



TRANSCRIPT

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Admiral Patrick Walsh, Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet

**Media Roundtable
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New Sanno Hotel
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ADMIRAL WALSH: Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to spend time with you today. I was here six weeks ago to visit my friend Admiral Akahoshi, the chief of naval staff from the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force just prior to his retirement. I was here to extend not only our greetings but our gratitude for the performance of the JMSDF, the very strong relationship between the United States Navy and JMSDF and, on a personal note, an opportunity to offer my gratitude and thanks for the relationship that we were able to establish in the course of the past year that I've been with the Pacific Fleet. I'm back here for this trip to visit with his replacement, Admiral Sugimoto, and to attend the change of command for the 7th Fleet Commander. I will visit with civic leaders both in Yokosuka and some of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense representatives in Tokyo. I will then travel to Korea to and have an opportunity to participate in the tenth annual Seapower Symposium as well as attend the anniversary event at Inchon. The relationship that we have with Japan I think is best characterized by this professional as well as personal relationship that I just described to you. So even though I was here only six weeks ago, I feel very comfortable returning to visit with JMSDF counterparts to witness the change of leadership and to renew those relationships with the new leadership in place at JMSDF. I think that it's indicative of a very strong relationship that we have that extends at many levels and it's also an opportunity to again express my gratitude for the close relationship we have not only for our sailors but for their families and for the work that we continue to do on behalf of security and stability in the region. With that as an opening, I would like to now turn to you and find out what's on your mind, with your questions.

QUESTION: Yes, thank you Admiral. I want to ask about Senkaku Islands, because a Japanese patrol ship captured a Chinese fishing boat yesterday. I want to make sure that the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty has applied to that Senkaku Island.

ADMIRAL WALSH: I'm aware of the report that has just come in. I am not familiar with particular details of what actually transpired. I know just what has been reported in the media. I can tell you that over the course of the many years that the security treaty has been in place, there have been incidents that have taken place that have caused us to work closely together to work through those issues. It seems to me that when you have the incident that I've recently read and reported in the press, it is an incident that takes place at a national level between two countries, that it involves the diplomatic leadership on the part of both countries to try and resolve that. From the relationship that I have, which is really to have forces in place to support my alliance partner, I will take full advantage of my opportunity to be here, to spend time with Admiral Sugimoto, and to discuss with him whatever I can that can be in a position to support JMSDF. To go beyond that or to speculate I don't think would be very constructive and I'm just not in a position to comment on it because I do not know the particulars of this incident.

QUESTION: So just to follow up on the same question. So you haven't given any instructions to your subordinates to diffuse the tension on this particular case?

ADMIRAL WALSH: In terms of instructions to subordinates with regard to tension in the particular locality of where this incident took place...

QUESTION: On the particular incident that happened near the Senkaku Islands.

ADMIRAL WALSH: I think the best approach to take in a particular incident like this is to be in support of JMSDF and to be in a position to respond to any requests that they have.

QUESTION: Have they requested...

ADMIRAL WALSH: I have not been in direct contact on this incident, no I have not.

QUESTION: **The U.S. and South Korea set joint military exercise in the Yellow Sea, but it is postponed due to the typhoon. Do you have any updates on the schedule when it will be reset?**

ADMIRAL WALSH: We don't have a date published yet and as soon as we have that date, we'll let you know. But that was weather avoidance and for the safety of crew.

QUESTION: Jiji Press, Okuma. My question is about North Korea. North Korea's main party, the Workers' People Party will hold some important meeting this week or next week, and do you see any unusual movement by North Korean military recently? Is your fleet on high alert because of that conference?

ADMIRAL WALSH: I would just say that since the events that took place with *Cheonan*, that we've been watching very closely and working closely with the ROK Navy. To go

beyond that in terms of operational or intel speculation I don't think would be very helpful, but it's an opportunity to highlight both here as well as when I get to Korea the close relationship that we have with the ROK Navy and that we'll continue to support them through the course of exercises as well as military-to-military collaboration and cooperation.

