

Press Release

Maritime Security Becomes a Strategic Factor

MS&D Conference & Expo 2026 Brings Together Politics, Navies and Industry in Hamburg

Hamburg, 17 June 2026 – The current geopolitical situation is driving action. Numerous countries are investing in the expansion of their naval capabilities, unmanned systems and the protection of critical infrastructure. Against this backdrop, **MS&D – International Conference & Expo on Maritime Security & Defence** will bring together high-level decision-makers from politics, navies and industry in Hamburg on 3 and 4 September. Maritime security is increasingly becoming a strategic factor for the competitiveness and resilience of shipping, ports and global supply chains. At today's joint **press conference** for SMM 2026, MS&D Conference & Expo and ALL ABOUT PORTS, the organisers provided insights into the conference programme and discussed the growing importance of maritime security and defence for shipping, ports and critical infrastructure.

“Maritime security and defence is now a shared responsibility of politics, navies and industry. The challenges range from protecting critical infrastructure to strengthening maritime capabilities. A key task is to advance industrial capacity, procurement systems and technological innovation. This is exactly the dialogue we want to foster through MS&D Conference,” said Rear Admiral (ret.) **Karsten Schneider**, President of the German Maritime Institute and Programme Director of the MS&D Conference.

The importance of maritime security now extends far beyond the security domain itself. It is increasingly becoming a strategic factor for shipping, ports, critical infrastructure and global supply chains.

“Maritime security is often viewed primarily through a military lens. In reality, it also affects trade, energy supply, ports and critical infrastructure. Understanding these connections is becoming increasingly important for the maritime industry,” said **Claus Ulrich Selbach**, Vice President Exhibitions Maritime & Energy at Hamburg Messe und Congress.

The conference programme addresses the key challenges of maritime security and defence – from Europe's maritime capabilities and hybrid threats to the protection of critical infrastructure, cybersecurity, underwater technologies and unmanned systems.

Maritime capabilities and security requirements

The conference programme opens with a focus on Europe's maritime capabilities and the security of global trade routes. Among the speakers is **Giovanni Cremonini**, Head of Maritime Security at the European External Action Service. **Irina Haesler**, Member of the Executive Board and Head of the Brussels Office of the German Shipowners' Association (VDR), emphasised that shipping connects the world and, more than any other mode of transport, stands for free trade and open markets, while also warning: "Without security there can be no freedom, and without freedom there can be no prosperity." **Vice Admiral Axel Deertz**, Deputy Inspector of the German Navy and Commander of the German Fleet, will address the requirements of modern naval warfare in his keynote speech. His presentation will focus on the impact of hybrid threats and the capabilities required of modern navies.

Hybrid threats and innovative systems

In addition to strategic and operational questions of naval warfare, MS&D Conference will focus on technological innovation and emerging threat scenarios. Underwater technologies will play a key role in this context. Their potential and operational applications will be discussed by **Malte Kutscher** of Kiel-based sonar specialist ELAC Sonar and **Dr Moritz Lehmann**, Senior Oceanographer at New Zealand company Starboard Intelligence, which provides solutions for monitoring maritime activities. The discussion will be moderated by **Prof. May-Britt Stumbaum** of the George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies.

The priorities shaping procurement decisions at both national and European level will be outlined by **Vice Admiral Carsten Stawitzki**, Director General for Equipment at the German Federal Ministry of Defence, in his opening keynote on the second day of the conference. According to Stawitzki, protecting NATO territory can only be achieved through international cooperation.

Another focus of the conference will be current developments in maritime security. **Thomas Kazakos**, Secretary General of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), will address the growing impact of geopolitical conflicts on global shipping. In his view, these developments represent one of the greatest challenges facing the industry, particularly for seafarers operating in high-risk areas. Their safety and wellbeing must therefore remain a top priority. He will be joined by **Dr Gregor Krah**, Chief Executive Officer of Cypurge. Krah and his team help organisations protect themselves against cyber threats.

Strengthening cooperation between industry and navies

The conference concludes with a focus on manned and unmanned systems. Speakers include **Rear Admiral Christian Bock**. "Many solutions are suitable for both civilian and military applications. These dual-use technologies, in particular, are making security and defence an important growth area for the maritime industry. MS&D Conference addresses all relevant issues at the interface

between navies and industry, making it the perfect complement to SMM,” said **Rear Admiral (ret.) Karsten Schneider**.

The **Naval Hall B8** will serve as the centre of the MS&D – International Conference & Expo on Maritime Security & Defence as part of SMM in Hamburg from 1 to 4 September 2026. The international **MS&D Conference** will take place on the Naval Stage on 3 and 4 September. Throughout the entire event, the accompanying **MS&D Expo** will showcase technologies, systems and solutions for maritime security and defence.

Press accreditation

Press accreditation for SMM 2026 is now open. Media representatives can register here:

[Press Shop](#).

About MS&D – International Conference & Expo on Maritime Security & Defence

MS&D – International Conference & Expo on Maritime Security & Defence – is Germany’s only international conference dedicated to maritime security and defence. It brings together high-level representatives from navies, government, industry and academia to address key maritime security challenges, European defence procurement and technological developments. The MS&D Conference & Expo combines exhibition and conference into an international meeting point for maritime security and defence technologies, as well as for dialogue between navies, industry and procurement organisations. Increasingly, topics such as the protection of critical infrastructure, maritime resilience, dual-use technologies and the security of global supply chains are also moving into focus. Since 2025, MS&D has been held annually, strengthening its role as a European platform for dialogue, innovation and collaboration. In SMM years, the MS&D Conference & Expo takes place as part of SMM – the world’s leading maritime industry event – in Hamburg; in the intervening years, it is held as a standalone conference.

More information: [MS&D Conference - SMM](#)

About Hamburg Messe und Congress

Hamburg Messe und Congress (HMC) is an organizer and host of major international events, trade fairs, and congresses. Its unique event campus in the heart of Hamburg comprises eleven exhibition halls and the CCH – Congress Center Hamburg – connected by the park Planten un Blomen. Leading international trade fairs such as SMM, WindEnergy Hamburg, and INTERNORGA are meeting places for visitors from all over the world. In addition, there are numerous guest events on a wide range of topics, including aviation, mobility, and renewable energies. The portfolio of trade fairs and congresses is geared towards the economic clusters of the Hamburg metropolitan region. Hamburg Messe und Congress employs over 350 people and generated sales of around 92 million euros in 2025.

More information: [Trade fairs | Conferences | Events - Hamburg Messe und Congress](#)

Digital press kit

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