

## The Tragedy of Flight AI-171

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The afternoon of June 12, 2025 ripped apart the silence over Mahatma Gandhi's historic Sabarmati Ashram, which stood barely 7 kilometers from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Airport, Ahmedabad, India, as Air Indias flight AI-171, VT-ANB B-787 Dreamliner crashed on takeoff, plunging into the neighboring BJ Medical College, killing 270 passenger, crew and persons on the ground including students in the nearby medical college hostel.

The early hours of July 12, 2025, were broken apart by the release of the preliminary report of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau of India, which dropped silently online in the still of the night in India, without any fanfare,



for minimum exposure, creating maximum impact.

Strangely, a news report that had emerged out of the United States three days prior, in an Aviation magazine, had leaked the fact that the Air India investigators were skirting around the Fuel

Control Switches, and its improper, incorrect, or intentional pilot actions.

A day later, the hallowed Wall Street Journal came around with the very same theory, adding a rider that the "situation had got so bad between the NTSB and the

AAIB, that the NTSB observers were thinking of withdrawing their cooperation from the investigation and returning home." Pertinently, both the reports came days before the Indian AAIB report was released, and only after the foreign observers from NTSB, AAIB-UK, Boeing, and GE had returned home. The 15-page preliminary report raised more questions than it answered, focusing on the Fuel Control Switches, the Ram Air Turbine (RAT), a sentence of the Cockpit Voice Recorders (CVR), and the flaps position. The investigation, which began shortly after the crash, had been joined by NTSB officials from the USA, representatives of Boeing, GE, and the FAA, and the AAIB of the UK, who served as observers.

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## Axis of Opportunism or Strategic Cooperation? How Military Ties Between Iran and North Korea Evolved to Accommodate Russia

By Samyak Mishra

NEW DELHI – The deepening military cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), now increasingly intertwined with the Russian Federation, has been a worry for the West for a while now. Once dubbed the "Axis of Evil" by then-U.S. President George W. Bush in 2002, this grouping of states has evolved beyond a mere rhetorical alignment into a somewhat tangible, strategic challenge to Western norms. As Pyongyang and Tehran continue to defy them, their shared perception of a common adversary, the United States of America, has fostered a partnership that, despite some contradictions and opportunistic nature, now extends to critical military technologies like missiles and, most recently, advanced drones, with Moscow increasingly acting as a key facilitator and beneficiary.

While not an official alliance, Iran and North Korea have had a military relationship for decades. Iran established formal diplomatic relations with North Korea in 1973, during the reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. However, Iran still felt wary of Pyongyang due to its close ties with the United States and South Korea. This changed dramatically after the Khomeini Revolution in the late 1970s. The new Iranian government was openly anti-West, and North Korea, which embraced the



Graduation of North Korean military students in Iran [Koosha Mahshid Falahi/Mizan News Agency, Attribution, via Wikimedia Commons].

revolution, also embraced the anti-American vitriol as ideological kinship. Iran and North Korea found common ideological ground. This anti-Western ideology established the foundations for military collaboration, which existed throughout the protracted Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s. North Korea was having economic issues and was isolated, and thus supplied Iran

with arms and fighter jets, which it desperately needed because Western sanctions imposed by the United States and Western nations were making it more difficult for it to procure weapons. In 1982, Pyongyang emerged as Iran's largest munitions supplier, providing 40 percent of total military imports through the provision of a full assortment of weapons, including tanks,

artillery, mortars, and light weapons, in exchange for crude oil. The significance of these early military transactions lies in the fact that they involved not only the exchange of weapons but also the exchange of advisors and technical trainers.

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# Call Him Daddy: The Return of a Relentless Commander



Rohit Sharma

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**WASHINGTON**—President Trump began his second term with clarity, conviction, and a checklist. Two major goals defined his agenda. First—fulfill what he calls the “unfinished business” of his first term: advancing the America First doctrine, pushing through long-promised conservative reforms, reducing the size and scope of federal government, cutting taxes permanently, and overhauling the U.S. immigration system. Second—reshape America’s global standing into one defined not by soft diplomacy, but by strength, boldness, and direct action.

Since returning to the White House on January 20, 2025, Trump has governed with the full weight of experience and none of the hesitation. Gone is the learning curve of his outsider first term. This time, he knows the bureaucracy. He knows which agencies matter, which bureaucrats stall progress, and how to work around Congress using executive authority, agency rule-making, and the regulatory machinery that he now bends to his will. With a unified Republican Congress and a reliably conservative Supreme Court, Trump is not just governing—he’s dominating.

And what’s striking is how quickly he has delivered. In just half a year, he has reminded America of what his brand of leadership looks like. The politics of sensitivity, of DEI slogans and speech codes, have been swept aside—no more triple-checking every word for political correctness. Trump has created a space for Americans who felt stifled under the performative culture wars of the past few years. To his supporters, he has brought back unapologetic patriotism, where



The White House from Washington, DC

Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Behind closed doors, his administration maneuvered to ask Pakistan to stop retaliatory action against India, asking Islamabad to call India and end any further escalation. Instead of playing mediator, Trump played power-broker. His team made it clear: continued instability would come with consequences. The tone from Islamabad changed overnight.

America doesn’t explain itself, but asserts itself.

He’s not simply reversing the past four years; he’s replacing them with an alternate vision of American strength. He often speaks of an America he grew up in—proud, tough, independent—and that’s the blueprint he’s working from. For Trump, the period after his first term felt like watching a great nation lose its voice and its edge. Now, he’s restoring both, and doing so with the urgency of someone who believes history has given him one last chance.

In foreign affairs, the Trump Doctrine has become even more pronounced. His approach is simple: strength leads to peace. He was tested early in his second term by the sudden eruption of war between Israel and Iran. The world expected a long-drawn proxy war or U.S. indecision. Instead, Trump stunned even his critics by authorizing targeted strikes on three nuclear sites in Iran, ending the conflict before it could spiral. It was shock-and-awe diplomacy with

zero ambiguity. No coalition-building. No red lines crossed slowly—just decisive action.

That wasn’t an isolated case. Behind closed doors, his administration maneuvered to ask Pakistan to stop retaliatory action against India, asking Islamabad to call India and end any further escalation. Instead of playing mediator, Trump played power-broker. His team made it clear: continued instability would come with consequences. The tone from Islamabad changed overnight. Similarly, his effort to end the war in Ukraine has taken a blunt path. He publicly called out both Putin and Zelenskyy, refusing to play favorites and pushing them toward a negotiated end. Where previous administrations tried to tiptoe, Trump has stomped forward.

But Trump’s global vision doesn’t end at resolving wars. He is methodically dismantling what he sees as unnecessary entanglements—minilateral pacts, regional security clubs, and economic arrangements

that dilute U.S. sovereignty. He ordered a full review of AUKUS, casting doubt on its utility. He’s put international organizations on notice: they don’t set America’s agenda. And, in a moment that symbolized how far the world has shifted, NATO’s own chief reportedly referred to him as “Daddy”—a viral, perhaps tongue-in-cheek endorsement from an alliance that once mocked him. Trump has transitioned from disruptor to dominant force.

Economically, he’s waging a full-scale war for American supremacy. The tariff strategy that once drew bipartisan concern has now become a centerpiece of his trade policy. And it’s working. Countries are returning to the table with offers that favor the U.S. Trump has made it clear that America is not in the business of equalizing global markets—it’s in the business of winning. Trade partners who once relied on American leniency now find themselves negotiating with a leader who doesn’t blink. These are not just trade deals—they

are declarations of American leverage.

Trump doesn’t seem to care how the rest of the world views him. That, ironically, may be why his brand of leadership resonates so deeply with many Americans. They’ve watched past presidents, especially Barack Obama, be applauded on the international stage, only to preside over policies that seemed to undermine American power. Obama’s “leading from behind” left a vacuum that others rushed to fill. Trump is the backlash to that era. His operation “Midnight Hammer,” as it’s been dubbed, was a demonstration of stealth, speed, and force meant to remind allies and enemies alike: America still leads—when it wants to.

There is also something historic about what Trump is doing. Very few leaders, especially in democracies, return to power with this much command over the political system and narrative. He is not coasting on nostalgia. He is recalibrating the machinery of state. In a way, Trump isn’t just finishing what he started—he’s rebuilding the executive branch in his image: fast-moving, centrally directed, and unapologetically results-oriented.

Of course, the next big test looms. Trump has 15 more months to cement his agenda. But if the Republican Party loses the House and Senate in the 2026 midterms, Trump will have to pivot. Will he be able to maintain momentum without a friendly Congress? Can he sustain the aggressive pace of reform through executive action alone? Or will we see the return of bureaucratic gridlock and legislative obstruction?

What’s clear for now is this: Donald Trump is not a figure of the past. He’s not a relic of 2016. He is the dominant political force of this era, reshaping the nation from within and without. Critics may recoil at his rhetoric, mock his style, or warn of the disruption he may cause. But they cannot ignore the results. Trump governs like a man who believes history is watching—and that this time, it will not forget.

As the world looks to Washington, it sees one figure standing tall. Call him Daddy.

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This led to questions over the confidentiality and independence of the AAIB and its report, and has caused detractors of the government-led process to raise objections in various media.

The preliminary report has set off storm clouds across India, amongst citizens and pilots' organizations, who are demanding answers, some even seeking a judicial probe headed by a sitting High Court Judge. From the selective leaks in the US media, it appears that some foreign agencies had leaked details to foreign media, and the influence of big corporations cannot be ruled out, given the current state of these corporations.

The Airline Pilots Association (ALPA-India) issued a press release objecting to several issues, including the selective leaks regarding foreign involvement in the investigation, the lack of transparency within the organization, and the fact that details of the AI-171 report appeared in various overseas newspapers days before the Indian families were informed. The association also criticized the presumption of pilot guilt, the failure to involve pilot organizations in the probe, and the absence of any 787-rated check pilot on the investigative panel — concerns that were also raised by several experts, including Captain Kishore Chinta.

The barrage of negative media today forced the Cabinet Minister of Civil Aviation and his Minister of state for Civil Aviation to make public statements this evening, about how the Civil Aviation Ministry in India recognized the skills and hard work of the Pilots and Cabin Crew in Indian Aviation and that this was merely the preliminary report which was fact finding and that the detailed report would emerge in some months (up to a year from now) and may have different thesis.

The lack of the CVR transcript in the preliminary report was a huge dampener, as it gives rise to speculation and conjecture as to what happened in the cockpit. The fact that the AAIB selectively released one sentence from the CVR data, regarding the "fuel cutoff," has added to the confusion.

That being said, we turn our focus to the AAIB report and its key milestone observations —

VT-ANB AI-171 had a normal takeoff profile for its flight from AMD-LGW with 242 passengers and crew,



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### Preliminary Report

#### Accident involving Air India's B787-8 aircraft bearing registration VT-ANB at Ahmedabad on 12 June 2025

and reached Vr at 180 knots at 0808 UTC. The aircraft air/ground sensors transitioned to air mode consistent with liftoff at 08:08:39 UTC.

At 08:08:42 UTC, the engine run cutoff switches transitioned from RUN to CUTOFF position, one after the other, with a gap of 01 second.

The Engine N1 and N2 began to decrease from takeoff values as the fuel supply to the engines was cut off.

In the Cockpit Voice Recording, one pilot is heard asking the other, why did he cutoff? The other pilot responded that he did NOT DO SO. (No timing given)

Significant issues are that the Airport CCTV footage showed the Ram Air Turbine (RAT) was deployed during initial climb immediately on liftoff (no timestamp on video)

EAFR data shows that RAT hydraulic pumps began supplying power at 08:08:47. As per EAFR data, Engine 1 fuel cutoff switch transitioned from CUTOFF to RUN at 08:08:52 UTC.

Engine 2 Fuel Cutoff switch transitioned from CUTOFF to RUN at 08:08:56 UTC. Thereafter, each engine, FADEC (Full Authority Digital Engine Control), automatically manages a relight and thrust recovery sequence of ignition and fuel introduction. At 08:09:05 UTC, one of the Pilots transmitted "Mayday Mayday." The EAFR recording stopped at 08:09:11 UTC.

The AAIB Report is available here.

The pilots, Sumeet Sabharwal and Clyde Kunder, together had more than 19,000 hours of experience, with a combined experience of almost 9,724 hours on the 787 type of aircraft. Captain Sabharwal was a trainer and a check pilot on the 787.

The conversation between the two Pilots in the cockpit is supposed to have been one asking the other, "Why did you cutoff?" — the response — "I did NOT do so." This clearly indicates that there was confusion in the cockpit over the Fuel Cutoff, and both pilots seemed unaware as to how the fuel was cut off. Yet the tone, tenor,

and direction of the preliminary report led the casual observer to note that it had to be "inadvertent or intentional actions of the pilot to turn the fuel control switches to Cutoff mode, starving the engines of fuel.

Experts have suggested that it is next to impossible for a pilot strapped in on takeoff climb to pull both guarded Fuel Control switches one after the other within ONE SECOND to cut off fuel to both engines. The enhanced airborne flight recorders (EAFR) have noted that the two engines cut off within one second of each other, which appears to be humanly impossible, given that it took both pilots 04 seconds to recycle and transition the engines from Cutoff to Run stage. The insinuation on social media has been that of a "German wings" kind of situation that has enraged the aviation community and the Indian traveling public, bringing back sad memories of the Lion Air 737-Max crash, where a 24-year-old Indian pilot Chirag Kalra was one of those wrongly blamed for the crash, which later surfaced as the 737-max MCAS issue. Unless, as some suggest, the AAIB and NTSB know something they have not disclosed yet to the public and are trying to break it gently. The reluctance of the AAIB to be transparent in the process and the failure to include the entire CVR transcript have only added to the anger and suspicion of the people. The Digital Flight Data Recorder (DFDR) has still not been fully decoded and studied, and its interpretation will take some time longer.

What makes the preliminary report even curiously is the fact that it pauses to refer to a 2018 FAA Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin (SAIB) No. NM-18-33 on December 17, 2018, which was based on reports from 737 Operators that fuel control switches were installed with locks disengaged. This similar part had been installed on 717, 737, 747, 757, 767, 787, MD-11, and MD-90 aircraft. That FAA SAIB, which warned of vul-

nerability in fuel control switches, did not make it mandatory for all airlines, but advised all operators to follow the process of "inspect the locking feature of the fuel control switch to ensure its engagement. Airlines were advised to check whether the fuel control switch can be moved between the two positions without lifting up the switch. FAA requested airline owners and operators to report any failure of the locking feature of the fuel control switch to Boeing, including the date of the failure occurrence.

At the same time, another FAA Directive, which was not relied upon by the AAIB but may be relevant, was FAA BOEING ALERT BULLETIN (May 02, 2022), which was entitled "Engine Fire Control Panel – Engine fire shutoff switch". The FAA review of this document was prompted by a report that indicated that Foreign Object Debris (FOD) may have been introduced during the maintenance or rework of certain EFSS units.

The FOD risks included — "Uncommanded Activation of the engine fuel shut off." The 2022 circular, when read in conjunction with the 2018 notice, firmly established a link between dirty engine fire panels and fuel cutoff switches. While Boeing and unnamed parts suppliers had already notified operators that received affected parts, so much has gone awry with them in recent times that it's difficult to be certain of anything.

The preliminary report noted that Air India had not conducted the safety checks on this equipment in line with the 2018 circular, as it was not Mandatory but was optional and advisory in nature. The report also noted that Air India had replaced the entire throttle control module in 2019 and 2023 without complaint of Fuel Cutoff switches.

Air India, for its part, has issued a statement noting receipt of the preliminary report of the AAIB and offered to continue cooperation with all the authorities whilst continuing to support the families of the passengers and crew of the ill-fated AI-171.

To quote Captain Amit Singh, a veteran pilot and the founder of Safety Matters Foundation, "there was no indication of foul play, no sign that either pilot intended to shut down the engines, but something — Manual, Electrical, or Mechanical — caused both fuel switches to CUT OFF Fuel".

Experts have opined that there is also no certainty whether the Fuel Control Switches were actually moved to cut-off or whether it was just the electronic functions associated with the switches, that were recorded as having cut-off fuel supply to the engines, as the report

records the words "transition" and not "moved". That could even be due to a software/electronic glitch, such as a TCMA malfunction in the EEC, which sends a signal to other software logic gates, that the aircraft has changed its status from air to ground, as TCMA is the only logic gate software, behind pilot controllers that can automatically shut down the engines, as confidentially shared by a 787 Check pilot. The above theory is taken from Boeing 787 lab notes, which is available only to Boeing and GE engineers, though this angle requires deeper investigation. However, what has appeared most offensive to people in the Indian Aviation industry is the Aviation Accident Investigation Bureaus report which in its final sentences, states that "at this time there were no safety recommendations for either Boeing or General Electric," thereby absolving both the US based corporate giants of any culpability in this episode.

The preliminary report raises many questions and issues worth noting:

Why did the report not have the full CVR conversation transcript?

Importance of the pilot conversation over the fuel control switches.

If both pilots did not cutoff the fuel, then was there some electronic glitch? When and how did the RAT deploy? Images indicate that it may have deployed at 60 feet height, suggesting that engine failure may have occurred even before 08:08:42.

The fuel control off switches were found in "run" position at crash site.

The throttles were found in maximum position at the crash site.

Flap handle was set at 5 degree position, for take off attitude.

Landing gear was down, the ELT did not activate. RAT had deployed on takeoff, indicating a total power failure. Has the possibility of a TCMA — EEC malfunction been investigated as yet?

Why did the AAIB remark that there were "no safety recommendations for Boeing or GE," thus giving them a get-out-of-jail-free card?

The onus thus is left on the two brave men who died in the cockpit that fateful day, whose entire lives will be scrutinized to find a way to solve the mystery by placing the blame on them. Dead men tell no tales, and the secret of AI-171 may go down with its 260 victims from the plane and in that Medical college. The blessed soil of Gujarat, of the great Mahatma Gandhi, will bury one more bloody truth with it, along with the hundreds of struggles that the great man himself fought against in his lifetime.

# Axis of Opportunism or Strategic Cooperation? How Military Ties Between Iran and North Korea Evolved to Accommodate Russia

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By Samyak Mishra

And yet, the relationship between Iran and North Korea has never been a solidified alliance, but rather a convenient strategic partnership, with some opportunism on Tehran's part as well. While abstraction exists with ideological ties and military exchanges with Pyongyang, Iran has steadfastly developed economic relationships with South Korea, North Korea's angry competitor. South Korean companies played a crucial role in rebuilding Iran after the war and have continued to export both civilian and military goods to it. For a long time, South Korea was arguably one of Iran's top ten trading partners. This two-pronged approach is indicative of Iran's instrumental foreign policy regarding the national interest (both political and economic) taking precedence even when dealing with the "enemy of my enemy's friend." While there are notable instances of Iran demonstrating opportunism with North Korea, Tehran has maintained a diplomatic approach with South Korea. A prime example of these opportunistic nuances in Iranian diplomacy was Tehran's establishment of full diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1989.

