



Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Admiral Scott H. Swift
U.S. Pacific Fleet Change of Command Ceremony
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
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As delivered

This is my 14th change of command. Seems like a good point to transition to something new.

What makes the timing especially good now is to have a team like Laura and Chris coming in behind us. Admiral Aquilino was serving as my operations director when I took over the fleet. There is no one in the Navy with more experience than he has on all the dynamics that are at play here in the Indo-Pacific. His experience as commander of Naval Forces Central Command, leading at the numbered fleet level as well, will serve him well here commanding the largest, most consequential fleet, by any measure, in the world today. He and Laura have been perfectly positioned to return to the Pacific to lead the fleet, its Sailors and their families. Welcome back to both of you.

Admiral Aquilino won't be alone in his effort. Just as I have benefitted from the leadership of Admiral Richardson, Admiral Aquilino brings with him a friendship and trust with CNO engendered from their having worked so closely together when Admiral Aquilino was CNO's director of operations and policy prior to his assignment at NAVCENT. CNO thank you for your support and guidance of and to the Pacific Fleet. These have certainly been consequential times here in Pacific Fleet. Your support has been a cornerstone to the successes the fleet has enjoyed.

While Admiral Aquilino won't have for very long the advantage I had of the direct guidance and leadership of Admiral Harris, he will benefit from the firm foundation Admiral Harris has established that will continue to guide the actions of all the component commanders in the Pacific going forward. The lines that connect PACFLT to PACOM will continue through the transition between Admiral Harris and Admiral Davidson for many reasons, not the least of which is the close relationship enjoyed between Admiral Aquilino and Admiral Davidson. Admiral Harris thanks as well for your leadership of not only the Pacific Fleet but Army, Air and Marine Forces throughout the Pacific AOR.

As I turn over command to Admiral Aquilino and depart the Navy, I am first struck by the depth and breadth of experiences to share and people to recognize. So many have contributed so significantly in so many ways to me and Trish, not only in this tour but throughout all of our previous tours. Giving each one of you the public credit you are due is an impossible task for sure. Instead I defer to Captain Blyden's role as the master of ceremonies to recognize all of the dignitaries and stalwart supporters of the Pacific Fleet and its Sailors.

This has been an interesting journey. Having enlisted in January 1978, just over forty years ago, there is a lot to cover here. Let me start with the end of that journey and work my way backward through a few important points.

As I leave the Navy it is not lost on me that there is still much work to be done. In the interest of time I'll just touch on two of the most significant challenges we face in the Pacific Fleet. The first and foremost task centers on the Fitzgerald and McCain collisions.

For all of us wearing the uniform, the greatest burdens of service are the memories of those shipmates we have lost along the way. As a young naval aviator, I stopped counting at the thirteenth memorial service I attended. It seemed like a good point to do so. Instead of numbers, I chose to focus on both those we had lost and on those they left behind to carry on. I feel this especially toward the Sailors of Fitzgerald and McCain that we lost, and toward their shipmates, family and friends who have been left behind to carry on as well. While the void left in so many lives is significant, we should also remember how much richer we all are for having come to know those we have lost, for their service and sacrifice for others. From this we must re-commit ourselves to recognize that, while individuals are responsible for their loss, and must be held accountable, the readiness environment that created the conditions for those individual failures and the deaths of the Fitzgerald 7 and McCain 10 must be improved...and I am convinced it will given the leadership demands that we first fully fund the readiness accounts for the Navy we have before we start building a Navy for the future.

I am convinced that the Readiness Review Oversight Council, led by the Vice Chief of Naval Operations and the Under Secretary of the Navy, will ensure not only the necessary actions are taken to ensure the tactical 'eaches' of the Comprehensive and Secretary's Strategic Reviews are corrected, but also get after the needed cultural changes to further reduce the likelihood of these tragic collisions from occurring again.

