



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet  
Commander, Navy Region Hawaii Change of Command  
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii  
Admiral Cecil D. Haney  
10 July 2013  
As Prepared for Delivery**

Thank you Frank for your introduction and for the opportunity to participate today.

Distinguished guests, state leaders, fellow flag and general officers, ladies and gentlemen, friends and family, good morning and aloha! Thank you all for coming today as we salute the efforts of Frank and Carol Ponds, and welcome Rick and Suzy Williams to the Pacific Fleet and Hawaii Ohana.

I know this transition is bittersweet for the Ponds, who have enjoyed the wonderful aloha spirit of this Hawaii Ohana. The presence of so many guests, including distinguished leaders and friends from the community, is a clear reflection of the remarkable relationship between our Navy and the Hawaii community, as well as the great work by Frank and Carol. No other community welcomes its military and its Navy with such aloha. Frank and Carol have worked diligently to strengthen the bonds of this relationship and I am thankful for their great efforts.

What a fantastic venue for this Change of Command! Here we are by this historic and remarkable battleship, the Missouri; in this historic harbor surrounded by the Arizona Memorial, the Bowfin, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Ford Island including the Pacific Air Museum. This setting clearly serves as a reminder of what it takes to retain the freedoms we cherish and the National security capability necessary to support our democracy.

As a maritime Nation, we have continuously depended on the strategic location of Hawaii. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, our submarines and carrier strike forces surged from this port during World War II to defend our Nation. Our shipyard here worked to salvage and repair many of the ships that were damaged so they could fight another day. Throughout World War II, we used these lochs as staging areas for operations as we fought through the Pacific.

Today, as our Nation carries out the President of the United States' rebalancing strategy to the Indo Asia-Pacific region, know that your Pacific Fleet continues to provide credible warfighting capability forward, ready to respond across the full range of military operations.

Region Hawaii remains essential to carrying out this strategy. Our whole-of-government approach is to focus on this region that is so important to the economic viability of the United States, as well as that of our allies, partners and friends in the Indo Asia-Pacific region. We continue our commitment to regional stability and maritime security, while making critical decisions to absorb the impact of sequestration.

Frank Ponds' flag level leadership has been critical to carrying out this strategy. While recognizing the importance of Hawaii's strategic location and supporting the world-class facilities supporting our joint expeditionary military forces here, Frank has passionately led the charge to balance budget reductions while supporting the operational readiness of Middle Pacific (MIDPAC) warships and quality of life initiatives for our most valuable asset, our people, our Sailors, civilian employees and their families.

It is great to have Vice Admiral Bill French, the Chief of Naval Installations Command, here today. Thank you Bill for your leadership given the budget challenges we face. I know you are pleased to have escaped from the D.C. arena to return once again to Paradise. About 10 years ago, Bill and I were stationed here as commodores. We were even neighbors here on Ford Island. Bill, I think you'll agree, a lot can change in a decade.

Of course I'm talking not just about new warfighting capability, but about the quality of life improvements, such as new housing, the Navy Exchange complex, fitness center, new child development center and even solar power initiatives. Frank has been part of that change, and for the last 20 months Frank has kept the momentum, despite financial uncertainty and sequestration.

Just last week at a Town Hall meeting, he fielded concerns by our Sailors and their families. Frank's had to make some tough decisions, but he also hears out concerns and fights to regain those services most important to our people.

As the Commander for both Navy Region Hawaii and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, Frank has enjoyed the privilege of working for more than one boss. So Bill French will soon appropriately address Frank's achievements as Navy Region Hawaii, and I am going to focus on his accomplishments leading MIDPAC, which supports the Pacific Fleet with Destroyer Squadron 31, Afloat Training Group MIDPAC and 11 Pearl Harbor-based cruisers, destroyers and frigates. Some you can see here from this vantage point.

During the 20 months that Frank has been in command, his MIDPAC warships have provided 53 months' worth of deployed time, and that doesn't account for the local operations these ships have spent out at sea near Hawaii.

Just to give you a glimpse of the hard work these ships are doing with respect to warfighting readiness - consider the three ballistic missile defense test events that ships like USS *Lake Erie* conducted or how these ships like USS *Russell*, *O'Kane*, *Hopper* and *Port Royal* were deployed and ready to respond to North Korean provocations.

Fighting pirates isn't something you just see in the movies, MIDPAC ships like USS *Russell* and *Hopper* have even been deployed for counter-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa. They also work to improve interoperability with numerous ally and partner navies in Southeast Asia.

Today, DESRON 31 is deployed for Pacific Partnership 2013, where our forces are working with partner nations and non-governmental organizations to prepare in calm to respond in crisis, while working to improve synchronizing effects, improving interoperability, building partner capacity and helping train other nations to lead future humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.

Just last summer, eight of Frank's MIDPAC ships participated in the largest ever Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise. I'm sure some of you have fond memories of the socials held on visiting ships.

