Center for Strategic and International Studies

"Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia"

Keynote Address By:
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KATHLEEN H. HICKS: All right. Good morning, everyone. I'm Kathleen Hicks. I direct the International Security Program here at CSIS, and I'm pleased to be co-hosting this morning's event with my colleague who directs the Asia Program here at CSIS, Dr. Mike Green.

And it's our pleasure to start our event on "Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia" with a talk by Admiral John Richardson. Admiral Richardson is the 31st chief of naval operations. He began that position in September of 2015. He sits, as the CNO, at the forefront of discussions about, of course, how we use naval presence and naval capabilities in our deterrence efforts, but also as part of that joint community that's advising the president and the secretary of defense on issues of deterrence, the role of military forces as part of an integrated package of solutions on deterrence. Most importantly, I just learned that Admiral Richardson is the proud father of a recent UVA grad, so we're very proud of him for that.

And, without further ado, Admiral Richardson. (Applause.)

ADMIRAL JOHN RICHARDSON: Well, thank you, Kath. And thank you and Dr. Green for having me speak here today, inviting me here. And it's a bit of a heavy lift. It's kind of, you know, a big talk to start off so early in the morning. It's kind of like waking up and getting some beef wellington for breakfast or something. So hope everybody's had some coffee and had a chance to settle down. And we'll step through this – I'll try and get through this pretty briskly so that we can get to the – kind of the dialogue part of the discussion as quickly as we can.

And I just thought I'd talk about three major things. One is a little bit of a review of the strategic environment and how that may affect our approaches to deterrence; how the Navy contributes to deterrent calculations; and then some questions that we face. In fact, I think I've got as many questions in my talk today as I have any kind of information.

So just the strategic environment. And if we've spent any time together in any sense, you've heard me say that, you know, from my perspective, we are very much back in a situation where we're seeing competition – competition at a much broader scale than we've seen for perhaps 25 years. We're now back in the game. And since we were last competing, since we were last in the game, a lot has changed. The game's become much faster-paced, much more complex, and as I said, increasingly competitive.

And in a competition and in a lot of this complexity, I would argue that right now, as always, time is a very unforgiving dimension. And you talk to more and more people about the pace, how would you describe the pace, what about this time – temporal dimension, and the word that keeps coming up over and over is "exponential" – you know, things are changing at an exponential rate. And so, you know, that implies an awful lot for us.

And so the dimension of time is very pertinent to business in the gray zone, as well, I thought. And so, as we're here to really highlight the terrific report, you know, gray-zone approaches seem to me to operate over long periods of time, right, just like a – like a gravitational force or the – you know, the shaping action of the ocean, waves, you know. They don't work in an abrupt sense. They have a long-term shaping type of a force. You know, this temporal dimension is playing out very much in the maritime domain, very much on the seas, and that has a lot of implications for maritime forces.

Just a couple of quick facts to illustrate my point. Megacities, expected to grow, you know, from the current number of 31 to 41 by 2030. And the vast majority of those megacities are within 100 miles of the coastline, and so there's an awful lot of implications for the maritime there.

Depending upon what you read, people have been going to sea for tens of thousands of years. And you know, with that fact, the density of maritime traffic, the amount of maritime traffic, has quadrupled in the last 25 years, which is an amazing thing if you think about the shape of that curve, you know, you start 10,000 years ago and you sort of build a linear type of a(n) increase until 25 years ago, and then you've got this four-times increase.

The sea is becoming more and more a source of our food, aquaculture production increasing 13-fold in the last 25 years.

And then tapping into undersea resources, you know, technology allowing us to reach deeper and deeper parts of the sea floor, climate change giving rise to the shrinking Arctic icecap, which is uncovering not only trade routes but also continental shelves with their attendant resources.

You know, a lot of what's driving this exponential change is information technology and information itself, the growth of information – doubling every two years or something, the amount. And 99 percent of that information, particularly international types of traffic, it travels over telecommunication cables that run on the sea floor.

And so there's a lot going on in the maritime business, and it's changing the character of, you know, our business: naval competition, naval warfare. And, you know, that changing character of the strategic environment, and particularly the maritime, is also being exploited to various degrees by, you know, others in that environment.

I would say that if you take a look at folks out there, nations out there, China and Russia, you know, both of them able to compete on a global scale across all of those domains, from the sea floor to space and in the information or cyber domain, you know, because they possess significant forces, significant capabilities in all of those domains, including nuclear forces. North Korea, relentless pursuit – I mean, we just read the paper in the last couple weeks – for a missile that can – increasing range, a drive to make them nuclear-capable, and it just seems a persistent drive to destabilize things. Iran growing their naval forces; really, you know, geography an ally to Iran – provocative behavior in the Strait of Hormuz, Arabian Gulf and beyond. And then, you know, terrorist groups being used as – almost for battlefield experimentation by a lot of folks, different tactics, techniques and procedures being pursued or tried out in those types of environments.

