



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
U.S. THIRD Fleet Change of Command
Onboard USS MAKIN ISLAND, San Diego
Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
Thursday, 21 April 2011**

Thank you very much, Rick, for your kind introduction. Distinguished representatives from Canada, Japan, and Spain.... fellow Flag and General officers, men and women of the THIRD Fleet, family and friends, and the many partners and supporters of the U.S. Navy here today.....good morning!

Rick and Jerry - thank you for the opportunity to be a part of your change of command ceremony – to honor you and your families for your service, support, and professional accomplishment.

I would like to offer a very warm welcome -- especially to those who have traveled far to join us as we recognize the many achievements of Rick and Josie Hunt and welcome Jerry and Yvonne Beaman. We have family members witnessing the ceremony via Skype from around the country – a warm welcome to you also!

My remarks begin with...friends, family, and our supporters within the community, because the days pass too quickly, our opportunities with each other too fleeting, our reunions too limited, to miss out on a chance to express our personal gratitude to each other....for each other. It is important and good to have all of you here as we celebrate this very important day for THIRD Fleet and our Navy.

I am especially pleased to be back in San Diego and aboard MAKIN ISLAND once again. 18 months ago I had the privilege of participating in the commissioning of MAKIN ISLAND – it is an honor to be back. Captain Landers and crew – thank you for your hard work and preparation. Today's ceremony follows a centuries old naval tradition – a simple yet powerful expression of authority, responsibility, and accountability.

THIRD Fleet's distinguished heritage inspires those who serve today with command of naval forces from the International Date Line to the west coast, this command provides maritime homeland defense, prepares deploying forces, and enhances international maritime partnerships.

THIRD Fleet's effectiveness in an evolving security environment reflects the adaptability and responsiveness of our Navy...but the main ingredient for this sustained success is the bold, visionary leadership of a long line of distinguished commanders. From Halsey to Spruance to Gravelly to Rick Hunt, THIRD Fleet's reputation for tactical excellence, operational innovation, and the highest standards of readiness is well-known.

Our Navy relies upon THIRD Fleet to provide forces and people trained and ready for a broad range of missions...from high-end warfighting in strike warfare, anti-submarine warfare, and ballistic missile defense... to counter-piracy and maritime security...and for humanitarian assistance and disaster response. Today, the ships, aircraft, and submarines of THIRD Fleet are on station, demonstrating commitment to allies and friends, and making vital contributions to security and stability...for example, today, PAUL HAMILTON provides ballistic missile defense in the Arabian Gulf, CLEVELAND leads Pacific Partnership humanitarian operations in the South Pacific, and GARY conducts counter-narcotic operations for Southern Command.

While our staffs plan deployment schedules with great efficiency, world events dictate tasking, often unexpectedly. Our ability to respond in a timely and effective manner is the best test of our readiness...Rick Hunt and THIRD Fleet have given me great confidence in our ability to respond to the changing security environment, most recently demonstrated by U.S. naval forces in Japan, where I had a ringside seat to witness the team that he trained in action.

On 19 March, more than 90 members of the Joint Task Force assigned to my headquarters departed Hawaii with very little notice and traveled to Yokota Air Base, Japan. There was nothing that we could have done to prepare ourselves for what we were about to see. The tectonic forces that moved the Eurasian Plate affected the tilt of the earth's axis, lowered the Northeast Honshu coastline by more than a meter, and displaced Japan by seven feet. The damage, the loss of life, and the series of cascading casualties that followed (to include explosions and fires in a nuclear power plant, and more than 400 aftershocks) were apocalyptic in magnitude, description, and effect for the prefectures of Fukushima, Iwate, and Miyagi.

In times of crisis, in the hour of tragedy, at the moment of calamity, we learn about ourselves and about the brotherhood of humanity. If ever there was a time and place to learn about commitment to your fellow man...then "come to Japan..." where more people came to assist the people of Japan than departed the nation to avoid the damage caused by the earthquake, tsunami, and radioactive contamination...where more than 24,000 U.S. servicemen and women, 24 ships -- including each ship from our forward deployed naval forces, deployed to support Japan, and over one hundred aircraft provided 189 tons of food, 2.0 million gallons of water, and 87 tons of relief supplies to augment the Japanese relief effort.

By any and every measure, the actions taken and work done by the Japan Self-Defense Force has been heroic...where record numbers of citizens mobilized...to rescue, to find the missing, and to sustain the living. Despite incalculable personal loss and grieving for their own loved ones, their missing relatives, and their destroyed communities, the Self Defense Force carries a deep sense of personal honor and responsibility to see this mission to its completion.

