Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet Participates in Western Pacific Naval Symposium



QINGDAO, China (April 21, 2024) Adm. Stephen Koehler, left, commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, meets with Adm. Hu Zhongming, right, commander of the People's Liberation Army Navy, at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium in Qingdao, China, April 21, 2024. Koehler met with Hu to discuss the increasing security challenges in the Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Navy photo)
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From U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

U.S. Pacific Fleet spokesperson Navy Commander Hayley Sims provided the following readout: U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Stephen Koehler participated in the 19th Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS), which was hosted this year in Qingdao,

People’s Republic of China from 21-23 April.

WPNS is a multi-lateral organization with a history dating back to 1987. It includes 23 member and seven observer nations with maritime safety equities throughout the Western Pacific. Responsibility to host WPNS activities, including working groups and symposiums, is rotated annually among member countries on a volunteer basis. WPNS provides naval leaders the opportunity to discuss maritime matters of mutual interest while also giving the United States, allies, and partners an opportunity to underscore the importance of safe and responsible operations in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Discussions during this year’s symposium included maritime issues, areas for cooperation, and military-to-military communication.

While at the symposium, Koehler met bilaterally with heads of Navy from Australia, Bangladesh, Chile, Colombia, France, Thailand, United Kingdom, and Vietnam to discuss the importance of continued multi-lateral exercises and combined operations that enhance interoperability and boost deterrence in support of a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific region. Consistent with standard practice at WPNS, Koehler also met with host-nation representatives from the People’s Liberation Army Navy to discuss the importance of maintaining open lines of communication, operational safety, and regional security concerns.

Admiral Koehler is traveling throughout the region after assuming command of U.S. Pacific Fleet earlier this month. He first made stops to Japan and Republic of Korea where he met with senior officials to discuss the increasing security challenge in the Indo-Pacific and the importance of trilateral cooperation between Japan, Republic of Korea, and the United States to demonstrate the strength and resolve against those

who challenge regional stability.