



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet**  
**“A View from the U.S. Pacific Fleet”**  
**Maritime Security Challenges 2014**  
**Victoria, British Columbia**  
**Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr.**  
**7 October 2014**  
**As prepared for delivery**

Fellow Flag officers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good evening and bonsoir.

Let me begin by saying how honored I am to be here. Tonight, I bring you best wishes and highest regards from Admiral Sam Locklear, the commander of United States Pacific Command, and my boss. The Admiral sends his regrets that he could not be here. So just close your eyes and visualize...pretend I'm taller, grayer, more distinguished looking, and a steely-blue-eyed ship-driver, and we'll be okay.

Admiral Locklear looked hard for the right speaker to represent him tonight – a speaker with the right amount of gravitas, a speaker with a true strategic persona. Well, when Hawk Carlisle, Vince Brooks and John Toolan were unavailable, he settled on me. Probably because he knows that I follow the first principle of public speaking: promise to be brief, no matter how long it takes.

But really, I don't intend to talk long. Events like this remind me of a friend of mine who caught a fish and had it mounted on the wall in his den. The inscription on the plaque read: "If I hadn't opened my mouth, I wouldn't be here." Good reason to keep my remarks brief.

So tonight I've been asked to talk about “The Naval Rebalance and Pacific Seapower” from my perspective.

So let me tell you what's behind the evolution of America's rebalance to the Indo-Asia-Pacific. I use the word “evolution” intentionally, because America never left the Pacific. At the height of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we were here in the Pacific, in force, helping to maintain the peace and stability this region has enjoyed for decades.

Even today, despite what's going on in the Middle East, Africa and Europe, we're here in force, and growing. In fact, not only are we growing in terms of numbers and quality of forces, our focus and our mindset are also increasing. But before I talk about the how of this rebalance, let me talk about the why – why this area of the world is so important to all of us.

As each of you knows, nations today are increasingly interconnected and interdependent. The oceans, which for centuries kept us apart, are now the super-highways that bring us together. Today, not only does 90 percent of the world's commerce travel by sea, but 95 percent of all international electronic communications, like the Internet and telephones, travels under it.

It's no exaggeration to say that freedom of the seas is the minimum condition necessary for global prosperity and trade to flourish. This applies to the United States, a maritime nation and a Pacific power. This applies to Canada, also a maritime nation and a Pacific power, and this applies to every one of the many nations in the room here today. We all rely on freedom of the seas so that our economies can thrive.

That's why the United States Pacific Fleet maintains a strong presence throughout the Indo-Asia-Pacific. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand how crucial freedom of the seas is in this region, where we have the largest maritime flow of international trade in the world all flowing through a handful of strategic chokepoints. We know that economic development in this region of the world will drive the global economy for the rest of this century and that any disruption in the maritime domain can have lasting repercussions. Our national interests are at stake here and so are all of yours.

In his recent book "Asia's Cauldron," Robert Kaplan wrote that "Starting in the last phase of the Cold War the demographic, economic, and military axis of the earth has measurably shifted to the opposite end of Eurasia, where the spaces between the principal nodes of population are overwhelmingly maritime." And the significance of this statement isn't lost on me for a moment.

Strong maritime nations need strong navies. No conjecture, no theory, just fact. All of us are in the same boat, so to speak.

And we recognize the risks in this maritime domain – risks that we must be ready to confront where calamity or conflict on a regional scale can negatively impact the entire global economy.

Consider the full range of natural disasters that we know all too well. Earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, typhoons – if Mother Nature can dish it out, it's on the menu here in the Pacific.

Back in November, we responded to the devastation left in the wake of the massive typhoon that hit the Philippines. Friends help friends, and we didn't hesitate to do so. And I'm not talking the royal 'we', or 'we' the United States. I mean 'we' the international community, including many of the nations represented in this room tonight. We provided financial aid, manpower and equipment to help the Government of the Philippines as they recovered from the disaster.

But we're certainly not just contending with natural disasters in this vibrant part of the world. We're also dealing with man-made issues, like cyber-crime, terrorism, piracy, trafficking in all its bad forms, and all types of trans-national criminal activity.

Then there are the more volatile threats in the region, like North Korea, with its quest for nuclear weapons and efforts to operationalize a long range missile that can deliver them, and its attempts to sell powerful weapons systems to other rogue states and entities.

As Admiral Locklear said, quote ... "The proliferation activities of North Korea, their desire for nuclear missiles and nuclear capabilities are highly threatening to the global security environment, and denuclearization of North Korea is an essential part of the way ahead in this part of the world." Unquote.

North Korea isn't just a U.S. problem. It is an "us" problem.

In the competition for increasingly scarce resources, we see regional tensions on the rise between nations over rocks, shoals and islands once thought too small to matter. We're seeing this all through the East and South China Seas. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm the farthest thing from a math major that you'll ever see, but I remember Pi r squared from my schoolboy days, and when the "r" is a 200-nautical-mile circle you could call it an "EEZ." Those tiny little islands that once were only an obstruction to navigation suddenly become a prime piece of real estate. Today, 40 percent of the world's oceans are covered by someone's EEZ.

While there has always been uncertainty in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, let me be clear that there is no uncertainty about America's response to the challenges in this important region.

Our continued diplomacy in Asia amid these challenges underscores the importance of the United States remaining active and strong in the region. That's why, like each of you, we are laser-focused on working with our regional allies, partners and friends to maintain stability, security, prosperity and peace. We are stronger, together.

And I applaud event organizers who had the foresight to create forums like this, the Maritime Security Challenges Conference Series, where we can discuss our common understanding, share our perspectives, and debate options for a common future.

