



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet**  
**Wounded Warrior Pacific Trials Closing Ceremony**  
**Honolulu, Hawaii**  
**Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr.**  
**13 March 2015**  
*As prepared for delivery*

Thanks, Mark, for the kind introduction.

Ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate the tremendous turnout for this important ceremony and thank you for being here. It's great to see our event coordinators and sponsors, from Navy's Safe Harbor, Patty Babb; Kathleen Purtill from Deliotte; and from Navy Region Hawaii, Jeff Harris.

Jeff, gotta compliment you for a fabulous last name.

Patty, Kathleen and Jeff, thank you for what you have done and continue to do for our wounded warriors and their families.

I also see Master Chief O'Brien from my staff at Pacific Fleet. Master Chief, I know that your team has done a lot of the heavy lifting for many of these Pacific Trial events over this past week. Well done.

And there's a lot of family and friends here today who deserve a very special thank you for all of their love and support through every step of this journey.

But the people I want to thank the most are the ones who have inspired us the most: the tremendous athletes up here on stage. Ladies and gentlemen, how about round of applause for our warrior athletes!

It's an honor for me to be here and to have a chance to speak at the closing ceremony for the 2015 Wounded Warrior Pacific Trials. Last year, I attended the Warrior Games in Colorado Springs and the trials here in Hawaii. I was inspired by the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of the athletes and their loved ones. On a daily basis, they offer us all a model of human spirit and determination. Their capacity to grow despite trauma, to compete despite injury, to triumph in the face of adversity — they *will not* be denied.

And certainly, nothing has stopped these athletes here today — especially during this week's Pacific Trials, which produced some fierce competition. I watched the volleyball practice yesterday and I was impressed by some talented hitters. The University of Hawaii has some of the finest collegiate volleyball players in the nation, and I think our "Warriors" would give those "Warriors" a contest to remember!

These Trials have provided an opportunity for all of us to celebrate your athletic achievements, your perseverance, your drive, and your desire to succeed.

This program was built to inspire each individual to set and achieve a goal: to test yourself physically and mentally. Each of you has been through a trial, and each of you has passed with flying colors.

More than that, you've inspired and quickened the hearts of your supporters — families, friends, and the entire military and civilian workforce of the Defense Department. You've also motivated this salty ol' admiral. So, thank you, and congratulations for your tremendous achievements.

You know, I was doing some reading the other day and I came across a story about a guy named Todd Huston. He's a motivational speaker, author, world record holder, and an amputee. He often speaks about the boating accident that led to the loss of his leg at age 14. Needless to say, his life was radically changed that day. But it didn't stop him from dreaming big dreams and working hard to achieve them.

Todd holds the world record for completing the Summit America Challenge, where he climbed the highest elevations of all 50 states in only 66 days. He shattered the original record by *37 days!*

Todd often speaks to Wounded Warrior groups, so some of you might be familiar with his story. But for those of you who haven't heard him, Todd often talks about the power of positive thinking and encourages us to never — *never* — give up.

Against all odds — against everything he had been told — he set his mind toward a goal, and Todd achieved it.

Same goes for Army Colonel Gregory Gadson, who I was fortunate to meet last year here in Hawaii.

In 2007, Colonel Gadson was returning from a memorial service in Baghdad for two Soldiers from his brigade when his vehicle was hit by an I.E.D. He lost both legs above the knee and suffered a severe injury to his right arm.

Incredibly, he stayed on active duty. He became one of the first Soldiers fitted with a next-generation powered prosthetic knee. He then took command of Fort Belvoir in Virginia.

I bring up Colonel Gadson because many people might recognize him as the character Colonel Mick Canales from the movie *Battleship*, a film where aliens threaten an attack on Oahu.

Now, just between us, I wasn't available to play the Pacific Fleet Commander in the movie, so they went with Liam Neeson. He did O.K. playing the role of the admiral, but really, I think I could have boosted ticket sales.

Anyway, there is one memorable scene in the movie where Colonel Gadson is riding down the mountain side with Brooklyn Decker. As the aliens approach, he turns to Brooklyn and says "I got this." So I have the same message to our Warrior athletes:

*We've got this!*

On your journey to be here today, I know there were many obstacles that seemed insurmountable. All of you have not only overcome those obstacles, you've strived for new challenges. In pursuit of a dream, you have shown incredible mental and physical toughness.

Ladies and gentlemen, our nation draws her strength from the brave men and women who choose the warrior way and serve in our armed forces — and who are, right now, serving around the world to protect and defend America, where it matters, and when it matters.

The athletes here on stage are those very same warriors. They chose the warrior way, and their fighting spirit remains as they strive toward victory — in spite of overwhelming odds.

And it isn't just the athletes who have to overcome obstacles. Family and friends provide essential backing to help all of us achieve our dreams. So I'd like to personally thank all of the loved ones in the audience today for your critical support.

Every one of you here today has my deepest gratitude and respect for all that you have given. We can't thank you enough for your service to our country and the inspiration you continue to provide.

Congratulations to the award recipients. And again, thanks to all the warrior athletes and their loved ones who have supported this important journey. Looking forward to seeing you back next year!

May God bless you and every one of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and National Guardsmen, past and present, who answered our Nation's call to duty.

And may God bless the United States of America.

Thank you.