

LETTER

RUSI Needs to Stay Focused

I feel compelled to offer a comment on the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) lecture held in Sydney on 25 May 2021.

Given the current events underway in the South China Sea, the lecture was a great disappointment as I had expected that there would have been some discussion concerning the deteriorating strategic situation *vis-à-vis* China. The fact that China has recently threatened this nation with an intercontinental ballistic missile attack is a matter of great concern to everyone and, in particular, the military fraternity!

In addition, and punctuating the matter further, at the very moment of the lecture, a Royal Navy task force (Carrier Strike Group 21) was preparing to depart Portsmouth for a multitude of joint naval exercises around the world that are to culminate in a six-power naval exercise, that will include the Royal Australian Navy, in the South China Sea.

Putting these observations in the context of my own personal experiences: in 1971 while taking my ship down the Malacca Strait, I observed the final departure of the British Far Eastern Fleet from Singapore, as it passed down my port side. It was a moment in history which I will never forget.

History has at least two elements which I understand to be somewhat constant: 'that nature abhors a vacuum' and 'never back-down to a bully'! As I understand the history and purpose of the RUSI extending back to the Duke of Wellington, we are about the accurate and timely dissemination of military information and not just about entertaining those who were once involved in the warfighting professions. It is a time for the RUSI to stay focused!

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