



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
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It's great to be with you today. As many of you know, the U.S. is undergoing a strategic rebalance to the Pacific, where our nation's entire government is turning its focus to this region of the world. So let me start out by telling you what's behind America's rebalance. I believe that it's not just a goal, not just a promise or a vision, but it's a reality.

Nations today are increasingly interconnected and interdependent. The oceans, which for centuries kept us apart, are now the pathways that bring us together. Today, not only does 90 percent of the world's commerce travel by sea, but 99 percent of all international electronic communications, like the Internet and telephones, travels under it.

For us living in Hawaii, which some describe as the most isolated population center on earth, 90 percent of everything we need to maintain our current standard of living is brought to us over thousands of miles of vast ocean. Any disruption to that can have serious, even dire consequences for all of us.

But that reality also applies for our nation as a whole. Although we are largely a continental nation, we've got the second largest coastline in the world, especially when you consider Alaska, Hawaii, and U.S. territories. This means we are also very much a maritime nation and a Pacific power.

Freedom of the seas is the minimum condition necessary for global prosperity and trade to flourish, and that really applies to every nation around the world, not just ours. And that's at the very heart of why your Navy is deployed forward, to areas of consequence around the world, to ensure stability and security in the maritime domain.

Now as we look into the future, we realize our national interests are inextricably linked to the other side of the Pacific. We know that economic growth in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region will drive the global economy for the next century and it's important that we face that reality today

As we work to ensure freedom of the seas, there are some real challenges that we face in this vibrant maritime region, where conflict or calamity on a regional scale can harm the entire global economy.

Just 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.

But there's more than just natural disasters that require our attention. Right now we are lending a hand in the recovery effort of AirAsia Flight 8501 in the Karimata Strait. As our hearts and prayers go out to the victims of this tragedy, we also have sent our newest littoral combat ship USS Fort Worth, and the guided-missile destroyer USS Sampson to aid in the recovery of remains and debris.

Because we are already forward deployed to this area of the world, we're able to respond at a moment's notice. Forward presence matters.

We also contend with man-made threats such as terrorism, piracy, trafficking in all its bad forms, and all types of trans-national criminal activity, and of course cyber-attacks as the folks at Sony can recently attest.

North Korea is a notoriously unpredictable and dangerous nation. It's aggressively developing nuclear weapons and working to operationalize a long-range missile that can deliver them, and its attempts to sell powerful weapons systems to other rogue states and entities have been revealed time and time again.

But North Korea isn't the only nation causing us consternation. There's an issue with competing claims and friction among many different nations – including our friends and allies – as they compete for increasingly scarce resources. We see regional tensions on the rise among nations over rocks, shoals and islands once thought too small to matter.

Now I'm the furthest thing from a math major that you'll ever see, but I remember "Pi minus R-squared" from my schoolboy days. And when the "R" is a 200-nautical-mile circle – you could call it an "EEZ" or an Exclusive Economic Zone – then those tiny little islands that once were only an obstruction to navigation suddenly become prime pieces of real estate. And some of the actions taken by nations to lay claim to these little islands can be downright provocative and dangerous.

In these increasingly tense times, it's important that nations communicate, consult and coordinate instead of taking unilateral action.

So, amidst the growing friction over competing claims, we also see a rapid expansion of military power by nations all throughout this region. And in the last decade, no nation has outpaced China in expanding their military. Quite frankly I have my concerns regarding China's aggressive military growth, its lack of transparency, and its pattern of increasingly assertive behavior in the region. And China's neighbors are concerned.

The growing uncertainties in the region and the increasing tensions have everyone on edge. And now, perhaps more than ever, I find that many countries out there are looking to the U.S. as their security partner of choice.

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 had 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 U.S. is conducting a strategic rebalance. 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.

Our whole-of-government rebalance to the Pacific consists of four components: diplomatic, political, economic, and security. The most important is economic, and we've got a lot of industry partners that are working that critical piece.