The United States has seven collective defense arrangements. Five of them are with nations in the Indo-Asia-Pacific and we work closely with each of them. As for the other two treaties, one is with a collective group of nations in the Caribbean, Central and South America. The other is NATO – perhaps the most successful alliance in modern history – where we are linked to nations throughout Europe and our close friends here in Canada.

The U.S.-Canada friendship is a celebrated one – where we are each other's number one trading partner – where we share a deep and abiding commitment to peace and prosperity – where we share the largest undefended border between nations in the world – and since 1958, Canada and the United States have also shared in the defense of North America through NORAD, a truly unique advantage of two sovereign countries willing to work with and fight for each other.

Our two nations have worked, fought, bled and died together, in World War I and II, the Korean War and the Cold War, and our modern-day fight in Afghanistan. Now, in Northern Iraq, we are working together as part of a broad coalition to stamp out ISIL, an evil that threatens all law-abiding nations.

We've served together on the high seas, in operations and exercises around the world and always to the same ends: stability and security for peace and prosperity.

Our most recent sailing occurred during the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, or RIMPAC 2014, in the waters around Hawaii and California. In fact, a lot of the nations in this room were there. RIMPAC is the world's largest international maritime exercise and expands cooperation, improves safety, builds trust and increases transparency between all participating navies.

This year's was the biggest RIMPAC in the exercise's 43-year history, with 22 participating nations and six observer countries. Canada played a lead role in this exercise, as Admiral Gilles Couturier of the Royal Canadian Navy led as the CFMCC Commander.

It's in the best interests of all of us that we manage friction and prevent misunderstanding at sea through sustained navy-to-navy dialogue and practical cooperation on maritime challenges faced by all Pacific nations. That's what RIMPAC is all about.

Now I'm sure you've all have heard the story of the guy who went on holiday in the Himalayas. While he was there he got the rare opportunity to visit a monastery. Now this monastery was on top of a steep mountain and the only way you could get to it was to be pulled up the side of a 300-meter cliff, in a basket.

As he looked up at the rope, he noticed it was fraying a bit, so he asked the monk sitting next to him, "How often do you guys replace the rope?"

The monk replied, "Every time it breaks."

Now that kind of logic doesn't work for most of us. There's simply too much at stake, and that is why the United States is conducting a strategic rebalance to the Pacific. We can't allow the rope to break. We've got to remain proactive in this region in order to address the challenges we see today and tomorrow.

The U.S. continues a whole-of-government rebalance to the Indo-Asia-Pacific consisting of four components: diplomatic, political, economic and security. The most important is economic, and we've got a lot of interagency civilian partners working that critical piece. But the most visible is the military component. All of our nation's military forces are playing an important role. As the commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, I'll talk about how our Navy is leading the rebalance to the Pacific.

In fact, we're moving out on that effort as we develop new platforms, equipment, innovative technologies and bringing them, first, to this region. The littoral combat ship, the Zumwalt destroyer, Virginia class submarines, the Joint Strike Fighter, the MH-60 Romeo helicopter, and the P-3's replacement – the P-8 Poseidon – all have or will debut first in the Pacific Fleet. By the year 2020, almost 60 percent of our Navy will be in the Pacific.

But our efforts are focused on more than just stuff. It's about developing gray matter as we bring our intellectual focus to bear on the region.

We're experimenting and validating new tactics, techniques and procedures and operational concepts.

We're putting people with extensive knowledge or experience in key leadership positions throughout the area. I'm an example of that. Not only was I born in Japan, but I've served several tours there and throughout the region. And I've spent most of my academic time studying East Asian security and strategy.

We're developing and educating our younger personnel to serve in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, including the growth of our foreign area officer program, all in an effort to strengthen the relationships we have with our regional allies, partners and friends.

Along this same vein, I support the further integration of senior exchange officers on our major staffs. At Pacific Fleet, we've had a Canadian Naval Exchange officer on our staff since 2005 and our current one, Captain Steve Jorgensen, has been here since 2012.

Now this isn't a one-way arrangement, I know Admiral Truelove's got at least two U.S. officers on his staff, working directly for Canada for a time. This tremendous arrangement is built on decades of trust and cooperation and is the model for the relationship I would like to see developed with others who we call ally. And the building of that trust starts by working closely together over time, during crisis and in peace, developing trust over decades.

Ladies and gentlemen, I've had my mouth open so long I'm worried someone's going to cast a hook and pull me off stage.

I once heard a story of a man who shot and killed a long-winded speaker. He went to the sheriff's office and said, "Sheriff, I've just shot a keynote speaker." The sheriff turned to the man and said, "Son, you're in the wrong place, you pick up your reward money down at the courthouse."

For those of you thinking about collecting some reward money, let me close with this thought: Though we all have many interests related to security and stability in the Pacific, I'm confident we can all agree that peace and prosperity are the most desirable outcomes of our strategic efforts. That being said, I never lose sight of the fundamental function of the United States Navy, and that is to fight and help win our nation's wars, particularly at sea, and I can assure you we are ready to fight tonight, if need be.

But I also believe the forward presence of our U.S. Navy and Marine Corps team protects the interconnected global system of trade and underwrites the strength of our entire global economy. That is why I believe all of our national interests are intertwined, and that the only responsible way forward is to find ways to work more closely together to assure our secure and prosperous future. As Dr. Till reminded us this morning, you can't surge understanding, you must pay attention and build relationships. This is juice worth the squeeze.

There are three great ships that sail the high seas – friendship, partnership and leadership. And forums like this are the rudders that steer those ships toward a more prosperous future.

Folks, thank you for your attention and kindness tonight.

Merci/thank you!