And this all has implications for deterrence. And in the last 25 years, I think, as you think about deterrence, many things have changed and many things have stayed the same. I think the essence of deterrence remains the same, really remains some kind of a credible ability to inflict an unacceptable cost on another party, some type of a punishment. And if you use Dr. Kissinger's formula, it really has three elements: you've got to have the power to do that; you've got to have the will to use it; and if you're going to have a deterrent effect, your adversary – the person that you're trying to deter – has to have a clear understanding of that so that it has that deterrent effect.

My role in this equation is much smaller than Dr. Hicks – (chuckles) – outlined in my introduction, but it's really to deliver on the power part of that, to make sure that we are – we can do what we say we're going to do; and also, I would say, the understanding part of that, so that we are,

you know, making that capability visible, just as visible as we want. And then the third part is to support policymakers' decisions on, you know, the will part, the will dimension of that equation.

And delivering on the two parts that I keep a close eye on – you know, the power and transmitting, you know, so that other parties can understand that – requires me to have a clear understanding of, you know, where we have advantages relative to others. And I would argue that this is happening in more and more dimensions than before, and I'll talk to just five.

It's kind of five plus one, really. That seems to be just a really great construct. Nobody – (laughter) – nobody can say just six, right? (Laughter.) It's got to – it's got to be five plus one. And so – and these five that I'll talk about, you know, they combine together in different ways, very much consistent with the report we're here to discuss today – kind of like five spices, right, that can combine together to form a tailored blend of deterrence depending upon how spicy you want your meal that day, OK?

And, you know, with respect to the aspects that have changed in the last 25 years, really the last time we've thought deeply about deterrence – you know, we're just getting started to rekindle this thinking – but many others, you know, who we might want to consider our rivals or our competitors, they've been thinking about this deeply for a long time, and particularly with respect to, you know, those capabilities that we have, how they might address them, neutralize them, mitigate them.

So we'll quickly try and run through these five spices of military competition and deterrence, and how they're shifting. And, you know, the spices I'm talking about are not, you know, cinnamon and pepper and fennel and those things, but we'll talk about nuclear, chem/bio, cyber, space, and then conventional. It's kind of like a cooking class in Dr. Evil's kitchen, OK? (Laughter.)

All right. So we'll talk, first, nuclear. Still an absolutely critical part of our deterrent equation, very important part of the mix. Still perhaps the only capability where, you know, both sides lose if deterrence fails. Means for us we must maintain a credible ability to strike back at any who would pose a nuclear threat to the homeland. The Nuclear Posture Review underway is focused on the capabilities we need to do this. And the triad remains the foundation of our military strength in our approach to this. But in this world, even in nuclear, much is changing. There are more people seeking to join this nuclear club, some with what we might want to call a lower technology approach – dirty bombs, small scale, you know, relatively simply technologies, but also some with very advanced capabilities – smaller, more precise, perhaps less, you know, damaging approaches to nuclear weapons, maybe blurring the line between nuclear and conventional.

And as that line erodes, you know, are we entering – we've got to consider the possibility that we're entering an era where some of these nuclear approaches could be considered to be seen as acceptable by some, and how does our deterrent calculus address that? You know, can we – and can we have a deterrent in this area if we don't invest in not only understanding, but perhaps shoring up our ability in this area, the understanding to use some of these advanced approaches. If we don't, does that asymmetry prevent us from having a meaningful deterrent posture? You know, deterrence and asymmetry, not very good bedfellows, right? And so we want to make sure – I would say that that's an important question for us as we go through the nuclear posture review.

Second spice is chem/bio. I think – you know, it remains an attractive option – or, an option, maybe; I don't know if anybody could call it attractive – for those who might see few other areas where they could get, you know, that type of a capability. And advances in biotech make that threat more

potent and more likely as the science advances and spreads. I would say that particularly attractive for states without a lot of resources, or to determine, you know, where the value structure is if we're going to inflict some kind of an unacceptable cost, you know, against what.

And I'm not an expert in this area by any means, but it does seem very – super hard to control once something like that gets out. And so that would hopefully give anybody pause. It's like the old gas attacks of World War I, right, when we were shooting artillery. Well, you just needed a shift in the wind and you were in trouble, you know, for having employed the weapon at all. In fact, there's a reason that that word viral sort of seizes and holds your mind. This is sort of the other side of this chem/bio dimension.

