



**Remarks for Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Tuesday 15 November 2011
New York**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and dear friends...thank you for the kind and generous invitation to join you for this special event, in this wonderful city, surrounded by the warm embrace of colleagues, friends, and family. I am honored, I am grateful, and I am humbled, for the privilege to stand here this evening and represent the men and women of our armed forces who participated in an important operation, under extraordinary conditions at a remarkable time in history.

I am especially grateful for this evening because we have an opportunity for reflection as well as an opportunity for an expression of gratitude, to offer solace for those who continue to suffer, and to offer prayers of quiet thanksgiving for the blessings that we have received in our lives.

By any measure, Operation TOMODACHI reminded us, that we are part of the great fabric of community, with shared histories and unique traditions...where one generation cares for and nurtures the next...and provides support to each other, for each other. I am so thankful to have three generations of my family present this evening to share in this moment with me: my father, sisters and their husbands as well as several special friends.

Although my daughter is away at school and unable to attend this special occasion, my son, Matthew (11) has joined us – he is the handsome young man in the tuxedo at Table #_. I have reserved my last introduction for my soul mate, best friend, and wife of 23 years, Andy, because of her quiet, selfless, and special contribution made in the true spirit of TOMODACHI. In the days that followed the tragedy, Andy worked with the Japanese Consul General in Hawaii, and brought people together all the way from Fairfax, VA to Tokyo, Japan...people, previously unknown to each other, yet who shared a common cause and sense of purpose. Andy found her role and coordinated private donations to the orphanages, because children bore an especially heavy burden in the days that followed the disaster.

When I first learned of the privilege to be here and join you this evening, I was awed, humbled, and touched: awed by the distinguished history of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in New York; humbled by the exemplary contributions of those you have recognized previously for fostering and improving relations between the United States, Japan, and the world; and, especially, touched by the spirit of friendship reflected in this award.

In my 34 years of service, in operations and deployments around the world, I had never experienced anything close to what we witnessed in the days that followed the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake. The tectonic forces that moved the Eurasian Plate physically displaced Japan and lowered the Northeast Honshu coastline by more than a meter...caused damage, loss of life, and a series of cascading casualties that were apocalyptic in magnitude, description, and effect for the prefectures of Fukushima, Iwate, and Miyagi.

Yet, it is 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 history ever records where there was a time and place to learn about commitment to our fellow man, it will be in Japan...where more people came to the scene of the disaster to offer assistance than those who departed to avoid the damage caused by the earthquake, tsunami, and radioactive contamination...where record numbers of citizens mobilized...to rescue, to find the missing, and to sustain the living. Where dedicated workers known to us as simply the Fukushima 50, captured the heart of the nation and inspired the world into action. Despite incalculable personal loss and grieving for their own loved ones, the Japanese Self Defense Force carried a deep sense of personal honor and responsibility for the mission – and by any and every measure, they were bold, dynamic leaders who faced down uncertainty. Their work was truly heroic and earned the gratitude and respect of nations around the world.

If history ever records a time and place to witness where the wrath of nature met the best of humanity...it was Sendai...where the chaos of the sea confronted the orderly life of the city...where the giant wave churned and pushed itself more than 10 kilometers inland and then pulled everything within its grasp out to sea. 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. The forces of nature exposed our vulnerability and laid bare the order in our lives with a confused picture of commercial tankers on land along with homes and automobiles out to sea. But in Sendai, 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 willing to commit themselves for the rest of their lives to build a future for their children, with politeness, patience, and prudence.

If history ever records a time and place to witness an impressive operation, to witness a team in action, to witness heartfelt contribution without concern for credit, it will remember “Operation: TOMODACHI,” where the USS Ronald Reagan strike group joined forces with Yokosuka and Sasebo sailors, Okinawa Marines, Zama soldiers, and Yokota and Misawa airmen...with more than 50 Non-Governmental Organizations, the ministries of the Government of Japan, the Self-Defense Force, US Agency for International Development, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Chemical, Biological Initial Response Force from US NORTHERN COMMAND, and many others, in a unified effort on behalf of our friends.

While none of us could have predicted or prepared for this cascading set of conditions, the mark of an impressive organization is to learn and grow under pressure, during 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 could land on its feet within hours of the unprecedented crisis, and prove beyond measure, what it means to be a friend.

When Defense Minister Kitizawa visited REAGAN, he conveyed the personal gratitude of the Prime Minister to the US armed forces for their remarkable, timely, and sustained support and added, “Your warm help will be cherished and forever engrained in the hearts and souls of the Japanese people.”

