



Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
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U.S. Third Fleet Change of Command
aboard USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76)
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As delivered

Good afternoon everyone. What a great day to be here in San Diego. I can think of no more fitting venue to celebrate the service of Vice Adm. Floyd and his wife, Debbie, than aboard this icon of American power, the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan. There is a personal connection here as well in that the Reagan inherited her moniker, “America’s Flagship,” from Vice Adm. Floyd’s own USS Constellation.

We also have the privilege today of welcoming back to the Pacific Vice Adm. Nora Tyson along with her husband Wayne as she takes the reins here at Third Fleet.

Now, I’m going to go a little off script – I can see the emcee getting nervous. Normally as the guest speaker I would talk for a while about Pink’s achievements, then we’d bring up Pink to give him an award, then recognize Debbie’s contribution. I am going to depart from that convention and recognize Debbie’s achievements first.

As we all know, and Pink would be the first one to tell you, our families deserve far more credit than we can ever give them for all they do to support those of us who wear the uniform. It seems most appropriate to provide recognition of our families front and center, where it belongs.

Debbie personifies the support we in uniform receive daily from our families. After serving in uniform herself, Debbie has gone on to share in her husband’s service and commitment. She has done so with incredible grace and her own commitment for everyone in the extended Navy family. Debbie, please join me here at the podium so we can formally recognize your service.

Here on San Diego Bay, looking at the beautiful skyline of America’s Finest City, or when up in Point Loma at Third Fleet headquarters, overlooking Sunset Cliffs and the surfers out catching waves, it is easy for us to take for granted the prosperity, the peace, the stability we have enjoyed in recent history as a maritime nation across the vast Pacific Ocean.

Having grown up here in San Diego, spending more time on a surfboard than in classrooms than I should have, I can attest first-hand how distracting the pleasantries of life here can be in contrast to the forces that compel Sailors to go to sea, sailing to distant seas where storm clouds brew, harbingers of the forces of instability that, if left unaddressed, will impact, as has happened in the past, the prosperity, peace, and stability we so value, so much here. For 70 years, the U.S. Pacific Fleet has been the guarantor of that peace, stability and prosperity. Not only has our nation benefited from this reality, so have all nations on the Rim of the Pacific, and indeed the world.

Seventy years: An interesting and relevant snapshot in time given why we are gathered here today. It was more than 72 years ago, in March of 1943 to be exact, that Third Fleet was formed.

This is an important point – many of the lasting institutions we know today are an effect of 70 years of stability in the Pacific. But to be clear, Third Fleet is not one of those effects of that stability. It is a cause of that stability, a guarantor.

Third Fleet was commissioned to be a fighting fleet under the bold leadership of Fleet Adm. Bull Halsey. Throughout the remainder of the War in the Pacific, that's exactly what it was – a fighting fleet, living out Halsey's motto: Hit Hard, Hit Fast, Hit Often – right up until the Japanese surrender aboard the deck of the Third Fleet flagship, the USS Missouri.

Through the years since our victory in the Pacific, Third Fleet has gone through many changes. She was made an inactive reserve fleet shortly after the war, and then reactivated in the 70s and headquartered ashore at Ford Island in Hawaii. In the 80s she went back to sea aboard USS Coronado, homeported here in San Diego. In the nineties she moved ashore again to her current headquarters in Point Loma.

At different points, the Third Fleet was charged with focusing on training, experimentation and certification of deploying forces. But make no mistake, throughout all those changes, no matter where the Third Fleet flag was flown, Third Fleet remained a fighting fleet to its core.

- Many of the ships, submarines and aircraft deployed to the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf right now are Third Fleet units.
- Vice Adm. Floyd has just led his staff through the largest maritime exercise held in the Western Pacific, Talisman Sabre, as the Maritime Component Commander, commanding over 30,000 personnel, 21 ships, 200 aircraft and three submarines.

This warfighting power of Third Fleet was exactly what I was referring to last week in the Philippines when I was quoted as saying I was, "very satisfied with the resources that I have available to me as the Pacific Fleet commander," and, "we are ready and prepared to respond to any contingency that the president may suggest would be necessary."