Third spice if you will is cyber, the other viral, right? And there's, you know, a recent by the Defense Science Board that conclude that, you know, the offensive nature of cyber will outstrip the defensive ability of cyber for the next five to 10 years. And so there's an interesting window there that I think demands our attention. And so this clarifies the need not only to deter attacks – attacks like Stuxnet and ransomware and the things that we've seen just very recently – but also not attacks but intrusions, the theft of intellectual property of political manipulation.

And the target in many of these incursions is maybe not such much a – the hardware or something you can identify, but seem to be really targeting the confidence of the institution – you know, the confidence that they can be – the institution can be relied upon to portray the real truth or to protect their assets – some of which may be our assets, you know, my assets. And so this idea of attacking the confidence in the institution.

There's very low barriers to entry in this cyber world. And so there's a tremendous degree of reliance on that right now, both in the military and in the commercial worlds. Very hard to get to attribution when you talk about cyber. And so it makes it attractive in many ways as a tool. And also it seems that there is – you know, if we're thinking about gray zone types of approaches, cyber kind of has a gray zone all its own, right, within the cyber dimension. Is there a cyber gray zone – or a gray zone in cyberspace, maybe?

And then, as you think about a tailored approach that is not sort of one-on-one, you know, nuke-on-nuke, cyber-on-cyber, cyber in particular might be one area where we want to have a coherent, you know, multidimensional approach to deterrence, so that we're not doing force on force. There's a lot of – you know, you've heard it before, that there's maybe kind of a mutually assured destruction dimension to cyber. Avoiding that type of an approach would require a more complex deterrent mix of tools.

A fourth spice in the mix is space. Also poses unique challenges. Another comingling, you know, between military signals, commercial signals, you know, and a lot of collateral damage possible depending upon what sort of action you take in space makes responding to space or deterring space, again, very complicated. And as in cyber, as in so many of these other dimensions that all constitute sort of gray zone types of activities, you know, what constitutes an attack? What is that line, beyond which we say, OK, that was an attack? That's a critical element, and more complex in space than some of the other areas. Again, you know, kind of a gray zone approach emerges. Anytime you have these ambiguities arise, you're sort of moving into that gray zone.

But competition absolutely heating up here, becoming more complicated as satellites just proliferate. You know, microsatellites, minisatellites, CubeSats being launched, a lot of commercial

launches day by day becoming much more frequent. Again, maybe not lending – you know, deterrence in space, not space-on-space, it may not be the answer. Does it lend itself to sort of inflicting a cost in kind because the – again, the consequence is very hard to predict, hard to contain. It just seems very fragile to me, this space business. And you know, because of collateral damage and space debris and those sorts of things that could arise seems very, like I said, fragile. Easy to lose, you know, what we currently have for everybody.

And so, you know, you have to think about, you know, who benefits the most if all of space is, you know, taken down, or significantly degraded. And it's likely an area where, you know, some – again, you know, trying to get as much clarity or reduce ambiguity as much as you can – as much as you possibly can. And, you know, reducing the harm that's inflicted in other venues. Maybe, you know, some kind of United Nation convention or something along those lines.

A fifth spice that is conventional deterrence. The trends here, again, are really alarming, staggering. I would argue that, you know, because of advances in space and other areas, you know, the era of competition for precision is moving to an era of competition for decision superiority. And so if you think of just the OODA loop – observe, orient, decide, act – we have really concentrated on that first O, the orient – the observe, right? And so if we had better information, right, we could get more precision, and that would lead to better orientation, decisions and actions.

But as these satellites and other sensors proliferate and become ubiquitous, that – the playing field on that observe part of that cycle is really leveling out. In fact, data is becoming – you know, it's just coming in avalanches. And so it shifts the competition now to who can sift through that data, orient themselves better, and then made a decision. If everyone can observe, and the data is, you know, just in monstrous amounts, you know, the quickest to figure out what matters and to make a decision is going to be the winner.

And this is going to involve all sorts of information-types of approaches – data analytics, big data, however you want to think about it. I think it lends itself to hard thinking in what deception means now. So if you think about – I'll just use a sports analogy, right? So you're preparing your team for a game across the cross-town rival on Saturday. What does it mean when you invite that cross-town rival to come and watch all your practices? I mean, how do you prepare for that game? It's got to be a fundamental shift. But I think that that's where we're headed.

Technologies like autonomy and artificial intelligence are going to challenge us there – not just our laws and policies, but really I think significantly our culture. And we have to move this conversation forward as quickly as we can, but also be clear-eyed about, you know, what we might be willing to do relative to some of our competitors there. Seems that we need just some serious game theorists to help us out, test out these theories, do a series of games in this area. I'm hiring in that area, if you're a game theorist in the audience and you're interested in joining the team.