In contrast to North Korea's proximity to Iran and position in the Persian Gulf and the Northeast region of Asia, the range of a traditional mutual defense alliance diminishes because these two states hardly ever represent a direct military threat to each other. Additionally, Iran represents a far greater military and economic force in the Persian Gulf than North Korea, which competes for its survival among superpowers. Iran has demonstrated that it has multiple foreign policy trajectories, such as its attempts to normalize relations with Washington during the Khatami and Obama years, through diplomatic efforts that demonstrate its willingness to separate itself from Pyongyang while pursuing engagement opportunities with the West. However, North Korea's historical pattern of hostility towards the United States has never limited its approach to Iran.

Despite these fundamental restrictions, Western pressure paradoxically brought Iran and North Korea closer in delicate military areas, especially in the years following the Cold War. Cooperation in ballistic missile and nuclear technology has become increasingly important. Both countries are believed to have transferred nuclear weapon technologies and, more precisely, are working together on bal-



Graduation of North Korean military students in Iran [Koosha Mahshid Falahi/Mizan News Agency, Attribution, via Wikimedia Commons].

listic missile capabilities for reasons of national security and shared strategic deterrence objectives towards the United States. Significantly, Iran has developed its own series of Shahab missiles (Shahab-1, Shahab-2, and Shahab-3). The Shahab-3 is a derivative of North Korea's Rodong-1 missile, having obtained technology and prototypes of the Scud-B and Scud-C missiles from North Korea. U.S. intelligence stated that the collaboration created a key proliferation pathway, with reciprocal visits by engineers and technicians accelerating the two countries' respective efforts to develop nuclear delivery systems. Some experts think that underlying exchanges for maintenance and ongoing development continue even after Iran announced in 2006 that its partnership with North Korea had ended, suggesting a halt to technological support. Iranian scientists and technicians have even been reported to be present in North Korea during missile launches.

The emergence and proliferation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), specifically suicide drones, which are a type of loitering munition, is a newer part of this relationship. North Korea has been interested in UAVs at least since the 1970s when the country developed its own means to counter American reconnaissance drones. Kim Jong Un's regime has larger ambitions, represented by the Saetbyol-4 and the Saetbyol-9, both of which are significant reconnaissance and multipurpose attack drones that are clearly modeled after and are larger mimics of the U.S. Global Hawk and Reaper UAVs, respectively. In small indigenous designs and copying, acquired Chinese systems were much less ambitious. While these "copycat"

drones represent a significant step forward in Pyongyang's capabilities with respect to intelligence surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR), and tactical strike capability, outside analysts agree that we might expect little actual performance to match those of their U.S. counterparts because North Korea's capabilities are sorely limited in terms of sensors, communications, engines, etc. These UAVs could help contribute to assessments of the allied military situation, extend intelligence footprints by hundreds of kilometers into South Korea, and provide early indications of the general threat capabilities, which would be especially valuable in peacetime. Beyond these platforms for reconnaissance and attack, North Korea's quick development of suicide attack drones that use new AI technology is a greater security threat to the West. These recently tested drones bear a remarkable resemblance to Russia's Lancet-3 and Iran's infamous Shahed drones. Experts believe there may have been a technology transfer, speculating that North Korea obtained these designs from Russia, which most likely acquired them from Iran. Tehran may have gotten them by stealing or hacking Israel. These suicide (or kamikaze) drones, which are UAVs equipped with explosives, can strike targets over a range of more than 1,000 kilometers by crashing into them, essentially functioning as guided missiles. They hold the potential to hit both tactical and strategic targets with precision. The potential of these drones to strike targets at both tactical and strategic levels across land and sea has been emphasized by Kim Jong Un, who has personally called for their mass production. By launching drones into South Korean

airspace in 2022 that Seoul's military was unable to intercept, Pyongyang has already shown that it is prepared to use such systems.

The growing role of Russia in this relationship is the most recent and significant change. Moscow has strengthened its military ties with Pyongyang in response to its own military procurement requirements in the ongoing conflict with Ukraine. Russia has already received millions of artillery shells and countless ballistic missiles from North Korea for use in Ukraine. The North Korean Korean People's Army also supported Russia in the so-called "liberation" of Kursk Oblast, which Ukraine had recently occupied. Russia's pledge to help North Korea produce Iranian Shahed-type loitering munitions domestically is currently a significant development. North Korea will be able to manufacture these powerful drones domestically thanks to this initiative, which Ukraine's military intelligence chief referred to as a technology transfer involving the common work of Russian and North Korean specialists. Tensions over regional security, particularly on the Korean Peninsula, are expected to escalate sharply as a result of this action. Russia has a clear goal in mind: utilizing North Korea's industrial base to enhance its own drone production capacity, which currently stands at approximately 2,000 Shahed drones per month, with plans to increase this to 5,000 per month. This partnership presents a vital opportunity for North Korea to acquire advanced manufacturing expertise, generate foreign exchange despite sanctions, and enhance its position as a military technology exporter, all of which will likely exacerbate its long-standing economic challenges.

Now, for the far-reaching implications for the West. First and foremost, it poses a serious challenge to the Western-led international non-proliferation regime, which is surely hypocritical and inconsistent in its ideals, as the same order would allow the State of Israel to enrich uranium without any protests. Tehran could develop (or is developing), through a back-channel mechanism, its nuclear capabilities without direct violation of agreements like the P5+1 because of the ongoing, albeit secret, nuclear and missile cooperation between Iran and North Korea, and thereby become a "threshold state" that could quickly weaponize.

Secondly, the United States' interests and allies, particularly Israel in the Middle East, are directly threatened by North Korea's military exports, especially drones and missiles. Tel Aviv views North Korea as a serious security threat because it supports Arab regimes and Palestinian militant groups, as evidenced by its supply of tunnel-building materials and defensive measures to groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. The Israeli challenge is that it cannot intercept shipments, given the immense distance, the absence of intelligence or situational awareness, and the need to cooperate with the United States and South Korea in any operational action against this threat. This is further fueled by fears of North Korea's development of strategic weapons, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs).

Finally, denuclearization attempts are made much more difficult by this connection. Pyongyang was concerned about the possibility that Washington would lose face as a credible negotiator, compounded by the USA's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran in 2018. With its sophisticated nuclear program, North Korea views the JCPOA as a draft agreement. It wants better terms that will enable it to produce additional nuclear weapons while doing more than Iran in this context. Therefore, there is a delicate situation in which North Korea and Iran can potentially coordinate their requirements and information to obtain terms that are at least as favorable as those provided by the United States. In light of the recent missile strike exchange between Iran and Israel and the strike by the USA on Iranian nuclear sites, it now seems highly unlikely that Iran would be willing to negotiate denuclearization.

# Southeast Asian Nations Look to Hedge Their Way Out of Troubled Waters in the South China Sea



**John Rennie Short**

John Rennie Short, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

The South China Sea has long been a bubbling geopolitical hot spot. Recently, a series of moves by the various nations claiming a stake in the waters has stirred up yet more trouble.

Malaysia has of late reaffirmed its commitment to oil and gas exploration in waters claimed by China while quietly building up its military on the islands off Borneo.

Meanwhile, Chinese coast guard vessels have deployed water cannons against Filipino fishing boats. And the accidental grounding of a Chinese boat in shallow waters around the Philippines' Thitu Island on June 8, 2025, was enough to put Filipino forces on alert.

Vietnam, too, has been active in the disputed waters. A Beijing-based think tank on June 7 flagged that Vietnamese engineers had been busy reclaiming land and installing military-related ports and airstrips around the Spratly Islands.

What the three Southeast Asian nations of Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia have in common is that they, along with others in the region, are trying to navigate a more assertive China at a time when the U.S. policy intentions under the second Trump Administration are fluid and hard to read. And in lieu of a coordinated response from the regional body Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, each member nation has been busy charting its course in these choppy waters.

## US-China relations all at sea

Why is China trying to assert control in the South China Sea? In a 2023 speech, President Xi Jinping noted that "Western countries led by the United States have implemented all round containment, encirclement and suppression of China."

This fear has been long held in



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gridley (DDG 101) fires its Mark 45 5-inch gun during a live-fire exercise in the South China Sea, May 31, 2025. Gridley, assigned to the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, is underway in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations on a scheduled deployment, demonstrating the U.S. Navy's unwavering commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Timothy Meyer

Beijing and was reinforced by a U.S. Indo-Pacific policy announced in 2011 of rebalancing military forces away from Europe and toward Asia to confront China.

In response, China has in recent years embarked on an ambitious policy of attempting to outmuscle U.S. naval power in the South China Sea.

China is now the world's leading builder of naval vessels and is estimated to have 440 battleships by 2030, compared with the United States' 300.

And it comes at a time when U.S. naval power is spread around the world. China's, meanwhile, is concentrated around the South China Sea where, since 2013, Chinese vessels have pumped sand onto reefs, turning them into islands and then weaponizing them.

Then there is the activity of China's maritime militia of approximately 300 nominally fishing boats equipped with water cannons and reinforced hulls for ramming. This so-called gray zone fleet is increasingly active in confronting Southeast Asia nations at sea.

The U.S. response to China's militarization in the sea has been through so-called "freedom of navigation" exercises that often deploy carrier groups in a show of force. But these episodic displays are more performative than effective, doing little to deter China's claims.

The U.S. has also strengthened military alliances with Australia, India, Japan and the Philippines, and has

increased coast guard cooperation with the Philippines and Japan.

## The sea is a valuable resource

Yet the battle over control of the South China Seas is more than just geopolitical posturing between the two superpowers.

For adjoining countries, the sea is a valuable biological resource with rich fishing grounds that provide a staple of fish protein for close to 2 billion people. There are estimates of 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 11 billion barrels of oil.

The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS, guarantees a nation an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles from around its coastline.

China is a signatory of the UNCLOS. Yet it views ownership of the South China Sea through the lens of its nine-dash line, a reference to the boundary line that Beijing has invoked since 1948. While the claim has no legal or historical basis, the delineation makes major incursions into waters around Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia and, to a lesser extent, Brunei and Indonesia as well.

Despite China's expansive claim to the South China Sea being dismissed in 2016 by the international Permanent Court of Arbitration, Beijing continues to assert its claim.

## Hedging positions

As I explore in my recent book "Hedging and Conflict in the South

China Sea," part of the problem Southeast Asian nations face is that they have failed to forge a unified position.

ASEAN, the regional bloc representing 10 nations in Southeast Asia, has long been governed by the principle that major decisions need unanimous agreement. China is a major trading partner to ASEAN nations, so any regional country aligning too close to the U.S. comes with the real risk of economic consequences. And two ASEAN members, Cambodia and Laos, are especially close to China, making it difficult to generate a unified ASEAN policy that confronts China's maritime claim.

Instead, ASEAN has promoted a regional code of conduct that effectively legitimizes China's maritime claims, fails to mention the 2016 ruling and ignores the issue of conflicting claims.

Further complicating a united front against China is the competing claims among ASEAN nations themselves to disputed islands in the South China Sea.

In lieu of a coordinated response, Southeast Asian nations have instead turned to hedging—that is, maintaining good relationships with both China and the U.S. without fully committing to one or other.

## A balancing act for Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines

Malaysia's approach sees its government partition off the South China Sea dispute from its overall bilateral ties with China while continuing to promote an ASEAN code of conduct.

Until recently, Malaysia's oil and gas activities were well within Malaysia's EEZ and not far enough out to fall into China's nine-dash claim.

But as these close-to-shore fields become exhausted, subsequent exploration will need to extend outward and into China's nine-dash claim, putting Malaysia's dealings with China under pressure.

China's nine-dash line claims a significant amount of Vietnam's EEZ, and the contested maritime area is a source of friction between the two countries; China's maritime militia regularly harasses Vietnamese fishermen and disrupts drilling operations in Vietnam's EEZ.

But Vietnam has to tread carefully. China plays a significant role in the Vietnamese economy as a major destination of exports and an important provider of foreign investment. China also has the ability to dam the Mekong River upstream of Vietnam—something that would disrupt agricultural production.

As a result, Vietnam's hedging involves a careful calibration to avoid angering China. However, part of Vietnam's heavy hedging involves the promotion of the South China Sea dispute as a core issue for domestic public opinion, which limits the Vietnamese government's ability to offer concessions to China.

China's nine-dash claim also includes a wide swath of the Philippines' EEZ.

The Philippines has zigzagged in its dealings with China. The presidencies of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001–2010) and Rodrigo Duterte (2016–2022) pursued a pro-China tack that downplayed Filipino claims in the South China Sea. Presidents Benigno Aquino (2010–2016) and Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. (2022–present), in contrast, have given U.S. forces greater access to its maritime bases and mobilized national and international opinion in favor of its claims.

Since coming to power, Marcos has also pursued even closer naval ties with the U.S.. But this has come at a cost: China now views the Philippines as a U.S. ally. As such, Beijing sees little to be gained by pulling back from its assertive activity in and around its waters.

## The future

In the shadow of two major powers battling for power in the South China Sea, Southeast Asian nations are making the best of their position along a geopolitical fracture line by advancing their claims and interests while not overly antagonizing a more assertive China or losing the support of the U.S.

This may work to tamp down tensions in the South China Sea. But it is a fluid approach not without risk, and it could yet prove to be another source of instability in a geopolitically contested and dangerous region.

# Trump vs. the Deep State: Myanmar Case Study

By Anderson Miller

*"I can attest personally that in my work as the Director of National Intelligence, the Deep State is fighting us every step of the way. It exists within every single federal agency... We are pushing hard. I know that they are pushing hard back."*

That was Tulsi Gabbard—not speaking as a pundit, but as the sitting Director of National Intelligence—confirming exactly what's unfolding inside the State Department today. As President Trump fights to realign US foreign policy around peace, trade, and realism, the entrenched bureaucracy at Foggy Bottom is doing everything it can to drag America back into endless war and ideological crusades.

Nowhere was that sabotage more apparent than on July 7, 2025, when President Trump sent a tariff letter to Myanmar's military chairman, Min Aung Hlaing—a move that bypassed the deep State entirely and sent the bureaucracy into quiet revolt. Trump's letter fired the opening shot in this now direct confrontation with the deep State—an ossified cartel of Soros-backed NGO activists, liberal career bureaucrats, and neocon regime-change fanatics who still think they run US foreign policy. For four years, they waited in the shadows, clinging to their titles, pretending the 2020 election wasn't stolen. Now, even with Trump back in charge, they're still defying him—openly, aggressively, and without consequence.

Trump's letter, a blunt notice of a 40 percent tariff on all Myanmar exports, was addressed directly to "the Chairman"—Min Aung Hlaing's formal title. For Myanmar's generals, long isolated and demonized by the very institutions Trump has spent years dismantling, it was a symbolic breakthrough. The Myanmar military immediately seized on the moment, forming a national task force to manage US engagement and publicly praising Trump's leadership and "America First" trade doctrine. Min Aung Hlaing even echoed Trump's claim that the 2020 election was rigged—a not-so-subtle wink at the President's legitimacy that no foreign head of State had dared voice before.

Yet, while Nay Pyi Taw was popping champagne, the Beltway was boiling over.

The State Department, still crawling with Soros alums and liberal NGO functionaries in diplomatic drag, rushed to tamp down any suggestion that the US was recognizing Myanmar's military leadership. Channel News Asia and The Guardian both confirmed that US



Bagan, Myanmar

via Wikimedia Commons

On one side, the President of the United States, using tariffs as a lever to force strategic engagement. On the other hand, an unelected priesthood of activist diplomats, radical liberal technocrats, and neocon warmongers still clinging to their decade-old fantasy of "democracy promotion," even as the country they're trying to save has moved on.

diplomats "do not officially engage" with the Myanmar Military, that the letter "does not signal recognition," and that Washington "continues to call for dialogue with the opposition." A State Department spokesperson went further, rehashing the same tired 2021 script about military violence and political prisoners—statements that have achieved precisely nothing over the last four years.

And why would they?

It's the same network of neocon holdovers who once gave us Iraq, Libya, and Syria—and now want to do the same in Myanmar. These people love a failed state, especially when it's one they helped break. They don't want a negotiated settlement with the Myanmar military; they don't want peace for over 54 million innocent civilians. They want an uprising they can fund, a resistance they can co-opt, and a client state they can manage from Washington, D.C.—preferably with the World Bank, IMF, and Open Society Foundations on speed dial.

This was clear as day earlier this year when reports surfaced that the deep state operatives within the NSC had refused to fire NSC staffers Trump had personally blacklisted. They were promoted instead. It wasn't a misunderstanding. It was a message: the deep state lives, and it answers to itself.

This is the reality of Trump's

Foreign Policy—not a clean pivot, but a knife fight in the corridors of American power. On one side, the President of the United States, using tariffs as a lever to force strategic engagement. On the other hand, an unelected priesthood of activist diplomats, radical liberal technocrats, and neocon warmongers still clinging to their decade-old fantasy of "democracy promotion," even as the country they're trying to save has moved on.

And nowhere is that rebellion more flagrant than in the halls of the National Security Council.

### The Neocons Still Live!!! The National Security Council's Continued Marriage with Soros-Backed NUG

Despite President Trump's sharp pivot toward transactional diplomacy with Myanmar's military leadership, internal resistance to this policy shift has not come solely from left-leaning activist bureaucrats at the State Department. Evidence now confirms that remnants of the pre-Trump national security establishment—particularly neoconservative Republicans embedded within the National Security Council (NSC)—continue to sabotage the administration's evolving Burma strategy.

According to a July 2025 communications exchange between US policy contacts and diplomatic

sources, the Soros-linked National Unity Government (NUG)—a parallel government in exile with collapsing operational control—was granted closed-door meetings in Washington with both State Department officials and an official from the NSC. The fact that the NUG, widely discredited by battlefield commanders and abandoned by multiple battalions in 2025, was given access to White House-adjacent personnel is not just symbolic—it is politically damning.

The NSC official in question was identified as Ivan Kanapathy, the only remaining East Asia-Pacific staffer after Trump's NSC purge. Kanapathy, a Bush-era neoconservative and former military attaché, has long cultivated ties to Southeast Asian activist networks and holds no MAGA credentials. As described by one official familiar with the meeting, Kanapathy is "masquerading as a Trumper" while quietly maintaining legacy alliances rooted in a failed democracy promotion agenda. His unauthorized meeting with NUG representatives was conducted without clearance from the President, or the administration's top officials—an act of bureaucratic defiance.

