



NEAR EAST SOUTH ASIA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

# NESA Update

April – May 2023

## NESA Region Trends – CENTRAL & SOUTH ASIA

- A recent SIGAR report asserts that foreign armed groups and domestic security threats have increased in Afghanistan since the group took over the country in August 2021. The concern is also echoed in a UN Under-Secretary-General for Counterterrorism, Vladimir Voronkov’s statement, “Afghanistan has once again become a breeding ground for terrorism.” The UN statement comes after foreign ministers of the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) raised their concerns about the “deterioration” of the security situation in Afghanistan. In a statement, the ministers expressed their concern “over the deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan and the invigorated activity of international terrorist organizations, primarily ISIS and its affiliate, Wilayat Khorasan.”
- Russia has voiced similar concerns in recent weeks. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson was quoted that the Islamic State-Khorasan (Daesh) is seeking to undermine security and stability in Afghanistan and its neighboring countries, relying on external support.
- An agreement between the Taliban government and Pakistan to relocate elements of Pakistani Taliban (TTP) in northern Afghanistan on the border with three central Asian states has alarmed the region about a new terrorism threat in the area. As terrorist attacks by the TPP in Pakistan significantly increased (73%), the Afghan regime announced a plan to relocate the TTP cadre from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, the Durand Line, to northern and western provinces. The announcement has upset communities within Afghanistan and caused concerns in Central Asia. Some Afghans criticize the move believing that the objective is to transform northern Afghanistan into a new Waziristan, export terrorism and the transfer of terrorist groups to Central Asian countries, fuel proxy wars, and alter the demographic composition of the population.

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**Engagement • Education • Outreach**

# NESA Region Trends

- Concerns over the *Taliban-ruled* Afghanistan becoming, again, a breeding ground for terrorism, worries nations across South and Central Asia. The concerns were reflected in several recent statements by the United Nations Security Council and leaders of Pakistan, Russia, and Central Asian states.
- In May 2023, China hosted a conference for the Central Asian states in the city of Xi'an, outlining future paths between itself and the region. Throughout the summer, Central Asian reaction to this high-level event has been muted, with experts cautioning against agreements that would make the countries further indebted to China. As leaders and populations in the region are reconsidering their ties with Russia in light of the current war in Ukraine, they're reluctant to find another dominant actor. To that end, regional connectivity is taking on a quality that includes multiple routes, a re-examination of the U.S. presence (primarily through the [C5+1](#) format), and the rise of other external actors such as India and Turkiye. The latter country is especially important, given its role in the [Organization of Turkic States](#) (OTS), a structure that has held a number of high-level events this year and includes Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Turkmenistan (as an observer).
- There can be little doubt that U.S.-India cooperation has reached a new intensity, including in defense cooperation and critical technology. The [announcement of INDUS-X](#) on 21 June reveals the depth of progress made bilaterally on technological cooperation. INDUS-X, or India U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem, is an incubator for greater cooperative effort.
- Sri Lanka, despite its recent domestic turmoil, is garnering more international attention than ever before. Recent high-level visits by the French President and other senior state leaders indicate three overarching trends - that more non-South Asian states are recognizing the importance of a successful and stable Sri Lanka, that the eastern Indian Ocean is being recognized as more vital for strategic objectives (namely by European powers), and that there is an opportunity to gain mutually advantageous relations with a Sri Lankan regime no longer viewed as overtly pro-China.

# NESA Programs & Events

## **MARSEC Digital Series: Tensions in the Indo-Pacific**

On Thursday, 6 April 2023, the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies hosted a digital chat with 25 NESA alumni on “Tensions in the Indo-Pacific.” Assistant Professor Jeffrey Payne led the conversation that marks the first of what will be an ongoing set of digital conversations focused on maritime security issues and the state of the Indo-Pacific.

All interested alumni of the NESA Center were welcome to join this group and recommend future topics of conversation. Over the coming months, the NESA Center will initiate more discussions on additional themes.