And, you know, conventional deterrence remains highly relevant to the maritime context. You know, navies around the world are – let's say, it's a growth industry. It's sort of a maritime decade or two approaching us. And so as folks – as nations hope to expand their maritime influence and seek to respond to growth, I think that this conventional deterrence idea is going to be growing as well.

So this brings us to this gray zone. You know, increasing reliance on these approaches I think will be very logical – these gray zone approaches – for those who want to not take us on where we are – in our areas where we are strongest, and perhaps believe that we're not very well-postured to respond

in these other areas and, you know, our transparency and our democracies and all those things – they may appear in the short term to make us more vulnerable, but I would – I would argue that in the long term they are our greatest strength.

And it requires a way of thinking and collaboration that, you know, might require us to adapt going forward. And I concur so much with the conclusions of the study that, you know, to work deterrence must be very tailored to the situation at hand – a unique blend of some or all of those five spices for the situation at hand. So the gray zone is the plus one – five plus one. And then, you know, if we go back to this idea of, you know, the dimension of time. And so much of our environment moving very quickly – exponentially, if you – if you buy that.

These gray zone approaches manifest themselves over longer time – you know, sort of these slow – this gradual force that acts and shapes. And so, you know, how do deter the frog from even entering the pot, right? Or how do you deter the cook from turning the heat up in the pot so that the frog doesn't boil? You know, what exactly are we trying to prevent in gray zone deterrence? Is it even desirable to deter in the gray zone? You know, so many of the other dimensions that we talked about today seem that they're almost all or nothing, right? And so chem/bio or space or nuclear. And so you would want to deter activity in those dimensions.

You know, is there a need for some kind of an outlet, you know, if you will, to allow nations to provide some kind of a venue to show a willingness to act in ways that are not catastrophic – just an outlet for action? I agree with the report that in the gray zone, alliances are very important. And when an ally feels like they are maybe subject to maybe the same coercive forces that we are, and is willing to partner closely together, then we should work to tighten that alliance. Gray zone activity often involves some kind of challenge to international norms or rules, rules that govern the commons. And so, you know, those are international venues, international areas. And so if we can get international approaches to those, I think that that strengthens our deterrent effect.

And then, as a report talks about, you know, what – how much risk are we willing to absorb as we do seek opportunities to act? The Navy, I would say, just peaking a bit parochial, plays a key role in most if not all of those dimensions, the deterrence, and certainly in the combination effect. In nuclear deterrence, that's maybe the clearest part. You know, our number-one modernization priority is the continued viability of the undersea leg of the strategic deterrent triad. And we're working hard to make sure that the next generation of submarine is a survivable and can continue to provide that alert coverage in an uninterrupted way.

But also, by being, you know, just convention Navy forces, by virtue of their presence forward all around the world, think in particular they make a unique contribution. And it goes, again, along with this dimension of time. You know, the Navy and Marine Corps team is sort of the alert force. We're present there. We can move quickly to the scene of a crisis. And so that allows us to hopefully have a deterrent effect to prevent any of this sort of bad behavior or hooliganism from occurring. And then if it does occur, that initial response may be able to mitigate it, deescalate it, so that it doesn't rise to anything more. So there's this sort of very quick, high bandwidth type of a response that the naval force gives our national leaders.

But there is also, on the other side of the temporal scale, this present and persistence over time, a naval kind of, you know, continued assurance and a long-term deterrence effect – you know, a shaping effect that allows us to engage – particularly when relationships are complex. You know, it allows this sort of persistence in our message, persistence in our approach. Operates very much on the

same time scale that some of these gray zone approaches operate. And so it provides us a counter narrative. And so, for instance, you know, conducting a freedom of navigation operation all over the world to demonstrate, you know, that kind of persistent, consistent, non-escalatory, over time approach for advocating for international norms and laws.

In the middle, you know, we've got the quick response that hopefully can serve to deter or, if not, deescalate. And in the long term you've got this shaping effect from our presence. In the middle it's sort of, you know, conflict, if you will. And the Navy's a key contributor to military operations there as well, as we've seen today.

And so, you know, the Navy, very involved across the deterrence spectrum. We are looking to enhance that even further, so that we can continue to sort of demonstrate that we are able to impose what we – you know, an – a potentially unacceptable cost. So we're adding to the lethality of our current platforms, adding to the lethality of the fleet, keep pace with the security environment and the technology that's out there in the conventional context. So we have, you know, teams out there working very hard in the cyber domain, working hard to get us on the right side of the cost curve with weapons that can have a deterrent effect, enhancing our resilience, contributing to the joint force approach to space. And so we're involved in – you know, across all elements of that deterrent mix that we could put together.