QUESTION: I'd like to ask you about China's growing anti-access/area-denial capabilities. What do you think the Japan-U.S. alliance can and should do to deal with these growing Chinese capabilities? And to be specific, has the U.S. Navy already developed the countermeasures to deal with ASBMs, Chinese ASBMs, and if so, what is it?

ADMIRAL WALSH: First of all, you're talking about technology and developments that I don't think this is the appropriate place or time to have that discussion. But thank you for the question, because the point that you make is very relevant today to the relationship between JMSDF and the United States Navy. And that is that we work cooperatively on ballistic missile defense, that we have a relationship that allows us to share information as well as to share technology, and that this is a technology that we have to keep pace with, and we acknowledge that the anti-access/area-denial capability is under development and we recognize that in order to have a credible deterrent in a proliferated world, we have to have the technology that keeps pace with it.

QUESTION: Do we have it? Or do you have it already?

ADMIRAL WALSH: This is not the place for that discussion. Thank you.

QUESTION: It's about North Korea again. It is believed that Kim Jong Il is expected to appoint his son as a key position in the party. It could happen today or tomorrow, I don't know, but if there is succession movement in that country, will that affect your U.S. military force deployment in Asia-Pacific area?

ADMIRAL WALSH: I think we continue to recognize that we should expect instability with any sort of succession plan and I think the record that we have seen in the past is one in which there will be provocations and there will be other acts that are very difficult to interpret and understand, but history has proven that in the case of dealing with succession in North Korea that it is an unstable period and that we should be alert to that and that we should have our forces ready for any sort of instance.

QUESTION: Let me introduce myself. My name is Kawakita from Kyodo News. I have recently visited Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands to see the situation and to pay a personal tribute to those who were killed during the War in the Pacific. **It is more likely that the proposed transfer of 8,000 Marines and 9,000 dependents from Okinawa to Guam could be delayed beyond the current target of 2014. If that is the case, what kind of impact does it have on your mission and the U.S.-Japan relationship, particularly in terms of the land relocation, agreed relocation of the Futenma Airbase in Okinawa?**

ADMIRAL WALSH: The agreement between the government of Japan and the government of the United States, as well as the timeline associated with that, is really a relationship and a conversation that takes place amongst policy leaders. The role that I play in this discussion is really to have Guam as best prepared as possible, as soon as possible. So that means the buildup of infrastructure, that means the buildup of capability as well as skilled labor in order to be able to respond to the developments. Beyond that though I do not have visibility into the timelines nor the relationships or agreements that have already been struck, nor am I privy to those conversations. My role here really is to focus on Guam's capabilities and its receptivity to the movement, the eventual movement of Marines.

QUESTION: Hi. Sunohara with Nikkei newspaper. I just got back from Washington DC and I got a series of meetings with former and current officials in Washington, in the Beltway. They got some concern, the quality of this alliance right now because of political turmoil here in Tokyo, and some of them somehow worrying about maybe this turmoil would damage the high quality of mil-to-mil relationship between the U.S. and Japan. Having said that, can I ask you what are your views and position on those policies?

ADMIRAL WALSH: Well, I'm back here just six weeks later, and it's because I feel very comfortable with the mil-to-mil relationship, and so I'm not aware of those conversations back in Washington. I can tell you my perspective when I witness the Japanese participation in our Rim of the Pacific Exercise, when I witnessed the Japanese participation in the Pacific Partnership, when I look at the exercise series that we have, and the relationship that we have, I find this relationship stronger than ever. So I have not witnessed any shortfalls. In fact, the level of participation most recently in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise was one in which Japanese forces were far more integrated into the fabric of the exercise and working closely with partners. The deputy commander came from the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force for the exercise, which was an extraordinary accomplishment, and it was really remarkable to see the level of integrated activity and exercises that took place. So while there may be speculation associated with what takes place at a political level, at the military level and the mil-to-mil level, I have seen no retreat from commitments, I've seen no shortfall in terms of level of participation. In fact, it's been just the opposite, so the relationships are very energetic, very enthusiastic. We had the Japanese training ships come through Pearl Harbor where our chief of naval operations flew from Washington to address the young ensigns and Admiral Akahoshi was present so that both chiefs were present at the same time. It was a remarkable symbol as well as a level of effort on both commanders' parts to be present and to make this statement in front of the next generation of both U.S. as well as Japanese naval officers of how important this relationship is. I think their actions told a better story than any of the speculation that I've heard.