Last year some 47 ships and 25,000 personnel from 22 nations sailed together to enhance interoperability between the RIMPAC forces. While Secretary of the Navy Mabus and Chief of Naval Operations Greenert came to RIMPAC, many other high level officials came, including ministers of defense and chiefs of navy from participating nations. They not only made their way to Hawaii for RIMPAC, but they are still talking about it. No wonder the Chinese are as interested as we are in their participation next year.

Frank has also been a determined leader and advocate for energy conservation here in Hawaii. During RIMPAC, several of his ships were directly involved in the Great Green Fleet demonstration – showing fleet conservation efforts and tools; but also the use of a bio-fuel mix, innovative energy solutions for our future.

Not only were ships powered by biofuel, but their helicopters were too. I had an opportunity to fly from ship to ship in one of those helicopters with SECNAV and CNO. We survived, so clearly biofuel works!

Seriously, Frank has worked hard to ensure that his DESRON and his ships are at their highest possible level of combat readiness. I'm talking about manning, training, modernizing, and maintaining these highly capable multi-mission warships, closely

scrutinizing the way we do business for the future, while trimming costs, maximizing readiness, and valuing his people, our Sailors, civilian employees and their families.

Frank, thank you for your tremendous dedication, energy and leadership. Well done!  
(Applause)

Now Frank didn't do all this alone. Carol has been Frank's closest partner in strengthening the Navy bonds with the Hawaii community and caring for families.

I frequently read about Carol's support of community schools, Armed Services YMCA, and Navy Marine Corps Relief Society, just to list a few in our local paper. No wonder the Hickam Elementary School that sang the Hawaii state song is present today. The list goes on and on.

I'm told, that when Frank and Carol first got here to Hawaii, folks would just plow past Carol to get to Frank. Within a few short months though, folks would breeze past him to get to her. I am not surprised given her warm personality and her caring and graceful demeanor.

Recently, I learned that when Frank and Carol got orders here to Hawaii, he promised her that he would take her to visit all the neighbor islands. A vacation visit, not a work-related visit. I understand you are a bit behind on that promise.

But considering Carol's energy and enthusiasm for supporting our Sailors and their families, it's little wonder that between the two of them, they have not been able to find time to execute this completely. Perhaps to achieve that goal this fun couple will have to return to paradise.

Carol, I am reminded of a certain Hawaii lei legend. When you leave, throw your lei into the water and if it washes ashore, it means you will someday return. I recommend throwing it in from the beach, perhaps at low tide, to improve your odds.

Carol, on behalf of our Sailors, Civilians and their families thank you for all you have done here.

Though Frank and Carol will be miles away from Hawaii, at least for a while, they will not go far. They will still be here in the Pacific. While I value Frank's leadership here at MIDPAC and Navy Region Hawaii, I know he is the right guy to serve as the Commander of Expeditionary Strike Group THREE in San Diego.

Given your work here, I know you will support Pacific Fleet well in your new role, a vital area, not just for our Nation, but for our allies, partners and friends, as demonstrated recently

by the DAWN BLITZ exercise just completed in the San Diego area that included amphibious capability from Japan, Canada and New Zealand.

I know you will continue to provide the same level of excellence in support to the fleet and our navy families there. Bonny and I wish both of you the best of luck. Thank you, mahalo. (Applause)

As I conclude, I would like to welcome Rear Admiral Rick Williams and his wife Suzy. Bonny and I are so pleased to welcome you to the Pacific Fleet Ohana. I'm sorry the kids could not make it, but it's great to see your mother Carole and step dad Mike, as well as your sister Shari and her family, all the way from New York.

Rick, I know your record of leadership and broad operational expertise brings special insights from past assignments. I noticed to get to paradise, you took the circular route, through Central Command where you worked for General Mattis, and most recently, Norfolk at Fleet Forces Command, where you worked to improve fleet readiness with Admiral Gortney.

I am told Suzie has moved the household goods by herself for the third time in two years. Thank you, Suzie. Hope this tour in paradise will be sort of a payback.

Rick, it is clear that you are exactly the right officer for the operational challenges we face today.

As you take command, I want you to know I have the utmost confidence that you and your talented team will continue to provide first rate support to the Pacific Fleet Sailors and their families. You will ensure MIDPAC units are ready to provide the full range of military operations our Nation depends on.

Finally, to the men and women of Navy Region Hawaii and MIDPAC, thank you for your service. It's great to have leaders like you in the fleet today. Can you believe that it was 40 years ago this month that our country implemented one of the most consequential and far-reaching changes in the history of our America's armed forces by establishing the all-volunteer force? That's something I don't take for granted.

Thank you to the Navy families and to our friends from the community and region for making our all-volunteer force the best military in the world.

May God bless our Navy, our Nation, this wonderful Ohana and all of those volunteers who serve. Mahalo Nui Loa and thank you.