



**Pacific Partnership 2012  
Opening Ceremony Remarks  
ADM Cecil Haney  
Tuesday, 19 June 2012  
Calbayog City, Philippines  
As Prepared for Delivery**

Magandang umaga po. Good Morning and thank you for being here today. I am very pleased to be here in Calbayog for such a meaningful and worthy event as the Opening Ceremony for Pacific Partnership 2012 in the Philippines. Pacific Partnership is truly a multi-national effort. We do this effort here, with nine partner nations-Australia, Canada, France, Great Britain, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Peru, Philippines the United States and 15 Non-Governmental Organizations. We are fortunate to partner with so many dedicated professionals from across the globe.

I would like to recognize the Distinguished Visitors who were able to make it here today. Governor Sharee Ann Tan, governor of Samar; Under Secretary Edilberto Adan, executive director of the President's Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement; and Representative Mel Sarmiento, West Samar, 1<sup>st</sup> Dist. Mayor Ronaldo Aquino, mayor of Calbayog; Lt. Gen. Ralph Villanueva, commander, Central Command, Armed Forces of the Philippines; and Ambassador Harry Thomas. Thank you all for being here.

It was 25 years ago that USNS *Mercy* conducted her maiden voyage to conduct humanitarian assistance and training. Of all the places she could have gone on that deployment, she came here to the Philippines and to the South Pacific. On her four-month mission she treated more than 60,000 people and nearly 1,000 inpatients in need of care. At the conclusion of that deployment a quarter of a century ago, her last port visit in the Philippines was right here in the city of Calbayog. It is inspiring to have Hospital Ship *Mercy* here again, to support this important effort – Pacific Partnership 2012. Pacific Partnership stands as a true testament to the close and enduring relationship between the United States and the Philippines.

It was seven and a half years ago that the world watched in horror as an earthquake and tsunami devastated South East Asia. The 2004 tsunami impacted 14 countries bordering the Indian Ocean and claimed the lives of more than 230,000 people. Thousands more were injured and more than 1.5 million people were displaced from their homes. In the aftermath of the destruction, the world responded to help those in desperate need. People came to the aid of people, nations came to the aid of nations, and the slow recovery process was begun. The global response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami became the genesis for the Pacific Partnership mission as we know it today.

As a result of that great tragedy, regional partner nations are working together today to better respond in the event of an unexpected natural disaster. We live in an uncertain world where the lives of so many can be affected by typhoons and flooding, volcanic activity, earthquakes and tsunamis. Pacific Partnership allows us to “prepare in calm to respond in crisis.”

Since our first Pacific Partnership mission in 2006, we have partnered with Non-Governmental Organizations and international agencies from as far away as Europe.



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The cooperative effort of our outstanding civilian and military professionals in the medical, dental and veterinary fields, combined with public health services, civil engineering, and disaster response activities demonstrates what a true multi-lateral effort can accomplish. The relationships we have developed, the trust that we have established, and the teamwork that we have fostered, are the foundations we will continue to build upon into the future. These Non-Governmental Organizations and willing nations have made an important and positive difference in the lives of thousands of people throughout the Asia-Pacific.

I was in Japan just a few days ago – a country recovering themselves from the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and tsunami of last year. This year Japan is supporting the mission by providing the JS *Oosumi*, LST 4001, as part of the Naval mission embodying the spirit of Tomodachi-friendship. Here in Samar, the Philippine Armed Forces are working shoulder to shoulder with their regional counterparts to construct and renovate schools and a health clinic. Already our mission is off to a great start having just completed work in Indonesia. Pacific Partnership-12 promises to be our most successful effort to date.

I want to thank all those involved, who have come together, united in their efforts, for the betterment of all. Our progress since the 2004 tsunami is a true testament to the strength of our relationships with one another and to our commitment to each other as people, and as nations. I look forward to the great accomplishments we will achieve working with the people of the Philippines, as well as our future missions to Vietnam and Cambodia and I look forward to our continued work together during the many years to come. May this continue to serve as an example to the world of like minded nations and organizations coming together for the betterment of mankind.

Thank you. Salamat po, Maraming salamat po.