

Critical Defense Topics at Sea-Air-Space 2024 underscore Naval Postgraduate School expertise, partnerships and outreach

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- In the dynamic realm of the maritime domain, where challenges and opportunities intersect, the Navy League's annual Sea-Air-Space Conference serves as a convening place for collaboration and innovation. The 2024 event, held in National Harbor, Md., brought together defense industry leaders, military decision-makers and experts from around the world to delve into the pressing issues shaping the future of maritime security. With a backdrop of geopolitical tensions and operational complexities, Sea-Air-Space 2024 offered invaluable insights into the evolving landscape of global maritime challenges and highlighted the role of the Naval Postgraduate School as a resource and central connector for the defense innovation ecosystem.

The expo commenced with a Chiefs Leadership Panel, where Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Lisa Franchetti

joined Erik Raven, Under Secretary of the Navy, and service chiefs Gen. Christopher Mahoney, Assistant Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, Adm. Linda Fagan, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, and Rear Adm. Ann Phillips (Ret.), Administrator for the Department of Transportation Maritime Administration. The panel deliberated on the collaborative efforts between the nation's forces and industry partners under the National Industrial Defense Strategy. Franchetti underlined the necessity for a larger and, more importantly, a ready Navy to address contemporary challenges effectively. During her remarks, Franchetti highlighted the



Retired Adm. Sandy Winnefeld speaks to NPS and USNWC Alumni at Alumni Reception



NPS & DIU Sign Memorandum of Understanding at SAS 2024

importance of manning every platform to field lethal and capable units at sea.

Leadership keynotes throughout the week, provided an opportunity for attendees to gain insights into current global maritime challenges, including Russia's aggression in Ukraine, China's assertive behavior in the Indo-Pacific, and the attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. As the conference unfolded, discussions continued shedding light on recent military operations and the Navy's efforts to counter emerging threats.

Navy leadership, including the Secretary of the Navy, The Hon. Carlos Del Toro, emphasized the need to create a steady demand signal to industry, prioritizing increasing industrial capacity to meet global challenges. He expressed the Department of the Navy's commitment to working with industry to develop and grow the defense industrial base.

Del Toro also highlighted the [release of the Naval Science and Technology \(S&T\) Strategy](#), which guides innovation initiatives and research efforts for the Navy and Marine Corps. Developed with input from various stakeholders, the strategy prioritizes strengthening maritime technological dominance, fostering a culture of excellence in science and technology, and building partnerships with academia, industry and international partners.

At the heart of conferences like Sea-Air-Space is the value of partnership and collaboration. A highlight of the conference was the joint alumni reception hosted by the Naval Postgraduate School and U.S. Naval War College Foundations, where speakers retired Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau, President of NPS, Rear Adm. Peter Garvin, President of USNWC, and retired Adm. Sandy Winnefeld, former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, addressed attendees. Their remarks underscored the enduring bonds and shared commitment to advancing naval education and strategy, reaffirming the critical role of collaboration in navigating the complexities of the global landscape. Representatives from both the U.S. Naval Academy and the Marine Corps University also attended. This gathering not only strengthened the bonds between institutions but fostered a deeper sense of shared purpose within the Naval Education Enterprise, reinforcing our collective dedication to developing and educating a prepared and agile workforce across our Navy and Marine Corps.

The [signing of a Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) between NPS and the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) on Tuesday, April 8, was another example of the importance of collaboration. Rondeau and Doug Beck, Director of DIU, formalized this partnership with a



NPS President Ann Rondeau invites NPS students to join her during Alumni Reception

commitment to leveraging commercial dual-use technology solutions for the advancement of defense education and innovation. Emphasizing the transformative potential of this collaboration, Beck said "Through this partnership, we will connect companies with NPS talent and technology leaders, providing a catalyst for their learning and applied research to deliver innovative solutions for the joint force." This MOU not only accelerates technological adoption but also enhances the educational experience of defense leaders, positioning NPS and the Naval Innovation Center at NPS as a key resource and convening place for the DON and DOD.

Representatives from NPS and the NPS Foundation also actively engaged with current and potential industry and DOD partners in a series of meetings that provided valuable updates on current relationships and a platform for discovery, exchanging ideas, and exploring potential research opportunities and collaborations. Industry engagements facilitated by the NPS Foundation included a visit to the Lockheed Martin Global Vision Center, where NPS representatives explored best practices and opportunities for the design and development of the Naval Innovation Center at NPS facility. A group also visited the DARPA Adaptive Capabilities Office to explore a partnership that will share resources and incorporate NPS students and faculty into DARPA's mission of advancing transformative technologies for national defense.

The participation of Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau in the panel discussion "How Wargames Help Us Win" and as a moderator of the panel "Additive Manufacturing: Creating a Warfighting Advantage through Materiel Readiness" exemplified NPS' commitment to practical education with real-world impact. Rondeau emphasized the significance of exploring such concepts, stressing that they pave the way for capabilities and adoption.

The Sea-Air-Space Conference provided a platform to showcase the exemplary students of NPS, like Vrtis, who exemplify dedication and excellence in advancing defense education and innovation. From Vrtis' groundbreaking work in additive manufacturing to Marine Corps Lt. Col. Scotty Black's research in machine learning, these individuals embody the spirit of innovation and leadership cultivated at NPS. Navy Lt. Sreerag Sarma's focus on security studies and Lt. Eric Bowden's contributions to electrical engineering underscore the multidisciplinary approach to education at NPS. Marine Corps Capt. Michael Spain's exploration of space systems operations highlights the institution's commitment to cutting-edge research and exploration.

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