

Concept Note for Workshop on 18 Dec 2021 at 1630 Hrs Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework for Effective Forensic against Marine & Maritime Crime Investigation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

Background

The Indo-Pacific region is gaining significant geopolitical relevance in the 21st century, with more & more global powers maintaining their strategic presence in the region. There is political, economic, military and physical dynamics to this geostrategic upsurge and needs to be understood in a comprehensive manner. Geographically, the entire Indo-Pacific region is spread across the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The tropical waters present some unique challenges and opportunities, in terms of the undersea resource management and the strategic security framework. The presence of the non-state actors and their deep and seamless connect with the state instruments for projection of state power, is a major cause of concern. The rising marine and maritime crime in the Indo-Pacific region cannot be dealt with using the conventional means. The Indo part of the Indo-Pacific needs focus particularly from the geostrategic perspective in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

The effective maritime governance mechanism, will require substantial domain awareness to bring transparency to the entire effort of marine and maritime crime investigation. The Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) has been a term, used often to describe the much required domain awareness in the maritime region. The Indo-Pacific strategic space being a maritime construct will require significant MDA initiative to ensure effective maritime governance. The conventional MDA, somehow failed to be inclusive and bring all the stakeholders on-board. The developing world could not come on-board the MDA initiative led by the US post 9/11. Even in India as well, post the 26/11, although the MDA became a buzz word, but could not comprehensively address the concerns of the stakeholders. The underwater component of the MDA has been a gap, as the unique Science & Technology (S&T) challenges of the tropical littoral waters require massive local site specific R&D. The indigenous R&D is highly resource intensive and the developing nations in the region are unable to prioritize S&T budget allocation politically.

The Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework proposed by the Maritime Research Centre (MRC), can comprehensively manage the challenges and opportunities of the tropical littoral waters of the IOR. The UDA framework encourages, **pooling of resources** and **synergising of efforts** across the stakeholders to allow a **safe, secure, sustainable growth model** for all. Such initiative will also address the concerns of the fragmentation among the stakeholders within the nations and the region and will possibly minimize the interference by the extra-regional powers. The proposed UDA framework ensures policy & technology interventions along with the much needed acoustic capacity & capability building. A structured approach will allow enhanced marine and maritime crime investigation for enhanced forensics in the politically volatile IOR. Digital Oceans, backed by the UDA framework could be critical.

Proposal

A workshop is proposed on 12 Dec 2021 at 1630 hrs, to get all the stakeholders and the policy makers together on one platform to discuss the nuances and formulate concrete way ahead. The multi-disciplinary experts will deliberate on the structure and scope of the proposed UDA framework and formalize the detailed strategic vision. A detailed report will be generated post the workshop, for consideration by the appropriate authorities.

The maritime crimes such as piracy, International Ship & Port Facility Security Code (ISPS) violation, insurance fraud, cyber security of secured trade data, movement of dumping goods, London convention, etc., need detailed deliberation. The experts will discuss multiple challenges and opportunities to formulate way ahead.

Program

- 1630 hrs - Welcome Address and the Role of Domain Awareness & Intelligence.
Capt Sudhir Subedar, Former Joint DG Shipping and President & CEO Indian Coastal Ship-owners Association.
- 1645 hrs - Introductory Remarks: UDA Framework and the Challenges in the IOR.
Dr(Cdr) Arnab Das, Founder & Director MRC, Pune.
- 1700 hrs - Maritime Cyber Forensics and Digital Vulnerabilities.
Cdr Amit Dhawan (Retd), Cyber Security Expert.
- 1715 hrs - Role of Technology and the Broad Framework.
Dr. Geeta Varadan, Outstanding Scientist (Retd), Former Director ADRIN, Hyd/ Programme Director (Special Projects), ISRO.
- 1730 hrs - Piracy & Marine Environmental Crimes in the Changing Global Order.
DIG Ashish Mehrotra, Commanding Officer ICGS Sangram.
- 1745 hrs - Forensics in the Modern Times – Challenges & Opportunities.
Prof J R Gaur, Director School of Forensics, Risk Management & National Security, Rastriya Raksha University Gandhinagar Gujarat.
- 1815 hrs - Special Intervention
ADG Vijay D Chafekar, PTM TM (Retd), Indian Coast Guard.
Shri Rajan Medhekar, IPS (Retd), DG IISSM, and Former DG NSG.
Shri Pratap M Heblkar, Former Special Secretary Government of India.
- 1830 hrs - Summing Up and the International Maritime Law Perspective.
Cmde O Johnson (Retd), Former Director Maritime History Society.
- 1845 hrs - Vote of Thanks by Shri Praful Talera, Adviser-Blue Economy MRC Pune.

Convener

Dr(Cdr) Arnab Das, Founder & Director MRC, Pune.

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