But the most visible is the military component. All of our nation's military forces are playing an important role, and it's tempting for me to talk about this from the joint perspective. But as the commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, I'll stick to talking about what your Navy is doing for the rebalance.

Let me briefly talk about some of the new platforms, equipment and innovative technologies that are coming to this region first.

Back in October I was in San Francisco, where we commissioned the brand-new USS America, the first of the Navy's new class of amphibious assault ships, built to deploy Marines with their new Joint Strike Fighter, V-22 Ospreys and helicopters, wherever and whenever they're needed.

We've got new littoral combat ships like the USS Fort Worth I mentioned earlier, and we've got new Virginia-class submarines, like the newly arrived USS Mississippi, the fourth Virginia-class submarine to be stationed here in Hawaii.

In the future we'll see all 3 of our Zumwalt-class destroyers deployed to the Pacific, and if you haven't seen a picture of that thing yet, Google it when we're done here. If Batman had a ship, that's what it would look like.

Then there are the new aircraft, like the MH-60 Romeo and Sierra helicopters, Joint Strike Fighters, and the P-3's replacement – the P-8 Poseidon.

And all these things have, or will, debut first here 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. We're developing and educating our younger personnel to serve in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, all in an effort to strengthen the relationships we have with our regional allies, partners and friends.

These are exciting times for your Navy and our nation, and I, for one, am proud to be a part of it.

Now amidst all that's going on with this rebalance, right smack dab in the middle of everything, is Hawaii, a truly critical partner in the rebalance across every aspect of national influence. Hawaii's strategic location places it center stage in the Pacific. In fact, last year at this conference, I called Hawaii the Gateway to America's Rebalance to the Pacific, and it certainly is.

But Hawaii offers more than just location.

We also have Pacific Command and the functional components, whose presence here in the islands is a force multiplier.

The harbors and bases we use are the very best in the world, and world-class facilities like the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, the Pacific Missile Range Facility and the Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility provide tremendous support to our efforts in the region.

For an economic development model, Hawaii has cultural diversity, small and medium enterprises, and is ideally suited for economic interaction among regional partners – invigorating the economic element of the rebalance from Hawaii.

I appreciate the focus Hawaii is putting on innovation and technology, the promotion of STEM – that’s Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – in our schools and the effort to champion robotics as an extracurricular activity on par with our traditional sports programs. These kinds of programs help cultivate a pipeline of technical talent to grow Hawaii as a center of innovation that’s vital to the state, our nation, and our Navy.

Finally, I’m grateful to the community of Hawaii, which has always reached out to our Sailors and their families and embraced us in your ohana.

So as you can see, our rebalance is real, and all of us are involved. It’s a team effort, but – and there’s always a but – we must do more. Especially as we face downsizing and the ever-present specter of sequestration. And this is where we rely heavily on the new MAC – MAC 2.0.

I applaud the efforts of the MAC since I spoke last year, as you reorganized, built new alliances and centers of influence, and leveraged the talent of Hawaii in new and innovative ways.

But I want to further challenge the MAC, and I want to challenge Hawaii’s state and local leaders, and myself to do even more this year, together, especially in regards to training, innovation, and education. It’s an acronym, T-I-E, tie – training, innovation and education.

So let’s start with the “T” for training. While you’ve already heard the case for protecting Army force levels here in Hawaii, I would add that we in the Navy also leverage Oahu and Big Island Army ranges for our training, as well as our own world-class ranges here and on Kauai. And of course, we in the Navy have a lot of operating areas at sea, where we train in the waters surrounding these islands.

As I opined in the Honolulu-Star-Advertiser last year in an Op-Ed I wrote, collectively, all these ranges and operating areas are essential to our readiness, and guaranteeing the future availability of those ranges is critical to the warfighting Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen who operate here. They are also key to some important international training, including last summer’s Rim of the Pacific Exercise, or RIMPAC 2014.

As most of you know, RIMPAC is the world’s largest international maritime exercise and expands cooperation, improves safety, builds trust, and increases transparency between all participating navies – all important things.

