby posited questions about the concept of integrated deterrence, and asked whether the U.S. will prioritize the Indo-Pacific region and over what time period. Overall, he said the U.S. needs a sustainable Indo-Pacific strategy and must carefully consider the nature of its alliances and partnerships in the region. He said the United States must work to fully understand how to deal, for example, with countries like India, which may have a different perspective on Russia than does the U.S.

“What does it mean that Russia is an acute threat whereas China is the priority threat? How are we going to go about doing that? Or do we need to prioritize at all? Some people are saying maybe we double the defense budget and you get out of prioritization,” Colby said.

Salene, the director of the Strategy and Plans Division, Plans, Policies and Operations at Marine Corps Headquarters, said there are four overarching priorities in the National Defense Strategy, among them “first and foremost” to defend the homeland. Other priorities include deterring a strategic attack against the United States and against its allies and partners; deterring aggression from China, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, and then against the Russia challenge in Europe; and building a resilient joint force and the ecosystem that supports it inside the defense establishment.

Salene said the Indo-Pacific region is critically important to the U.S. and its partners and allies, and the U.S. is committed to helping its allies defend their own sovereignty.

“We are a Pacific nation,” Salene said. “You probably know how much trade goes through there. You probably know the value and the rise of Asia, and what it means to the development of the entire world.”

He said the most important themes going forward involve the key strategic advantages of working with allies and partners, and the “integrated nature at which we would apply all of the elements of our national power,” also known as integrated deterrence.

Advising for Growth: Coast Guard's 5th District Monitors Massive Mid-Atlantic Maritime Expansion



The CMA CGM Marco Polo, the largest container ship to call on a U.S. East Coast port, arrives at the Port of Virginia in May. *PORT OF VIRGINIA*

The Port of Virginia is something of a little-understood region on the nation's vast maritime map, and yet is one of the busiest, most strategically important ports in the nation.

Located at Hampton Roads, it ranks seventh among North America's largest ports, with five major terminals (compared to 25 at the Port of Los Angeles, the largest, and probably

best-known port). It's a neighbor to the world's largest naval base, Naval Station Norfolk.

Like much of the nation's maritime infrastructure, the general public often doesn't see the mighty industrial lifting done at a port like the Port of Virginia, which employs nearly 400,000 people directly and indirectly and contributes about \$92 billion annually to Virginia's economy.

Its public profile could increase over time, not least due to the ever-expanding economy in the Mid-Atlantic region that has resulted in a 2.6% compounded annual growth rate since 2015, according to data from the Port of Virginia's 2020 Annual Report. The primary drivers of Virginia's transformative growth – which translates into more cargo, new jobs and bigger regional investments – is the arrival or expansion of multinational companies like Amazon, engineering giant Navien and Acesur, which specializes in IT and enterprise security.

Coast Guard Oversight

The 5th District of the U.S. Coast Guard, which has four sectors stretching from New Jersey to South Carolina, advises on how to accommodate this economic growth while making sure the waterways are also safe for traditional maritime uses.

Rear Adm. Laura M. Dickey, 5th District commander, says there have been a host of changes in Virginia and the rest of the region, from adapting to massive container ships to dealing with renewable energy needs and climate-related initiatives.

"There is a tremendous amount going on across the district," Dickey told *Seapower*. "In addition to our normal Coast Guard missions, we are really seeing an explosion of growth in the maritime transportation system, in the ports and in trying to keep up with that, making sure that the traditional uses of the waterways, and these new uses – or these growing uses – will work in concert with each other.

“And then where is our role in that? [We are] making sure that we’re prepared for these changes that we’re seeing, and doing our part to evaluate them, and doing so in a holistic way that integrates all the different aspects of what happens in a port, or the approaches to our ports from offshore.”

Dickey said the Coast Guard team in the 5th District is adapting much like their maritime partners to new uses of the waterways, including offshore renewable energy initiatives – mainly wind farms – and, to a lesser extent, preparations for sea level rise.

With new construction in the region, for example, the Coast Guard is tasked with examining these projects and their parameters. It’s more of an advisory role rather than a regulatory or law enforcement capacity, an important distinction given the cross-section of different interest groups and government agencies.

“The Port of Virginia is going through some amazing expansion, [and] there is a tremendous amount of activity going on,” Dickey said. “We have our traditional [missions] but we also have some uncharted territory and this explosive growth that all has to be harmonized ... so that these activities in these ports happen safely and are done in a way that supports the economy but also takes into consideration all of the other traditional uses of our waterways.”

Dickey said wind farms are at the center of new development throughout the 5th District. There are at least eight projects in development potentially in the Mid-Atlantic region. In Virginia, the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind project is in its initial phase. Located about 27 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach, the pilot project consists of two 12-megawatt turbines that cost about \$300 million and are expected to generate enough electricity to power 3,000 homes. It is the second offshore wind farm operation in the United States after Block Island Wind Farm in Rhode Island.