Let's be clear, the only Navy that is more powerful, by any measure, than the combined power of Seventh Fleet and Third Fleet encompassed by the Pacific Fleet, is the United States Navy itself.

For the past two years, Pink Floyd has led Third Fleet forward with the same bold leadership that Bull Halsey was known for. The fact is the challenges we face today are much different, but no less dangerous, than those we have faced in the past. Vice Adm. Floyd has ensured our Navy in the Pacific is positioned to face those challenges as opportunities, and overcome them.

As Navy leaders, we often get asked about the rebalance to Asia-Pacific, and what that means for the Navy. The fact is that for us in Pacific Fleet, we been here in the Pacific from when we were formed in 1907. That said, adjustments to global Navy distribution were made to rebalance to the Pacific. Those adjustments are nearly complete, at least in terms of numbers. Of course we will continue to push the best and newest technology and our top talent to this theater, as the Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Greenert just highlighted again a couple days ago, but when it comes to the numbers of ships, submarines and aircraft, we are just about there. What continues to evolve and advance, however, is how we employ those forces.

Vice Adm. Floyd has been a critical part of that evolution. He has led this Fleet to improve the way we fight Navy-wide. The advances we have made with Air-Sea Battle under his leadership are a perfect example. With Air-Sea Battle, the Navy looked at how to address emerging challenges by more effectively and efficiently developing with our Air Force service partners a better understanding of what it would take to succeed in today's threat environment.

The initiatives contained within the context of Air-Sea Battle at the Strategic level have:

One, formed the leading edge of the Navy rebalance to the Pacific,

Two, strengthened our relationships with our allies, partners and friends, especially, in my view, reinforced by what I heard during my just completed trip through the Pacific Fleet area of responsibility – with the Philippines, Australia, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, and Japan – though clearly not to the exclusion of our strong relationship with the whole host of other Pacific Fleet partners and friends, represented by the attendance here today of the senior naval representatives from Chile and Mexico.

Three, formed the engine for full informationized warfare development. Just one recent example was Adm. Greenert's empowerment of Adm. Davidson to take the lead in developing and enhancing our Navy's expertise in Electromagnetic Maneuver Warfare, resulting in his leading a Fleet Commanders Synchronization seminar in Newport, Rhode Island, which included all the senior three and four star leadership in the Navy.

Four, while Air-Sea Battle has been leveraged extensively by the Pacific Fleet, at its core it is a strategy with global application, providing valuable insights to better address multiple challenges the nation faces or could face around the world.

And last, it has resulted in the significant improvement of Navy concept of operations, our command and control concepts, their application, and has informed our capability requirements.

Vice Adm. Floyd has taken those ideas and made sure that our naval forces in the Pacific have fully incorporated these initiatives into our high end training and certification events. He not only made sure of our Navy team's success, he has ensured our success as a joint team in any endeavor we might be directed to engage on.

It is now time to move forward on the next phase of warfare optimization, what we call the Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons or JAM-GC. Hey, I don't pick the names, but I am a firm believer in the value of what it stands for. It will extend the advances that Air-Sea Battle has brought to our air and naval forces and extend their continued advancement to all our joint partners.

The great work of my friend Gen. Vince Brooks, the Commander U.S. Army Pacific, in bringing Pacific Pathways to reality is just one example of the value JAM-GC will bring to the Joint Force.

Vice Adm. Floyd's visionary leadership with respect to Air-Sea Battle has made all this possible.

No nation has more experience, expertise and success at building a team of joint and international partners than the United States, and I'd argue that no force is better at building that team than the U.S. Navy and nowhere is that more apparent than in the Pacific.

Vice Adm. Floyd certainly showed that last year in RIMPAC, when he led a team from all services and from 22 countries, more than 50 ships and 25,000 people. In six weeks he formed them into an effective team. To say it was a complex effort would be an understatement.

You may recall we had a couple of new participants in RIMPAC last year. One was Brunei. The other was China. Pink and the rest of his international leadership team showed everyone, including the newcomers, why nations want to work with us – why in the Pacific we are the partner of choice. We know how to work together with our partners for the mutual benefit of all. That is how great power should be employed, for the benefit of all, multilaterally, transparently, without conditions or mandate for inclusion.