This is no longer conjecture. As confirmed by The Independent and Headline USA, President Trump personally ordered the firing of several NSC staffers earlier this year,

including Kanapathy. However, the NSC defied the President's orders, keeping these individuals in place and even promoting at least one of them. Headline USA quotes internal sources describing NSC's maneuver as "a middle finger to Trump." The report goes further, asserting that "the treacherous advisor Trump wanted fired was instead promoted—an open challenge to presidential authority, and a clear act of resistance from inside the building"

Trump allies—including media figures and Hill operatives—went public, accusing the NSC bureaucracy of running a parallel foreign policy. The case of Myanmar proves their point. Trump seeks to engage the leaders of the world—regardless of whether they pass the Deep State purity test—on terms rooted in sovereignty, tariffs, and mutual trade benefits. Yet, NSC loyalists to the pre-2020 playbook continue to quietly funnel legitimacy, access, and oxygen to "regime changing" hopes like the NUG—a group that no longer holds battlefield command, has lost legitimacy among ethnic resistance partners, and is now facing desertions, drug trafficking scandals, and rogue drone attacks it can't even account for.

It is worth repeating: the NUG is no longer a viable entity, even in the eyes of many PDFs. Since February, at least seven battalions have defected from the NUG's Ministry of Defense—some joining more established and capable Ethnic Armed Groups, others operating independently. In March, the NUG went so far as to arrest its own PDF leaders for attempting to resign, a sign of its waning internal legitimacy. That this group still walks the halls of the NSC—hosted not by accident but by active bureaucratic protection—is nothing short of sabotage.

President Trump's team must reckon with the reality that the NSC remains infiltrated. What should have been a clean break from the activist-neocon consensus of the Obama and Bush eras has instead become a standoff. A President can issue an order—but if that order is ignored, and the offender is promoted, then what follows is not policy—it is insurrection by another name.

A tariff may open a door, but if that door is quietly closed behind the President's back and reopened to the Soros-funded exiles of a collapsing revolution, then the message is clear: the war within Washington is not over.

And in Myanmar, it's not the White House calling the shots—it's the treacherous survivors of yesterday's failed ideologies, still embedded deep inside the national security apparatus.

### Activist-Aligned Bureaucrats and Continued Backing of the NUG

Within the State Department, a cohort of career diplomats and advisors—many with portfolios focused on human rights and democracy—have quietly continued to support Myanmar’s shadow government in exile, the NUG. This collection of liberals and neo-conservatives has banded together to still actively promote “regime change,” even as the Trump White House pivots away from this sort of interventionist foreign policy across the world. These so-called “activist-aligned bureaucrats” remain deeply invested in the previous US policy of isolating the Tatmadaw and empowering the NUG, a parallel government formed by ousted lawmakers and ethnic leaders. Despite the change in administration, their course has not reversed.

US Embassy staff and regional diplomats continue to maintain close ties with Burmese civil society and pro-democracy groups, such as the NUG. Burmese-language media and diaspora groups report ongoing informal meetings between US officials and NUG representatives. NUG Foreign Minister Zin Mar Aung publicly stated years ago that her then newly established liaison office in Washington, DC, was aimed at preserving diplomatic channels with sympathetic US actors. “I have seen people in the U.S. government increasingly warming to the NUG,” said one U.S.-based advocate at the time of the office’s opening—crediting mid-level officials within State and other agencies who, despite the fractured State of the pro-democracy armed movement and ethnic armed groups territorial gains and leverage over the Burmese-majority, still view the NUG as Myanmar’s rightful representative.

Concrete evidence of this quiet backing emerged immediately after President Trump’s tariff letter to SAC Chairman Min Aung Hlaing. U.S.-based Myanmar democracy activists quickly mobilized, sending letters to the State Department and Congress to express their objections. Groups like Save Myanmar USA, with long-standing ties to Foggy Bottom, raised their concerns directly with officials. “We raised concerns that the U.S. President is engaging with a sanctioned figure,” activist Ko Yin Aye told DVB News. The fact that such activists could access State channels so swiftly—without rebuke—points to an alignment of values and goals between diaspora groups and the career officials who manage Burma policy day-to-day. Rather than discourage the backlash, State Department personnel reportedly reassured activists of continued support for the democracy cause, signaling privately to NUG

supporters that “we stand with you, not the generals.”

Even as the Trump White House moved to slash democracy assistance programs and dismantle USAID’s Burma portfolio, there are signs that career officials are finding ways to sustain pro-democracy engagement. Before its reorganization, USAID had been using BURMA Act funds to support capacity building programs that “taught local communities how to vote,” DEI programs, and non-lethal support for the pro-democracy movement. While those programs were abruptly halted under Trump’s orders to merge USAID with the State Department and eliminate staff, Burmese civil society leaders report ongoing US engagement via alternative channels—such as small grants routed through the National Endowment for Democracy or discreet coordination on cross-border aid. A leaked cable, reported in Burmese media, showed diplomats encouraging NGOs on the Thai-Myanmar border to “keep up their important work,” while

leadership and diplomatic bureaucracy came into sharp focus following the catastrophic March 28, 2025, earthquake in Myanmar. The Trump administration authorized \$9 million in humanitarian aid, which was delivered via the UN and ICRC, and required formal coordination with the military for customs clearance and logistical access. Yet, US Embassy officials on the ground told Burmese NGOs and media that there was “no direct engagement” with the Myanmar Military government (SAC)—a claim contradicted by operational realities.

This episode encapsulates the dual-track nature of US policy toward Myanmar. Officially, Washington engages pragmatically to facilitate humanitarian relief, but on the ground, embassy personnel continue to maintain the fiction of non-engagement in order to placate activist circles and preserve moral distance. This quiet dishonesty reveals the deeper resistance within the US diplomatic apparatus: even when the President authorizes cooperation,

letter to Min Aung Hlaing “equated [the] Myanmar military chief...with a lawful head of state” by addressing him as “His Excellency.” That single phrase—His Excellency—sent the State Department’s “Burma desk” into convulsions. Not because it was inaccurate, but because it shattered the fantasy they’ve clung to for four years: that the US can pretend the generals don’t exist.

Indeed, reports suggest some US officials lodged internal objections to treating the military as a negotiating partner. According to Myanmar Now, a draft statement by a coalition of concerned State and Congressional staff circulated in early July, affirming that the US “has not changed its stance of holding the military accountable” and that Trump’s letter did not confer legitimacy (this was in response to worried queries from allies). While that statement did not appear officially, its existence underscores an internal effort to push back against any perception of US recognition of the SAC.

military as “the military regime” and highlight its atrocities. For example, a June embassy post commemorating Rohingya victims pointedly blamed “the military regime’s repression and escalating violence in Myanmar”. Such language, coming just weeks before Trump’s letter, signaled to Burmese audiences that the US mission’s stance hadn’t softened. It is likely that embassy officials, in concert with allies like the EU mission, intentionally kept a hard line to counter any military narrative of US acceptance. This can be seen as a subtle form of resistance, or at least message discipline, that contradicts the spirit of Trump’s outreach.

To these entrenched officials—many of whom built their careers on appeasing autocrats while virtue-signaling about democracy—Trump’s letter wasn’t just unexpected. It was an existential threat to the liberal internationalist worldview they’ve spent decades enforcing. According to one unnamed official (leaked, of course, through Politico), “We have no idea what the hell he’s sending, who he’s sending it to or how he’s sending it.” That’s not analysis. That’s a tantrum. And it confirms what everyone already suspects: these bureaucrats aren’t running the show anymore, and they hate it.

Normally, a presidential letter of this significance would be cleared through the interagency process—read: filtered, watered down, and neutered by every mid-level bureaucrat with a George Soros fellowship on their CV. But this time, Trump cut them out. The result? Internal rage. A rupture of protocol. And open sabotage by the foreign policy clerks who now see their influence slipping away.

Former US ambassadors Scot Marciel and Derek Mitchell—two of the most prominent relics of the Clinton foreign policy machine—have emerged as the unofficial spokesmen of this revolt. Marciel, who spent the Obama years cozying up to Suu Kyi and attending civil society roundtables that yielded little, while China secured significant gains in Myanmar, lamented that Trump’s tariff letter could “undo years of efforts” to build regional trust. In other words, it might actually change something.

Derek Mitchell, the first US ambassador to Myanmar post-reform and a longtime Clinton loyalist, went further—accusing Trump’s strategy of “pushing countries closer to China.” Of course, what Mitchell refuses to admit is that it was his own do-nothing engagement strategy that opened the door to China in the first place. For a decade, these men presided over a “Burma policy” that empowered oligarchs, emboldened the military behind the scenes, and left ethnic minorities to rot under

Inside the State Department, President Trump’s pivot to transactional engagement with Myanmar’s generals didn’t just provoke alarm—it set off a bureaucratic meltdown. Career diplomats and Clinton-era foreign policy holdovers—many of whom spent years coddling Aung San Suu Kyi, bankrolling ineffective “democracy promotion” NGOs, and cozying up to the very institutions that failed to prevent Myanmar’s collapse—have been quietly fuming. But now, the gloves are coming off.

quietly promising support would resume in due time. These behind-the-scenes efforts illustrate how parts of the US bureaucracy continue to support the NUG’s cause—despite the White House’s overt pivot toward engagement with the SAC.

Notably, the NUG’s Foreign Ministry office in Washington has maintained access to mid-level State Department personnel even after the Trump transition. In February 2023, a State Department official attended the NUG office’s opening ceremony—a symbolic nod to its legitimacy. In September 2023, senior advisor Derek Chollet met with Zin Mar Aung and affirmed “unwavering U.S. support” for democratic efforts. These quiet, often unpublicized meetings reveal that the foreign policy establishment’s default sympathies remain with the NUG. Burmese-language sources continue to report informal contacts between NUG officials and US embassy personnel into 2025, reinforcing the perception that a “deep state” of pro-democracy loyalists is keeping the old Burma policy alive, irrespective of new directives from the top.

This tension between political

some State Department officials deny or obscure that cooperation—undermining the coherence, credibility, and execution of US policy in the process.

### The Deep State Fights Back: Clinton Creatures and the Myanmar Meltdown

Inside the State Department, President Trump’s pivot to transactional engagement with Myanmar’s generals didn’t just provoke alarm—it set off a bureaucratic meltdown. Career diplomats and Clinton-era foreign policy holdovers—many of whom spent years coddling Aung San Suu Kyi, bankrolling ineffective “democracy promotion” NGOs, and cozying up to the very institutions that failed to prevent Myanmar’s collapse—have been quietly fuming. But now, the gloves are coming off.

Leaks to friendly media outlets, bitter off-the-record quotes, and sanctimonious warnings from former ambassadors reveal a diplomatic class in open revolt against the White House. The Politico National Security Daily newsletter put it plainly: Trump’s

Another avenue of dissent has been whistleblowing and leaks about aid cuts. For instance, an internal memo obtained by Reuters in June revealed that nearly all USAID funding to Myanmar had been frozen, except emergency humanitarian aid. Humanitarian groups sounded the alarm, and it emerged that even State Department officials were “alarmed” at the wholesale dismantling of democracy assistance programs. This leak served to embarrass the administration and has been interpreted as a protest from within the bureaucracy—essentially highlighting how the Trump team’s moves (like dissolving USAID’s Burma programs) were sabotaging US support for the democracy movement. The dissent channel—a formal State Dept mechanism—may also have been used; while those communications are secret, the media hints that Myanmar policy has been a hot topic for internal dissent memos in 2025.

Moreover, local US embassy staff in Yangon have quietly continued their work in ways at odds with Trump’s approach. Embassy social media accounts in Burmese still refer to the

broken ceasefires. Their solution? More dialogue. More donors. More democracy conferences in Yangon hotels funded by taxpayer dollars.

These are the “regime-happy” diplomats who shook hands with generals in private and condemned them in public. Who preached democracy while coordinating with the World Bank to finance military-adjacent infrastructure. Who propped up the NLD, ignored ethnic resistance groups, and now cry foul when Trump recognizes the political reality they helped suppress. They are the Clinton creatures—unelected, unaccountable, and absolutely furious that America First is back. And their rage isn’t just ideological. It’s personal. Trump didn’t just bypass their institutions. He humiliated them. He proved that four years of virtue signaling, sanctions, and moralistic press releases had achieved nothing. One letter from Trump did more to trigger engagement from the SAC than four years of State Department “pressure.”

This is why their knives are out. Because if Trump succeeds in flipping Myanmar into a functional trade partner—one that plays both China and America to its own advantage—it will expose the entire failure of the Clinton-Biden-Blinken foreign policy consensus. It will prove that diplomacy isn’t about who you moralize—it’s about who you talk to when it matters.

And that’s why they’re fighting him—not because Trump’s strategy is reckless, but because it might actually work.

#### Support for the NUG’s Washington Office and Links to George Soros

Another facet of this behind-the-scenes contradiction is the financial and organizational support directed toward the NUG’s presence in Washington, D.C., often via third parties and philanthropies aligned with the pro-democracy cause. The NUG established an official liaison office in D.C. in late 2022 to engage with the US government and international community. While the Trump administration has not officially recognized this office, it has quietly tolerated it. More tellingly, resources and endorsements have flowed to the NUG from activist networks, including those connected to financier George Soros’s Open Society Foundations (OSF).

Notably, Open Society Foundations has been a vocal and material supporter of Myanmar’s democracy movement for decades. In February 2023 – just months before Trump took office – OSF explicitly urged the world to “recognize the civilian National Unity Government... as the legitimate representative of Myanmar.” This public call by Soros’s foundation underscored its alignment with the NUG, and it was accompanied

by continued funding for Burmese civil society. OSF’s press release commemorating two years since the coup highlighted that OSF “began supporting Myanmar’s democracy movement in exile in the 1990s” and had a presence in-country until the coup, working on initiatives from inclusive education to democratic institutions. After the coup, OSF shifted to backing the resistance in exile. According to Reuters, OSF’s local branch (Open Society Myanmar) was accused by the military of funneling cash to the Civil Disobedience Movement, as the regime seized OSF bank accounts in 2021. OSF denied wrongdoing, but the military’s own claims inadvertently confirmed that significant funds were being channeled to anti-military activities—likely including support for striking workers, activists, and possibly NUG-linked projects.

In Washington, the NUG’s office has benefited from these activist funding streams. While official US aid to the NUG is basically nil (and the NUG publicly “rejects [the] claim” that it is on any “U.S. payroll”), private funding and diaspora donations have sustained its operations. Many of these donations trace back to philanthropic outfits. Burmese exile groups in the US have long received grants from organizations like OSF for democracy advocacy. For instance, the US Campaign for Burma and other Burma advocacy NGOs historically got Soros funding; those same networks are now rallying around the NUG. Sources in the Burmese diaspora report that OSF’s Open Society Action Fund quietly provided grants in 2023–2024 to support Burmese advocacy in D.C., effectively underwriting some of the NUG’s lobbying efforts. Though specifics are closely held, The Irrawaddy reported that pro-military propagandists circulated an (unfounded) figure of “\$200 million annually” from the US to the NUG. This was exaggerated, but it hints at the substantial sums raised by Burmese democracy advocates from sympathetic donors. In reality, some of that support comes from George Soros’s network and allied philanthropies – a fact not lost on the military or on Trump’s aides who view Soros-funded initiatives with suspicion.

One tangible link: Alexander Soros (George Soros’s son, now chair of OSF) has engaged with Myanmar issues and met NUG representatives. The Myanmar military’s media itself published photos of George and Alex Soros meeting Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in happier times, suggesting Soros had the ear of Myanmar’s democratic leadership. Post-coup, OSF’s call to recognize the NUG and its condemnation of military atrocities effectively put the Soros organization squarely behind the

NUG’s legitimacy. Through OSF and related entities, funding is likely being funneled to support the NUG’s information campaigns and its office. This might include paying for lobbyists or consultants. For example, the NUG recently hired a US lobbyist, John Todoroki, as an envoy to engage with the Trump administration, and questions have arisen about whether private donors (potentially OSF or wealthy Burmese expatriates) are financing this effort. An April 2025 filing showed that NUG’s acting president Duwa Lashi La appointed Todoroki as envoy, suggesting a coordinated lobbying plan—something that would typically require significant funding.

At the bureaucratic level, State Department “activist” officials have not impeded these outside support channels – if anything, they’ve encouraged them. When the NUG’s D.C. office opened, the presence of a State official and the attendance of think-tank allies signaled an unofficial US blessing. And although President Trump eliminated most direct US assistance via USAID, Congress (including Democrats and some Republicans) has kept some funding for Burmese democracy alive, often via the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Open Society network. The result is that the NUG’s operations in Washington are buoyed by a patchwork of non-governmental funding and political support that runs parallel to (and sometimes under the radar of) the official administration. George Soros’s role is part of a broader pattern of the so-called “deep state” and civil society teaming up: Soros-funded groups pressuring for continued isolation of the military, career diplomats lending a sympathetic ear, and members of Congress of both parties critical of any legitimization of Myanmar’s generals.

While President Trump attempts to bring US policy back to reality with tariffs and leverage, D.C.’s activist machine continues to bankroll the fantasy. The NUG—discredited on the ground and fractured internally—is alive in Washington thanks to Open Society Foundations, NED, and a swarm of Soros-aligned NGOs that rushed in after Trump froze official aid. The State Department claims it’s not funding the NUG. Maybe not directly. However, activist bureaucrats within Foggy Bottom are still greasing the wheels—setting up meetings, sharing intelligence, and ensuring the exile government remains relevant in congressional offices and think tank roundtables.

It’s classic deep state sabotage: fund the proxy, bury the President’s agenda, and keep the regime-change dream alive. They don’t care that the NUG is collapsing—they care that it still serves their script. One Trump

letter disrupted their narrative. So now, they’re using soft power to fight back—with Soros cash and bureaucratic subversion.

#### State Department Sidelined and Backlash Over Tariff Diplomacy

President Trump’s Myanmar tariff letter didn’t just disrupt business as usual—it blew up the State Department’s entire operating script. The decision to hit Myanmar with a 40 percent tariff, delivered straight to Min Aung Hlaing with “His Excellency” on the envelope, was made by Trump’s inner circle—not the bureaucrats at State, and certainly not the Burma desk lifers still clinging to the failed policies of Clinton and Blinken.

It wasn’t just bold. It was intentional. No interagency coordination, no warning to the embassies, no Foggy Bottom filters. Just a direct, unignorable message from the President of the United States to a government the State Department has spent four years pretending doesn’t exist.

And they hated it.