QUESTION: Concerning the series of drills that the United States and South Korea are having in response to *Cheonan*, I understand that Japan took part in the drills as

an observer in late July, but do you have any hopes for Japan to take full participation in the future in a similar drill like that?

ADMIRAL WALSH: I know that there is ongoing dialogue between the national leadership of Korea as well as Japan and the United States to eventually get to that point. It is correct that Japan participated in an observer status for the exercises, but the pace in which that full integration takes place, that level of communication and dialogue, and the policy decisions that have to be made by national leaders is really for the national leadership to comment on rather than for an operational commander such as myself.

QUESTION: Nami Inoue from TBS. Given the recent incidents with China, Japan is considering deploying its Self-Defense Force to the Nansei Islands, and if that happens, do you think that would be an effective deterrent to China? And also, how would that change the security picture in the region?

ADMIRAL WALSH: Well, I think there's probably a couple of points I should make up front. When you look at the amount of traffic that comes through that area, particularly the South China Sea and Malacca Strait, we're talking about 70,000 ships or so per year. When you look at the level of economic activity that flows over that same water space, we're talking trillions of dollars. So it becomes increasingly difficult to separate now the interest of one nation from another. In other words, the whole globalized economy that we live in is now symbolized by this area that you're discussing and that you're concerned about. So the idea that navies are forward-deployed in search of security and stability I think is a very positive development. I think as long as we look for the peaceful resolution of disputes, that we're willing to put credible military capability forward to enforce the national concern about security and stability, I think it can play a constructive role. But when it comes to intention, that has to be very transparent and that has to work inside the context of those who reside in the region as well as those who are concerned about the overall security and stability in this particular case of the South China Sea area. So from my point of view, the relationship that we have with JMSDF can play a very constructive role in this area. In terms of the operational details in terms of how many ships, where do they go, what sort of operating pattern do they have, it's probably best left to the JMSDF leadership to decide how they want to do that. But the idea of navies being forward to protect their national interest, their economic interest, that's why we have navies. The difference today is that all of us are very concerned about this. All of us now recognize that the stability that we have enjoyed, the economic prosperity that we have enjoyed for the last several decades, has largely been because we could rely on the sea for a secure means of the movement of people, of goods, and of economy. No matter how look at it in the future, we're going to continue to see 90 to 95% of the world's economy move at sea. So it's important to have a means to resolve whatever points of friction, whatever historic disputes that there have been in the region, it's important to have not only a declaration on conduct, but a true code of conduct on how to conduct operations in international waters.

QUESTION: My name is Shirato from Mainichi newspaper. Let me go back to the question regarding North Korean situation again, sir. The power succession in North Korea will be taken place in the near future. Do you think there is going to be a serious change inside North Korea in terms of the security issues, not only for the North Korean domestic problem but also for the all security situation in East Asia?

ADMIRAL WALSH: So if I could rephrase, is the question then that with the change of political leadership in North Korea, could it have consequences for all of East Asia? I believe that's your question. I know from the Pacific Fleet perspective, this is a reason why we have as many ships and as much capability forward, to be in a position to deter. So we have six carrier strike groups, we have almost 2,000 aircraft, and over 125,000 people focused on a deterrence mission, on a security mission, and a stability mission. So as we go into a period of uncertainty, it would be best for us to be ready and to be prepared for any contingency and that's the role that we play is to be ready for all seasons and all events. Beyond that I could not speculate in terms of what the political consequences are to a change of leadership. I can just tell you from an operational perspective that this is something that we should find ourselves trained and ready for.