"Wind farms are huge," Dickey said. "It is an emerging area, and it is one where the Coast Guard is not responsible for signing off on the permit, but we do play a role in advising the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and others. Our role is to review the projects and see how they fit with traditional uses of the waterways to make sure that we are able to do our own missions."

The Coast Guard works with multiple partners, interest groups and fellow federal agencies on wind farm programs, having done so in the Northeast for more than two decades to support the construction of wind farms in Block Island and Nantucket Sound (the latter was rejected by local interest groups in 2017). Communication, transparency and sharing knowledge are the key to successfully executing such projects.

"If you have wind farms that are too close together, can you still do search and rescue properly in there, or do they run into traditional fisheries grounds, or are they in the way of traditional or necessary fairways so that commerce can come in and out?" Dickey said.

"There are an awful lot of these projects. It is the wave of the future, and it is something that we are having to rapidly adjust to make sure that we're looking at things in a holistic way. We are working with headquarters and everybody to make sure that we come up with a process that is repeatable and standardized in a sense but is also flexible to adjust to the particulars of each project."

Dickey cited several port deepening projects, among them the Ports of Wilmington, North Carolina and Delaware Bay, where ongoing deepening and dredging of ports and harbors is essential for handling the increasingly larger container vessels coming daily through the port to one of the area terminals.

Dickey described a constant cycle of challenges in keeping up

with growing trade volume at the Port of Virginia, which is the No. 1 exporter of vegetables and soybean products, and a leader in recycled wastepaper and animal feed exports.



The Ewell, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Norfolk District survey vessel, sails past cranes at the Virginia Port Authority's Norfolk International Terminal. The first phase of Norfolk Harbor's deepening project is set to begin next January. *U.S. ARMY / Patrick Bloodgood*

Fewer, but Larger, Ships

In late May of this year, the CMA CGM Marco Polo, the largest container ship to call on a U.S. East Coast port, arrived at Virginia International Gateway, marking a milestone for the Port of Virginia. The vessel is nearly 1,300 feet long and can carry 16,022 20-foot equivalent units.

"[Trade] is such a huge part of our economy and globalization and the Coast Guard has got to make sure that it happens safely, and how do we do that," said Dickey. "The Coast Guard is agnostic on all of this. Our job is to make sure that maritime activity occurs safely and is deconflicted."

Also underway are tunnel and road expansions at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel and with the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel (HRBT) Expansion Project. In a groundbreaking ceremony in October 2020, officials kicked off the \$3.8 billion HRBT Expansion Project, which will add twin, two-lane bored tunnels and widen portions of Virginia's Interstate 64 to reduce congestion and ease access to the Port of Virginia and Naval Station Norfolk. The project, which gets underway in 2022, is the largest infrastructure project in the commonwealth's history.

"The [projects] are going on across the Mid-Atlantic region as these ports all try to remain competitive," Dickey said. "It is an interesting thing where the volume of ships goes down because [the vessels] are able to carry so much more. But you

need to accommodate these large ships, and what does that do for the safety of ships as they try to pass each other in channels? Does it shut down things?”

Dickey said her team in the 5th District is doing is Port Access Route Studies, or PARS, which ensure, in part, that new projects and construction are integrated with the potential future uses of areas.

“How do we make sure that the waterways and approaches to our ports are deconflicted with all the different types of things that people want to do?” Dickey said.

“We are reviewing the access to ports. How do we get ships moving in and out of our ports and navigating here in the safest manner, and then what is the impact of a wind farm? Where can those even be permitted to be leased, [and] does that fit with access to the ports? That entails outreach to all the stakeholders, whether that is private industry, the DoD, recreational users, commercial fishing users and environmental groups,” she said.

“We are well postured, because we are very tightly [linked with] our port partners in each location. We have area maritime steering committees and consultative groups where we know most of the folks, so we get a sense of what’s going on and what the impact might be, and then we take a look at these projects.”

Ensuring

Friendship,

Cooperation and a Shared Doctrine: U.S. Southern Command Checks in With Central, South American Partners



Adm. Craig Faller, commander of U.S. Southern Command (back row, fourth from left) and Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Bryan Zickefoose (back row, fifth from left), senior enlisted leader of SOUTHCOM, are flanked by U.S. military instructors of the 20th Special Forces Group of the Massachusetts Army National Guard at a Joint Combined Exchange Training on Aug. 23 at Vista Alegre Infantry Training School in Asuncion, Paraguay. Also pictured is Paraguayan Col. Bienvenido Silva (back row, second from left), commander of Paraguay's Joint Special Forces Battalion, whose 30-plus soldiers trained for more than a month this summer with the 20th Special Forces Group at Vista Alegre. Defense Department

A delegation from U.S.

Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) embarked on a three-nation, 10-day tour in South

America at the end of August, traveling along Brazil's coast for multi-nation

military exercises, then cutting across the continent to observe military

training in Paraguay followed by a diplomatic mission to Lima, Peru.

On its second multination trip this year to South America, the Miami-based SOUTHCOM staff, headed by its commander of 11 months, Adm. Craig Faller, has under Faller's concerted guidance virtually landed running since his swearing-in in last November, overseeing a tireless travel itinerary to visit

every nation and dependency in the central and southern reaches of the Western hemisphere while seeing to the implementation of programs, attending events and monitoring the well-being of the command's extended embassy and military staffs.

Check out the digital edition of October's *Seapower* magazine [here](#).

Even as Faller and his team are focused on commitments set forth in its May 2019 strategic plan, "Enduring Promise for the Americas," SOUTHCOM's achievements to date include a remarkable checklist of already-cemented programs, including medical and rescue operations, military training and civic and community development.

With an area of responsibility that includes 31 countries and 16 dependencies in Central America, South America and the Caribbean, the command's impact is playing out in Panama, Guatemala, Honduras and Columbia. In addition, SOUTHCOM governs the ongoing medical assistance mission of the USNS Comfort and operates in Brazil's Amazon rainforest, where a joint U.S. and Brazilian military medical team recently completed a 26-day riverine humanitarian mission to provide medical care to isolated communities along the Amazon.



U.S. Southern Command's Adm. Craig Faller speaks during the South American Defense Conference Aug. 20-22. Military leaders from 14 nations met during the conference to discuss

cooperation for humanitarian operations, disaster response and countering transnational threats. SOUTHCOM Public Affairs/Jose Ruiz

Meanwhile, Faller kicked off

the SOUTHCOM tour on Aug. 19 at Base Naval do Rio de Janeiro, where he and Adm.

Leonardo Puntel, commander of the Brazilian Operational Navy, presided over

opening ceremonies of UNITAS LX (60), an annual multinational maritime exercise

of more than 3,100 naval forces from 13 countries.

"I think you all should just savor the moment. Look around the room,

look at the group of like-minded professionals that you are with," said Faller,

underscoring a key theme of the SOUTHCOM's Enduring Promise, while sending a

clear message to the South American military teams whom he addressed throughout

his tour.

"We all have so much to learn from each other. Take every advantage of the

opportunity to teach, to make new friends, to build trust.

This is how we are

going to fight. We are going to fight together. As like-minded democracies, as friends,"

he added.

In addition to the U.S. and

Brazil, UNITAS LX participants included naval forces, representatives and

observers from Argentina, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay,

Peru, Portugal, Great Britain and Japan. Unique to UNITAS LX this year, the

Brazilian navy, as host of the event, demonstrated regional

maritime

cooperation in a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) scenario.



USS Carter Hall moves into position on Aug. 23 behind Brazil's PHM Atlantico during Unitas LX. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Ian Parham

"This is the 60th [year] of UNITAS, and today we have more of an emphasis on disaster relief and humanitarian relief," said Puntel, who reflected on Brazil's longstanding maritime ties to the U.S. and Royal Navy dating back to World War I when, during the events of 1917, British Admiralty requested naval assistance from distant allies, including Japan. "The relationship between the Brazilian navy and the U.S. Navy is very important and started back in the first World War when the Brazilian navy sent a task force to Gibraltar to fight against the German navy, and we fought side-by-side with the U.S. Navy, the Royal Navy and the Japanese navy in the mouth of the Mediterranean."

In Rio later that day, Faller

addressed students and faculty at the Brazilian Armed Forces' Escola Superior

de Guerra (War College), where he discussed the significance of the U.S.-Brazil

military alliance and the urgency to elevate the importance of Central and

South American regional partners, which has led to Brazil's designation as a

non-NATO major ally, as outlined in the Defense Department's National Defense

Strategy. To that end, Faller explained how he views the region as a "shared

neighborhood" – a notion that also illustrates the close partnership between

the U.S. and its South American allies.

"I say this neighborhood of the Western Hemisphere because we are neighbors, and we are close neighbors. And, we're partners. And, we're friends," Faller told students and instructors at Brazil's war college. "We share all the domains that we study – and we're fighting air, land, sea, space, cyber – but most importantly, we share values. We share a belief in freedom. We share a belief in sovereignty, respect for human rights and for democracies. The hemisphere is blessed with democracies."

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U.S. Southern Command's Adm. Craig Faller

In his remarks, Faller explained how the United States and SOUTHCOM view regional security in terms of the pervasive and ever-present threats that touch every South American nation, among them anti-government political factions, counter-drug trafficking, illicit mining, money laundering, the influence of violent extremist organizations, Russia's anti-U.S. crusade and criminal ties, China's economic offensive, and to discuss the reality of corruption across governments, militaries and communities in the region.