State Department insiders, Clinton-era leftovers, and career “Burma-watchers” went straight into damage-control mode. Leaks began circulating in D.C. press circles. According to Myanmar Now, a draft statement began circulating among State and Congressional staff in early July asserting that the US “has not changed its stance” toward the SAC—a bureaucratic attempt to undermine the White House’s diplomatic move before it even got off the ground.

Simultaneously, Soros-linked democracy NGOs and their allies at State began pushing narratives that Trump was abandoning the Burmese people, fueling Congressional concern and media hysteria. Reuters published leaked memos showing the freeze on USAID democracy funds—portrayed as “alarming”—even though the cuts were part of the White House’s plan to redirect resources away from ineffective vanity projects and toward leverage-based diplomacy. These leaks weren’t incidental. They were the slow-rolling sabotage of a policy they disapproved of—and one they hadn’t designed.

Caught in the middle of this storm? Secretary of State Marco Rubio. A true Trump loyalist, Rubio has long understood what many at State will never admit: that the institution is bloated, broken, and incapable of real strategic recalibration. Insiders say Rubio was likely aware of the letter strategy—but given that the very people beneath him are entrenched in Clinton-era orthodoxy, he wisely chose not to preview a single word to the desk officers, regional envoys, or mid-level diplomats who would have leaked it to kill it.

Instead, Rubio went to the ASEAN

Regional Forum in Kuala Lumpur on July 10 as a one-man cleanup crew—tasked with tamping down regional hysteria and calming allies who’d been blindsided. “Rubio said the right things,” one analyst noted, “but he was flying blind. The letters went out before his team could even blink.” The White House had sent tariff notices to 14 countries—including eight in ASEAN—without passing through the usual diplomatic gauntlet. That was by design. Because Trump knows that if you send a new policy through State, it comes out the other side dead.

US diplomats in Southeast Asia—especially those still married to the old model of “isolate the generals, fund the NUG”—were furious. Embassy Rangoon had no heads-up. Neither did diplomats in Bangkok, Tokyo, or Singapore. That vacuum created precisely the kind of resentment Trump’s team anticipated—and refused to accommodate.

The backlash came fast: a leaked ASEAN joint statement expressed “concern” over US tariffs. One diplomat called Rubio’s visit “a containment mission.” Meanwhile, back in Washington, State’s Burma desk reportedly froze, refusing to engage on implementation or facilitate follow-up negotiations with Min Aung Hlaing’s trade team. Instead of helping broker a counteroffer or revised tariff terms, State adopted a “wait-and-see” posture, publicly reiterating that sanctions on the military remain, and privately hoping the deal would die on its own.

And behind the scenes? Open resistance. Foreign Policy magazine quoted anonymous officials “aghast” that Trump would send what looked like a recognition letter. One analyst sniped, “It’s Trump’s policy by tweet—and the professionals are left cleaning up the mess.” But that’s precisely the point. The “professionals” aren’t trying to clean it up—they’re trying to stall it, bury it, and make it disappear.

Even worse, members of Congress who had long been fed the NUG fairytale were looped in after the letter was dropped. Mitch McConnell reportedly leaned on Rubio in private, demanding reassurances that the US wasn’t legitimizing Myanmar’s military. But these concerns are based on narratives State has cultivated for years—a fantasy where the NUG wins, China gets pushed out, and everything goes back to 2015. That world is gone. Trump is negotiating with the facts on the ground. Foggy Bottom is still chasing ghosts.

In short, Trump dropped the tariffs and the Deep State bureaucrats. They’re still hiding behind press statements and “dissent memos,” hoping this White House initiative collapses under the weight of their inertia.

# United Against Extremism: A Call for National Security and Global Awareness



**Sanjay Lazar**

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The landscape of North America has been beset with terrorism afflicting the American and Canadian landscape, with Canada playing battleground to the various South Asian, Middle Eastern and Chinese banned groups ranging from the Khalistanis, Sikhs for Justice, Babbar Khalsa and their many offshoots, the LTTE, PLOTE Muslim Brotherhood, IRGC connected groups, Hamas, Triad and many more who create unrest, violence in USA, Canada, India, Israel and the Middle east.

The National Security Conference held this week in Toronto, spearheaded by the Canada India Foundation and TAFSIK, a Jewish Civil rights group, brought together speakers from all denominations and from across the world like India, Israel, Iran, America, Canada to discuss the serious issue of Extremism and National Security In the light of threats by the Khalistani groups, Antisemitic groups and the Muslim brotherhood groups.

The North American continent has seen the dastardly 1985 bombing of the Air India Kanishka 747 over Ireland, by the Babbar Khalsa, a Khalistani group, killing 329 passengers and crew, and a second bomb at almost the same time on the same day in Narita, Japan, killing two baggage handlers. This was the largest act of aviation terror in North America before 9/11.

This author was privileged to present a session on the Human cost of terrorism session focused on the "Children of Kanishka", where more than 82 children under the age of 12 and close to 126 children under the age of 18, were killed by the radical Khalistani Bombs on Air India 182, wiping out an entire generation of children.

Let's put that into perspective: On Air India 182, the Khalistanis killed 82 kids under the age of 12. 126 kids under 18. That was an entire new generation wiped out, who would never see the light



The North American continent has seen the dastardly 1985 bombing of the Air India Kanishka 747 over Ireland, by the Babbar Khalsa, a Khalistani group, killing 329 passengers and crew, and a second bomb at almost the same time on the same day in Narita, Japan, killing two baggage handlers. This was the largest act of aviation terror in North America before 9/11.

of the new decade, let alone the millennium.

Brinda and Arti Pada, both trained dancers, embarking on their lives, perished with their dad, Vishnu Pada. Their mother, Lata Pada, still struggles to come to grips with the scale of the loss and the memories of the girls and runs the Sampradaya Academy in Toronto.

Sanjay and Deepak Turlapati, two young brothers from Toronto, lost to the world. Brilliant at academics, the brothers were inseparable. Their parents, Laxmipati and Dr. Padmini Turlapati, have returned to Ireland every year for the past 40 years to honor the boys' memories. For the past 25 years, they have established and funded the 'Kanishka Scholarships,' which provide support for the college education of two Irish children each year.

John Chatlani remembers his siblings, Mala, a school topper, and his baby brother Marc, only 4 years old then, who perished with their mother. He still believes that Marc had a premonition and didn't want to go on the flight, and he is consumed by guilt.

Sumanta and Deepa Harpalani, aged 5 and 9 respectively, were outstanding students who loved swimming, skating, and singing. Their parents, Kalyan and Mrs. Harpalani, have been heartbroken for years over the loss of their beloved children at such a young age.

Of course, Sandeeta Lazar, my own baby sister, naughty as they came, only 3 years old, and the breath in my soul. Snatched away by a cruel act of madness, by a bunch of terrorists.

I could go on; these are only a few of the 82 children of Kanishka, but you, Canada, and the world would never know them. They belonged to our lost generation, and no one speaks about them anymore.

The time has come to establish memorial learning centers and exhibits across North America, including Canada and India, to educate future generations about the horrors of the past—so that we are not condemned to repeat them—and to ensure this tragedy is included as part of the compulsory curriculum in schools across Canada and the United States.

Similarly, the bombing of Pan Am 103 on 21 December 1988 took the lives of 270 victims, including 11 on the ground, through the act of a Libyan bombing. It took away the lives of 169 Americans, including 21 returning Syracuse University students, and included citizens of 21 countries.

The horrors of 9/11 ripped apart our hearts and souls. It was the greatest aviation terrorist act in North America, perpetrated by Al-Qaeda, Mohammed Atta, Osama Bin Laden, and co. Thousands lost their lives that day in the four airplanes and the twin towers tragedy. It is a day the world can never forget. The Oklahoma bombings are another grim reminder that terrorism and religious fundamentalism are real threats to our civilized world.

Apart from terrorism and extremism, the "United Against Extremism" conference also discussed the concept of "Foreign Interference" and how foreign countries seem to covertly influence policy in foreign allied countries. The irony was that, until now, there was no legal definition of the term "Foreign Interference" in the statute books of Canada. Is there a boundary to alleged "Foreign interference"? The panel discussed whether it was okay for one government to permit its soil, resources, and citizens to discuss the seditious dismemberment and death of elected officials in another country. Whether it was allowed by Canadian Law or not, and why that should be punishable.

Ritesh Malik, the Chairperson of the Canada India Foundation (CIF), opined that Canadian society was going through a lot of threats and extremist violence that needed to be stopped. "This is not against any religion or people, but against

extremism". "This conference was to preserve Canada in its original state, and it was time that Canada fought back against extremism and restored the Nation to its pristine state, the way it was."

TAFSIK Executive Director, Amir Epstein, wanted the end of terrorism, antisemitic discrimination, and violence all across the country by radicals against the Jewish people.

Ujjal Dosanjh, former Premier of British Columbia and also a former federal minister of Canada said that "this was an extremely important conference, the first public meeting of its kind, in a long time, that highlights the question of extremism in Canada, particularly in the Indo-Canadian community and how the politicians in the community have not paid much attention to it. This was why extremism, drugs, smuggling, terrorism, and immigration rackets coalesce and come together to create problems for our society."

The conference was also attended by some Canadian Members of Parliament, such as MP Anna Roberts, and a Canadian Member of Parliament from Calgary, Shuvaloy "Shuv" Majumdar. Shuv a Canadian conservative MP, spoke of the need of a rules-based order and how he attended the 40th anniversary memorial of the Air India bombing, a week earlier, and explained how he had no problems in naming the murderers in the terrorist bombing of Air India 182, and how he personally knew one of the victims who died on the Kanishka. He made it clear that he was not scared of the false allegations that he was an agent of another country, when he was a strong and proud Canadian patriot who had served his country, but the time had come for a new beginning.

A conference of this nature was a significant milestone, to restore the balance of the rule of law, and it was necessary for the world that North America become a bulwark against terrorism and not allow the forces of extremism run rampage amongst our societies at large, like the radical fringe outfits such as Khalistani radicals, Hamas sympathizers, Sikhs for Justice, IRGC assets, Muslim Brotherhood and ISIS.

It's time that all the G7 Nations took this issue up on a war footing to end all forms of terrorism and separatism emanating from their soil, especially in North America.

# The Mamdani Effect: What a Progressive Mayor Means for NYC

By Dr. Lina Abirafeh

Last night, New York made history. Zohran Mamdani—the underdog, the socialist—declared victory in New York City’s Democratic mayoral primary. Mamdani’s victory reveals a refreshing shift towards more progressive policies—and a long overdue turn away from the old guard.

Former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo conceded, despite having the support of billionaires like Michael Bloomberg, anti-free speech Israel-obsessed hedge fund manager Bill Ackman, and co-founder of Palantir Alex Karp. The former governor—twice Mamdani’s age—resigned after multiple accusations of sexual harassment and a long list of scandals.

If elected, Mamdani would be the first Muslim and the first South Asian mayor of the city. So what might Mamdani as mayor mean for women? For minorities? For Muslims and Arab-Americans in the city? And—for Palestine?

Here we go.

A key part of Mamdani’s platform is city-funded universal childcare and pre-kindergarten programs. This could be a game-changer for many women, particularly mothers, by reducing the financial burden of childcare and allowing for greater participation in the workforce or pursuit of educational opportunities. Universal no-cost childcare is a cornerstone of gender equity as well as economic necessity.

Amid a devastating housing crisis, Mamdani is calling for a rent freeze on all rent-stabilized units and the creation of a Social Housing Development Agency to build publicly owned, affordable



housing. Women—especially single mothers and women of color—are disproportionately affected by housing insecurity and the high cost of living in NYC. These policies also offer crucial stability and financial relief to combat the affordability crisis that disproportionately affects low-income New Yorkers, many of whom are from minority backgrounds.

Mamdani’s economic policies also include the establishment of subsidized city-owned grocery stores, stronger tenant protections and a potential increase in the minimum wage to \$30/hour by 2030, which would benefit a workforce that is heavily comprised of minority workers. This also benefits women, who often hold lower-wage jobs and bear the brunt of managing household budgets and food security.

Mamdani is committed to public safety and community well-being through the creation of a new Department of Community Safety focused on mental health professionals, crisis responders, and outreach workers. While some argue that shifting resources away from the

NYPD might compromise immediate safety, it’s clear that addressing root causes of crime and providing mental health support could create safer communities for everyone, including women. This could also be a significant change for communities of color that have historically been over-policed. This new department could help address the root causes of crime and build trust between communities and the city.

On healthcare, Mamdani is committed to fighting against any attempts to undermine reproductive healthcare access in NYC, particularly in the context of broader national political shifts. He also supports expanding access to gender-affirming healthcare as well as establishing an LGBTQIA+ Affairs Office.

Mamdani has pledged to “Trump-proof” New York by enhancing the city’s sanctuary status and removing the influence of federal immigration agencies like ICE. This would be a major positive for immigrant communities, including a large portion of the city’s minorities. He also plans to expand legal support

and language access for migrants. His campaign used culturally-specific outreach targeting different minority groups, demonstrating a commitment to making politics accessible and personal for the city’s diverse communities.

As a Muslim and the son of a Ugandan academic and an Indian filmmaker, Mamdani’s victory provides a powerful symbol of representation for Muslim, Arab, and South Asian communities. His campaign’s successful outreach to mosques and community hubs demonstrates the growing political mobilization of this demographic. What’s more, he has pledged an 800% increase in funding for anti-hate crime initiatives, with a specific focus on combating both antisemitism and Islamophobia. This is a direct response to the rise in hate crimes in the city—and a welcome measure for the Muslims and Arabs who have felt vulnerable.

And then there’s Palestine...

Mamdani’s outspoken support for the Palestinian cause is a defining aspect of his political platform and has generated both widespread support and intense controversy. His willingness to speak on the issue, even in the face of strong criticism, signals a significant shift in city politics. Mamdani has refreshingly been one of the most vocal elected officials in the US to criticize Israel’s actions, calling it what it is—a genocide. One that US taxpayers are funding while they can’t afford basic necessities.

Mamdani is a strong supporter of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement and has introduced resolutions to sever city ties with firms operating in Israeli settlements and has stated that he

would have Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrested if he visited NYC.

Of course the same chorus continues to scream antisemitism, failing to distinguish anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli government policies from the Jewish people. Meanwhile Mamdani has strongly condemned antisemitism, rising above the incessant attacks and false accusations, maintaining his anti-war, pro-peace, pro-human rights position. For everyone.

In an article for Zeteo, progressive and democratic strategist Waleed Shahid explained that democratic leaders pay lip service to multiracial democracy but “faltered precisely when solidarity demanded clarity—particularly around Palestinian suffering, anti-Arab bigotry, and anti-Muslim discrimination.” “More than strategic cowardice,” Shahid adds, this is “a moral failure.” Mamdani’s candidacy directly confronted this silence, declaring that true democracy includes the people that power often renders invisible.

Mamdani’s election is more than progressive—it would usher in a new era of real political representation. According to Arab America, Mamdani’s campaign is a long-overdue acknowledgment of the voices and struggles of those too often left behind—Arab and Muslim New Yorkers, immigrants, the working class. This is a turning point, a rejection of complicity and a stand for justice... evidence of what happens “when conscience meets courage.”

I don’t know about you, but I’m feeling a hope in this country—or at least in this city—that I haven’t felt for a long time.

## The Crushing of Sacred Spaces: Bangladesh’s Assault on Religious Minorities Demands Global Action

By Priya Saha

**DHAKA, Bangladesh**—On June 26, 2025, the Khilkhet Sarbajanin Durga Mandir, a sacred Hindu temple in Dhaka, was demolished by Bangladesh Railway authorities, backed by the Army, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), and police. Without prior notice, sacred idols of Goddess Durga, Kali, and Shiva were crushed under bulldozers, igniting outrage among Bangladesh’s Hindu minority. This act, enabled by the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, is part of a broader campaign of violence against religious minorities, violating Bangla-

desh’s Constitution, international law, and the United Nations’ human rights protocols. The United States, India, and the United Nations must act to hold Bangladesh accountable and protect its vulnerable communities.

### A Temple Razed, A Community Betrayed

The demolition followed a June 23 mob attack by over 500 extremists who surrounded the temple, demanding its removal while worshippers covered inside. “We will return and destroy this temple unless it is removed,” they threatened, per New Age. Instead of safeguarding the Hindu community, the state responded with

bulldozers, razing the temple without warning or consultation. Arjun Roy, temple committee secretary, told ANI, “They demolished everything without notice. We are heartbroken.” A local Hindu woman added, “We have no place to pray. If thousands of mosques stand, why can’t one temple?” Bangladesh Railway claimed the temple was an “unauthorized structure” on railway land, citing Ordinance 24 of 1970. Yet, the temple had permission for Durga Puja rituals in 2024, undermining claims of illegality. In Hindu tradition, idols consecrated through Pran Pratishtha embody divine presence, making their destruction a profound

act of spiritual violence. The absence of religious protocols, such as Visarjan (deactivation), amplifies the offense.

### A Pattern of Persecution

Since the Awami League’s fall in August 2024, Bangladesh’s religious minorities—Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, and indigenous groups—have faced relentless attacks. The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council reports 2,010 attacks on minority homes, businesses, and temples, including 69 temples vandalized between August 4 and 20, 2024. The Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities (HRCBM) documents dozens of cases of forced

conversions, sexual violence against minority women, and mob intimidation, with police often complicit. Over 10 months, over 200 Hindu and Christian temples have been desecrated, dozens of Hindus killed, and 3,000 minority properties attacked.

A chilling example occurred in Dinajpur, where the Mahastri Manasa and Durga Temple’s idols were beheaded, a deliberate act of humiliation. India’s Ministry of External Affairs condemned the Khilkhet demolition as state-enabled persecution, stating, “The interim government projected the episode as illegal land use, allowing its destruction.”

# Washington Update: Prevent Genocide in Ethiopia's Amhara Region

By Mesfin Mekonen

## A Call to Action: Prevent Genocide in Ethiopia's Amhara Region

Ethiopia's Amhara region is in the grip of a rapidly escalating crisis, marked by widespread violence, mass displacement, and immense human suffering. The violence is tearing communities apart, targeting civilians, and driving the region into chaos.

The warning signs are clear: the Amhara region is on the path to genocide. This is not a time for silence or indifference. The international community must act now—before it is too late.

We call on world leaders, human rights organizations, and international institutions to:

- Launch independent investigations into the atrocities being committed.
- Demand accountability from all parties responsible for the violence.
- Take concrete measures to prevent further atrocities and protect innocent civilians.

History will judge how the world responds. We must stand together to uphold the values of humanity, justice, and peace. The people of Amhara—and all Ethiopians—deserve to live free from fear and violence.