So I'll just maybe finish up with some – you know, some questions that have been threads through this quick talk. Deterrence, like the rest of the environment, growing increasingly complex. And as the report describes, you know, the – I think you used the term, you know, simultaneously solving a Rubik's Cube in many dimensions.

The deterrent mix of the five spices must be carefully thought out. It might be that a simple, you know, like-on-like approach is appropriate. But, you know, a more sophisticated approach would include the other modes, other dimensions of deterrence, perhaps responding through other means when required. It would be tailored to specific actors, but at the same time we've got to be mindful that the whole world is watching, and so it has to hold together across, you know, all situations. Other actors will be watching what we do to one.

These types of deterrent approaches – as always, but even more complicated and challenging now – must be informed by solid strategic intelligence about what the other side – their capabilities and what they value, and I think that these days that's just a tremendous task for the intelligence community. The high-end competitors are able to pose unique challenges using all five of the spices, five plus one. And low-end competitors, you know, they can operate in the gray zone and maybe just use a select few of those tools.

We need to be as clear as we can to lend – to reduce ambiguity in this gray zone our specificity of our commitments, the implications for our allies and partners, what our tolerance for risk might be. But a question: If speed is a dominant characteristic of today's environment, how does this acceleration, this exponential type of pace, affect deterrence? You know, in many ways, I don't know if speed and deterrence are good bedfellows.

And this is different in different avenues. You know, cyber, just by its nature, moves at the speed of light. But, you know, if you go back to sort of the beginning of deterrence theory and nuclear, I would say that that – the one thing about the undersea leg was it gave you that second-strike capability, right, that guaranteed second strike, and that slowed things down a little bit. You really had

to think things through. It wasn't just sort of ICBM versus ICBM. That was sort of a high-bandwidth structure, very, very quick decision-making possible. And so, as we think about deterrence, things that slow the process down a little bit, buy us time, seem to be beneficial. And so, you know, is there a way in some of these other dimensions to have something like the SSBN, a – you know, an assured second-strike capability in space or an assured second-strike capability in cyber? How would we build something like that to slow this down?

In some of – if we can't do that in areas like space, where there's kind of – you know, where you could lose all capability or the vast majority of your capability, you know, who has more to lose? If space goes away, who loses the most? And how does that affect our deterrent calculus?

And then, as technology makes some of these deterrent effects more feasible. We talked a little bit about nuclear, you know, electromagnetic pulse types of weapons. You know, what effect does that have on our approach to deterrence strategy? How do we craft that mix, that optimum mix?

What are the – asymmetry. What are the limits or the possibilities for deterrence against weak or non-state actors?

So, you know, again, just kind of summing up, this deterrence has not gotten any easier over the last 25 years. The Defense Department is tackling these challenges this summer in many ways. And so your report is perfectly timed to help us think through that, and I appreciate that – making a real contribution to perhaps, you know, our greatest need today, which is a community of committed, smart, high-quality thinkers that can rejuvenate the – what I think needs to be a robust dialogue in government, in the private sector and academia, you name it, around these deterrence questions.

So I appreciate everybody being here this morning. I hope that you'll continue to stay engaged on this critical question of deterrence across all dimensions, including the gray zone. These are really critical combinations for us to get this right going forward. And I want to thank you for listening to my talk this morning, and I look forward to your questions. So thanks a lot. (Applause.)

MS. HICKS: Thank you, Admiral Richardson. That was a very thoughtful and helpful talk to start our day.

I want to start on very naval issues. The implications of what you said – consistent, persistent speed – do seem to prejudice a need to be forward, which does seem to prejudice the Navy also as one of those instruments. Can you talk a little bit about the challenges, and opportunities perhaps, for the Navy in terms of its ability to be forward, given constraints that it faces looking ahead in budget, in readiness, and in developing longer-term, maybe, capabilities that might be in competition with sort of size and scale to be forward?

ADM. RICHARDSON: Right. No, there is – you know, that's kind of the job description of the CNO, right? So –

MS. HICKS: Yes. (Laughs.) In one question. (Laughter.)

ADM. RICHARDSON: Yeah, that's right. (Chuckles.) So I'll just – 15 seconds, I can wrap it up.

There is sort of this constant balance that we're trying to strike, and you just have to sort of take a walk around the world right now to see, OK, you know, very present, doing legitimate work in the Eastern Mediterranean, and that's getting, you know, more and more challenging – you know, the Baltic, you know, those areas. So you're there.

