



## **Webinar on Indian Ocean Security Framework Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) framework for Effective Security in the Tropical Waters of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**

The Indo-Pacific Strategic Space has become the de facto theatre for global power play in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Indo part of the Indo-Pacific has attained strategic interest due to its political sensitivity and the economic potential. More and more global powers are maintaining their strategic assets in the region and ensuring enhanced domain awareness. The geopolitical and geostrategic competition in the region is making sure heightened military deployment and economic investments. The political volatility and geopolitical fragmentation, have further encouraged the non-state actors to operate with ease, making it a complex mix of state & non-state elements working seamlessly.

The Indo-Pacific by definition is the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The tropical waters provide rich biodiversity and thus high population density as well, making it politically very sensitive. The unique acoustic propagation of the tropical waters, makes sonar deployment extremely challenging due to massive degradation of performance. The sonars designed and developed during the Cold War era in the temperate and the polar region, suffer over 60% degradation, when deployed in the tropical waters of the Indo-Pacific region. The developing nations in the region are not able to prioritize spending on military hardware and underwater technology development, given their socio-economic priorities.

The excessive Submarine Proliferation and the non-state actors having unlimited access to sub-surface capabilities, makes the strategic security dimension unimaginably challenging. The Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) needs to be prioritized with a cohesive framework that deals with policy & technology intervention along with acoustic capacity & capability building. The demography of the region demands meaningful engagement of the aspirational youth along with economic growth and prosperity. The strategic security initiative has to be inclusive to ensure the blue economy, sustainability & climate change and science & technology are all integrated into one holistic framework.

The UDA framework proposed by the Maritime Research Center (MRC), encourages pooling of resources and synergizing of efforts by the stakeholders and also the nations in the IOR and beyond. The UDA framework will ensure digital transformation to deal with the tropical challenges & opportunities in an optimal manner, particularly for the Global South with limited resources and competing socio-economic priorities. An integrated framework with five pillars, including research, innovation, skilling, knowledge and policy to ensure nuanced transformation. The Indo-US partnership could prioritize UDA framework and work towards acoustic capacity & capability building across the IOR. The Indo-US strategic maritime partnership has an opportunity to consider a holistic UDA framework to drive the strategic security agenda with greater public good as an integral component. The digital transformation could be a game changer and will allow optimal deployment of resources for a larger strategic objective. India could be a formidable partner given its talent pool of young and aspirational human resource. Local site-specific field experimental R&D will be critical. More about the UDA framework is available at: <https://udafoundation.in/>.

## **Proposal**

The Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA), USA in partnership with the Maritime Research Center (MRC), India proposes to host a webinar titled “*Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) framework for Effective Security in the Tropical Waters of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)*”. The event will start at **0800 hrs Washington DC time and 1730 hrs IST on 22 Oct 2024**. The event will bring together strategic thinkers, experts, policy makers, academicians, researchers and stakeholders to deliberate on this important issue and find nuanced way forward. A detailed report will be generated at the end of the webinar and circulated to the concerned authorities and influencers across the two countries and beyond.

## **Program (Washington DC Time)**

- 0800 hrs - Opening Remarks on the Geopolitical Realities in the IOR.  
Mr. Jeffery Payne, Assistant Professor (Maritime) NESA, USA.
- 0820 hrs - Introductory Remarks on the UDA framework,  
Dr (Cdr) Arnab Das, Founder & Director MRC, India.
- 0840 hrs - **Session 1**  
Challenges & Opportunities in the Tropical Waters of the IOR  
Session Moderator Mr. Jeffery Payne, NESA.  
Dr. Thomas F Lynch III, Distinguished Research Fellow at the Center for Strategic Research (CSR), Institute of National Strategic Studies (INSS), National Defence University (NDU).  
Vice Admiral A R Karve PVSM, AVSM (Retd),  
Former CinC Indian Navy and Anti-Submarine Specialist.  
Ms. Nilanthi Samaranyake, Visiting Expert, South Asia Program, United States Institute of Peace (USIP).  
Dr. Ajay Kumar, Indian Administrative Service (IAS),  
Former Defence Secretary, Government of India.  
Q&A  
Closing Remarks by Moderator.
- 1000 hrs - **Session 2**  
Capacity & Capability Building and Strategic Partnerships.  
Session Moderator Amb Anup Mudgal, Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Former Diplomat Government of India.  
Capt (Retd) Charles B Marks (Chuck),  
Associate Dean and Professional Military Education, NESA.  
Dr. Satheesh C Shenoo, Chair Professor Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Former Director Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) Hyderabad.  
Dr. Geoffrey Gresh, Professor of International Security Studies at the College of International Security Affairs (CISA), National Defense University (NDU).  
Shri Ashwin C Shroff, Executive Chairman Excel Industries Ltd  
Q&A  
Closing Remarks by Moderator.
- 1120 hrs - Closing Remarks by Mr. Jeffery Payne, NESA
- 1130 hrs - Vote of Thanks by Shri Praful Talera,  
MRC Advisor on Blue Economy.

**Convenor**

Mr. Jeffery Payne, Asst Prof (Maritime) NESAS, USA.

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