Ethiopia's economic situation is deteriorating rapidly. Monthly inflation has soared to alarming levels while youth unemployment remains dangerously high. This combination creates a volatile environment.

Young people see no opportunity and have nothing to hope for, creating the real risk of violent unrest. Fundamental changes to



One of only two stone bridges built over the Blue Nile during the reign of Emperor Fasilides in approximately 1660. Destroyed during World War II by retreating Italian soldiers. via Wikimedia Commons

Ethiopia's governing structure are crucial to prevent the country from further deteriorating into crisis. By disregarding even the most basic human rights, the Abiy regime risks turning Ethiopia into a failed state. The consequences would be devastating: widespread suffering for Ethiopians, regional destabilization across the Horn of Africa, and the emergence of safe havens for extremist groups.

Ethiopians understand that the future of their nation ultimately rests in their own hands. However, they also believe that the United States can play a meaningful role, both as a partner and a source of inspiration, in the pursuit of human rights, democratic governance, and long-term stability.

The U.S. government should pursue a three-pronged strategy focused on:

- **Cessation of hostilities** to prevent further bloodshed and displacement.
- **Targeted sanctions** against those responsible for human rights abuses and obstruction of peace.
- **Support for constitutional reform** to lay the groundwork for

inclusive, democratic governance.

We are working to secure meeting space at the U.S. Senate to discuss the deteriorating human rights situation in Ethiopia and the ongoing constitutional conference.

This gathering comes at a critical juncture, as Ethiopia stands at a crossroads. It is essential to find common ground to address the suffering of all citizens—especially the Amhara people—and to work toward unity among Ethiopia's diverse ethnic groups. Our goal is to foster dialogue and collaboration to build a peaceful and inclusive future for one united Ethiopia.

### Healthcare workers in crisis

In Ethiopia, healthcare professionals are being harassed and jailed for demanding fair wages and improved living conditions. These frontline workers are facing increasingly dire circumstances, and their calls for justice cannot be ignored.

The government must engage with their demands before the crisis deepens. Failure to act risks triggering broader unrest, as other professional

associations may soon follow the example set by healthcare workers.

### Setting the record straight on the GERD

The Ethiopian government has firmly rejected recent claims by President Donald Trump regarding financial support for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). In a statement issued by the Public Coordination Office for the GERD, officials emphasized that the dam's construction has been funded entirely by Ethiopians, not foreign donors.

Ethiopia maintains that outstanding issues related to the equitable use of the Blue Nile's waters can and should be resolved through ongoing tripartite negotiations with Egypt and Sudan. A clear understanding of the underlying facts is essential to appreciating the stakes involved.

Although 85 percent of the Nile's water originates in Ethiopia, specifically from the Blue Nile, Ethiopians have historically derived minimal benefit from the river. The GERD represents a long-overdue step toward rectifying that

imbalance. It will play a critical role in addressing Ethiopia's severe energy deficit. Currently, 83 percent of the population lacks access to electricity, and 94 percent of households rely on wood for cooking and heating. This is unsustainable, especially given that Ethiopia possesses Africa's second-highest hydropower potential, but it has only developed 3 percent of this potential.

The GERD is also essential to Ethiopia's food security. Today, less than 5% of irrigable land in the Blue Nile basin is cultivated, despite the country's growing population, struggling economy, and recurrent food shortages. The underdevelopment of irrigation and water infrastructure is a direct contributor to the devastating famines that have plagued Ethiopia for decades. As of now, up to six million Ethiopians are at risk of hunger, a crisis that highlights the urgent need for long-term, structural solutions.

While the United States and other nations have provided crucial emergency food assistance, Ethiopia's future depends on sustainable development. Large-scale water projects, such as the GERD, are necessary to break the cycle of dependency and build resilience.

The Renaissance Dam is indispensable—but it alone is not enough. Ethiopia remains one of the few countries that prohibit private ownership of agricultural land, and it is one of the few where famines continue to occur with alarming regularity. Ending that cycle will require bold policy reforms and sustained investment in infrastructure, irrigation, and energy.

## Washington Update: Conference on Ethiopia's Future and Human Rights

By Mesfin Mekonen

### Constitutional Conference

We are very pleased to share that Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) has kindly sponsored meeting space for us at the U.S. House of Representatives' Rayburn Building. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 1, from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM. The meetings will be a continuation of a series of Constitutional Conferences focused on finalizing the draft Ethiopian Constitution and addressing the ongoing deterioration of human rights in Ethiopia.

In light of recent events, we have also decided to include the persecution of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia as a major topic of discussion

during the conference.

We will share more details in the coming weeks.

### Request for Senate hearing

We asked Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Africa & Global Health, to hold a hearing on the crisis in Ethiopia. We outlined the causes and impacts of the situation in Ethiopia, emphasizing that political stability and economic prosperity in Ethiopia are critically important to the United States as instability in Africa's second-most populous nation threatens to destabilize the Horn of Africa. While crises in the Middle East, Ukraine, and elsewhere dominate the attention of the State Department

and the national security community, ignoring the looming catastrophe in Ethiopia is a mistake.

We are waiting to hear from the Senator.

There is a new piece of legislation, H.Res. 594, introduced by Representative Riley Moore of West Virginia. The resolution condemns the persecution of Christians in Muslim-majority countries. It is currently in the first stage of the legislative process, having been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on July 17, 2025. Press Freedom in Ethiopia: A Concerning Backslide

Recent actions by the Ethiopian government have significantly curtailed press freedom, undermining the

progress made following the 2018 political reforms. Although the media environment is relatively more open than under previous regimes, it remains fragile and vulnerable to state control.

### Key Developments

Crackdowns on Journalists: Authorities have increasingly targeted members of the press, including both Ethiopian and international journalists. Reports include arbitrary arrests, prolonged detentions without due process, intimidation, and even physical assaults. These actions have created a chilling effect on independent journalism and public discourse.

Internet and Communication Blackouts: The government has imposed

widespread internet shutdowns and communication restrictions, particularly during periods of unrest or conflict. These blackouts not only obstruct the flow of information but also hinder humanitarian response and civil society engagement in affected regions.

States of emergency have been used to justify sweeping limitations on media activity, including censorship and legal action against those who report on sensitive political or security issues. These measures often lack transparency and due legal safeguards.

Despite previous steps toward media liberalization, these recent trends represent a concerning regression.

# Statement on the Continuation and Recognition of the Dalai Lama Reincarnation

By Global Strat View Staff

On 24 September 2011, at a meeting of the heads of Tibetan spiritual traditions, I made a statement to fellow Tibetans in and outside Tibet, followers of Tibetan Buddhism, and those who have a connection with Tibet and Tibetans, regarding whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue. I stated, "As far back as 1969, I made clear that concerned people should decide whether the Dalai Lama's reincarnations should continue in the future."

I also said, "When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, to re-evaluate whether or not the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue."

Although I have had no public discussions on this issue, over the last 14 years leaders of Tibet's spiritual traditions, members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, participants in a Special General Body Meeting, members of the Central Tibetan Administration, NGOs, Buddhists from the Himalayan region, Mongolia, Buddhist republics of the Russian Federation and Buddhists in Asia including mainland China, have written to me with reasons,

earnestly requesting that the institution of the Dalai Lama continue. In particular, I have received messages through various channels from Tibetans in Tibet making the same appeal. In accordance with all these requests, I am affirming that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue.

The process by which a future Dalai Lama is to be recognized has been clearly established in the 24 September 2011 statement which states that responsibility for doing so will rest exclusively with members of the Gaden Phodrang Trust, the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should accordingly carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition.

I hereby reiterate that the Gaden Phodrang Trust has sole authority to recognize the future reincarnation; no one else has any such authority to interfere in this matter.

Dalai Lama

Dharamshala



Photo from HH Dalai Lama's office



HH Dalai Lama's 90th birthday celebrations in Dharamshala

Photo from HH Dalai Lama's office

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Photo from HH Dalai Lama's office



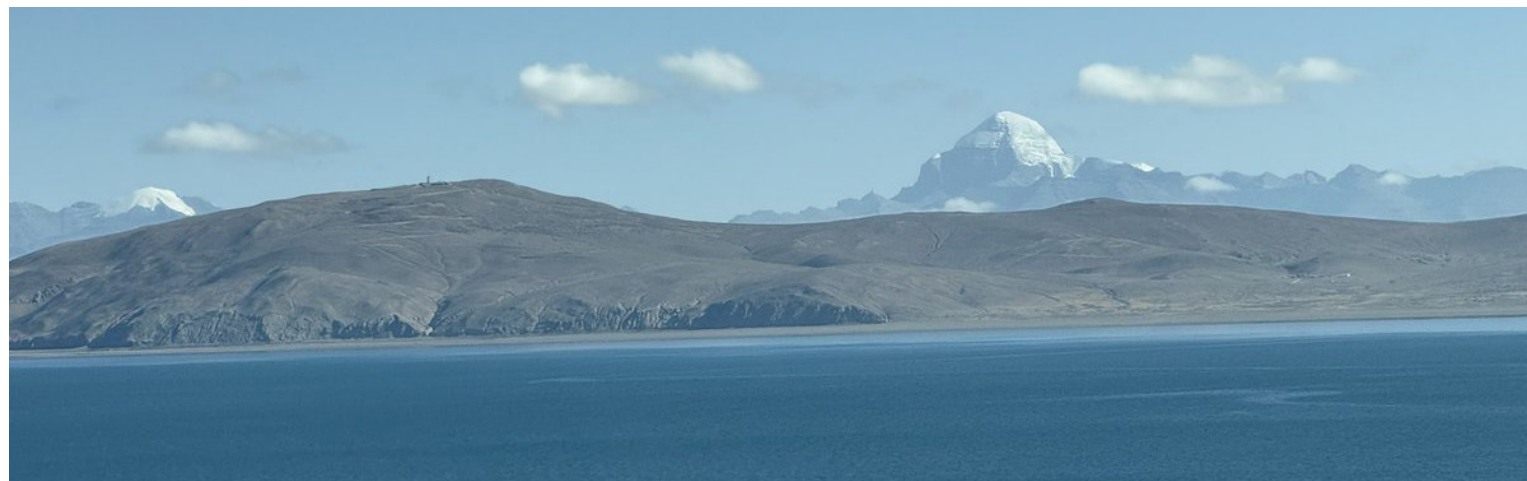
Photo from HH Dalai Lama's office



Kadambini Sharma

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# Journey to the Sacred: My Kailash Mansarovar Experience



**NEW DELHI** – It was the fourth flight since I'd left Delhi, and it was about to land. The seatbelt sign had come on, and I was strapped in, sitting one seat away from the window, craning my neck for a glimpse. And then, suddenly, there it was. Holy Mount Kailash. The reason I had embarked on this grueling six-day, eight-flight journey was to reach Kailash Mansarovar in Purang County, Tibet. I could hardly believe my eyes. And just as suddenly as it had appeared, it vanished from view. Had I really seen it? Or was it a mirage of anticipation? I didn't know then, but the next few days would leave no doubt about it.

I've never been particularly religious, leaning more toward the spiritual essence of faith than rituals. Yet this trip was entirely devoted to visiting the revered Mount Kailash. It was also a major story. For the first time in nearly six years, Indian pilgrims were resuming the Yatra—a sign of thawing ties between India and China after relations had frozen following the deadly Galwan clashes, where 20 Indian soldiers lost their lives. Just a year earlier, I had covered the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, where Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping held their first in-person talks since that incident. The resumption of the Yatra felt like a pivotal gesture of diplomatic normalcy.

A batch of Indian journalists had begun the journey just before us. The Ministry of External Affairs had held a lottery to select 750 pilgrims, divided into groups of 50, each accompanied by a doctor and two liaison officers. The first group was arriving at Mount Kailash alongside us.

Many of us had visited China before—some even to Lhasa—but for all of us, this was the first time visiting Kailash Mansarovar. Unlike the pilgrims taking a 21-day trek via the Nathu La Pass, our route involved four flights: Delhi to Bangkok, to Chengdu, to Lhasa, and finally to Purang.

Since Bangkok, the weather had been unpredictable. Heavy rains in Chengdu raised concerns about what awaited us at Mount Kailash. But as our flight touched down in Purang, the skies began to clear. On the way to our hotel, we caught our first distant glimpse of the holy mountain. Mesmerized, I forgot to

take any shots. Awe and gratitude washed over me. Local officials assured us we'd be visiting the base of Mount Kailash that very day.

I had been preparing for the altitude by taking both modern and traditional Tibetan medicine, which had helped me during my visit to Lhasa 11 years prior. Still, the thin air made its presence felt. Labored breathing, quick fatigue. However, the excitement of being so close to Mount Kailash soon made me forget my concerns.

After a jarring bus ride, we reached the base. This, we were told, was the closest point accessible to visitors. There, I saw Tibetan Buddhist devotees engaged in prayer, tying prayer flags around a tall pole, chanting, lost in their rituals. And behind them, towering above all, was Mount Kailash—majestically still and utterly divine. I bowed low before the

and took a seat on a raised platform meant for prayer. I sat in silence, reflecting on the journey, letting the mountain's presence envelop me. I had come as close as one could. And in that moment, a deep, wordless calm settled over me. I didn't chant, I didn't recite anything. Simply being there, seeing Kailash unhindered—it felt like prayer enough. A quiet surrender.

That evening, we met a group of pilgrims who had just completed the Parikrama, arriving at the base where they were setting up camp. The Chinese government had made the arrangements. One group after another streamed in—exhausted, yet glowing with joy.

I spoke to a few women pilgrims from the United States who had undertaken this incredible journey. When I asked how fit one needs to be for such a demanding trip, they smiled

step of the way.

The next morning, we woke before sunrise to witness the first rays of light fall on Mount Kailash. That golden image had lived in our minds for years. I had become quieter by then. No longer anxious about the shoot or obsessed with view counts, as independent journalists often are. Something inside me had shifted. I didn't know what it was, but everything felt as it should be.

As the sun rose, I recorded the golden glow on the sacred mountain, 18,000 feet above sea level. I attempted a small part of the Parikrama but couldn't manage the whole circuit. Instead, I returned to the base, meditated, took a few more shots, and absorbed the atmosphere.

I often write about what I feel, not because facts aren't important, but because facts are everywhere. You can Google the height of Mount

the experience, not just the facts. Everyone's journey may differ, but one thing was clear to every pilgrim and journalist I met: reaching Kailash and Mansarovar was not possible without faith and divine will.

Later, I visited Mansarovar Lake, one of the 51 Shakti Peeths, said to have first formed in the mind of Lord Brahma. Bathing is no longer permitted here to protect the pristine water and fragile ecosystem. Just as climbing Mount Kailash is prohibited, out of reverence and preservation, yet from across the lake, if the skies are clear, you can still see the peak reflected in the sacred waters.

And as I stood there, the myths came alive: Brahma's swan, the blue lotuses, the sound of Shiva's Damru in the waters of Mansarovar. These were not just stories anymore—they were part of the atmosphere, part of the place.



The author at Mount Kailash.

all photos by Kadambini Sharma

sacred peak, revered in Hinduism as the abode of Lord Shiva, and equally venerated in Buddhism, Jainism, and Bon traditions.

I completed my shoot, doing my best to capture not just the visuals but the weight of the moment. But it felt inadequate. Still, I wrapped up quickly

and said, "We were medically cleared, but what really carried us was our faith, our belief in Lord Shiva. Without that, we wouldn't have made it."

Their conviction moved me. Tired as they were, they spoke with strength and clarity: it was God, they believed, who had guided them every



Tibetan prayer flags at Mount Kailash.

all photos by Kadambini Sharma

Kailash or read about its location. But what no search result can give you is the feeling of standing in the presence of something eternal. Is it belief? Faith? Or the cumulative energy of generations of pilgrims that envelops you and makes doubt disappear? That's why I write about

I cannot compare this experience to anything else. Everyone's journey is different. But for me, this was something rare and precious. I came back with images, yes. But more than that, I came back with something I can't quite define—an experience that will stay with me always.

# Parag Jain Takes Charge as R&AW Chief: Quiet Force Behind India's Boldest Intelligence Strikes

By Defence Capital

**NEW DELHI**—India's top external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), has a new chief: Parag Jain. From Punjab's militancy to Pakistan's terror camps, the new R&AW chief's silent precision has shaped India's sharpest responses.

Known for his calm demeanour and razor-sharp strategic mind, Jain steps into the role after the retirement of Ravi Sinha on June 30. Behind the scenes of some of India's most critical counter-terror and geopolitical operations, Jain is often described by colleagues as "soft-spoken, composed, and quietly lethal."

Until now, he led the Aviation Research Centre (ARC), the tech-ops wing of R&AW, where his mastery of surveillance and precision targeting shaped many operations, most recently the much-talked-about Operation Sindoor, India's retaliatory strike after the Pahalgam terror attack.

## Steel in Silk: Punjab Roots and Global Ops

An Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the 1989 Punjab cadre, Jain earned his stripes in the most



turbulent times. As Punjab battled militancy in the 1990s, this St. Stephen's alumnus was deployed in hotspots like Bhatinda and Hoshiarpur. Known for thinking before acting, he built a reputation for delivering results without theatrics.

His calm during crises stood out. Whether as Senior Superintendent of Police in Chandigarh or Deputy Inspector General of Ludhiana, Jain earned respect not through noise, but through consistent, calculated

performance. Peers recall his ability to absorb stress and redirect it into strategy, skills that later defined his intelligence career.

Later, his assignments in Canada and Sri Lanka marked his evolution into a global intelligence operative. In Canada, he tracked Khalistani sleeper cells and flagged their growing influence early. In Sri Lanka, he managed India's intelligence engagement during the country's economic collapse and regime change

(2022–24), a period that demanded both discretion and foresight.

## The Strategist Behind Cross-Border Precision

Jain's Jammu and Kashmir stint saw him operate at the heart of India's most high-stakes decisions. He was part of the intelligence backbone during the 2019 Balakot air strikes and the abrogation of Article 370 from the Constitution of India. Later, as ARC head, he led R&AW's Pakistan

desk and shaped the technical groundwork for India's cross-border surveillance.

But Operation Sindoor is widely considered his masterstroke. The precision missile strikes on terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir were based on intelligence Jain's team painstakingly gathered over the years. His method? Fusing human intelligence with tech surveillance to pinpoint targets with surgical accuracy.

## The Officer Who Lets Results Speak

Described as a "listener who always asks the right questions," Jain is widely respected for his diligence, integrity, and hands-on approach. Former IPS officers call him "a professional's professional," while his training mentors recall a cadet who turned quiet discipline into unshakable resolve.