Continue to swing to the East and you're – you know, you're in the Middle East and the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf and that area – you know, present there, and hopefully having a positive effect.

And then of course, you swing around further, so far east that now you're west in the Pacific. And, you know, the Indian Ocean as well becoming more and more – so there is this – you know, this capacity dimension that has to be addressed if we're going to continue to be a global power and, you know, protect our interests around the world. So numbers matter. And, you know, we – our thinking, our studies, studies of others have all pointed to, in this new security environment, you know, more navy is required. So that's one, you know, driver in terms of where we need to invest.

But there is also this question of capability that you raised, and so how do we make each one of those platforms more capable and, you know, more affordable? And I would say that technology is giving us opportunities to make real strides there, and one of those technologies being unmanned, you know – so can you get after some of these responsibilities that we have without a manned platform. Then there's, you know, just sort of sensor weapon-types technologies that can help us there as well.

And then I think that there's – in this – to get at sort of exponential rates of increasing naval power, this idea of information and networking is a very powerful one. So I kind of see it as three layers. There's the – you know, there's the quantity, the capacity. You've got to have sufficient capacity there to cover down on our interests. Physical presence matters. But then there is this sort of platform-level capability and there's this networking dimension that stiches it all together.

MS. HICKS: So there's also the element of what you're – what the navy's doing as it forward, if you will. And we had just last night or yesterday, I should say, the Mischief Reef, freedom of navigation operation near Mischief Reef. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about what you see the role of freedom of navigation operations to be and what expectation – what our expectations should be about the role they play in deterrence.

ADM. RICHARDSON: Well, it's more of an advocacy for the rules or the norms that govern, you know, the international commons. And the – you know, they are part of what we've been doing since 1979. We do them all the world, just sort of contesting excessive maritime claims and showing that these rules matter.

You know, I just came from a conference in Singapore, and when you go down to that part of the world, you – there were dozens of heads of navies there. They're all talking about that – right? – the need for best rules-based approach to operating in the maritime domain – you know, not only for militaries but even more importantly for trade and prosperity. So it really sort of levels the playing field.

And there are scholars of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea because they're all – you know, all the tradeoffs that were made to arrive at that set of rules, the give-and-take, you know, to come to this package deal, if you will, it matters that that all hangs together as a coherent body that we don't sort of cherry-pick what we like out of that and leave the rest in place. So I think that that's really the role of freedom of navigation ops. And the – you know, the persistence, as we talked about, over a long period of time of doing that kind of shows our continued advocacy there.

MS. HICKS: And then I'm going to turn over to the audience, but if I can ask you one more pretty broad question. If – can you tell us a little bit about the kind of dialogue that you have ongoing today with our Asian allies and also with China, India, others who are major players in the region?

ADM. RICHARDSON: It's a – it's a very rich dialogue, and everybody's looking for a way forward where everybody can prosper and, you know, with all of those folks that you mentioned. And it's very dynamic, you know, I mean, economic, you know, fortunes are rising and falling. And, you know, that's really what's on everybody's mind out there, is prosperity, right? And so to the degree that, you know, we can provide – we the collection of navies can provide security in the maritime dimension to enable prosperity, that's really what's on everybody's mind out there. They just want the people to have a better standard of living and that sort of thing – secure those.

You know, I think that as you look at the entire region, there are areas where some nation – groups of nations even have very – a lot of overlap, a lot of common interests. I would say that just about everybody has some common interests, and we want to make sure we really spend a lot of time talking about making progress in those areas. And then, you know, particularly with our relationship with China, my relationship with my counterpart in China, very clear to say, hey, we've got a lot of common interests even between our two navies. There are some areas where we disagree. I think that's a natural thing when we have two nations of, you know, this power and complexity. And so as we negotiate through those areas where we disagree, let's do everything we can to mitigate and minimize risk so that we don't have some kind of a tactical miscalculation that gives rise to some escalation that – we don't want to spend the energy to have to go through that.

And so some of these are very practical operational concepts – you know, the Convention of Unplanned Encounters at Sea, you know, allows all of those navies in that region of the world to have a sense of – a level of predictability when they encounter each other on the high seas. We come up on the radio, we exchange communications, and things proceed without – you know, they're very predictable, right? And so I think that these types of mechanisms are extremely important to just keep everything from a – keep it predictable, right, and prevent a miscalculation from escalating while we work through our differences.

MS. HICKS: OK, I am going to open it to the audience. We have microphones that will come around, so if you raise your hand and I call on you, give your name, affiliation, and ask a brief question.

OK, so I have one right over here.

Q: Thank you. Admiral Richardson, thank you very much for coming today. Hunter Steier (sp), Center for the National Interest and Columbia University.

