



**Royal United Services Institute – Vancouver  
3<sup>rd</sup> Strategic Studies Conference  
Vancouver Public Library  
April 8<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

With a record attendance of more than 170, including students from Simon Fraser University, University of BC and University of Victoria, the RUSI Vancouver 2016 Strategic Studies Conference on April 8th and 9th was an outstanding success.



**RUSI President Cam Cathcart & Keith Maxwell,  
Principle Conference Organizers.**

On Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, The Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC, Lieutenant Governor of BC opened the Conference and delighted the participants by remaining for the entire weekend proceedings.



The Lieutenant Governor's opening remarks were followed by a panel of experts who addressed the Conference theme of "Global Flashpoints", which became a 'tour de force' moderated by former CBC journalist Cecilia Walters.

The wide range of topics included the Asia-Indo Pacific, Climate Change, Russia, European stability, Migrants & Refugees and the Middle East.

Dr. James Boutillier, Political Advisor to the Commander Maritime Forces Pacific, extensively covered developing events in the Asia-Indo Pacific emphasizing the new assertiveness of China in the region, the unpredictability of North Korea, the naval buildup of India, vulnerability of the Philippines and how these activities may affect future strategies of the United States, Japan and South Korea.



**Dr. James Boutillier**

The Friday evening kickoff panel discussion was followed by a reception at the BC Regiment Officers' Mess.



**RUSI Past-President Jim Stanton facilitated Saturday's question and answers.**

A welcome feature of the Conference was the question and answer sessions that followed each of the presentations.

The day-long Conference on Saturday began with an insightful presentation by Professor Alexander Moens, SFU Political Science Department on "NATO: Threats, Challenges and the Response of Allies and Partners."

Dr. Moens discussed NATO's changing role following the collapse of the USSR and how it has sought new directions by extending its mandate into areas outside the normal NATO sphere like Afghanistan.

Following this presentation Jillian Stirk, former Canadian Ambassador to Norway, explained that today's crises are unfolding in a very different context than they did in the 1990s. Just as the world is becoming increasingly complex, more connected and faster paced, so too is diplomacy.



Ms. Stirk, an expert on foreign policy and multilateral negotiations, said that as new grass roots organizations seize power from old institutions, the focus of diplomacy is less upon relations between states and more on the struggle for resources, ideas, and influence. She clearly stated that “gone are the days of whispering in the ears of governments behind closed doors”.



**Retired Canadian diplomat Jillian Stirk  
addressing the Conference**

The topic for Professor Allan Sens', UBC History Department was “The Middle East, Conflict and Conflict Management.”



**Professor Allan Sens takes questions.**



He described current times as “promising, risky, dangerous and uncertain” because uprisings and political change are engulfing countries across the Middle East. These create complex challenges for policymakers and other seeking to advance peace in the region.

One of Professor Sens’ clear observations described the danger of a generation of Middle East youth who have never been educated but rather, indoctrinated.

On Saturday afternoon, retired RCAF Brigadier General Bob Chekan provided background on air operations at home and abroad, with an emphasis on Canada’s NATO involvement and reviewed possible scenarios in which Canada may be involved in future, including the Arctic.

The Arctic was the subject given the final panel on Saturday, chaired by Joe Spears, Principal, Horseshoe Bay Marine Group, addressing the question: ‘The Arctic-Whose Future is it Anyway?’

The Arctic is cold, remote and desolate; home to polar bears, whales and hardy people who wish to protect their culture and the environment. Clearly, it is a frontier rich in oil and minerals and also a fragile region threatened by climate change and human over-exploitation.

In this regard all panelists agreed with Professor Tina Adcock of SFU who warned of risks by large cruise ships traversing the Northwest Passage, the first of which is planned this summer, and whether Canada will cope in the event of an emergency.

Attention was also drawn to the growing Russian presence in the Arctic, their buildup of military and naval forces and of icebreakers, that number more than 40 including nuclear, plying the Arctic waters year round.



Closing remarks were delivered by Vancouver South MP and Minister of Defence Harjit Sajjan, PC, OMM, MSM, CD, MP.



**Minister of Defence Harjit Sajjan speaking at Conference.**

Minister Sajjan talked about how Canada promotes security and stability abroad, delivers international programs that address security challenges and responds effectively to international crises.

He noted that Canada advances international security by addressing a broad range of challenges, including but not limited to: terrorism; risks linked to the proliferation of conventional, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons; transnational organized crime; and human smuggling.

Mr. Sajjan gave an update on his activities since becoming Minister and outlined some of his intentions for the Department, especially to take the 'politic' out of defence appointments.





**SFU student asking question of panel member.**

The Minister invited questions from the audience and responded accordingly. He concluded by saying that the recently-announced Defence Review will get underway within weeks and the first of a series of six roundtables scheduled will begin in Vancouver on April 27. These initial sessions are by invitation only, with later public sessions to be hosted by Members of Parliament from all parties in the Commons. No dates have been announced for the public sessions.

Closing remarks were given by Cam Cathcart, President of RUSI - Vancouver, who acknowledged the exceptional and timely presentations and thanked everyone for attending. He particularly thanked Minister Sajjan for the giving of his valuable time in attending and in making his presentation. The 2016 RUSI Conference was deemed a great success by many of those present who also expressed appreciation to Keith Maxwell in particular, with assistance from Cam Cathcart, for organizing this exceptional event. Those who attended are asked to complete an evaluation of the Conference and return it by e-mail to [kdmaxwell@gmail.com](mailto:kdmaxwell@gmail.com) or to [lhccathcart@gmail.com](mailto:lhccathcart@gmail.com). The evaluation form can also be mailed to RUSI Vancouver, 2025 West 11th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6J 2C7.

**Report submitted by Past-President Jim Stanton and RUSI President Cam Cathcart.**