R&AW's new chief doesn't seek headlines, but his actions shape them. As India navigates a tough geopolitical landscape — border tensions, proxy wars, and shifting alliances — Parag Jain is the man charting the invisible paths with clarity, caution, and cold precision.

# India's Narcotics Control Bureau Busts Global Drug Cartel Operating Across Four Continents

By IAT News Desk

**NEW DELHI** — In one of the most extensive international crackdowns on illegal pharmaceutical trafficking, India's Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has dismantled a global drug syndicate spanning four continents and more than 10 countries. The investigation, codenamed Operation Med Max, has resulted in eight arrests, five seizures, and triggered parallel enforcement actions in the United States and Australia.

India's Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah congratulated the NCB and other agencies involved, emphasizing the Modi government's unwavering resolve to dismantle global drug networks.

"Congratulations to NCB and all agencies on busting a global drug cartel," Shah said Tuesday in a post on X. "The probe set a stellar example of multi-agency coordina-



tion... PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji-led government is determined to saw off every drug cartel and protect our youth, no matter where they operate from."

The transnational syndicate was uncovered following a routine vehicle interception on May 25 near Mandi House in New Delhi, where officers seized 3.7 kg of Tramadol tablets from two B. Pharma graduates. Investigations soon unraveled a sprawling international network trafficking pharmaceutical drugs

via encrypted platforms, cryptocurrency payments, and anonymous drop shipping models. According to NCB officials, the Delhi seizure led to multiple arrests across India—including in Roorkee, Mayur Vihar, Udupi, New Delhi, and Jaipur—and exposed a vendor operation selling controlled medications via a major B2B platform. The group reportedly shipped illicit consignments to the U.S., Australia, and several European countries. Authorities say 50 international

shipments were identified, including 29 within the U.S., 18 within Australia, and one each to Estonia, Spain, and Switzerland.

The syndicate's digital sophistication allowed it to operate under the radar. "Encrypted messaging apps like Telegram, crypto wallets, and a chain of international drop shippers enabled them to operate globally while remaining virtually anonymous," a senior NCB official said.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), acting on NCB intelligence, arrested Joel Hall, a key re-shipper in Alabama. Over 17,000 tablets of controlled medication, cryptocurrency wallets, and active parcels linked to the network were recovered. The DEA also seized five parcels containing approximately 700 grams of Zolpidem tablets. A clandestine pill factory in Australia, also tied to the syndicate, was dismantled in a parallel operation by Australian law enforcement.

Officials say the syndicate's operations were divided into an "orders module" and a "supply module." A call center in Udupi managed orders placed via the B2B platform, while payments were processed in cryptocurrency and dispersed among handlers and re-shippers.

The syndicate's mastermind has been identified in the UAE, and NCB is coordinating with Emirati authorities to pursue further legal action. India's enforcement agencies continue to investigate the syndicate's financial networks, including crypto wallet transactions and hawala channels. The NCB is also collaborating with private sector platforms to combat the online proliferation of illicit pharmacies. "This is a wake-up call on how technology is being exploited by organized crime. But it also shows what's possible through global coordination and intelligence-sharing," an official involved in the operation said.

# How Rare Earths Create Strategic Leverage

By Masaaki Yoshimori

China's strategic dominance in rare earth elements, especially heavy ones critical for defense and clean energy technologies, threatens global supply chain security. This dominance arises from its vast resource endowment and a vertically integrated, state-led industrial strategy encompassing mining, processing and manufacturing. To counter this asymmetry, allied democracies must develop coherent, long-term policies that match China's scale, strategic resolve and institutional consistency.

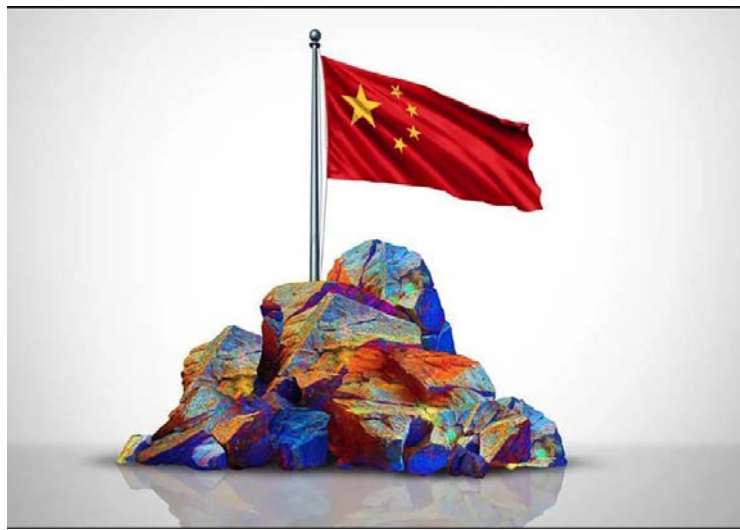
Once obscure and overlooked, rare earth elements (REEs) are now at the heart of the 21st-century technological revolution. From precision-guided missiles and electric vehicles to wind turbines and smartphones, REEs power the critical systems that define our digital and low-carbon future. As the global shift toward electrification and renewable energy accelerates, demand is spreading across nearly the entire Periodic Table, driven by the unique, irreplaceable functions of these often-unconventional materials. At the center of this transformation stand the 17 distinct REEs, indispensable to the modern world yet challenging to secure.

Rare earths (the general term encompassing all REEs) are typically divided into light and heavy categories. While light REEs like cerium and lanthanum are more abundant, it is the heavy ones — dysprosium, terbium, neodymium and others — that are essential for permanent magnets used in high-temperature environments, such as electric vehicle motors, fighter jets and missile guidance systems.

Magnet strength declines significantly at high temperatures if lighter REEs are used alone. Thus, high-density rare earths must be mixed in to maintain performance. China controls nearly 99% of heavy REE processing, not just because of resource abundance, but because it has developed and protected its technical edge in separation processes. Moreover, Chinese firms often operate at a loss but are supported by state subsidies, which allows them to drive out global competition.

## China's rare earth dominance and the strategic supply chain asymmetry

Despite large-scale investment — over \$439 million from the Department of Defense since 2020 — the United States remains dependent on Chinese magnets. For example, MP Materials, the leading US producer, plans to produce just 1,000 metric tons of neodymium-boron-iron



Via Shutterstock

(NdFeB) magnets annually by 2025. That is less than 1% of China's 2018 output.

Even promising breakthroughs, such as USA Rare Earth's 99.1% pure dysprosium oxide sample in early 2025, remain at the pilot stage. Commercial viability is years away. In the meantime, Chinese production continues to scale. In 2024 alone, China produced an estimated 300,000 tons of NdFeB magnets. The US's goal of an independent REE supply chain by 2027 remains aspirational, not assured.

China's advantage lies in its vertical integration, from mining to refining to magnet production. It has built and subsidized its REE ecosystem through environmental externalization, industrial policy coherence and technological investment. In doing so, it has created a monopolistic grip on the midstream and downstream segments of the supply chain. This control gives Beijing strategic leverage, which it has exploited several times. In 2010, Beijing cut off exports to Japan over maritime disputes, and in 2023–2024, it implemented licensing restrictions to retaliate against US semiconductor export controls and tariffs. These measures have not been wholesale bans but targeted, calibrated interventions designed to inject uncertainty, pressure adversaries and reassert industrial dominance.

The nature of this dominance reveals a deeper structural asymmetry: China is able to play a long game, enabled by centralized political authority and strategic continuity. Democracies, meanwhile, struggle to maintain long-term consistency across administrations. In game-theoretic terms, China acts as a high-commitment actor in a repeated, asymmetric game.

Without equivalent institutional coherence, the US and its allies are consistently reacting to Beijing's initiatives rather than shaping the

trajectory of the REE landscape.

## Rare earths and US tariffs

In response to sweeping US tariffs in 2025 — up to 145% on Chinese imports — Beijing strategically restricted the export of several rare earths, including dysprosium and neodymium. This move intensified concerns across global industries, with automakers and defense contractors warning of severe production disruptions due to limited alternative suppliers.

The tit-for-tat escalated until the two parties announced a provisional deal in London. China agreed to resume shipments of rare earths and magnets to the US in exchange for tariff reductions to 55% and the easing of restrictions on Chinese students studying in America. US President Donald Trump claimed victory, stating that the "full magnets, and any necessary rare earths, will be supplied, up front, by China." However, details remain vague and enforcement mechanisms unclear. Both sides characterized the deal as a "framework" still awaiting final approval from Chinese President Xi Jinping and Trump.

Despite this temporary truce, the rare earth dispute underscores the strategic risks of supply chain concentration. The US continues to rely heavily on China for processed REEs, especially heavy rare earths critical to defense. Unless structural diversification is achieved through domestic production, allied partnerships or technological alternatives, the geopolitical leverage China holds through its dominance in rare earths will remain a persistent vulnerability for the US and its allies.

## US vulnerability and the emerging strategic response

Recognition of this strategic vulnerability has grown in Washington, especially given defense-sector dependencies. An F-35 fighter jet

requires over 900 pounds of rare earths; a Virginia-class submarine demands more than 9,000 pounds. Yet despite years of warnings, the US remains almost entirely dependent on Chinese REE refining and magnet production. While upstream mining projects exist, such as Mountain Pass in California, the absence of domestic separation capacity means that most US-extracted ore is still shipped to China for processing. In response, the US has initiated a patchwork strategy aimed at diversifying supply.

However, Greenland's mining promise is constrained by structural limitations: limited infrastructure, complex permitting requirements and indigenous land rights. Moreover, mining in Arctic conditions is capital-intensive and environmentally risky. To succeed, US-led efforts must not only provide financial support but also demonstrate political maturity and long-term commitment. Greenland is, in effect, a test of whether democracies can engage in high-stakes resource development without compromising transparency or environmental integrity. Its trajectory will reveal whether values-based industrial policy can function at scale in strategic sectors.

## Japan's deep-sea initiative and the role of scientific autonomy

Japan's experience offers a parallel yet distinct response to Chinese dominance — one rooted in scientific capacity and technological self-sufficiency. Following China's 2010 embargo, Tokyo moved rapidly to secure alternative supply lines. It established recycling capabilities from electronics, formed bilateral mineral partnerships with countries such as Vietnam and India and launched intensive research and development (R&D) into seabed resource potential.

These efforts culminated in a landmark 2024 discovery: Japan discovered over 230 million tons of cobalt- and nickel-rich manganese nodules within its exclusive economic zone near Minamitori Island. China is preparing to test mining operations for rare metals in the Pacific Ocean, in waters near Japan's island. This signals a bold move into seabed resource competition in the region.

While these nodules do not contain large concentrations of traditional rare earths, their richness in battery-critical minerals, namely cobalt and nickel, and the heavy REEs could dramatically enhance Japan's strategic position in the broader clean energy supply chain. Equally important is the technological accomplishment of accessing resources at depths of 5,200–5,700 meters. Only a handful

of countries possess the capability to conduct extraction operations at such depths with precision and environmental control. Japan's pilot project, slated for initiation in 2025, aims to extract up to three million tons of nodules annually — potentially enough to meet its battery mineral needs for decades.

What makes Japan's approach noteworthy is not only its innovation but its philosophical divergence from China's model. Japan is pursuing resource security through scientific rigor, environmental standards and alliance-building rather than through monopolistic or coercive tactics. If its deep-sea initiative succeeds, it could become a model for how technologically advanced democracies can secure strategic resources without replicating the extractive externalities that have defined China's dominance.

## Allied coordination, fragmentation and the limits of decentralized strategy

Despite individual national efforts, fragmentation remains a persistent obstacle to building a resilient non-Chinese REE supply chain. Australia, for example, hosts the Browns Range project, which is one of the most promising sources of dysprosium outside China. Japan and Vietnam have increased collaboration on REE separation and materials R&D, and the European Union has launched its Critical Raw Materials Act to spur investment. Yet even the leading Western processor, Lynas Rare Earths, still sends intermediate products to China for final-stage processing. As China tightens export controls, Lynas's shares surge, which reflects investor anticipation that global automakers may seek more secure, non-Chinese alternatives amid mounting supply chain vulnerabilities.

The underlying problem is the lack of full-cycle infrastructure coordination. A strategic REE supply chain requires not only mining capacity, but also processing facilities, magnet manufacturing plants, recycling systems and logistics integration across multiple geographies. The current system remains siloed, underfunded and inefficient. Moreover, without harmonized standards and cross-border investment frameworks, allied countries risk duplicating efforts or falling prey to lowest-common-denominator policies — compromise policies that reflect the minimum agreement among allies. These compromises often sacrifice ambition, efficiency or strategic coherence for the sake of consensus.

# Farewell to the U.S. as the World's Top Science Nation

By Llewellyn King

When I asked John Savage, the retired co-founder of the Department of Computer Science at Brown University, what the essential ingredient in research is, he responded with one word: "Passion."

It is passion that keeps scientists going, dead end after dead end, until there is a breakthrough.

It is passion that keeps them at the bench or staring into a microscope or redesigning an experiment with slight modifications until that "eureka moment."

I have been writing about science for half a century. I can tell you that passion is the bridge between daunting difficulty and triumphant discovery.

Next comes money: steady, reliable funding, not start-and-stop dribbles.

It is painful to watch the defunding of the nation's research arm by roughly a third to a half; the wanton destruction of what, since the end of World War II, has kept the United States the premier inventor-nation, the unequaled leader in discovery.

It is dangerous to believe the status quo ante will return when another administration is voted in, maybe in 2028.

You don't pick up the pieces of projects that are, as they were, ripped from the womb and put them back together again, even if the researchers are still available — if they haven't gone to the willing arms of research



NIH, Public domain

via Wikimedia Commons

hubs overseas or other careers.

The work isn't made whole again just because the money is back. The passion is gone.

There are crude, massive reductions in funding for research and development across the government — with the most axing in the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Department of Energy (DOE). But the philistines with their metaphorical chainsaws have slashed wildly and deeply into every corner of science, every place where talented men and women probe, analyze and seek to know.

This brutal, mindless slashing isn't just upending careers, causing projects

to be abandoned in midstream, destroying the precious passion that is the driver of discovery, but it is also a blow against the future. It is a turn from light to dark.

The whiz kids of DOGE aren't cost-cutting. They are amputating the nation's future.

The cutting of funds to NIH — until now the world's premier medical research center, a citadel of hope for the sick and the guarantor that the future will have less suffering than the past — may be the most egregious act of many.

It is a terrible blow to those suffering from cancer to Parkinson's and the myriad diseases in between who hope that NIH will come up with

a cure or a therapy before they die prematurely. It is a heartless betrayal.

The full horror of the dismantling of what they call the nation's "scientific pillar" has been laid out by two of America's most eminent scientists in an essay in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

They are John Holdren, who served as President Barack Obama's science adviser and as director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Neal Lane, who was President Bill Clinton's science adviser and is a former NSF director. In their alarming and telling essay, they appeal to Congress to step in and save America's global leadership in science.

They write, "What is happening

now exceeds our worst fears. Consider, first, the National Science Foundation, one of the brightest jewels in the crown of U.S. science and the public interest. .... It's the nation's largest single funder of university basic research in fields other than medicine. Basic research, of course, is the seed corn from which future advances in applied science and technology flow."

The NSF co-stars in the federal research ecosystem with NIH and DOE, the authors write. The NSF has funded research underpinning the internet, the Google search engine, magnetic resonance imaging, laser eye surgery, 3-D printing, CRISPR gene editing technology and much more.

The NIH is the world's leading biomedical research facility. The writers say it spends 83 percent of its \$48 billion annual budget on competitive grants, supporting over 300,000 researchers at more than 2,500 institutions in all 50 states. Another 11 percent of the agency's budget supports the 6,000 researchers in its own laboratories.

Holdren and Lane write, "Of the energy department's \$50 billion budget in fiscal 2024, about \$15 billion went to non-defense research and development."

Some \$8 billion of this went to the DOE Office of Science Research, the largest funder in basic research in the physical sciences, supporting 300 institutions around the country including the department's own 17 laboratories.

## Notebook: Requiem for American Justice

By Llewellyn King

I have loads of my words to eat, a feast of kingly proportions.

I don't know when I started, but it must have been back when I was traveling on the speaking circuit. It doesn't matter.

This tale of getting it wrong starts in London, where I was asked to address a conference on investing in America. Most of the questions weren't — as I imagined they would be — about investment and returns on it, or taxes, or the exportability of profits. Instead, the questions were about the U.S. legal system; how litigious we are and what that is like. My response was that our courts are fair, there is less day-to-day litigation than you might think, and the courts can serve you as well as those who dispute your actions. I said, "Don't be afraid of litigation. It could be your friend."

Next stop: New Delhi. The question was how can we get more U.S. investment? My answer: Fix your courts.

They are famous for how slow they are to reach a decision. Americans are used to predictable legal speed. In Moscow, during the halcyon Mikhail Gorbachev days, I was asked about how to get U.S. companies to invest in Russia. My answer: Make sure the courts work fairly and, above all, are clear of politics.

In Ireland, I debated Martin McGuinness, the late IRA leader. It went well, despite my English accent. My contribution was to tell McGuinness that if there ever is a united Ireland, make sure the constitution doesn't hide anything under the mat (I was thinking of slavery in America) and make sure the court system looks to that constitution, not to politics.

Why am I eating on my words? Why am I shoveling them down my throat by the (Imperial) bushel?

The front page of *The Washington Post* for July 18 tells the story: Three pieces there add up to up a requiem for American justice.

Exhibit 1, this headline: "In deadly

raid DOJ eyes 1-day sentence." Exhibit 2: "Thousands here legally have 60 days to leave."

Exhibit 3: "Brazil judge in Trump's sights."

Two of these shameful reports show that neither the judicial process nor the laws of the United States are sacrosanct anymore.

The third shows that the Trump administration not only doesn't respect our own judicial processes, but also those of other countries.

The perversion of justice isn't a domestic matter anymore. \*\*\*\*\*

The Trump budget cuts are moving through the system, like a virus. There are clusters of damage and some slow lower infection, but nonetheless are capable of inflicting severe harm.

I was reminded of this when at a Newport Classical Music Festival concert last week, the deputy chairman announced that they needed \$40,000 to make up for the termina-

tion in National Endowment for the Humanities' funding.

Now you could argue that Newport Classical will get by, and divine music will continue to echo through the Gilded Age mansions — known as "cottages" — without the government's help.

But what about less-affluent places where concerts, plays and ramp-on for young people in the arts will be reduced or ended due to a lack of government support? \*\*\*\*\*

Some things take a long time to invent.

Take cup holders in cars. No technology was needed but it wasn't until the 1980s that a convenience store chain realized that their hot coffee needed a place of rest in cars.