"You look at what we share, and the opportunity that is presented – it

is also being challenged by the threats we share. The threats we share ... are characterized by a vicious circle that includes corruption," Fallner explained.

"Yes, I do include that as a military threat. Because with corruption thrives criminal networks, transnational criminal networks ... that respect no laws, no boundaries and that are aiming at our way of life. And there are violent extremists – a fancy name that we made up in the United States for terrorists. They are operating here in this neighborhood and they thrive on those same conditions."

At the South American Defense Conference (SOUTHDEC) in Natal, Brazil, SOUTHCOM met with members of the Brazilian Armed Forces for a forum that included defense leaders from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname and Uruguay as well as representatives from Canada, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. With its theme of "regional defense cooperation in response to hemispheric challenges," militaries attending the conference took part in two days of dialog, briefings, roundtables and meetings that focused on humanitarian assistance missions, disaster relief operations and international cooperation targeting transnational threats.

"The world is undergoing transitions with a diversity of threats, demanding joint efforts to neutralize them for regional stability and lasting peace."

Fernando Azevedo e Silva, Brazil's minister of defense

At the conference, Fernando Azevedo e Silva, Brazil's minister of defense, noted the climate of present-day security challenges compared to a decade ago, and, like Faller, emphasized the need for South American countries and their allies to join forces.

"The world is undergoing transitions with a diversity of threats, demanding joint efforts to neutralize them for regional stability and lasting peace," Azevedo said.

SOUTHCOM staff and delegations from other countries included senior enlisted leaders who met concurrently for the third consecutive year to discuss the meeting's top line themes, while also dedicating time to the important role of the region's professional enlisted corps, and examining more closely fitness, talent management, professional development, and the growing contributions of women to peace and security missions.

In a first visit to the region, Faller and the SOUTHCOM delegation traveled to Asuncion, Paraguay, where they met with Lee McClenny, U.S. ambassador to Paraguay, as well as U.S. Embassy and host nation officials. Together, they observed a Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) at Vista Alegre Infantry Training School in which a team of trainees

from a Paraguayan Joint Special Forces Battalion demonstrated an ambush. The exercise was as part of a 30-day bilateral training engagement between instructors from the 20th Special Forces Group of the Massachusetts Army National Guard and about 40 soldiers in Paraguay's special forces battalion.

Faller said Paraguay's challenges mirror the threats seen in other South and Central American countries. A landlocked country in the center of the continent, Paraguay, with its tri-border area where Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil meet, is lodged right in the middle of a critical area in South America that has served as a hub for narcotics trafficking, illegal mining, money laundering and that serves globally and transnationally in the flow illicit materials overseas, Faller said.

"When you look at transnational criminal organizations and the threats, there is a nexus in Paraguay," Faller explained. "A lot of the challenges that Paraguay faces are principally, for them, law enforcement-type challenges – police challenges, border challenges. As in all our countries, their military is very capable and there is a role for the military in support of those police efforts. So, we are focused on education and training and on these J-CETs. [Paraguay] is a small country with a small force. I think we saw how eager they were, how motivated

they were, and how important this was to them.”

SOUTHCOM’s final stop included meetings in Lima, Peru, at Peruvian army headquarters in Lima, where Faller met with Peru’s minister of defense, Peruvian navy Adm. Jorge Moscoso, and Krishna R. Urs, U.S. ambassador to Peru.

At Peru’s Centro Naval, Faller and his staff met with Gen. Cesar Astudillo Salcedo, head of the Peruvian Armed Forces Joint Command. Following the meeting, Faller received, on behalf of the country of Peru, the Medalla Gran Cruz (“Great Cross”), the highest award given to leaders as a show of gratitude and thanks and to honor the SOUTHCOM’s support in natural disasters, humanitarian aid and in multinational operations and training between both countries, while also honoring the commander’s military service.

At several meetings with South American leaders and military personnel, Faller discussed the importance of professionalism as a key concept for achieving unified, effective and enlightened partnerships among allies in Latin America and the Caribbean. A common theme in SOUTHCOM’s Enduring Promise, Faller returned time and again to the topic of professionalism as a means for remaining strong across the hemisphere.

“Building our team, it is about

professionalism. No one here is going to argue about the concept of professionalism.

But what goes into it for a military force, for a security force?" Faller said.

"Whether you are a police force, whether you are foreign service, with professionalism, it is doing the right thing. It is integrity, it is legitimacy, it is human rights, it is

forces that respect talent, and gender integration. We can't fight the future

without accepting the talent into our teams that makes us better and stronger.

We've all got to figure that out as we move forward."

To report this story, Daisy R. Khalifa traveled with the U.S. Southern Command delegation on its three-nation, 10-day tour of South America and the visits with their militaries. This is the first in a series of stories on her trip.