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Good morning ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning. It is a pleasure to be here again.

It is great to see so many familiar faces in the crowd from some of my previous trips to Australia. One of those, going back to my 7th Fleet days, is Rory Medcalf. Rory, thanks to you and the National Security College at Australia National University for inviting me and for providing us all the opportunity to share our thinking and insights with each other.

Fora like this are a critical part of our ongoing security dialogue, enabling a more informed analysis of the challenges that impact Australia, the Indo-Asia Pacific region, and those with interests here, including the United States. I look forward to hearing your questions and comments, and to learning from your thoughts and experiences.

This is my fifth trip to Australia as Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, and each time I visit, I'm struck by the enduring bonds between our navies, our nations, and our people. The crucible of World War II forged that bond as our naval forces fought together in places with names like Sunda Strait, Coral Sea, and Savo Island, just to name a few. Our Sailors share common character, common values and common graves. Through the lens of shared adversity, we've developed an abiding confidence in each other's commitment, a mutual respect for each other's capabilities, and most importantly, an unshakeable trust that comes as a natural by-product of steadfast relationships. Make no mistake; our alliance today is iron-clad.

I find it encouraging to draw upon our history and to see how our relationship continues to thrive today. For the last month, Australian and American forces conducted Talisman Saber, an exercise that included 33,000 personnel, and 21 ships including the air craft carrier USS Ronald Reagan strike group, the USS Bonhomme Richard Expeditionary Strike Group, and the Australian-New Zealand Amphibious Ready Group. I actually just came from participating myself in the command and control portion of the exercise in Brisbane. I was working alongside a US Army Lt. General, a Royal Australian Navy Rear Admiral, a U.S. Air Force Major General, a Royal Australian Air Force Air Commodore, and a Marine Brigadier General. If Americans and Australians are two people separated by a common language, I would tell you that language barrier does not exist between our militaries.

While the exercise was both realistic and challenging and our combined-joint forces displayed how smoothly we integrate and operate together, what struck me most is our ability to maneuver an impressive amount of combat power very quickly, from sea to shore, and around the operating area.

That capability is critical and shows that we are ready to be where it matters, when it matters, with what matters, within the region and across the globe. With that in mind, multilateral exercises like Talisman Saber help improve our ability to operate together, demonstrating the responsible use of combat power to provide security...for the sake of stability... to enable prosperity. In doing so, we set by example that the continued application of the accepted norms, standards, rules and laws, is the best approach to counter the forces of instability. Those forces of instability offer a false alternative focused on bilateral solutions for multilateral challenges, too often leveraging coercion and force over discourse and dialogue.

We never know where crises may occur, but it is our job to be prepared to respond. It is not lost on me that our shared history highlights that Australia's Defence Force has been deployed globally for over a century, demonstrating a keen appreciation for how frictions originating well beyond our own shores can impinge on security conditions at home. That's a valuable perspective to have, especially in maritime nations, and it helps widen the scope of things for us to consider when dealing with national, regional and global security issues.

One of the most pressing maritime security challenges facing us in the Indo-Asia-Pacific in my mind is the potential erosion of the rules-based international system. It is a system that emerged from the ashes of World War II, generated unprecedented levels of prosperity, lifted millions out of poverty, and benefitted so many nations over the past 70 years. Yet its continued acceptance is being challenged on several fronts by the very nations it has most benefitted.

As U.S. Defense Secretary Mattis stated at the Shangri-La Dialogue last month, "the international order [is] not imposed on individual nations; rather the order is based on principles that were embraced by nations trying to create a better world and restore hope to all." Membership is not based on size, strength or wealth; all nations large and small have the opportunity to participate and reap the collective rewards of cooperation. Unfortunately, some choose to reject the accepted framework of norms, standards, rules, and laws that underpin the international system and the inclusive security network supporting it, and instead pursue a more self-serving path.

We have no clearer example of the consequences of self-isolation and a desire to return to an earlier period where might makes right than that of North Korea. Satellite imagery underscores the contrast between a darkened North Korea and the bright lights of its prosperous neighbors. It's a stark comparison, but it emphasizes the positive impact of being a part of that rules-based international system. It is difficult for me to understand those that support such an approach, from a national, regional and certainly a global construct.

The behavior of other nations seems to suggest an opportunistic approach that seeks to impose national laws in international space. In the South China Sea, for example, rather than use the mechanisms in place for resolving disputes or advancing national claims, there is an emerging alternative to the global order being offered that leverages national power to coerce neighbors to the reluctant acceptance of unilateral actions. Smaller nations facing a growing preponderance of military and para-military force just beyond their shores have little recourse but to acquiesce within such a system.

The principle of unfettered access to the global commons at the heart of freedom of navigation discussions cuts across domains and disciplines as our maritime economies become increasingly intertwined. The concern of many in the region is that the imposition of restrictive national laws in international waters reflects parallel efforts to restrict access to cyber, space, information, diplomacy, commerce, banking and other forms of international exchange. This is why the role of navies is important beyond just the maritime.

For decades, the U.S. Navy and our allies in the Royal Australian Navy have, through global practice and observance of the international norms, standards, rules and laws, reinforce the value of this critical principle. We will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, and we remain committed to protecting the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea and airspace guaranteed to all countries.

In a region dominated by the maritime environment, upholding the rules-based system and inclusive security network requires constant reaffirmation by Indo-Asia-Pacific nations and their naval forces. As a rule, when nations apply seapower professionally and responsibly, it broadens national and regional prosperity alike. When seapower is applied provocatively and opportunistically, friction results with great potential for spiraling instability.

The region of the Indo-Asian-Pacific has enjoyed great prosperity since the end of World War II. And potential for continued and increasing prosperity yet remains. There is no doubt that nations who have embraced the international rules-based system have shared in that prosperity, and will continue to do so. And there is also no doubt that navies that uphold that international rules based system, like the US Navy and the Royal Australian Navy continue to do, will remain essential to ensuring the security and stability that enables that prosperity.