



Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet

Pacific Missile Range Facility Change of Command Speech
Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
6/4/2010

Thank you Dixon for the kind introduction. Senator Akaka, Mayor Carvalho, Representative Hirono, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, shipmates and friends of the Navy... Good morning and aloha – it is great to be here in beautiful Kauai.

Thank you for being here to celebrate the Pacific Missile Range Facility change of command. Together we will recognize the Cudnohufsky family and welcome the Mongillos to the Pacific Missile Range Facility ohana.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be here and publicly express my gratitude for all that you, the PMRF community and extended ohana, have done to support the Pacific Fleet and our Navy.

Earlier this week we flew the flag at half-mast -- and in public ceremony as well as private settings -- paused, memorialized, and recognized the men and women who have given their lives for our country. We are indeed fortunate to know that in times of turmoil, tumult, crisis or calamity, we can turn to fellow citizens who will take great risk to themselves and their lives to protect us...and they ask for very little in return...simply to appreciate their sacrifice and remember their loved ones.

My remarks begin with you...our friends, family, and our extended ohana, because Memorial Day reminds us that the days pass too quickly, our opportunities with each other too fleeting, our reunions too limited, to miss out on a chance to simply express our personal gratitude to each other.



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The work here is especially important. We share a mission at an inflection point in history -- when the movement of information, the shipment of energy, goods, and commodities, combined with the ability to communicate beyond national borders and opportunities for travel, have resulted in linkages and connections that make us increasingly reliant on partners in the international community and dependent on the sea, for many elements of our daily lives. No matter how you look at it, the sea lanes are the crossroads of many interests and this is particularly noteworthy in the Pacific.

In the region, we are witnessing a period of increased demand for resources, increased competition, and a period when the demand for access and freedom of movement that we typically view through the lens of the national interest... yet is increasingly important to the interests of the international community as well. So in other words...now, more than ever before, the consequences of activities that impede or destabilize those vital connections no longer affect simply one nation, but rather the vital interests of the global community.

So, because of the direct connection between the stability of the global commons and the security of nations, the United States Navy plays a vital role on the world stage. This range and this facility keep us on the leading edge of technology development; it facilitates training exercises that keep our armed forces and allies proficient.

Over the long, distinguished history here, the Navy has conducted testing for multiple missions. Missile testing and evaluation has evolved to the point that the successful Aegis BMD missions have enabled us to make an important contribution to the national missile defense strategy.



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The Barking Sands Tactical Underwater Range – the largest of its kind in the world today – as well as the Instrumentation Site serves the anti-submarine warfare training needs of the U.S. and allied navies.

The Rim of the Pacific exercise is the largest combined military exercise in the world. This year, the PMRF ranges will facilitate training events involving 35 ships, 5 submarines, 100 aircraft, and 22,000 military personnel from 14 participating nations.

Over the lifetime of this community, PMRF has made it possible for U.S. and foreign navy ships, submarines, and aircraft to complete over 6,000 warfare-training qualifications and testing events. While the global security environment continues to evolve, we find that the mission of PMRF - to facilitate training, develop tactics, and test weapons systems - is still as relevant and important as ever to the nation.

In the meantime, you have earned an enviable reputation for combined excellence and safety – a reputation enhanced under the command of Aaron “Suds” Cudnohufsky.

Aaron has had an impressive career. While most pilots tend to fly the same aircraft throughout their entire career, “Suds” carried a different challenge and flew in five different communities. This is not only rare – this is hard. Only the most skilled aviators transition to new platforms – and the fact that Aaron did it five times is testament to his level of competence as a leader, his technical and tactical skill as an aviator, and his versatility as an officer with exceptional aviation and leadership abilities.



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Repeatedly, he has had to start from scratch, learn to fly a new aircraft, land on his feet in a new community, and prove himself.

Aaron weathered many career course changes with the same resourcefulness he brought to the cockpit; his ability to adapt quickly served us well during his time here at PMRF – a command that is moving at the speed of technology.

In the past three years, PMRF testing and training tempo increased to the fastest pace that this command has ever seen. On April 4th, 2007, Captain Cudnohufsky became the 23rd commanding officer of PMRF, responsible for the safe operation of the range. On the next day, he oversaw a US Army Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system test. Moreover, Aaron guided this team forward through numerous challenges and changes to usher in a new era of progress and achievement.

