

Press Release

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Taking the Future to Sea: NURC observes 50th Anniversary

The NATO Undersea Research Centre (NURC) in La Spezia, Italy, celebrates its 50th anniversary with a series of events, spread over the week of 20-25 April, and concluding with the participation with the City of La Spezia to the “Festa della Marineria” (Marine Festival) 11-16 June 2009.

Established on 2nd May 1959 as the SACLANT Anti-Submarine Warfare Centre, the early mission of SACLANTCEN was to pool technical knowledge from both sides of the Atlantic to counter the threat of USSR submarine activities. NURC research activities widened after the fall of the Berlin Wall, expanding its programme of work to other undersea warfare technologies of interest to NATO and its members, and by preparing itself for the next security crisis. This evolution projected the Centre into the new world of synthetic aperture sensors, unmanned systems, robotics, artificial intelligence and automatic decision making in naval defence. The beginning of this century saw the Centre venture into the fields of maritime security & safety such as anti-terrorism, anti-piracy, maritime situational awareness and protection of the natural environment. Despite the name changes and evolution in research focus, the Centre’s main strength remains in its ability to test and evaluate concepts and technologies at sea. That, and an ever widening network of international researchers who collaborate with the Centre in areas related to maritime security augur well for meeting challenges in the next 50 years.

To commemorate the Centre’s birth, its many achievements over the past 50 years, and its evolving mission to meet the challenges of developing, evaluating and testing new technologies in the maritime domain, the celebration motto “*Taking the Future to Sea*” also inspires its 50th Anniversary programme. The Acoustics’08 Conference in Paris provided an early start to the celebrations, with a special session “50 years of progress in sonar acoustics research: the role of NURC/SACLANTCEN”. The AUVSI Unmanned Systems Europe 2009 Conference this week, co-sponsored by the Centre, will provide a whole range of presentations of cutting-edge technologies and systems applications in the underwater, surface and air unmanned domain. The Official Commemoration Day on 23 April will include the participation of NATO and Italian dignitaries, civil and military authorities, as well as current and former staff of the Centre. NURC staff and their families, and members and spouses of the newly-formed NURC Alumni Association will get together on the NURC Family and Alumni Day on 25 April. There will also be presentations on the Centre’s achievements in ocean engineering at the OCEANS’09 IEEE Conference in Bremen, Germany in May. Finally at the Festa della Marineria, NURC’s 50 years and its role in the La Spezia and the Italian community will be noted in special events scheduled in June 2009.

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