



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet**  
**Inaugural Amphibious Leadership Symposium**  
**Honolulu, Hawaii**  
**Admiral Harry B. Harris, Jr., USN**  
**May 18, 2015**  
*As prepared for delivery*

Fellow flag and general officers, good morning and thank you for coming.

I'd like to start by saying our thoughts and prayers are with the Marines and Nepali soldiers from last week's Huey crash in Nepal ... and with Marines from yesterday's MV-22 hard landing at Bellows Air Force Base here in Hawaii, where I offer my deepest condolences for the deceased and his family. I hope the injured Marines will have a speedy recovery and return to their units soon.

As these tragedies demonstrate, we all work in a dangerous business, and unfortunately, business is good. It is a reminder that we must continue to do everything possible to decrease risk through an unwavering unity of effort for amphibious operations – one team, one fight – as we close the force, move it from ship to shore, and engage at the point of friction.

All of us are here because our world faces a global security environment full of uncertainty and change. Natural disasters at the blink of an eye ... artificial island building in the South China Sea ... political upheaval ... and technological advancement across the planet continue to have a dramatic impact on world affairs.

It's no exaggeration to say that freedom of the seas is the minimum condition necessary for healthy trade and global prosperity. This is a call of duty to the United States, a maritime nation and a Pacific power. This is a call to every one of the many nations represented here today. We all rely on freedom of the seas to ensure that our economies can thrive.

That's why the United States joint military force 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 stream of international trade in the world flowing through a handful of strategic chokepoints. We know that economic development in this region will drive the global economy for the rest of this century and that any disruption in the maritime domain will have lasting repercussions.

Your national interests are at stake and so are ours.

At times, the seascape of the Pacific has been tumultuous and uncertain – but let me be clear now that there is no ambiguity about the U.S. response to threats against our interests in this vital region.

Our continued diplomacy in Asia and South America 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.

Together, we are a formidable force.

That's why I applaud General (John) Toolan and event organizers who had the foresight to create forums like this where we can discuss our common understanding, debate options for a common future, and share our perspectives about what I like to call "amphibiosity."

One of our nation's founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson, knew all about amphibiosity. Jefferson, like so many of his contemporaries, believed that a nation wishing to be free and live in peace had to be able to defend itself and be willing to protect its rights.

I think everyone in this room is in that business.

For 239 years, the military have been vital elements of our nation's defense around the globe. Amphibious warfare made huge strides in the 1930s that proved critical in the Pacific and European theaters during World War II and the Korean War. Today, the very nature of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region requires amphibious capabilities in order defend territory and respond to humanitarian crisis.

Today, the very nature of the Pacific region requires our joint capabilities. Our amphibious forces are at a tipping point in the operational art of warfare. This tipping point is being driven by our national strategies that direct an active defense to rapidly and decisively counter against budget restraints and pressures.

But no single nation or service has the capability to secure maritime domain and protect free trade and security around the world. We must all work with our allies, partners and friends to ensure that the global system remains secure. You are all here because you recognize the value that amphibious operations play in our current and future security environment.

Amphibiosity is a big part of our nation's strategic rebalance to the Pacific. I got to see this first hand when I visited Rear Admiral Frank Ponds aboard the USS AMERICA in Valparaiso, Chile. Our newest amphibious warship was advancing critical partnerships in South America. USS AMERICA was on its way to San Francisco to be commissioned, where I was again in attendance to watch her spirited crew. She is the first of the Navy's new class of amphibious assault ships, built to deploy Marines with our new Joint Strike Fighters, V-22 Ospreys and helicopters – to help our Navy-Marine Corps team be where it's needed, when it's needed.

That's important, because we live in an uncertain world where conflict and crisis can flame at any time. And as our nation completes the rebalance in the next few years, warships like USS AMERICA, and the magnificent Marines and Sailors who man her, will be needed now more than ever.

I want to point out that we're in the team business here – Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force – and we have been doing a lot of work together and we're getting good at it. Whether it is joint interoperability such as Foal Eagle, Valiant Shield, Northern Edge or this week's Culebra Koa exercise, we work together for a common purpose. Our job is to get connected and stay connected.

General Toolan said it quite well talking about connectors, “our major, common requirement for amphibious operations is moving “things and people” to the shore. Our job and often our challenge is to get that Soldier or Marine with his 120-pound ruck sack through seven-foot high shark infested waters all the way to the beach. If they can't get to the beach, then we have failed them and our nation. Five or ten yards short won't cut it.

But we need partners as well. This conference is a great starting point for us to hear from you. Together, we can forge an amphibious coalition that will help us all maintain stability, prosperity and peace for the entire region.

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 our Navy-Marine Corps team – to fight and help win our nation's wars, particularly at sea. And I can assure you we are ready to fight tonight if we're called.

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. Thanks again for being here and I hope you enjoy this symposium.

Thank you very much.