They came up with a plastic device that hooked over a window. Okay unless you opened the window inadvertently, in which case the coffee or other liquid would land squarely in the customer's lap. Ouch!

Detroit saw the possibilities and soon you were urged to buy an automobile based on how many drinks could be stowed safely in built-in cup holders during travel. Not to be outdone by Detroit, and all the other car manufacturers, recreational boats were next to secure drinks in holders. One has to wonder why this wasn't done in carriages or stagecoaches a long time before the automobile? \*\*\*\*\*

I flew from Rhode Island to Washington this week and I am writing this on my return trip on the train — unquestionably, a superior way of making this trip.

Of course, predictably, the plane was late, but I was feeling smugly superior. I had scored a first-class seat. My wife found me a first-class fare that was cheaper than coach. I think the term of art for this is: Go figure. For my lucky break up front, I had nice service and a choice of protein bars or Biscoff cookies. For this people pay a lot of money? Go figure.

# From a Museum Giftshop to the Dalai Lama's Chapel: A Reporter's Unforgettable Gift



Poonam Sharma

Poonam is a multi-media journalist, and Founder and Editor of Global Strat View. She was the Managing Editor of India America Today (IAT) for seven years, and launched its print edition in 2019 with IAT's Founder and Editor, the late Tejinder Singh.

**WASHINGTON** – In January 2002, as a journalist with Radio Free Asia's (RFA) Tibetan service, Karma Zurkhang embarked on an assignment that would take him on an unexpected journey, one that ultimately led a special gift into the private chapel of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

His initial mission was to cover a potential conflict between India and Pakistan. Karma had volunteered to go to Pakistan for RFA, but upon arrival, the conflict subsided. He spent about a week exploring, visiting ancient Buddhist sites like Takshashila, museums, and universities. Then, RFA asked if he could get a visa for a brief trip to Afghanistan. As an American journalist, Karma was able to join a group of international journalists on a special flight.

"I spent about a week in Afghanistan, primarily in the capital area, Kabul, gathering stories through conversations with my taxi driver and making connections with foreign office officials," Karma recounts. With only one weekly flight for journalists and his funds dwindling, he missed his scheduled departure. Karma's driver suggested a daring alternative: a road trip through the Khyber Pass to the border crossing into Pakistan. "It was a full day's journey, and while some might have considered it dangerous, I saw it as a small adventure," he chuckles. The car broke down along the way, requiring a new taxi, but he eventually made it to the Pakistan border.

Karma spent some days exploring Peshawar and Islamabad. To head back, he had to go to Lahore. There was an option of taking a flight, but he chose a long drive from Islamabad to Lahore with his taxi driver. In Lahore, he visited the Wagah border and the Lahore Museum. "The museum, a treasure trove of Buddhist artifacts, held something truly special: a rare black stone statue of the fasting Buddha,



His Holiness, the Dalai Lama in his private chapel. The statue of the fasting Buddha can be seen behind him.

Image from the Office of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama

one of the earliest depictions of Lord Buddha in the Gandhara art style. It was a humble yet powerful piece, unlike the typically opulent Buddhist art," says Karma. The caretaker suggested that he could buy a replica. Delighted, Karma purchased one, immediately thinking it would be a perfect gift for His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

At the Wagah border, Karma learned that as an American journalist, he could cross into India. He proposed to RFA that he enter India from the Wagah-Attari border, and go to Dharamsala to present the statue to the Dalai Lama, celebrate Losar (Tibetan New Year), and then return home. However, due to additional expenses, RFA didn't approve of the travel. So, Karma returned home with the statue, where it stayed for about 10 months.

## A Gift Finds Its Place

That winter, during a private visit to India to see relatives, Karma brought the statue with him. He approached the Dalai Lama's private office and gave the statue to be presented to His Holiness. Karma was later told that the Dalai Lama was very pleased with the gift. Over a year later, Karma even acquired books about the statue and had those presented to him as well. Karma learned the statue had found a special place

in his private chapel. For years, it remained unseen by the public, as the Dalai Lama's private chapel is not publicly accessible.

Then came COVID-19. The pandemic prevented the Dalai Lama from holding in-person teachings, necessitating a shift to online sessions. This is when people began to see him teaching from his private chapel, and there, clearly visible behind him, was the black statue. It sparked widespread curiosity: "What is that statue?"

"Though I wasn't there to

witness the initial buzz, word gradually spread that it was a statue from Pakistan," says Karma. "Soon, the Dalai Lama's office and a nearby monastery began producing postcards featuring the statue for distribution. It brought me immense joy to see how well-received this humble gift had become. Slowly, people began to realize I was the one who had presented it. Many have since told me, "Karma, that is your good karma!"

"I am profoundly happy about

this entire experience. I'm thankful to Radio Free Asia, for without that assignment, none of this would have happened. This experience has also deepened my already immense respect for His Holiness. In a world where Buddhist art is often grand and gilded, this ancient black statue of the fasting Buddha, simple yet profound, has become a cherished jewel to him. That, in itself, is a testament to his wisdom and humility. And for you to come to me to hear this story, Poonam? That's good karma too!"

## 8 Limbs of Yoga

**Note:** This is a very succinct description of the 8 limbs of Yoga. Various techniques, under each category, should be learned from a qualified teacher, and personally experienced through practice. Copyright: Dhananjaya Kumar, [www.yogasystem.com](http://www.yogasystem.com). Reproduction prohibited.

1. **Yama (Restraint or redirection).** Consists of practices to live in harmony with the society and the environment; the bridge between the self and the other.
  - 1-1. **Ahimsa (Non-Violence).** Not causing pain to anyone, including oneself. Non-violence must be followed in thought, action and speech. Also implies being kind to all; being gentle to oneself in Yoga practice; being protective of the environment; not harboring emotions, which may engender violence.
  - 1-2. **Satya (Truth).** To seek and understand the true nature of things, including one's own self; to go beyond the gross appearance to its subtle foundation.
  - 1-3. **Asteya (Non-Stealing).** Not taking what belongs to others, with or without their knowledge. Not being jealous or competitive.
  - 1-4. **Brahmacharya (Living in harmony with natural laws).** Not wasting energy or over-indulging in wasteful and destructive activity. Harmony and creativity may lead to celibacy, which conserves seminal fluid and energizes one's personal aura and magnetism. Transformation (not suppression) of sexual energy for spiritual growth.
  - 1-5. **Aparigraha (Non-Possessiveness).** Not being greedy; not hoarding or accumulating beyond one's need or capacity. Self-sufficient and giving nature.
2. **Niyama (Observance or discipline).** Consists of practices to bring about personal purity and harmony within.
  - 1-1. **Saucha (Purity).** To maintain cleanliness of diet, body and mind.
  - 1-2. **Santosha (Contentment).** To be satisfied with, and in oneself, without the need to seek happiness elsewhere. Attitude of voluntary acceptance.
  - 1-3. **Tapas (Austerity and simplicity).** Self-purification to transcend sensory gratifications. Through such transcending, spiritual knowledge is gained.
  - 1-4. **Svadhya (Self-Study).** To engage in the study of one's own self, and pursue spiritual growth. Self-observance and alertness.
  - 1-5. **Ishvara Pranidhana (Self dedication to the Cosmic spirit).** To dedicate and surrender oneself to higher principles. To rise above one's lower tendencies and move toward perfection.
3. **Asana (Posture).** To bring comfort and steadiness by, and in the practice of, physical postures. This enables one to have a strong, flexible and healthy body which, in turn, enables higher Yogic practices. Also implies shedding mental rigidities and disturbances, to promote physical balance and harmony.
4. **Pranayama (Expansion and manipulation of Prana through the breath).** Practice of breathing techniques to deepen and ease the flow of vital life energy, and calm the mind. Pranayama techniques are the key to higher Yogic accomplishments (Siddhis). The bridge between body and mind.
5. **Pratyahara (Withdrawal or return of senses from external objects).** This essentially involves withdrawal of awareness from sense objects and sense organs, in order to awaken inner wisdom; or refocusing the mind from external objects to inner self. Taming the mind.
6. **Dharana (Concentration or orientation).** To stabilize and focus the mind exclusively on one object, image, sound, or idea. This helps to remove unwanted and unnecessary thoughts or mental vibrations, and prepares one for meditation. Mental preparation.
7. **Dhyana (Meditation).** Prolonged concentration leads to meditation, or self-awareness, transcending the mind and its limitations, becoming thoughtless. The bridge between mind and soul.
8. **Samadhi (Pure Awareness).** This blissful state can only be experienced; it is beyond cognition or description. Various stages of Samadhi is a flow of pure awareness beyond object and subject, leading to the perfect union with the Self, where all multiplicity and dualities end, and One alone remains.

# Indian Navy Commissions INS Tamal, Strengthening Maritime Capabilities and Indo-Russian Ties

By IAT News Desk

**KALININGRAD, Russia** — The Indian Navy commissioned INS Tamal (F 71), a state-of-the-art stealth frigate, at the Yantar Shipyard in Kaliningrad, Russia, marking a significant step in India's maritime modernization and underscoring deep-rooted defense cooperation with Russia.

The ceremony was presided over by Vice Adm. Sanjay Jasjit Singh, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command. Also in attendance were Vice Adm. Rajaram Swaminathan, Controller Warship Production and Acquisition, and Vice Adm. Sergei Lipin, Commander of the Baltic Fleet of the Russian Navy, alongside senior officials from both nations' navies and defense industries.

INS Tamal is the eighth vessel in the Project 1135.6 series and the second of the follow-on Tushil-class stealth frigates. The first in this subclass, INS Tushil, was commissioned in December 2024. All ships in this series operate under the Western Naval Command's Western Fleet—known as the "Sword Arm" of the Indian Navy.

Commanded by Capt. Sridhar Tata, a specialist in gunnery and missile warfare, INS Tamal boasts formidable multi-domain warfare capabilities, including anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine warfare. The ship carries advanced BrahMos cruise missiles, Shtil-1 surface-to-air missiles, torpedoes, ASW rockets, and a 100 mm



main gun, among other types of weaponry. The commissioning began with a ceremonial Guard of Honour by Indian and Russian naval personnel. Mr. Andrey Sergeyevich Puchkov, Director General of United Shipbuilding Corporation, formally opened the event, followed by speeches emphasizing Indo-Russian cooperation in defense production.

Vice Adm. Swaminathan described the commissioning as "symbolic of the strategic partnership between India and Russia," highlighting that INS Tamal is the 51st ship built under the Indo-Russian shipbuilding program over the past 65 years.

He praised the integration of Indian technologies, including indigenous systems like the BrahMos missile and Humsa-NG sonar.

The formal transfer of the ship was marked by the signing of the Delivery Act by Capt. Tata and Sergey Kupriyanov, Director General of the Russian Naval Department. The Indian Naval ensign was hoisted with full military honors, followed by the reading of the commissioning warrant and ceremonial salutes.

Vice Adm. Singh, the chief guest, hailed the addition of INS Tamal as a "milestone in India's maritime defense capability." He

noted that the ship features 26 percent indigenous content and will be followed by two more vessels of the same class, built in India, advancing the country's self-reliance goals under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

"INS Tamal enhances the Indian Navy's reach, responsiveness, and resilience," Singh said. "She will undoubtedly prove to be a force multiplier, safeguarding national maritime interests and regional security."

The ship, launched in February 2022, began sea trials in November 2024 and completed a series of rigorous tests by June 2025. It is

equipped with integrated combat management systems, electronic warfare suites, and aviation capabilities for Kamov 28 and 31 helicopters.

INS Tamal carries a crew of 26 officers and 250 sailors and is designed for blue-water operations across all dimensions of modern naval warfare. The ship's motto, Sarvatra Sarvada Vijaya (Victory Always, Everywhere), reflects its operational ethos.

The vessel will soon depart on its maiden voyage to its homeport in Karwar, Karnataka, making port calls along the way to showcase its combat capabilities.

## India Delivers Stealth Frigate Udaygiri to Navy Ahead of Schedule

By IAT News Desk

**MUMBAI, India** — The Indian Navy took delivery of the stealth frigate Yard 12652 (Udaygiri) on Monday, marking a significant milestone in the country's ongoing Project 17A warship program.

Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai, Udaygiri is the second of seven advanced frigates under construction as part of Project 17A — the successor to the Indian Navy's Shivalik-class frigates. The ship was delivered in a record 37 months from its launch, underscoring India's growing shipbuilding capabilities and emphasis on defense self-reliance.

Project 17A ships are designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design



Bureau and boast improved stealth, upgraded sensors and weaponry, and a modern propulsion system. Udaygiri, a reincarnation of the erstwhile INS Udaygiri, which was

decommissioned in 2007, is tailored for multi-mission operations in blue-water environments and can counter both conventional and unconventional maritime threats.

"These new-generation warships reflect a quantum leap in our indigenous naval design and construction capabilities," said an Indian Navy official.

The stealth frigate features a Combined Diesel or Gas (CODAG) propulsion system, supersonic surface-to-surface missile systems, a medium-range surface-to-air missile system, a 76 mm main gun, and a suite of rapid-fire close-in weapons. The hull design is 4.54 percent larger than that of its predecessor, enhancing both stealth and sea-keeping abilities. The ship is also equipped with a state-of-the-art Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS).

Udaygiri's construction supports the

Indian government's "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) initiative, with significant contributions from over 200 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Indigenous firms supplied the majority of the ship's weapons and sensor systems. The shipbuilding effort has also delivered significant economic benefits, generating direct employment for approximately 4,000 workers and an additional 10,000 through ancillary industries.

The remaining five frigates in the P17A class are under construction at MDL in Mumbai and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata. They are expected to be delivered progressively by the end of 2026.

# U.S., India Talk 10-Year Cooperative Framework, Defense Cooperation, Shared Priorities

By C. Todd Lopez, DOD News

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth met today at the Pentagon with India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to discuss the close cooperation between the two countries, weapons sales and the upcoming signing of the framework for the new defense partnership.

"Almost right at the beginning of the administration, President [Donald J.] Trump and Prime Minister Shri [Narendra] Modi set a strong foundation for our relationship, which we're building on here today: productive, pragmatic and realistic," Hegseth said. "And our nations boast a rich and growing history of cooperation driven by a shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

The secretary said both the U.S. and India are mutually aware of the security concerns in the region, and both nations have the ability to counter that threat together. He also touched on U.S. efforts to provide India with the tools needed to counter threats in the Indo-Pacific region.

"The United States is very pleased with the successful integration of many U.S. defense items into India's inventory," Hegseth said. "And building on this progress, we hope we can complete several major pending U.S. defense sales to India, expand our shared defense industrial cooperation and coproduction efforts, strengthen interoperability ... between our



Air Force Staff Sgt. Madelyn Keech, DOD

forces, and then formally sign a new 10-year Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership ... which we hope to do very soon."

During a meeting in February between Trump and Modi, the two leaders announced plans to pursue new procurements and coproduction arrangements for Javelin antitank guided missiles and Stryker armored vehicles. Also discussed was procurement for six additional P-8I maritime patrol aircraft.

India has already integrated various weapons systems into its

own military, such as the C-130J Super Hercules, C-17 Globemaster III and P-8I Poseidon aircraft, as well as the CH-47F Chinook, MH-60R Sea Hawk and AH-64E Apache. It also utilizes the Harpoon antiship missiles, M777 howitzers and MQ-9B Sky Guardians.

Also in February, the president and prime minister pledged to increase military cooperation with enhanced training, exercises and operations.

Hegseth and Jaishankar discussed participation in the next India-U.S. Defense Acceleration

Ecosystem Summit, where the two nations will continue to build on U.S.-India defense industrial cooperation and produce new innovations in technology and manufacturing.

"We're eager to work alongside you to realize our shared goals," Hegseth said. "They're deep and ongoing."

Jaishankar said India's relationship with the U.S. is already strong, but more can be done.

"We believe that our defense partnership is today truly one of the most consequential pillars of the relationship. It's not built merely on shared interests, but we believe really deepening convergence and of capabilities, of responsibilities," Jaishankar said. "And what we do in the Indo-Pacific, we believe, is absolutely crucial to its strategic stability."



Air Force Staff Sgt. Madelyn Keech, DOD

## Army Works to Deter Chinese Threats While Supporting Joint Force, Allies, Partners

By David Vergun, DOD News

China is developing military technologies, capabilities and procedures at a pace and scale never before seen, said Army Gen. Ronald P. Clark, commander of U.S. Army Pacific, who spoke today during a strategic landpower forum at the Center for Strategic and International Studies headquarters in Washington.

It's also learning lessons from ongoing conflicts and are rapidly improving their ability to operate in a joint capacity, Clark said, adding that China's focus has been on anti-access and area denial in the air and maritime domains against the U.S. and its allies.

Anti-access prevents an advanc-



DOD screenshot

ing military force from entering an area, and area denial limits a force's freedom of action within an area. "What they have not accounted for is our ability to provide access through multidomain operations from the land," Clark said, referring to the Army's multidomain task force deterrence concept that prizes

operating in space, cyberspace, electronic warfare, information operations and employing long-range fires.

China has increased its aggression, belligerence and coercive tactics against allies and partners in the region, Clark said, noting, "Our ability to be present, to give them an alternative, specifically in the security arena, is very, very important. So, presence matters."

The general cited the large number of exercises occurring throughout the region, in which the U.S. and other nations participate.

He said the Army is increasing prepositioned stocks in the region, known as joint theater distribution centers, to reduce reliance on and risk associated with moving sup-

plies from afar by air and sea.

"Our ability to be able to gain positional advantage is all tied to our efforts to campaign inside the first and second island chains, to build positional advantage through our engagements, through our operations, through our activities and investments in the [Indo-Pacific] region," Clark said.

The first island chain comprises islands and land from Japan to Southeast Asia, much of which lies adjacent to waters illegally claimed by China. The second island chain consists of islands to the east of the first island chain, such as Japan's Bonin Islands, Guam, and those located south to Western New Guinea. Besides munitions and platforms, Clark said the Army is training its

soldiers to meet the demands of the modern battlefield.

"We've doubled down on holistic health and fitness to ensure soldiers and their families are resilient for whatever lies ahead."

Clark said the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command is ready to assist in natural disasters, many of which occur in the region, and soldiers are helping to experiment and develop effective capabilities.

"We're putting [new capabilities] into the hands of soldiers on the ground who, as you well know, will take it, break it, tell us what we can do to fix it, to ensure that we're getting the best capability into the hands of our teammates, who are forward in our theater, in real time," Clark said.