The complexity and scope of the humanitarian and radiological challenge required innovative solutions, so we organized our work for unity of effort and established a Joint Support Force. It was a horizontal arrangement based on collaboration, transparency, and coordination, rather than what you would expect to find in a traditional vertical, hierarchical arrangement based on authority, subordinate relationships, organized for unity of command. We needed integrative solutions among the multiple services, ministries, agencies, and organizations and therefore, in each critical department, at our headquarters in Yokota as well as in the Japanese Self Defense headquarters in Ichigaya, US and Japanese liaison officers worked side-by-side...for every meeting, for every decision, for every day of the operation.

The understanding and sharing of technical information was critically important and required the active involvement of medical practitioners and public health experts, nuclear technicians and regulators, military lawyers and contract experts, logisticians in the field as well as airport and seaport experts, expeditionary engineers (SEABEES), pilots, salvage experts, and military operators and many, many more. Ambassador Roos and his team at the US Embassy became the hub for US government leadership, countless, around-the-clock meetings, and communications with everyone from national leaders to anxious citizens in the international audience. All of us are grateful for his service, poise, and leadership during this crisis.

In the meantime, our military counterparts...leaders of the Self Defense Force...shouldered the pressure of an incredible burden. Chief of Defense, General Oriki, and Joint Support Force Liaison Officer, Major General Bansho, were strong, unflappable leaders who were in the right place at precisely the right time...and I was indeed fortunate to work closely with them.

While the Joint Support Force may have set records for responsiveness and the delivery of logistical supplies, it also required extraordinary levels of technical skills and communication to respond and to address the radiological crisis. But, what made it truly exceptional in my judgment was that it was not simply the narrative of a military operation...it was much, much more. What made the operation unique, special, remarkable, -- was the promise and potential of the idea...the idea...of TOMODACHI.

Noted American author, philosopher, and lecturer, Jacob Needleman in his seminal work, **The American Soul**, is instructive and informs us, “Great ideas begin with an ache.” The physical and emotional loss was hard to comprehend...much less calculate. In these circumstances, the name of the military operation took on an even greater degree of tangible and symbolic meaning...especially since it was a word that represented so much more than the simple execution of operations. In Needleman’s words, “...The mark of great ideas is that they act to unify the disparate parts of the human spirit...and have the power to bind people together.”

TOMODACHI taught us something we did not expect...it taught us what was possible.

The idea was powerful because it represented in its purest form, what our partnership meant and what it could become, based on a vision of what humanity is and what it could become.

Interestingly, the vision and drive to move our two countries to a closer understanding of each other predates this event by more than one hundred years. At least one example to consider that demonstrates the roots of true friendship dates back to the late 19th century when Nitobe Inazo expressed the desire to bridge the two sides of the Pacific. In 1905, he published, **Bushido: The Soul of Japan** for western audiences in an effort to reflect the true spirit of Japanese people and shape a closer relationship between the United States and Japan.

The American Soul and **The Soul of Japan** ...two works, two sources of insight, separated by more than 100 years; both make an effort to understand the psyche of our own respective culture, our own respective society, and of our own respective people, and with that understanding, finding the key to unlock the promise and potential of a partnership between nations and close friendship between people.

TOMODACHI taught us that nations have interests...people have friends, and this disaster demonstrated for all to see...that we will take risks for friends. For as long as there are real challenges ahead and real work to be done, as long as there is suffering, as long as people are in need, and, as long as there are forces that challenge peace and prosperity...our work together...must continue. As long as we make commitments to each other, and resolve to stand for each other, our friendship will endure, and the spirit embodied in that friendship will never wither and die.

I speak for my colleagues when I say that we are humbled by the gratitude and graciousness of the Japanese people and we will cherish the honor of this experience in a profound and personal way. Those who participated in Operation TOMODACHI will always remember our time together, the contribution that we were fortunate to make to our fellow man, and all that we learned under remarkable circumstances. For those who have been so grateful to us, we want you to know that ‘the graciousness of the Japanese people will be cherished and forever engrained our hearts.’

We feel that we should thank you – our mission together and our relationship will be a source of pride for the rest of our lives.

Tonight, I am proud of our work, our team, and I am thankful for an evening that we will always remember as a chance to stand together as true TOMODACHI. Thank you, my dear friends, and God bless you, our team, and all those who stand with us.