There are many ways to measure success – whether in achievements, awards, or positive impact on the world around us. PMRF made history with several “firsts.” This command provided range support for PACIFIC BLITZ 2008, the first ever live-fire ballistic missile defense training event. PMRF also coordinated command and control efforts for Operation BURNT FROST, the first successful SM-3 engagement of a non-functioning satellite that resulted in the protection of human life against uncontrolled reentry.

Earlier this year, PMRF broke new ground again – when construction began on the new Advanced Radar Detection Laboratory. This facility will serve as a test and evaluation site for critical, next-generation radar technologies to enhance the BMD and Air Defense capabilities of our surface ships.



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Yet, despite their busy training and operational schedule, the men and women under Aaron's command have still found the time to give back. They have assisted the Kauai community through command civic activities such as Habitat for Humanity, Kauai Food Bank, Blood Bank of Hawaii, and Adopt-a-School. As the third largest employer on the island, with a positive economic impact of 135 million dollars, PMRF has also joined forces with the Kauai Community College and local companies to provide advanced training, education, and internships that will result in a highly skilled local workforce.

During his tour, Aaron engaged with local government and civic groups regularly - whether by raising awareness of a Japanese cemetery at Mana Camp... participating in the Kauai Veterans Day wreath laying ceremony... hosting the Lieutenant Governor to discuss training and education initiatives to benefit the local workforce... serving on the panel of the 2008 Kauai Renewable Energy Conference... or even by helping lift a 300-pound green sea turtle onto an ATV in order to get her the medical attention that would save her life.

Always a conscientious environmental steward, Aaron instituted community outreach programs that earned PMRF the Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Installation Award for Cultural Resource Management and strengthened mutual understanding and trust with the Kauai community.

So Suds, you have positioned this command to continue making immense contributions to national defense and environmental protection; thanks to your visionary leadership, PMRF will continue to play a vital role in keeping America and our allies safe for years to come.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank Aaron's wife Laurie and sons Shawn and Corry (who are away at school and could not be here today), and Tyler. Laurie, your job as



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a Navy spouse is the hardest one in the Fleet, but also the most important. I know that it is your strength and commitment that inspires Aaron to serve and to succeed as a leader. On behalf of the Pacific Fleet, please accept my heartfelt thanks for all you have done – we are grateful for your support.

Aaron, Laurie – we bid you Fair Winds and Following Seas as you continue on to Point Mugu at the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Captain Nick Mongillo, Jacqueline, Lauren, and Kellie. I am sure you will enjoy living in beautiful Kauai and taking advantage of the opportunities that abound in the great state of Hawaii.

Nick is one of the most experienced, decorated, and esteemed aviators in our Navy today. His test came on his first combat mission when he shot down an Iraqi MiG during Operation DESERT STORM...on his first mission he received the Silver Star, one of the nation's most distinguished awards.

Nick has flown 25 combat missions and accumulated over 5,000 hours of flight time. However, his contributions to the Navy go far beyond the warzone. Nick is a force-multiplier; he has taught several generations of fighter pilots the tricks of the trade as an adversary, Fleet Readiness Squadron, and TOP GUN instructor.

The Navy recognized “Mongo” with several awards for his exemplary performance – and that speaks volumes about his leadership and how much his peers respect him. We are indeed very



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fortunate to have another talented and tested leader come here. PMRF will have the continuity of a skilled and conscientious commander and the Kauai community will have the continued support for safety and responsible environmental stewardship.

PMRF stands on the brink of a bright and busy future of new initiatives... later this year, the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force will conduct its fourth Aegis BMD engagement. The Navy will conduct operational testing of the newest extended range missile – the SM-6 – at the end of the year. Aegis Ashore will also come online in the near future.

Nick, it is an exciting time to be in command here. I congratulate you and know you will continue to move PMRF on the path to a successful future; I look forward to serving with you.

Again, I would like to thank you all for being here today. I would also like to thank the Kauai community and the State of Hawaii for your strong support for our Navy – and lastly, I would like to express my appreciation for all those who have served and continue to serve here at PMRF for the valuable contributions this command has made to enhance security and stability. Yours is a mission that is essential to the defense of America and the preservation of freedom around the world. You help us keep pace with a changing world...and for that, your Navy and your nation are grateful... and proud.

Thank you, and God Bless.

Aaron, please join me...at the podium.