<https://nesa-center.org/marsec-digital-series-tensions-in-the-indo-pacific/>



Follow the newly created NESA Center Maritime Security account on Twitter [@NESA\\_MARSEC](https://twitter.com/NESA_MARSEC) for topical security and policy updates.

# NESA Programs & Events

## **2023 Lebanese Armed Forces Seminar**

From 10–14 April 2023, the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies hosted a seminar titled “An Evolving World Order” at National Defense University (NDU) in Washington, D.C. The program was designed to provide an academic setting in which these officers could examine ideas relating to emerging threats and changes in global power structures while engaging with U.S. government officials, subject-matter experts, and scholars. NESA Center Adjunct Professor Dr. Jennifer Jefferis and NESA Center Associate Professor Dr. Michael Sharnoff led the seminar, which focused on five main themes: global order, economy, emerging tech, climate change, and Lebanon’s future defense security relationship with the U.S. Forty-nine members from the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) participated in the program, with discussions held off-the-record under Chatham House rules of non-attribution. It was structured so the participants could engage with the speakers (and each other) to enrich the interaction and seminar experience. <https://nesa-center.org/2023-lebanese-armed-forces-seminar/>

## **2023 Lebanese Armed Forces Seminar**

10–14 April 2023



*Lebanese Armed Forces Seminar group photograph at NDU on 10 April 2023.*

# NESA Programs & Events

## **NESA Center Briefing at ARCENT Commander's Conference**

On 20 April 2023, the United States Army Central Command (ARCENT) conducted a Commander's Conference at Shaw Airforce Base in South Carolina for all subordinate components and headquarters leadership focused on Security Cooperation. ARCENT invited the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies to attend the conference and provide an overview of the Regional Center's mission, a summary of Professional Military Education (PME) programs hosted by NESA, and a focused presentation on U.S. strategic interests in the region, centered on Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Deputy Director COL David Lamm, USA (Ret.); Associate Professor Dr. Michael Sharnoff; Strategic Planner Cindy Pritchett; and Associate Dean Charles Marks represented the NESA Center at the conference. <https://nesa-center.org/nesa-center-briefing-at-arcent-commanders-conference>

## **NESA Center Briefing at ARCENT Commander's Conference** 20 April 2023



*ARCENT Senior Leadership and NESA delegation in front of the headquarters after the conference.*

# NESA Programs & Events

## **NESA-IISS China-India Workshop in Singapore**

In partnership with the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the NESA Center for Strategic Studies participated in their first-ever track 1.5 workshop on Sino-Indian relations from 26–27 April 2023 in Singapore. NESA Center Dean Dr. Roger Kangas and faculty members Jeffrey Payne and Jack Gill participated as speakers and panel chairpersons. Topics included bilateral security and trade relations, maritime security challenges, strategic deterrence, confidence-building measures, and relations with other neighbors. Plans for a second meeting are under discussion. <https://nesa-center.org/nesa-iiss-china-india-workshop-in-singapore/>

## **NESA-IISS China-India Workshop in Singapore**

26–27 April 2023



*Dean Dr. Roger Kangas and the IISS lead Rahul Roy-Chaudhury during the workshop.*