QUESTION: Since you are clearly knowledgeable about aircraft issues, can I ask you, there are some debates here in Tokyo again, what kind of aircraft we should pick up as the next jet fighter for the defense of the Japanese airspace? And some candidates including F-22, used to be F-35, as well as Eurotyphoon, European-made, so-called 4.5 generation jet fighter. Can I ask you, if the Japanese government decides to pick up something like a non-U.S.-made aircraft, would that bring any negative impact on this alliance?

ADMIRAL WALSH: So you'd like me to comment on the next generation of aircraft which would have probably billions of dollars of impact? And I'm happy to talk about it as long as you turn your cameras off. (Laughter) This is I'm sure a very sensitive question that is very difficult to answer, from a political perspective as well as from an economic perspective. But let me offer: from a commander's perspective, the difficulty is keeping pace with changes in technology. That, to me, is the essential issue. And to be able to keep pace with technology at the same time with an affordable solution. Those are the twin themes that leaders try and balance and wrestle with, which is a recognition that in order for this procurement to have any credibility, it has to keep pace with developments in technology. But at the same time, nations can get themselves into trouble if they embark on a path that is not sustainable as far as the forces that they want to acquire. This is certainly an area of real concern for us as well, as we try and wrestle with the horns of this dilemma. From my perspective, I know that there are aircraft under development that have room for growth. And one of the things that I would look for is, if the platform that you ultimately decide to purchase, will that be able to accommodate and change over time? In other words, does it have enough room for growth, for future developments? Or is it sort of frozen in time with today's technology, and yet you live with it for the next several decades? I know that when we look at aircraft, we look for the opportunity to upgrade that aircraft over time,

and we look at the weight, we look at the fuel consumption, and currently in the United States Navy, we're very concerned about just the impact that energy has, in terms of how we look at our effectiveness and our ability to keep pace with changes in technology. I know that's not a very satisfying answer, because I didn't give you a letter or number, but I want to give you some of the considerations to think about.

QUESTION: So you say your answer for the ideal choice for Japan would be something very much expandable in the future?

ADMIRAL WALSH: I think so.

QUESTION: The F-18 used to be very much expandable. And in your answer then, F-35 could be very much expandable?

ADMIRAL WALSH: Well, I would let those who represent those two platforms speak for themselves when it comes to those questions, rather than me.

QUESTION: Back to the joint drill with South Korea. Obviously, China isn't very happy with the announcement that the drill will take place in the Yellow Sea.

ADMIRAL WALSH: Well, if you look back over time, we've operated in the Yellow Sea before. We've had operations with aircraft carrier flights, distinguished visitors flying out to the ship, and that did not create any sort of international reaction or uproar. These are international waters. We will honor all the agreements associated with operations inside international waters, we will avoid territorial waters, and we will adhere to the Law of the Sea Convention when it comes to the recognition of a certain taxonomy or rules set in terms of how we operate at sea.

QUESTION: I'd like to ask about the U.S. approach to territorial disputes. In general, not just this Senkaku issue that's happening right now. I fully understand what the U.S. position is vis-à-vis those territorial disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea as well, but you know, this current incident shows how volatile and how fragile the stability is in this region. And this incident, neither country, China or Japan, had intended this to happen. But it could escalate into the kind of situation where neither country would like to see. But that's the way it is, and eventually it is going to damage the interests of the United States as well, by hindering the freedom of navigation. And I was wondering, what you have done, the United States Navy has done through the Pacific Partnership training 2010, sending the Mercy to the South China Sea, was I think a great effort to show your interest and your preparedness in a subtle way. But is there any way, perhaps the Pacific Fleet can do, to prevent this kind of incident or prevent escalation, besides doing things like Pacific Partnership 2010?