Admiral, I understand you recently paid out of your own pocket to bring back into publication a book called "The Rules of the Game", all about how the Royal Navy's ossified personnel structure about a hundred years ago during the First World War contributed to various tactical and strategic problems that it experienced during that conflict. Could you talk a little bit about what aspects of the Royal Navy's example from a century ago do you think the United States – the U.S. Navy ought to avoid emulating and perhaps those elements that should be emulated, and both in warfighting context as well as in the gray zone.

ADM. RICHARDSON: OK, just another simple question, you know?

MS. HICKS: Yeah, well, that's an easy one. (Laughter.)

ADM. RICHARDSON: You know when you come to CSIS you better bring your varsity game.

MS. HICKS: That's right. You're not going to get an easy question. That's right.

ADM. RICHARDSON: Well, first, the reason I – I'll just tell you the quick story that led to bringing "Rules of the Game" back. First of all, it's a terrific book. So if you haven't had a chance to read "Rules of the Game," for a lot of reasons that is a great book about the Royal Navy kind of between Trafalgar and especially Jutland.

And there are a lot of interpretations about what the major messages of that book are and, you know, people agree and disagree with that. So I'm not going to, you know, take a particular side. The reason I – I had the book, and I went to get it. I had lent it to someone who had moved, which we do a lot in our business, and I went online and I said, OK, it's the price of doing business when you're lending books around. I got online and I find out the dang thing was out of print and it was like $85 a copy or something. So I said, well, this book should never be out of print. So we got together and put it back in print. And so now you can get it for a much more reasonable cost, even in your Kindle.

But the – but it's a book, I think, about command and control. That's how I sort of see it. And it's very pertinent to today's challenges. You know, I talked about the network and the power of the network, and I would say that one of the strengths of the way that the United States, you know, exercises military power, and particularly the Navy exercises military power, is that it operates on sort of mission-type orders, where you've got, you know, a firm grasp of commanders' guidance and you can take your team and go beyond the horizon. We're not going to be looking over your shoulder because we have a lot of confidence that you know your job, you're an expert in what you do. We share the same values. You've got a solid understanding of commanders' intents, and I'm going let you go exercise your initiative. I'm going to allow you to address fleeting opportunities that I simply won't have the – you know, the chance to respond to, and I'm going to count on you to go do your mission and come back stronger than when you left, OK?

Many people see that as kind of being in tension with this networked type of approach, where everybody's on a VTC all the time and you are – actually, your boss is looking over your

shoulder all the time, right? And it certainly can be if you let it. But the challenge is to make sure that you get the combined benefits of both of those things without eating away at this idea of initiative. And so the team that has better situational awareness across a broader spectrum is going to win. I believe that pretty strongly. How you dovetail that so that you don't lose initiative, you don't lose, you know, the idea that your leaders can think for themselves, respond and be creative, that's why I think that book is so great. It's just it addresses all those questions.

MS. HICKS: Great.

More questions. I have one right here.

Q: Sorry. Hello, my name is Jonathan Canfield. I'm a student at Wesleyan University and affiliated with the U.S. Asia Institute.

My question is about Japan's security divergence from the U.S. and how it's deepening and extending its bilateral security relations in the region to create this multilateral framework through capacity-building programs. And just as a preface, in the 2012 to 2013 term, there were six programs with five different nations, and it was more humanitarian-based. But in the 2016-2017 term, there were 25 programs with 10 different nations focused on aviation and maritime law. And for the 2017-2018 term, the Ministry of Defense set aside 330 million yen for these programs. So I'm wondering, does the U.S. Navy support a stronger Japanese Self-Defense Force that's acting more independently in the region from the U.S.?

MS. HICKS: That's about five dissertations that we've given you this morning. (Laughter.)

ADM. RICHARDSON: Yeah.

Q: Thank you.

ADM. RICHARDSON: I better get academic credit for this. Well, one, we have a very strong and committed alliance with Japan, and so, you know, a very reliable partner, also, you know, one of those partners where we can do a lot of pretty advanced work together – you know, high-end, high-tech work together. And so that's only getting stronger.

You know, one of the people that I spent a good deal of time with when I was out in Singapore was Admiral Murakawa, the chief of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force. And we talk all the time, right? And so that's a strong partnership getting stronger.

And I think what you described is that it really is a regional approach that – sophisticated – yeah, that's the most fruitful approach, I think, and the more sophisticated folks understand that. And so I don't – I see that – those all acting in concert, right? And so to the degree that we're all advancing or getting stronger, to the degree that it's becoming more multidimensional and, you know, not just bilateral, I think that that strengthens the alliance, you know, the bilateral alliance and leads to greater security and stability in the region as well.