Last year was the biggest RIMPAC in the exercise’s 43-year history, with 22 participating nations and 25,000 personnel. It had a combined economic impact to the state of more than 100 million dollars in increased revenue. And folks, that was only possible because Hawaii had the training ranges needed to support that exercise.

Next let’s talk about the “I” in TIE, Innovation. Traditionally our military forces have always counted on our superiority in both capability and capacity to offset challenges of distance and initiative in areas where strife is most likely.

For 13 years now we’ve been engaged in two wars that have required our focus and effort, while other nations have been able to solely focus on modernizing their forces. So we’ve got to get busy leveraging the innovative spirit of our best and brightest to continue to guarantee an overmatch capability in the future.

Recently, Secretary Hagel started a “New Defense Innovation” initiative, to get at just that, to find and field breakthroughs in key technologies, including robotics, miniaturization and advanced manufacturing techniques such as 3-D printing.

In my opinion, we also need innovative solutions to meet our energy needs, overcome our vulnerabilities in the cyber domain, and improve our ability to share data between our forces and allies and partners that we work with routinely. And I’m confident that Hawaii can play a part in that by establishing a renewed technology focus here – and industry here can, and should, help us with that.

Finally, the “E” in TIE, education. The Navy depends on education initiatives to further leverage our premier academic institutions here in Hawaii. The development of technologically and culturally astute naval leaders in the Pacific is critical to our success. That’s why I applaud the University of Hawaii at Manoa’s effort to establish a Navy ROTC unit on campus. Having a Navy ROTC here allows your Navy to take full advantage of what Hawaii has to offer as we conduct this important rebalance to this region.

I also encourage the further development and capitalization of the University Affiliated Research Center, the UARC, to pursue its objectives in alternative energy and cyber. This will ensure solutions to some of the Navy’s toughest problems in these areas, and grows a technology Center of Excellence here from our next generation of engineers, scientists and technology experts – maybe someday soon, we’ll have mentored a Doctor Marcus Mariota!

And speaking of Centers of Excellence, we’ve got terrific Pacific-focused forums like Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, like the East-West Center, and like the Center for Strategic and International Studies-Pacific Forum that encourage security experts to continue important dialogue through shared research, networks, and analysis.

We’ve also got some aspiring thought leaders here in Hawaii, for example the Young Leaders Program and the Omidyar Fellows, who require a place to learn, to research, and to be inspired.

Over the past year, I’ve been speaking to think tanks and international affairs centers of excellence on the mainland, especially the East Coast, about the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, but no one knows this region better than our thought leaders here. So I’d like to encourage a serious discussion about making Hawaii a true center of gravity for the study of the intersection of diplomacy, economics and security in the Indo-Asia-Pacific – a center of gravity leverages and synergizes our pillars of intellectual power here like those directed by retired general Dan “Fig” Leaf, Dr. Charles Morrison and Mr. Ralph Cossa.

As we move forward, I want to encourage all of us to work together so that we can protect what we’ve got here in Hawaii, and grow as necessary during this important rebalance. I think that by working together, we greatly improve our chances of maintaining Hawaii’s preeminence as the Gateway to America’s rebalance to the Pacific.

Now I see that many of you have pushed back your dessert plates, a clear indication that I have talked too long. Recently, when my wife Bruni and I were entertaining some dignitaries up at the Nimitz house, I gave a little talk after dinner. Later, as our guests were leaving, one of the ladies said to me, “Admiral, I really enjoyed your speech. I woke up so refreshed.”

Well I’m glad to see so many of you are still awake...or maybe you just woke up refreshed. Anyway, let me conclude with this final thought.

Today, the strength of our nation depends on the synergy between those brave men and women of our armed forces who volunteer to defend the nation and our partners in government and business, who support us – partners like each you here today.

I truly thank you for all you do on a daily basis to help ensure our military and our nation remain ready to fight tonight, and win.