

RUSI Prompt Strike Conference 2021

13 – 14 May 2021

Precision Strike in 21st Century Operations

The democratization of access to long range precision strike assets once thought to be components of an exclusively western revolution in military affairs will have important ramifications for the conduct of 21st century warfare. The introduction of novel technology in areas such as hypersonics at one end of the cost spectrum and easily proliferated loitering munitions at the other has only increased interest in conventional precision strike. Yet in many ways, our understanding of the technical capabilities of emerging technologies has outstripped efforts to situate them within an operational and strategic framework. This conference will attempt to bridge this gap by placing both the offensive and defensive dimensions of precision strike in their operational and strategic context. The conference will seek to examine what niche roles precision strike assets can occupy in the context of 21st century multidomain operations, as well as the ways in which western forces can offset adversary concepts of operations that use layered standoff to deny them freedom of manoeuvre.

Day 1

1150 - 1200 **Opening Remarks**

Speaker: **Professor Peter Roberts**, Director Military Sciences, RUSI

1200 – 1300 **Session One: Deep Interdiction in the 21st Century: How Do Prompt Strike Capabilities Contribute to a Multidomain Campaign**

The concept of using penetrating capabilities to disrupt the functioning of an opponent as a system is not new, and was understood by early 20th century thinkers and practitioners like Svechin and Tukhachevsky. The emergence of precise long range prompt strike capabilities has, however, accelerated the speed at which targets at operational depth can be struck. How will these assets support multidomain campaigns focused on penetrating and disintegrating an opponent's military system of systems? What priority should be placed on prompt strike relative to other means of striking and disrupting targets in depth? Conversely, what defensive measures exist against adversary attempts to penetrate and disintegrate the systems on which western power projection depends using precision strike?

Chair: **Paul O'Neill**, Senior Research Fellow, Military Sciences, RUSI

Speakers: **Lieutenant General Eric Wesley**, Former Deputy Commander, US Army Futures Command

Dr Tom Karako, Director, Missile Defence Project, CSIS, US

Dr Motonobu Fujita, Senior Policy Coordinator, Acquisition Technology and Logistics Agency, Japan

1300 – 1310 Break

1310 - 1410 **Session Two: The Impact of Reconnaissance Strike Complexes on Ground Maneuver**

Forces manoeuvring in the land domain will find their operations increasingly impacted by strike capabilities; both their own and those of opponents. A plethora of assets from cruise and ballistic missiles to UAVs and MLRS systems will increasingly challenge manoeuvre centric approaches. Equally, however, these same assets may facilitate the disruption and attrition of adversary forces. What avenues do long range precision strike capabilities open for ground commanders? And, on the other side of the coin, which points of fragility within their systems do the commanders of the land component of a joint force prioritise for protection?

Chair: **Justin Bronk**, Research Fellow, Military Sciences, RUSI

Speakers: **Dr Jack Watling**, Research Fellow Land Warfare, RUSI

Brigadier Charlie Hewitt, Commanding Officer, 1 Artillery Brigade, UK

LTG Richard Formica, Director CALIBRE, Former Commanding General US Army Space and Missile Defence Command

1410 - 1420 Break

1420 - 1520 **Session Three: The Maritime Domain**

Forces at sea will also find the emergence of strike capabilities a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the assets grouped under the rubric of anti-access area denial capabilities will force maritime and air forces to operate differently. Simultaneously, however, friendly prompt strike capabilities can potentially play a meaningful role in unpicking an adversary system of systems built to hold western naval and air power at arms' length. What are the key opportunities for naval forces as strike capabilities mature, and by what defensive avenues can they mitigate the risks that these assets pose?

Chair: **Dr Sidharth Kaushal**, Research Fellow, Military Sciences, RUSI

Speakers: **Brigadier General Marcus Annibale**, Chief of Staff, STRIKFORNATO

Bryan McGrath, Managing Director, Ferrybridge LLC, Easton

Professor Sam Tangredi, US Naval War College

Admiral Sir Philip Jones, RUSI Trustee, Former First Sea Lord, UK

1520 – 1540 Break

1540 - 1640 **Session Four: The Strategic Context**

The operational considerations discussed in this conference must, of course, be nested in the context of a strategic approach. This panel will seek to discuss the higher order strategic considerations that delineate the ways in which operations leveraging prompt strike assets can contribute to strategic success, as well as the ways in which considerations regarding strategic stability may constrain its development and utilization.

Chair: **Professor Peter Roberts**, Director, Military Sciences, RUSI

Speakers: **Dr Brad Roberts**, Director, Center for Global Security Research, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, US

Michael Kofman, Director, Russia Studies Programme, CNA, Virginia, US

Day 2

1200 - 1300 **Session One: The Conduct of a Defensive Campaign Against Adversary Prompt Strike**

Confronting the challenge of large, sophisticated air and missile salvos will force adaptations in every aspect of a defensive campaign, from fielding new capabilities and altering organizational structures, to prioritizing campaign critical targets. This panel will articulate the contours of a defensive IAMD campaign in the 21st century operating environment

Chair: **Dr Sidharth Kaushal**, Research Fellow, Military Sciences, RUSI

Speaker: **Rear Admiral Archer Macy**, Former Director, Joint Integrated Air & Missile Defense Organization, US
Dr Uzi Rubin, Former Director, Israel Missile Defense Organisation
Radoslava Stefanova, Head, NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence Section

1300-1310 Break

1310 - 1410 **Session Two: The Supporting Mechanisms Enabling Precision Strike Competitions**

Both offensive strike and IAMD will draw on a raft of enablers. Disruptive technological changes such as the proliferation of ISR assets in domains such as space and the increasing utility of AI as a means of accelerating decision-making cycles, to name but two, enable the conduct of high tempo future operations that leverage precision strike. How are nations around the world adapting their concepts of operations and organizational structures to leverage these technological enablers and what ramifications will this have for the operations involving prompt strike assets?

Chair: **Alexandra Stickings**, Research Fellow, Military Sciences, RUSI

Speakers: **Dr Peter Layton**, Associate Fellow, RUSI
Lt General Henry Obering III, Former Director, Missile Defense Agency, US
Dr Sarah Kirchberger, Institute for Security Policy, Kiel University, Germany

1410-1420 Break

1420 - 1520 **Getting the Capability Mix Right: In Conversation With Brad Clark**

As nations contemplate the portfolio of prompt strike capabilities and defensive systems they will develop, what is the relative weight that they should place on different options? What are the models which might guide the development and fielding of capabilities and what are the merits of alternative force structures? Professor Peter Roberts will interview Director of Nuclear Policy, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Brad Clark on these pressing trade-offs.

Professor Peter Roberts, Director, Military Sciences, RUSI

Brad Clark, Director of Nuclear Policy, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense, US