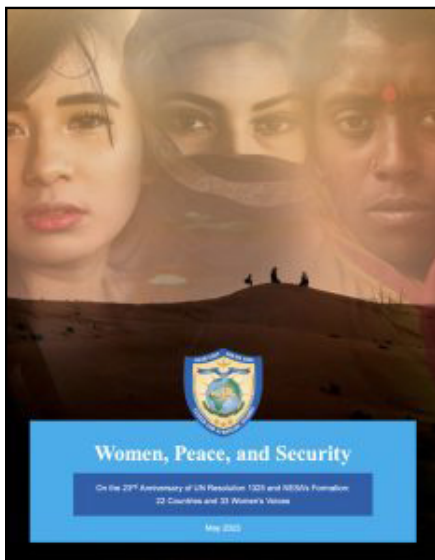
# NESA Programs & Events

## NESA-AFRICOM 2023 Workshop Series

From 29 April–6 May 2023, the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies, in partnership with U.S. Africa Command, held three back-to-back workshop series in Bangkok, Thailand, for senior government and civilian security experts and a “whole of society” approach from 24 countries with a total of 53 female participants. The 61 from 24 countries in attendance came from various countries across the globe: Latin America, Africa, The Levant, Central Asia, the Gulf, and South Asia. This was the first-ever program of this type conducted by the NESA Center. Under the leadership of Course Director Professor Anne Moisan and Deputy Course Director Fahad Malaikah, the three back-to-back workshops, which topically built on each other, covered: “The Changing Nature of Security” followed by “Transnational Threats Know No Boundaries” and culminated with a two-day Women’s ONLY session entitled “The Women’s Revolution: Life, Liberty, and Freedom.” [https://nesa-center.org/nesa-africom\\_workshops\\_and\\_nesacenter\\_wps\\_e-book/](https://nesa-center.org/nesa-africom_workshops_and_nesacenter_wps_e-book/)



*NESA-AFRICOM Workshop Series held from 29 April–6 May 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand.*



The NESA-AFRICOM 2023 Workshop Series also allowed for the release of the first-ever NESA Center Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) E-Book, a great collaboration among 33 women from 22 countries entitled “Women, Peace, and Security, On the 23rd Anniversary of UN Resolution 1325 and NESA’s Formation: 22 Countries and 33 Women’s Voices.” Read the “[Women, Peace, and Security, On the 23rd Anniversary of UN Resolution 1325 and NESA’s Formation: 22 Countries and 33 Women’s Voices](#)” E-Book [PDF].

# NESA Programs & Events

## Saudi Arabia Armed Forces Command & Staff College Program

The Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies, led by Matthew Holbert, NESA Program Manager and Associate Dean of Administration and Tom Wagstaff, Academic Advisor to the Saudi Arabia Armed Forces Command Staff College, hosted the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Defense Armed Forces Command and Staff College (AFCSC) from 1–5 May 2023. Holbert and Wagstaff welcomed Brigadier General Misfer S. Alshamrani, AFCSC Dean of Education, and other members of the Saudi AFCSC to Norfolk, VA, to visit the Joint Forces Staff College (JFSC) and the NATO Allied Command Transformation HQ. The focus of the visit was to aid the AFCSC with information on how to best enhance its joint curriculum, develop its faculty, and reestablish relationships to assist the AFCSC in transforming into the Armed Forces Joint Command and Staff College (AFJCS).

The engagements allowed for deep discussions that will aid in developing the academic vision for the future AFCSC and aid in defining the outcome of the NESA Center forward concept to support the AFCSC. Furthermore, the relationships built during this visit will have an enduring impact on influencing and shaping the vision of the future AFJCS. <https://nesa-center.org/saudi-arabia-armed-forces-command-staff-college-program/>

## Saudi Arabia Armed Forces Command & Staff College Program

1–5 May 2023



*Group photograph at the Joint Forces Staff College from left to right: Tom Wagstaff, Lt Col Abdullah Alotaibi, BG Misfer Alshamrani, BG Voris McBurnette, BG Abdulaziz Aldebais, Matthew Holbert, and Lt Col Ayedh Aseeri.*



# NESA Programs & Events

## Saudi War Course: Fundamentals of Wargaming

From 1–5 May 2023, the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies held a professional military education program in Washington, D.C., on the “Fundamentals of Wargaming” with five faculty members from the Saudi Command and Staff College of Saudi Arabia National Defense University. The course introduced the students to the wargaming theory by reviewing the purpose and types of wargaming, analyzing the principles of wargaming, and reviewing the components of a wargame. At the end of the course, the students put their knowledge into practice, conducting a commercial wargame under the tutelage of the U.S. Army War College Department of Strategic Wargaming (DSW) faculty. Students were paired with a NESA faculty member to serve as a mentor and support the student’s learning. Professor Justin Boston led the course with academic support from Professor Richard Wiersema, Andrea Brewington, and Mark Bibbey. <https://nesa-center.org/saudi-war-course-fundamentals-of-wargaming/>

