

Global Maritime Security Symposium builds relationships at NAVSCIATTS

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JOHN C. STENNIS SPACE CENTER, Miss. -- The Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical School (NAVSCIATTS) hosted Naval Special Warfare Group 4's Global Maritime Security Force Assistance Symposium Sept. 28 through Oct. 1.

More than 125 attendees representing 11 partner nations and more than 30 Department of Defense, State, interagency and academic organizations assembled to discuss common efforts to develop regional maritime training centers throughout the world.

"The symposium was a huge success," said NAVSCIATTS Commanding Officer Cmdr. Bill Mahoney. "This was a unique opportunity to bring together partner nation and whole of government organizations to discuss how each plays a role in supporting common efforts to overcome maritime security challenges. By the end of the symposium our partners were discussing how they could work together with their regional partners as well as leverage myriad U.S. agencies support to substantively improve maritime stability in their region. Not only was this symposium an unequivocal success, but we're already looking forward to hosting next year's Maritime Building Partner Capacity Symposium as security force assistance continues to gain momentum. "

Conference highlights included briefs from participating countries, regional working groups, and evening social activities in New Orleans. The final day concluded with a key note guest speaker and ceremony commemorating both the 10-year anniversary of NAVSCIATT's establishment ceremony on Stennis Space Center under United States Special Operations Command and recent operational command shift under Naval Special Warfare Group 4.

"This symposium exceeded my expectations. It's all well and good for Americans to talk about what's going on in other areas of the world, but hearing it directly from our partners brings our insight into regional challenges to a whole new level," said Commander, Naval Special Warfare Group 4 Capt. Chuck Wolf, who oversees the three Special Boat Teams, and NAVSCIATTS. "Every localized action has regional effect. This symposium is allowing us to begin to leverage those actions to build stability. "

James Q. Roberts, the symposium guest speaker and principal director of the Special Operations and Combating Terrorism Office in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, described the evolution of special operations, and the vital role partner nations play in governing their maritime commons that builds credibility for both the United States and the partner nation.

"Partner nation capacity building means helping friends help themselves, and SOCOM is heavily invested in making this happen," said Roberts. "We provide the capabilities for you all to control your littoral waterways and enable legitimate commerce...Our greatest challenge is maintaining maritime domain awareness. Our credibility is tied to differentiating between legitimate and illegitimate traffic."

Roberts reminded the audience, made up of personnel from the United States, Cameroon, Kenya, Lithuania, Uzbekistan, Brazil, Poland, Croatia, Republic of the Philippines, Indonesia, Colombia and Nigeria, that the command hosting the symposium played an important role in building ties that can enable regions to vastly increase maritime awareness.

"This school is a particularly interesting piece- seeking to train the trainer," said Roberts. "This expands the training exponentially at a very reasonable price."

Roberts closed by encouraging everyone in attendance to network and stay in contact, and to not hesitate to reach out and ask for help by building a community of interest.

"Next year's symposium on building partner capacity will develop based on successes of this first year's event," said Mahoney. "We'll continue to listen to our partners and cater to their requests by expanding the list of organizations in attendance and developing coordinated maritime engagement plans by country and region."

The mission of NAVSCIATTS is to provide partner nation security forces with the highest level of riverine and littoral craft operations and maintenance technical training. The school, which usually runs ten courses simultaneously for members of up to 20 countries, also conducts security force assistance missions in support of combatant commanders in accordance with SOCOM priorities using in-resident courses and mobile training teams (MTT) to prepare partner nation security forces to conduct small craft operations in riverine or littoral environments within their own countries.