To employ great power, one needs to be clear with respect to one's intentions. Just this week I issued my guidance to the Fleet. In it, I included my Commander's Intent, consisting of six focus areas. I won't repeat each of those and why they are important – you can read that for yourself – but I will tell you the first focus is our people. Our people come first. They enable all we do.

Vice Adm. Floyd demonstrated every aspect of leadership included in my Commander's Intent, not only here at Third Fleet, but throughout his career. And it should come as no surprise that throughout his career Pink, as the son of a Senior Chief himself, always put our people first. I have no doubt that Senior Chief Floyd is very, very proud of what his son has accomplished.

Now, I will say Pink, as your time in the Navy settles into the wake, there will be changes. In fact they have already begun. Always a warfighter, Pink may have taken the "Hit Often" part of Halsey's motto a little too literally in his golf game, but I understand that Pink has finally decided that any sport that frowns upon hitting too often is not for him, so he has sold his golf clubs and will now have more time to focus on his favorite contact sport – UNC basketball.

And the other two points in Halsey's motto: Hit Hard, Hit Fast have a whole new meaning when applied from behind the wheel of a large urban assault vehicle Pink affectionately refers to as his "RV." Make sure your insurance is paid up. I mean YOUR insurance, not his. You are now the force he holds at risk.

Pink, in summary, you did it right. Sailors of both today's and tomorrow's Navy are better prepared by your contributions, example and leadership throughout your career than they have ever been. On their behalf, and on behalf of a grateful nation, thank you for your leadership and service.

As Pink departs the pattern, there is no better officer to take the lead here at Third Fleet than Nora Tyson. Nora is no stranger to the Pacific. She has previously commanded Task Force 73 in Singapore. When I travel around the theater, everywhere I go, I hear about the great work she has done leading operations and building partnerships in the Pacific Fleet AOR.

She has commanded a carrier strike group on its maiden deployment, she has led Sailors in combat and in crises, and in the assignment she just finished as deputy commander of Fleet Forces, she helped make sure our Navy had the people, the equipment and the training we need to fight and win. I mentioned earlier that part of the rebalance means we are sending our most talented people to this theater, and Nora is living proof of that. Nora, I'm glad to have you back in the Pacific, leading Third Fleet.

On that note, as the Pacific Fleet Commander it is my intent to underscore the legacy of Fleet Adm. Halsey, leveraging both the heritage and expertise he has fostered in Third Fleet by enabling Vice Adm. Tyson to more fully employ her Fleet forward. I question why we are so allegiant to the International Date Line as a line of demarcation between the two most powerful numbered Fleets in the world.

While I am not talking about moving homeports or headquarters, or the ships and Sailors that make them up, we do need to match our material refocus to the Pacific with a commensurate mental refocus forward, especially between the Seventh Fleet and Third Fleet. We should be more flexible and innovative in our thinking as we continue to focus on keeping the storm clouds on the horizon where they are, and prevent them from darkening the skies closer to our shores.

Since well before Bull Halsey took command of this Fleet in the midst of World War II, 72 years ago, there has been a need for a strong Navy. That fact is underscored by the oft overlooked fact that the Pacific Fleet was formed 108 years ago. That national need of a strong Navy, forward in the Pacific, is the hallmark of the Pacific Fleet.

When the namesake of this aircraft carrier, President Ronald Reagan, embarked in what was then America's Flagship, USS Constellation, he talked about our Navy and the Sailors that make it up representing the nation's strength. Today, the Pacific Fleet continues to represent the strength of the nation at the crossroads of the world.

There is no longer legacy, no deeper heritage, no greater ocean, no more compelling need for forward deployed naval forces and no stronger fleet to embrace that legacy, heritage, ocean or compelling need, than the combined power of Seventh Fleet and Third Fleet embodied in the Pacific Fleet.

Today Pink passes that legacy and heritage of Bull Halsey and Third Fleet to Nora. Pink as you and Debbie take advantage of some well-deserved time together, you can rest assured in the knowledge that Nora has the watch, bolstered by the legacy of strength you leave behind in our Navy and in the lives of countless Sailors and their families.

Pink, please join me at the podium so we can recognize your achievements.