## Saudi War Course Fundamentals of Wargaming 1–5 May 2023



*Fundamentals of Wargaming participants applying wargaming lessons learned.*

# NESA Programs & Events

## **2023 Qatar Joint Staff College Washington Study-NESA Center Program**

From 29 April–10 May 2023, the NESA Center hosted the Washington Study Program of Qatar’s Joann bin Jassim Command and Staff College Senior Officer Program in Washington, D.C. The 38 participants included senior military officers and senior leaders from various Qatari government agencies. This program was part of a capstone trip at the end of a challenging year-long academic program. Associate Professor David Des Roches led the course as participants took part in various discussions with experts who have served in senior positions in the U.S. government and the Washington think tank community. Topics discussed included the U.S. government, the U.S. National Security Strategy, the presidency, Russia’s war in Ukraine, energy, the U.S. aspect of power, drones, and Iran. NESA Center Director LTG Terry Allen Wolff, USA (Ret.) delivered a lecture on the U.S. presidency. There were also presentations on different government agencies. Towards the end of the program, the group participated in a leadership and logistics-focused staff ride of the Gettysburg battlefield and a commencement at the National Museum of the United States Army. <https://nesa-center.org/2023-qatar-joint-staff-college-washington-study-nesa-center-program/>

## **2023 Qatar Joint Staff College Washington Study-NESA Center Program**

29 April–10 May 2023



*Group photo of the Qatar Joint Staff College Visit at National Defense University.*

# NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

## Dr. Hassan Abbas

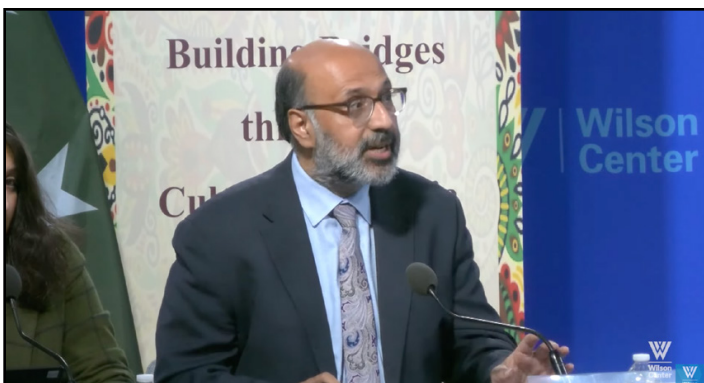


**12 April 2023** – Was a virtual speaker at Ananke's Annual Literary Festival - Women in Literature. The live event was attended by over 250 people.

<https://anankemag.com/2023/04/10/ananke-women-in-literature-festival-to-open-its-virtual-doors-tomorrow/>

**27 April 2023** – Served as a panelist at the Pakistan Conference at the Woodrow Wilson Centre. Discussed "U.S.-Pakistan Relations and Security Challenges in Pakistan."

The conference was attended by over 65 people. Event details and video: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/future-us-pakistan-relations> Media Coverage of the seminar: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1749928>

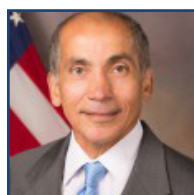


**27 April 2023** – Was a panelist at an extremism program at George Washington University titled "Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and the State of Global Jihadist Leadership."

The program was attended by over 50 virtual participants. Access the summary and video: <https://extremism.gwu.edu/islamic-state-al-qaeda-and-state-global-jihadist-leadership>



## Dr. Gawdat Bahgat



**8 April 2023** – Led a NESA and Chatham House workshop along with Dean Dr. Roger Kangas on the topic of Iran. The roundtable discussion with European experts was held in London.

