



# Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet

Opening Remarks to the Maritime University (VIETNAM)

Admiral Patrick M. Walsh

5/21/2010

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. It is an honor to be here, among so many maritime professionals. I am especially grateful to the government and Navy of Vietnam for arranging my visit with you.

I am here to share one perspective and describe the impact that the changing nature of maritime security has on the American Navy. The organization, training, and equipping of the U.S. Navy, is part of the public record. For those interested, you can find how much we spend, what platforms that we buy, the number of people who we recruit, and have a relatively good sense of our operations by examining records in the public domain. I think of greater interest to the audience today would be in what we think and how we arrive at our conclusions.

To be effective on the water across the spectrum of possible military operations, we must examine the contours of the security environment. This requires a review of sociological, ideological, political, and economic trend lines, so that we understand the nature of conflict and backdrop of activity in the maritime domain. Those assessments serve to inform, develop, and guide how we chart the course for the future.

Southeast Asia and the sea lanes that surround the region are hugely important to the global economic system. It is an area characterized by evolving political and economic ties; increasing demand for resources; rapid modernization of military capabilities; competing national interests; as well as, long-standing regional and international disputes.

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community. In other words...now, more than ever before, the consequences of activities that impede those vital connections no longer affect simply one nation, but rather the vital interests of the global community.

We share the sea at an extraordinary moment in history. The shipment of energy, goods, and commodities has resulted in linkages and connections that make us increasingly reliant on partners in the international community...and dependent on the sea, and its security, for many elements of our daily lives.

As Sailors, we have the honor, good fortune, and responsibility to represent our nations at sea, at a time when the security and stability of the global commons is very important to the community of nations. Mariners operate in one continuous body of water that covers 70% of the globe. Unlike land that others will fence, put up borders and protect, we share the sea. Therefore, the very nature of the operating environment requires a collective approach for the shared benefits and responsibilities of the sea.

Today, we recognize how quickly conflict can escalate and disrupt the international economic system. The potential for conflict based on grievance, resentment, and state interest, fueled by weapons proliferation, characterized by terrorism, insurgency, and disorder, now seems more troubling in areas of economic vulnerability, poor governance, and demographic stress and consequential for more nations than simply those affected.

Therefore the character of today's challenge to organize, man, and equip maritime security forces cuts across traditional boundaries. Moreover, it demands solutions that are rapid, credible, joint, inter-agency, combined with international partners, and cooperative. This is why, the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard took the unprecedented step in signing a unified maritime strategy, which acknowledges the



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role of the services as well as recognizes that today's security challenges require us to move seamlessly across the maritime domain prepared for any contingency.

Two years ago, this document, "The Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower", was published reflecting the changing security environment, the strategy emphasizes the importance of working with international partners as the basis for maritime security. Trust and cooperation are fundamental to our ability to respond to crises; we cannot surge them. Instead, it takes time to build partnerships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Our longstanding friendships in the Asia-Pacific region underpin the U.S. Pacific Fleet's role in regional cooperative maritime efforts. In many respects, the document codifies and builds on a long history of collaborative relationships in the Asia-Pacific region. The strategy serves to guide our concepts of operations, preparation of people, as well as the development and procurement of future systems. Our leaders expect the Pacific Fleet to prepare and respond to a broad range of missions. Exercises, maritime security, and humanitarian relief operations with our partners in the Pacific are a foundational element to our cooperative strategy.

The Pacific and Indian Oceans, adjacent seas, waterways, and merchant sea-lanes upon them are inseparable from the global economic system. Maritime security operations are particularly well suited for partnerships; they offer unique opportunities for innovative command and control arrangements and information sharing. Our challenge is to forge a way ahead...to find aspects of maritime security that we can share and cooperate. Ultimately, the stakes are very high and the role played by maritime professionals will affect more than simply the nations that we represent.

Thank you. I would now like to answer your questions.