MS. HICKS: Great, OK.

Looking this way. Right over here.

Q: Good morning. David Wood at the Huffington Post.

Admiral, I wonder if you'd talk a little bit about crisis management mechanisms. You mentioned time has gotten compressed. Things are more complex now. We have some crisis management mechanisms left over from the Cold War. But I wonder if you're happy – belay that – if you're comfortable with the mechanisms for crisis management that we have now, or what more is needed.

ADM. RICHARDSON: Yeah, two words I try and never really use are "happy" and "comfortable." (Laughter.) So I'll have to say no on both of those.

But I think you can always do more, and the implications or the fact that things can escalate very quickly now – right? – this time dimension being so compressed – it imposes an obligation, I strongly believe, to be doing a lot of ground work, you know, making a lot of deposits in that bank account, when there is no crisis. And so these very operational types of structures are great. You know, I mentioned CUES. We have INKZI (ph), you know, as well. There are other of these structures. And to the degree that everybody abides by them, you know, they become more and more the way things are, right? And so that's good.

The other thing I would say is that leader-to-leader communication is very important. So I mentioned, you know, the dialogue with the other chiefs of Navy, if you just want to talk about the maritime dimension of this, because the more those conversations happen, the more we exchange information, the more we – it sounds, you know, a bit fluffy, I guess, but the more you build trust and confidence – and sometimes that's at a very personal level – I think that that goes a long way towards managing crises or managing miscalculations or events when they happen. And again, you know, it kind of buys you a little bit of time, right? Just like we talked about in the deterrence talk, well, if you could – if you could just slow it down a little bit, give somebody a call – you know, all of those chiefs of navy have my phone number, and we talk personally together. It's like, hey, what just happened, you know? And – or I'll call them first. Hey, this is what happened. Let's take a deep breath and sort this out. I think that those types of things, very practical types of arrangements, but you've got to follow through. You've got to abide by them behaviorally so that they become the precedent. And then you've got to reinforce them with sort of a steady state level of communication so that, you know, people understand what you're after. So that, I think, goes a long way towards preventing misinterpretation.

In the absence of information or the absence of communication, too often people just interpret the things for the worst, and that would lead to responses that nobody would want. So we spend a lot of time together, and we sponsor an international sea power symposium every other year. But that's just one of many forums that chiefs of navy get together and we just spend time in each other's company talking through different aspects. And many of those are tailored to the region or tailored to the members of these different groups, and I think that that's all time well spent.

MS. HICKS: Let me just ask as a specific follow-up, you did mention CUES. My recollection is the Chinese coast guard is not covered under CUES.

ADM. RICHARDSON: That's right.

MS. HICKS: And that is an issue that worries many of us.

ADM. RICHARDSON: Right.

MS. HICKS: But do you see progress there that can be made in your interactions with the Chinese?

ADM. RICHARDSON: We certainly advocate for that. So really, it's kind of a persistent part of the dialogue to expand that out so that more and more folks are brought in to that structure.

MS. HICKS: OK, and we have time for one last question. That one all the way over here.

Q: Thank you, Admiral. My name's Donghu Yu, with China Review News Agency of Hong Kong.

And my question is regarding the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea that was conducted yesterday, right? And I know you have said that this operation is to show the international rule, but I'm still curious about the timing. Why now? Because it was reported by the U.S. media that the White House has delayed the request made by the Pentagon several times. And China said the situation in the South China Sea is going to the right direction, better direction, and the U.S. is relying on China, on North Korea. So why this freedom of navigation is conducted at this moment? Thank you.

ADM. RICHARDSON: Well, I would suppose that there's an implicit dimension to your question that these are somehow conformational or something like that, and I would say that they're exactly the opposite. And so as we said, we do them in the South China Sea. We do them all over the world. We have been doing them since 1979. And so I think some contextual background is really important to put these things – these operations, these – you know, these transits in to perspective. And so, boy, they sure get a lot of attention when they happen, but I don't think that, you know, in terms of the logical approach to why we do those, there's anything different in the South China Sea than there is anywhere else.

MS. HICKS: Admiral Richardson, you have been very generous with your time this morning. We thank you for coming to CSIS. We will find a way to get you academic credit.

ADM. RICHARDSON: Yeah, thank you.

MS. HICKS: I want to let the audience know, before you begin clapping, we are going to do a quick stage turn, and Dr. Zack Cooper, who's a senior fellow here at CSIS, will come up on stage to present to the major findings of the report.

But now please join me in giving a round of applause to the CNO. (Applause.)

ADM. RICHARDSON: Thanks so much. (Applause.)

(END)