**18 April 2023** – Wrote an article, "US-Iran Relations: Challenges and Opportunities," that was published in the Muslim World's "Special Issue: The Domestic Politics of Iran The International Relations of Iran." Access the issue to read the 14 original articles. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14781913/2023/113/1-2>

## David Des Roches



**3 April 2023** – Discussed North African security issues on Morocco's Medi 1 news program. Medi 1 is Morocco's most-watched Arabic language news channel. Its hosted by Ambassador Adam Ereli and regularly hosts various luminaries from the Washington think tank community. Video in Arabic:

[https://youtu.be/-yBpN\\_cUams](https://youtu.be/-yBpN_cUams)



**5 April 2023** – Spoke on Finland joining NATO on Sky News Arabia (the Arabic language affiliate of Sky News based in Dubai and has a large viewership – over 4 million YouTube subscribers). [https://youtu.be/oy\\_1MAvOBGQ](https://youtu.be/oy_1MAvOBGQ)

# NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement



**25 April 2023** – Participated and spoke during the concluding session of the two-day conference on “Afghanistan: Differences and Pluralism in the way ahead.” The conference was co-sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Center for Governance and Markets, the U.S. Institute of Peace, the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies, and the Hollings Center for International Dialogue. The highlights of Ambassador Jalali’s presentation included the challenges facing state-building in Afghanistan in the wake of several decades of political upheaval, wars, and conflicts. In recent years Afghanistan’s central government became so monopolized that local representatives were left with no administrative, fiscal, or other authority. He argued that a functioning government requires structural legitimacy, which, according to Weber, is a rational-legal authority supported by institutions that underpin the people’s acceptance. A well-functioning government should be based on justice, rule of law, and human rights, as well as security in its broadest sense. If the government cannot fulfill these responsibilities, various ethnic and tribal groups will seek to secure their interests separately, leading to chaos and further instability.

**26 April 2023** – Published a short article on the Saudi-Iran rapprochement for Azure Strategy in London. Azure Strategy is a private risk-management firm closely associated with Chatham House and with several UK academic institutions. <https://azure-strategy.com/saudi-iran-rapprochement-a-contrarian-view>

**1 May 2023** – Published a review of Bilaal Saab’s new book on U.S. efforts to build military capacity in the Middle East in the [Middle East Journal \(MEJ\)](#). MEJ provides objective research and analysis of the region. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/mei/mei/2023/00000076/00000004/art00015>

## Ali Ahmad Jalali



**6 April 2023** – Was interviewed by the London-based Afghanistan international TV for comments on the United Nations condemnation of the Taliban policies that violate every right of Afghan women. In their recent restrictions, the Taliban

banned women employees of UN offices in Afghanistan. Later in the month, The UN Security Council condemned the ‘Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s (IEA) decision to ban Afghan women from working for the United Nations in Afghanistan. In a statement, UNSC called the move as undermining human rights and humanitarian principles. In a strong show of unity, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution condemning the Taliban’s discrimination against women and girls in Afghanistan and called for the country’s leadership to swiftly reverse policies banning education, employment, and equal public participation of women and girls.

**1 May 2023** – Was interviewed for the prospect of UN efforts to pressure the Taliban to build an inclusive government and respect human rights of the Afghan people including, the rights of women. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres held a meeting in Doha with representatives of 20 regional and other countries to unify the policies of different stakeholders in dealing with the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. The meeting was described by the UN as nations and organizations trying to reach unified stances on human rights, governance, counter-terrorism and anti-drug efforts. The summit, which was attended by representatives of China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uzbekistan, ended inconclusively. The Secretary-General hoped to convene the meeting again soon.