If ever there was a time and place to witness where the wrath of nature has met the best of humanity...then "come to Sendai..." where a giant wave churned and pushed itself 6.5 miles inland and then pulled everything within its grasp out to sea. Where the chaos of the sea confronted the orderly life of the city. Where every man-made object, regardless of size, weight, or setting moved to the most unlikely, unpredictable, and implausible locations...tossed without regard to dimension or girth -- and created a confused picture of commercial tankers on land and automobiles out to sea. But also, where the same powerful wave summoned an equally powerful force -- the essential purity and resolute spirit of the Japanese people, possessed of the wish for peace and security, yet emotionally resolved to meet any challenge -- and commit themselves for the rest of their lives to build a future for their children, with politeness, patience, and prudence.

And if ever there was a time and place to witness an impressive operation, to witness a team in action, to witness heartfelt contribution without concern for credit, "come to Tomodachi..." where the USS Ronald Reagan strike group joined forces with Yokosuka sailors, Okinawa Marines, Zama soldiers, and Yokota airmen...with more than 50 Non-Governmental Organizations, the ministries in the Government of Japan, the Self-Defense Force, USAID, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Chemical, Biological Initial Response Force from US NORTHCOM, and many others, in a unified effort on behalf of our friends.

The USS RONALD REAGAN Strike Group, which played a valuable role as an afloat forward staging base -- trained here, under the leadership of Rick Hunt. While none of us could have prepared for this specific mission, the mark of an impressive organization is to learn and grow under fire, under crisis conditions, and adapt, improvise, and in this case, pivot from humanitarian assistance to missions in

response to the nuclear disaster -- to fight the fear of the unknown and the invisible...with a force that can land on its feet within hours of an unprecedented disaster, and prove by its actions what it means to be a friend.

RONALD REAGAN Strike Group demonstrated the immeasurable value of forward presence and agility. Our men and women adapted to operating conditions and performed in a manner that reflected the rigor of THIRD Fleet's training and readiness standards. I had the opportunity to join Japan's Defense Minister Kitzawa for a visit to REAGAN to convey the Prime Minister of Japan's personal gratitude for their remarkable, sustained, timely support. In the words of the Defense Minister, "Your warm help will be cherished and engrained in the hearts and souls of the Japanese people."

The success of our deployed forces does not happen by accident...it is through the careful preparation of THIRD Fleet.

Admiral Hunt's distinguished operational record made him especially well-suited for this important role...so the sustained success of our operating forces comes as no surprise.

His dynamic leadership of Rim of the Pacific 2010, the largest multi-lateral naval exercise in the world, brought together 14 navies from four continents, enhancing interoperability and bolstering trust. He expanded maritime security partnerships, most notably advancing our cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard as well as the navies of Canada and Mexico. He optimized employment of Hawaii-based ships, increasing deployed surface combatant presence with an innovative operating concept. His influence goes well beyond the sea...responsible for ballistic missile defense, anti-submarine warfare, and mine warfare, he has brought vision and focus to Navy's resourcing priorities for vital warfare capabilities...his contributions will keep our edges sharp well into the future.

Thank you Rick, for your commitment and your tenacity; your many achievements have enhanced the security of our nation.

Those of us who wear the uniform know that the most important part of our lives, the most important source of strength and support, is our family - so we understand and appreciate the personal sacrifices that your family has made.

Josie Hunt has been a true champion of Sailors and their families - active in many ways and often behind the scenes to support those on the home front. On behalf of the Pacific Fleet, please accept my heartfelt thanks for all you have done - we are grateful for your support.

Rick and Josie - we are fortunate you will remain within the Pacific Fleet family. Rick, I am sure you will miss the ocean view from Point Loma, but I know you will enjoy a return to your Surface Warfare roots and applying your THIRD Fleet experience to even greater effect for the Pacific Fleet. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue serving with you.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Vice Admiral Beaman and his wife Yvonne - Andy and I are so pleased to have you back on the Pacific Fleet team. Admiral Beaman brings an accomplished record of leadership and broad operational expertise - it is clear that he is exactly the right officer for the challenges ahead.

Jerry is one of the most experienced and esteemed aviators in our Navy today. He has been tested in combat early in his career in Operation El Dorado Canyon, Desert Storm, and later served in the U.S. Navy Fighter Weapons School, TOPGUN. However, his contributions to the Navy go far beyond the warzone. Jerry is a force-multiplier; he has served as the commander, Naval Network and Space

Operations Command, the director of operations, Naval Network Warfare Command, commanded the Strike Training Force Pacific, and served on the staff of US Fleet Forces Command.

The Navy recognized “Steamer” with responsibility for many commands during the course of his career based on his exemplary performance – and that speaks volumes about his leadership and how much his peers respect him. We are indeed fortunate to have another talented and tested leader come here. The THIRD FLEET will have the continuity of a skilled and conscientious commander and the San Diego community will have continued support for safety and responsible environmental stewardship.

THIRD FLEET stands on the brink of a bright and busy future...Jerry, it is an exciting time to be in command here. 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 San Diego community and the State of California for your strong support of the Navy – and lastly, I would like to express my appreciation for all those who have served and continue to serve in the THIRD FLEET for the valuable contributions this command has made that 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 America and the United States Navy.

[Rick, please join me...](#)