



Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet

South East Asia Disaster Management Cooperation Closing Remarks
Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
12/3/2009

Mister & Madam Secretaries; Generals; Directors; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, participants in the South East Asia Disaster Management Cooperation workshop. It is an honor to be here today and have a small role in this ceremony marking the conclusion of this extremely important event.

Let me begin by expressing our most grateful appreciation to our hosts, the Government of Indonesia, and especially the TNI. Your hospitality is without parallel. Thank you.

During the past few days, participants from ASEAN Member States including disaster management agencies and defense representatives, the ASEAN Secretariat, selected partner nations, as well as regional and humanitarian organizations involved in disaster management and emergency response, both regionally and here in Indonesia, came together to discuss mechanisms for disaster management and emergency response. Many have worked in past training events, or in actual crises, but after two days here in Jakarta, we have developed a greater understanding of disaster management and emergency response mechanisms at the national, regional and international level, and where and how these mechanisms can and must seamlessly work together in order to speed up our collective response in order to save lives and alleviate human suffering in the face of disaster.

There are many facets to improving and enhancing these mechanisms of response, including enhanced interagency and intergovernmental cooperation, improved communications and information sharing, and civil-military coordination to name a few. All of these aspects are enhanced by working together and getting to know each other in venues such as this over the past few days.



Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet

South East Asia Disaster Management Cooperation Closing Remarks
Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
12/3/2009

The event co-sponsors, the Government of Indonesia and the TNI, and U.S. Pacific Command, along with significant contributions from the ASEAN Secretariat, put together a robust professional exchange program and interesting and challenging discussions over the past two days.

It has been a worthwhile endeavor to examine all these issues for how we might improve our disaster response efforts.

As you well know, no one could have imagined the extent of the disaster that occurred as a result of the Boxing Day earthquakes and tsunamis that occurred throughout the Indian Ocean basin in December 2004. We have learned and shared many lessons since then. But it is critical that we strengthen our mutual understanding how institutions such as ASEAN, the United Nations, the Red Cross Movement, and most importantly the authorities of the Affected States themselves coordinate, share information, and conduct operations.

Many of us in this room have responded to numerous – often simultaneous – disasters in the region. And while we cannot predict when the next major disaster will occur, events such as this workshop help us improve our response capabilities a little bit each time.

As Commander of US Pacific Fleet, I have seen the enthusiasm and determination of our men and women in uniform when we have a chance to assist another country after disaster strikes. However, we as a military understand that we are not the lead in responding. Sometimes we may respond and provide assistance when appropriate, but we recognize that the primary responsibility for responding rests with the affected nations' government. It is imperative that all



Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet

South East Asia Disaster Management Cooperation Closing Remarks
Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
12/3/2009

ministries in governments work well together in crisis, and that those of us who may be called upon to assist know how to work through and support those structures so we can best meet their needs.

It has been a pleasure to be a part of this Southeast Asia Disaster Management Cooperation event because I believe it brings together incredibly dedicated and talented people from the government, military, humanitarian community, and private sectors to collaborate and work for the greater good to save lives and relieve human suffering.

I know that you have had the chance to learn more about each other's organizations, but it is important that as we build our relationships, we also identify ways to improve our cooperation. Most importantly, I hope you have developed some close personal and professional relationships with each other. The world is a small place and the Disaster Management / Emergency Response world is an even smaller place. I suspect that you will see some of the same people you met at this conference when the next large scale disaster relief mission occurs.

In closing, might I say to all of you, "thank you," for taking time from your busy schedules to work together over the past few days to examine ways of improving our collective response. I have no doubt that when a disaster afflicts people in the future, we will respond more quickly, work together better, to save lives, and make the world a better place.