# Indian Navy to Commission Indigenous Diving Support Vessel Nistar

By IAT News Desk

**VISAKHAPATNAM, India** — The Indian Navy is set to commission its first indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessel (DSV), INS Nistar, at the Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam on July 18, in a ceremony attended by Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh.

Built by Hindustan Shipyard Limited, Visakhapatnam, Nistar will be formally inducted into service under the Eastern Naval Command, marking a significant milestone in India's push for self-reliance in defense manufacturing. The vessel will play a critical role in deep-sea diving and submarine rescue operations.

The project underscores the government's emphasis on Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance), featuring more than 80 percent indigenous content and participation from over 120 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Officials described Nistar as a "state-of-the-art" vessel that reflects the Navy's vision of designing and building complex platforms within the country.

The new vessel revives the legacy of the ex-Nistar, a Soviet-origin submarine rescue vessel



acquired in 1969 and commissioned in 1971. The original Nistar served the Indian Navy for two decades, making significant contributions to submarine rescue and diving operations. The new ship carries forward its motto, Surakshita Yatharthta Shauryam—translated as "Deliverance with Precision and Bravery."

Measuring approximately 120 meters in length and displacing

over 10,000 tons, the vessel is equipped with a Dynamic Positioning System that allows it to maintain exact positioning in challenging sea conditions. Onboard features include an expansive diving complex with Air and Saturation Diving Systems, underwater Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), and side-scan sonar, significantly enhancing its operational capabilities.

As the designated "mother ship" for the Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV), Nistar will provide a significant boost to the Navy's submarine rescue preparedness. The vessel is also equipped with advanced medical facilities, including an operating theater, an intensive care unit, an eight-bed hospital, and hyperbaric treatment units.

With an endurance of over 60

days at sea, helicopter operations capability, and a 15-ton subsea crane, Nistar is poised to become a highly versatile asset in India's maritime arsenal.

Navy officials say the commissioning of Nistar represents not only a leap in operational readiness in the underwater domain but also a strengthening of India's strategic maritime posture in the Indian Ocean Region.

## Japan's Itsukushima Docks in Chennai for Bilateral Maritime Engagement

By IAT News Desk

**CHENNAI, India** — The Japan Coast Guard (JCG) training vessel Itsukushima, commanded by Captain Naoki Mizoguchi, arrived at Chennai Port on July 7 as part of a global ocean voyage aimed at enhancing maritime cooperation and regional security.

The week-long port call highlights deepening ties between the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the JCG, reinforcing their strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific. The visit will feature a series of high-level bilateral meetings, professional exchanges, cultural programs, and a joint sea exercise aimed at enhancing interoperability between the two forces.

During the stop, crew members from both nations will participate in courtesy calls, reciprocal ship visits, training sessions, yoga, and sporting events. The visit will culminate in a joint maritime exercise, 'Jaa Mata,' meaning "see you later," scheduled for July 12.



As a symbol of growing collaboration, four ICG officers will embark on Itsukushima as Sea Riders for its onward journey to Singapore, continuing a longstanding tradition of professional exchange between the two coast guards. The engagement builds on the

2006 Memorandum of Cooperation between India and Japan, aligning with India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and underscoring shared commitments to maritime security and regional stability.



# U.S., Malaysian forces conclude Bersama Warrior 25

By 1st Lt. Samuel DeRobertis,  
Marine Rotational Force - Darwin

**KUANTAN, Malaysia** — The annual staff exercise (STAFFEX), sponsored by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) and hosted by the MAF, is designed to strengthen defense ties, enhance combined interoperability, and develop combined staff processes. This year's iteration brought together a mix of active duty, reserve, and National Guard service members from the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force to plan alongside their Malaysian counterparts.

For several U.S. units, 2025 marked their first time participating in Bersama Warrior. Among them were Marines with the Marine Rotational Force – Darwin (MRF-D) 25.3 Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), soldiers with the Missouri Army National Guard, and civil affairs specialists with the 440th Civil Affairs Battalion.

"Our partnership with the Malaysian Armed Forces is rooted in shared commitment and mutual respect," said Dr. John Wood, deputy director, joint training and exercises, USINDOPACOM. "I'm glad we're all able to get together and think through some of these important constructs of military planning."

The foundation of the planning was the Military Decision Making Process – Multinational (MDMP-M).



U.S. Marine Corps Maj. David Miller (right), the current operations officer with Marine Rotational Force – Darwin 25.3, conducts planning with his Navy and Malaysian Armed Forces counterparts at the Joint Warfighting Center, Kuantan, Malaysia, June 20, 2025. Bersama Warrior is an annual, bilateral joint exercise sponsored by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and hosted by the Malaysian Armed Forces. This year marks the 11th iteration of the exercise, and the first time MRF-D is participating, enhancing U.S. and Malaysian defense readiness and improving combined joint interoperability. MRF-D is an annual six-month rotational deployment to enhance interoperability with the Australian Defence Force and allies and partners and provide a forward postured crisis response force in the Indo-Pacific.

U.S. Marine Corps photo by 1st Lt. Samuel DeRobertis

Nested under the Multinational Force Standard Operating Procedures (MNF SOP), the process provides a shared framework for operational planning that allowed joint and combined staff to integrate effectively across functions. U.S. and Malaysian planners worked to develop a combined operations order in response to a regional contingency scenario requiring humanitarian assistance and stability operations. Every step of the process

was conducted jointly and in parallel, with each functional area incorporating Malaysian and U.S. planners to foster integration, transparency, and learning on both sides.

"Planning side-by-side with our Malaysian counterparts helped us develop a common understanding of the problem and arrive at a solution that capitalized on everyone's strengths," said Maj. David Miller, the current operations officer with MRF-

D 25.3, and a combined planning group lead for the duration of the exercise. "It was a true team effort that reflects how we would operate together in a real-world scenario."

The combined order developed during the exercise will serve as a foundation for future iterations of Bersama Warrior, as the plan developed here will be executed in scenario during Bersama Warrior 26, which will be a command post exer-

cise (CPX). The continuity between iterations allows U.S. and Malaysian forces to build on shared progress and increase both the scope and complexity of the scenario each year.

The exercise concluded with a closing ceremony hosted by the MAF, where both U.S. and Malaysian service members were able to reflect on their shared accomplishments and look toward the future.

"As we close Bersama Warrior, let us take pride in what we've accomplished and look ahead with confidence," said Brig. Gen. Michael Ake, the land component commander of the Washington Army National Guard. "The lessons learned and friendships forged here will echo far beyond this field, strengthening the ties between our nations and enhancing our collective security."

Malaysian leaders shared a similar perspective. "Bersama Warrior 2025 has made us stronger, not just in military partnership, but as people united by sharing one purpose," said Malaysian Navy Rear Adm. Saifudin Kamarudin. "As we look ahead, let's continue to support each other and work together for a safer, more peaceful future."

As the Indo-Pacific continues to evolve, exercises like Bersama Warrior remain a cornerstone of multinational cooperation, ensuring participating forces remain resilient, responsive, and united in purpose.

## 'Historically Successful' Strike on Iranian Nuclear Site Was 15 Years in the Making

By C. Todd Lopez, DOD News

This weekend's strike on Iran's Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant used 30,000-pound GBU-57 "massive ordnance penetrator" bombs. The design of those weapons and plans for attacking the site had been in the works for some 15 years, which resulted in the destruction of Iran's nuclear capabilities. "President Donald J. Trump directed the most complex and secretive military operation in history, and it was a resounding success, resulting in a cease-fire agreement and the end of the 12-day war [between Iran and Israel]," said Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth during a press briefing today at the Pentagon. "Because of decisive military action, President Trump created the conditions to end the war, [while also] decimating — choose your word — obliterating, destroying, Iran's nuclear capabilities." Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said two officers at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency had studied the site in Iran, which was built to enrich uranium for use in nuclear weapons.

The Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Caine said, is the world's leading expert on underground targets — such as the Fordow site, which is about 60 miles south of Tehran. "In 2009, a [DTRA] officer was brought into a vault at an undisclosed location and briefed on something going on in Iran," Caine said. "He was shown some photos and some highly classified intelligence of what looked like a major construction project in the mountains of Iran. He was tasked to study this facility, work with the intelligence community to understand it, and he was soon joined by an additional teammate." The two worked for 15 years to gain an understanding of the site, but came to realize, after studying the location, that the United States didn't have a weapon that could penetrate into its depths to destroy what was contained inside. "They began a journey to work with industry and other tacticians to develop the GBU-57," Caine said. "They tested it over and over again, tried different options, tried more after that — they accomplished hundreds of test shots and dropped many full-scale weapons

against extremely realistic targets for a single purpose: kill this target at the time and place of our nation's choosing." As part of Operation Midnight Hammer, directed by the president, on June 21, at 6:45 p.m., which is Sunday, June 22, at 2:15 a.m. in Iran, U.S. B-2 Spirit bombers out of Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, dropped 14 of those GBU-57 bombs onto Fordow and a second nuclear facility, destroying the facilities and setting back Iranian nuclear efforts by years.

While Caine said the joint force doesn't do battle damage assessment — the intelligence community does — he was able to relay what's known so far. The weapons were built, tested and delivered properly; they were released on-speed and on-parameter; they were all guided to their intended targets; and the weapons all functioned as designed, he said.

"We know that the trailing jets saw the first weapons function, and the pilot stated, 'This was the brightest explosion that I've ever seen. It literally looked like daylight,'" Caine said. It wasn't just hardware and experts at

DTRA who made Midnight Hammer hit as hard as it did. The crews who flew non-stop for 36 hours and more than 13,000 miles round trip also played a huge role, Caine said.

The B-2 teams included both active-duty and Missouri National Guard pilots, Caine said. "When the crews went to work on Friday, they kissed their loved ones goodbye — not knowing when or if they'd be home," Caine said. "Late on Saturday night, their families became aware of what was happening, and on Sunday, when those jets returned [to] Whiteman, their families were there — flags flying and tears flowing. I have chills literally talking about this." Operation Midnight Hammer was a success, Caine said, because of the bomber crews, experts at DTRA and thousands of scientists, airmen and maintainers working together.

"[This] ... is what America's joint force does," Caine said. "We think, we develop, we train, we rehearse, we test, we evaluate, every single day. And when the call comes to deliver, we do so. I could not be more proud standing up here today of our joint force."

At the conclusion of Operation Midnight Hammer, Caine said, the joint force did not stand down. Instead, it continues to defend the United States. Following the destruction of the Iranian uranium enrichment site, Caine said, Iranians attacked American forces at nearby Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. And there, the joint force defended as it was trained to do.

On Monday morning, Caine said, the joint force saw indications that Iran meant to attack U.S. bases in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. At Al Udeid, he said, most forces were moved off base to extend the security perimeter, but two Patriot missile batteries remained behind to defend the installation.

"[That's] roughly 44 American soldiers responsible for defending the entire base, to include Centcom's forward headquarters in the Middle East, an entire air base and all the U.S. forces there," Caine said. "The oldest soldier was a 28-year-old captain. The youngest was a 21-year-old private who'd been in the military for less than two years."

# U.S., Australia, and Japan strengthen ties during Southern Jackaroo 25

By 1st Lt. Samuel DeRobertis  
Marine Rotational Force - Darwin

**TOWNSVILLE, Australia** — U.S. Marines and Sailors with the Marine Rotational Force – Darwin (MRF-D) 25.3 Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) arrived in Townsville to train alongside the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) during Exercise Southern Jackaroo 25, a multi-lateral exercise held from May 25 through June 13, 2025 at the Townsville Field Training Area, Queensland, Australia.

This year marked the largest iteration of the exercise with over 3,000 total participants, to include more than 500 Marines and 300 Japanese soldiers. Additionally, for the first time, MRF-D brought the full capability of the MAGTF to include MV-22B Ospreys assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 363, the MAGTF aviation combat element (ACE).

The Marines arrived in Townsville and immediately maneuvered to the Townsville Field Training Area where they began the force-on-force portion of the exercise, also known as the North Queensland Warfighter Exercise (NQWFX). The Marines, organized as a task force, worked alongside the Australian 3rd Brigade and a task force of JGSDF soldiers to seize and clear key terrain within the bounds of a complex scenario. This portion tested the combined force's ability to receive and execute constantly evolving mission sets and provide a unified response.

The MRF-D task force served as an air assault element, leveraging support from Ospreys to insert into an objective, secure it with Marines with the MAGTF ground combat element (GCE), and withdraw, setting conditions for the ADF and JGSDF to achieve their respective follow-on objectives. Everything in this evolution is dynamic, unscripted and challenges each



Photo by Cpl. Angelina Sara

country to tightly synchronize movements.

"The ethos of the Marine Corps is to be ready to fight in any clime and place. Our ability to train and build relationships with our partners and allies is crucial to that end and something we plan to continue."

At the conclusion of the force-on-force portion, the MRF-D task force immediately transitioned to a live-fire portion consisting of two events: a defense with elements arranged along a forward line, demonstrating combined arms synchronization, followed by a reinforced platoon attack on an objective area using artillery, mortars, and mounted machine guns to enable a platoon to maneuver on an objective.

Meanwhile on the gunline, Marines with Kilo battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, MRF-D 25.3, as part of the task force, mixed with ADF artillerymen to conduct fire missions on Australian M777 A2 lightweight 155 mm howitzers next to Japanese artillery systems in a display of multinational fires-based interoperability.

"Interoperability is not a buzzword – it is the difference between confusion and cohesion, between surviving and winning," said Commander, 1st (Australian) Division, Major General Ash Collingburn. "Our strength in battle lies in our ability to fight together."

The JGSDF echoed that sentiment. "Southern Jackaroo is a very important exercise

to enhance cooperation between Japan, Australia, and the United States," said Lt. Col. Kazuhiro Nagayoshi, a training officer with the JGSDF. "We had lots of positive outcomes. We want to keep strengthening our cooperation in this area."

Exercise Southern Jackaroo is a unique opportunity for the Marines of MRF-D to strengthen alliances and partnerships and ensure that U.S. Marines are forward-postured and ready to respond with allies across the Indo-Pacific. Through sustained engagements with multinational allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, MRF-D continues to serve as a stand-in force for readiness, interoperability, and stability in the region.

## U.S., Thailand Navies reunite to commence CARAT Thailand 2025

By Lt. j.g. Rebecca Moore,  
Command Destroyer Squadron 7

7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with Allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Sattahip, Thailand (July 7, 2025): The U.S. Navy (USN), Royal Thai Navy (RTN), and Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) began the 31st exercise Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Thailand 2025 with an opening ceremony in Sattahip, Thailand, July 7, 2025.

CARAT Thailand is a bilateral maritime exercise taking place ashore in Sattahip and at sea in the Gulf of Thailand. The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Santa Barbara (LCS 32), with an embarked MH-60S Seahawk helicopter, will

operate at sea with RTN Naresuan-class frigate HTMS Naresuan (FFG 421), Chao Phraya-class frigate HTMS Saiburi (FFG 458), and Rattanakosin-class corvette HTMS Rattanakosin (CVT 441).

"This year, as we operate alongside our Royal Thai and Canadian Navy partners, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthening maritime security cooperation and fostering a more stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region," said Capt. Matt Scarlett, commodore, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 7 and U.S. head of delegation. "Through exercises like these, we enhance our interoperability and build the relationships necessary to address shared challenges effectively."

This year's at-sea training will include anti-submarine warfare exercises, air

defense exercises, and surface action group (SAG) coordination. Mine countermeasures, and search and rescue training events will also be incorporated. The RCN has limited participation in CARAT Thailand 2025 by providing members of a visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) team to participate in the VBSS event. "CARAT helps all participants build partnerships, gain regional experience, and promote stability in the Indo-Pacific," said Admiral Nuttapol Diewvanich, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Fleet. "The exercise fosters strong military relationships and mutual understanding between the Royal Thai Navy and U.S. Navy. It also contributes to positive relations and mutual trust between our nations."

CARAT Thailand's shore phase

will consist of relationship building events, including a sports day; community service activities; and a series of public performances and exchanges between the U.S. and Thai navy bands. Classroom subject matter expert exchanges (SMEE) and practical education will also be held on topics that include maritime domain awareness, medicine and at-sea explosive ordnance disposal.

"Beyond the complex maritime exercises, CARAT Thailand is about building lasting relationships between our navies and our people. From joint training at sea to community engagement events ashore, we are strengthening the bonds of friendship and mutual understanding that underpin our strong alliance with Thailand," said Scarlett.

CARAT Thailand is designed to pro-

vide regional security cooperation, maintain and strengthen maritime partnerships, and enhance maritime interoperability. This year marks the 31st iteration of CARAT, a multinational exercise series designed to enhance U.S. and partner navies' abilities to operate together in response to shared maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. As the U.S. Navy's forward-deployed DESRON in Southeast Asia, DESRON 7 serves as the primary tactical and operational commander of littoral combat ships rotationally deployed to Singapore; functions as Commander, Task Force 76 Sea Combat Commander; and builds partnerships through training exercises and military-to-military engagements as the executing agent of Commander, Task Group CARAT.



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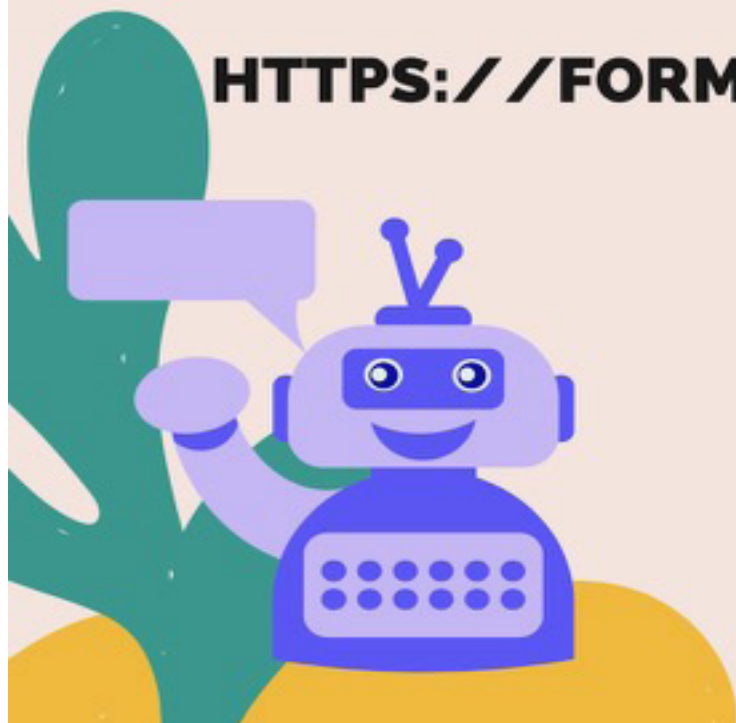
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