**3 May 2023** – Authored the book chapter “Reflections on the Fateful Collapse of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF)” for “The Great Power Competition Volume 4: Lessons Learned in Afghanistan - America’s

# NESA Faculty & Staff Engagement

Longest War.” The recent volume in the series is being published by the Springer Nature Publishers. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-22934-3\\_9](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-22934-3_9)

## Jeffrey Payne

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**18 April 2023** – Testified, along with Darshana Mozinder Baruah and Nilanthi Samaranayake, before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Indo-Pacific in a hearing entitled “Surrounding the Ocean: PRC Influence in the Indian

Ocean.” <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/surrounding-the-ocean-prc-influence-in-the-indian-ocean/>



**3–4 May 2023** – Took part in the 8th International Maritime Security Conference in Singapore. Sponsored by the Singaporean Ministry of Defence and organized by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) within Nanyang Technological University. Approximately 500 attended, representing over 50 countries and including naval officers, diplomats, academics, industry leaders, and subject matter experts. [https://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/idss/research-programmes/maritime-security-programme/imsc/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1687456938.7437510490417480468750](https://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/idss/research-programmes/maritime-security-programme/imsc/?doing_wp_cron=1687456938.7437510490417480468750)

## Dr. Michael Sharnoff

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**7 April 2023** – Was interviewed by QPOST about the unrest in Jerusalem and the decision by the UAE and China to hold a UN Security Council emergency session on the issue. [Read more in Arabic.](#)

# NESA Alumni Activities & Contributions

8 April 2023 – **Mustafa Fetouri (Libya)** wrote an Op-Ed for the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs: "[Libya's Missing and Murdered Women.](#)"

13 April 2023 – **Shanthie D'Souza (India)** wrote an Op-Ed for The Diplomat: "[China in Afghanistan: Myopia, Denial, and Fantasies.](#)"

13 April 2023 – **Mustafa Fetouri (Libya)** wrote an Op-Ed for the Middle East Monitor: "[Libya's Human Rights Situation is worse than what it was under Gaddafi.](#)"

25 April 2023 – **Shahab Enam Khan (Bangladesh)** wrote an Op-Ed for The Business Standard: "[Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook: What's in it, what's around it.](#)"

25 April 2023 – **Shanthie D'Souza (India)** wrote an article for The Diplomat: "[The Samarkand Meeting: A Half-baked Regional Approach to Afghanistan's Endless Woes.](#)"

1 May 2023 – **Shanthie D'Souza (India)** co-wrote a briefing for The Middle East Institute: "[The Dangers of Legitimizing the Taliban.](#)"

Visit the NESA Center Alumni Interactive Map:  
<https://nesa-center.org/alumni-map/>

## Calendar

### Upcoming NESA Center Events:

- **ARCENT Virtual Land Forces Intelligence Conference** | 9 May 2023
- **RJNDC Curriculum Review and 2023 Strategic Planning Meetings** | 8–9 May 2023 | Jordan
- **Washington Seminar** | 10 May 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **Indian Ocean Island Forum** | 10–12 May 2023 | Bangkok
- **Army War College Staff Ride Seminar** | 16 May 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **Silk Road Future Leaders Seminar** | 22–26 May 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **Dynamics of Countering Human Trafficking in South Asia & the Gulf Workshop** | 22–26 May 2023 | Oman
- **OSD-DOS Regional Cooperation Exercise (NEGEV Forum)** | 6–8 June 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **NESA Roundtable with Sino-Israel Global Network & Academic Leadership** | 7 June 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **Cyber Security Seminar** | 12–15 June 2023 | Washington, D.C.
- **NESA-AFRICOM Changing Nature of Security** | 12–16 June 2023 | Morocco
- **Air War College International Officer Seminar** | 23 June 2023 | Washington, D.C.

**Near East South Asia (NESA)  
Center for Strategic Studies**

Fort Lesley J. McNair  
National Defense University  
Abraham Lincoln Hall  
300 5th Ave SW  
Washington, D.C. 20319-5066

Phone: (202) 685-4131  
Fax: (202) 685-4999

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 GlobalNETPlatform.org/NESA

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