ADMIRAL WALSH: The points you make, I think, are a very strong argument for why we need to have military-to-military relationships between ourselves and China. If you look at

the government-to-government relationship that exists between the United States and China, you will see that it is mature at many levels, but not when it comes to issues related to security. And as a result, there can be differences of opinion, there can be constructive arguments raised on both sides when it comes to how they address some of the more difficult complex economic issues. Those conversations and dialogues take place even today. But when it comes to issues related to security, specifically the ability to communicate one's intentions, so that you can avoid the inadvertent tripwire that now results in an escalation that is really unnecessary between two countries, I think you've articulated the position exactly why that's important. In terms of Pacific Partnership in the South China Sea, this was the Mercy visiting Vietnam and Cambodia, it was a very successful venture. It was very successful in terms of the level of participation by countries interested in the medical care and the engineering work and projects that were conducted. We'll continue to offer that. We will continue to work with Pacific Partnership. We've already made planning efforts to look at how we will continue this next year. And I would like to think that, as you look back on the relationship between the United States Navy and JMSDF for these many years, you will see a very predictable transparent pattern of what we stand for, what principles are in play, and how we will support our partners in the region. We ask for very little in return when we participate in Pacific Partnership, and I think that model of cooperation and collaboration between countries in the region has been very successful, just by the level of citizens who come out and participate.

QUESTION: Quick follow-up, you mentioned the importance of the mil-to-mil relationship with China, and I understand the mil-to-mil relationship between United States and China is suspended right now. Is there any indication that that could be resumed?

ADMIRAL WALSH: If it is resumed, my job is to be prepared to respond. But I don't have an inside track as to whether or not it's going to be resumed, or when it's going to be resumed, if it's going to be resumed.

QUESTION: According to the latest version of the NPR released by White House and Pentagon, Washington has decided to decommission the nuclear warhead cruise missile, Tomahawk. And there are some voices on the part of Japan that it might weaken the quality of the nuclear commitment to Japan by the United States. Do you share those kinds of views, or are you fully confident in terms of the nuclear commitment to Japan?

ADMIRAL WALSH: For many years, TLAM-N has been the visible representation of the nuclear commitment. And I think the voices that are concerned are watching the decommissioning of that. But those same voices need to be concerned about the age and the reliability of the weapon. They need to be concerned about what happens to that kind of material over time, and I think for reasons of safety as well as security, it's important to follow through on the NPR recommendation. I see no retreat from our commitment to Japan at any level of security. I have read nor heard anything that suggests that we are

stepping back from our overall commitment to Japan. I think that when you look at the relationships as they are in play today, those relationships are stronger than ever before.

QUESTION: Quick follow-up: as you know, both the U.S. and Japanese governments kicked off the official meeting on nuclear commitment by the United States to Japan. Is there any sign or movement on the part of mil-to-mil connection between U.S. and Japan to discuss those kinds of issues?

ADMIRAL WALSH: I have not had those discussions at my level, but it would follow a normal track for policymakers to have that level of discussion before it actually reaches operational commanders. So this is not something that I've engaged in, but I'm not really surprised at this point because it's such a high-level dialogue.

QUESTION: Admiral, you mentioned the importance of the sea lanes. It's not your jurisdiction, but in July, a Japanese tanker was damaged in a suspected attack in the Strait of Hormuz. And a week later, al-Qaeda-related organization claimed responsibility for that attack. Do you have anything to say in front of us on this particular incident, and do you see any sign that these kinds of groups operate more actively than before at sea?

ADMIRAL WALSH: I think what I can offer is a general comment, because this did take place in the Central Command area of responsibility. I have not seen the results of any of the investigations that are taking place. But the larger point that you are making is, I think, very important. So this is a Japanese tanker, Japanese-flagged, in the Strait of Hormuz, between Oman and Iran. This is a clear illustration of the problem that we were describing at the beginning of our conference, which is that we have national interests on the part of Japan into the Middle East. It is hard to separate the threat to international shipping as a threat to just one country. This is a threat now to the international community. So when you look at the amount of shipping that goes through those straits, the idea of a terrorist act against one of those commercial vessels can have dramatic impact on not only prices, but also on the overall stability of the energy sector of our economy, simply because of the amount of shipping that's available, the amount of refining that is available, and surplus – it's just not what it used to be during the "tanker wars" in 1987, where there were attacks on tankers at very little impact. Today, this is something that we have to be vigilant, and we have to be very alert to. Because the impact can be very dramatic.

Thank you.

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