To get to the Navy the nation needs we are going to have to secure a bipartisan budget that funds the Navy we have, with the necessary resources for safe operations, a critical foundation for our primacy in war. Here in the Pacific we, as a Navy, must be ready. After 40 years of operating exclusively in and through the Pacific, it is clear to me that if war returns to the Pacific it will be a joint fight fought at sea. Our commitment to that required fleet readiness must be made for with the memory of those 17 Fitzgerald and McCain Sailors in the forefront of our minds.

The second point I want to make addresses the challenge we face to the long established international rules based order. That order as we know it has been the guarantor of the global rising tide of prosperity that has given us a historically long and sustained period of stability around the world. This international rules based order has collectively benefited all nations, regardless of size or competitive advantage.

Competition is not a bad thing, be it between collectives, companies or countries. But for competition to be healthy and constructive for all, the mechanisms that govern that competition have to be transparent and rules based. After the end of World War II the world collectively understood that using national power to force one's national views on others is not in the world's best interests, nor is it sustainable. Through a number of international conventions the collective world conclusion was agreement in the development of the rules that would govern how they would resolve what were otherwise intractable differences by methods other than force. These conventions also had the foresight to establish institutions to consider and act on

recommendations to change the rules themselves over time. The result has been the greatest period of stability and prosperity the world has ever enjoyed.

But now...for the second time since the end of World War II we have two distinctly different strategic visions for what this rules based order should look like.

One vision is the long established, tested and validated international rules based order established, as I pointed out earlier, by global consensus at the end of World War II. That consensus created the mechanisms by which the natural frictions between competing nations could be managed peacefully.

The other vision, however, offers a false narrative of a modified rules based order invalidated and corrupted by the primacy of using might to make it right. This vision, with its inherent leveraging of national power for national goals at the expense of regional stability, has such significant global implications we should all be concerned.

The leading edge of the application of this vision in the South and East China Sea has begun to spread to the India Ocean, a creeping genesis of a new rules based order formed on the basis of military power, not international consensus.

Solutions to this challenge to the rules based order will not be found in a series of FONOPS nor in the actions of a single, or multiple combatant commands, for that matter. It will take a whole of government approach with coordinated and collaborative government actions to counter the whole of government strategy being used to implement the alternative corruptive vision.

The value of our new National Security Strategy is a huge step forward but it must be matched by implementing the strategy through a whole of government effort.

That whole of government approach must develop a national framework to enact meaningful and productive tactical actions. Instead we tend to take tactical actions, then build a narrative to cobble those actions together in an attempt to show they have been shaped from a national strategy when in fact, at best, the reverse is true.

Even when thinking of the post war years we should remind ourselves that the success of the Cold War was relative in nature, pockmarked with near failures such as the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Korean War still plaguing the world today, among others. Lessons drawn from World War II and the Cold War should be sobering motivation for proponents of the standing international rules based order to coalesce on an action plan to defend it from those who offer little more than false alternatives.

Anytime a storm catches up with you at sea it is a daunting experience as the power of nature is more apparent at sea than anywhere else. There is nowhere to hide. Nowhere to run. My father didn't share much of his combat experience in the Navy but what he did share was often a nautical lesson applied to life. He made the comment once when I was facing a challenging life experience that 'bad weather makes good Sailors.' As with most of his wisdom I found it difficult at times to put into context. His wisdom was born as much of experience as education. I

had to gain my own base of experience to understand the value of the life tools he provided his children for their life journeys. I am convinced if we empower those across the region and the to consider the strategic implications of the challenges we face, these “Sailors” are well positioned with the necessary insights and talent to develop meaningful solutions to weather the storms we face today. By weathering these storms together we will collectively be better “Sailors” of the international rules based system. On this point I am an optimist.

Let me transition to thanking a few groups who have meant a lot to me, not only in this tour, but throughout my career.

To my fellow PACOM component commanders: from my time as the PACOM J3, then as Commander Seventh Fleet, and now as the Pacific Fleet commander, I can say with some authority there has never been a tighter, more committed, informed, personable or supportive group of component commanders assembled. A true band of brothers singing in Pacific harmony. Individually and collectively the nation has never been better served. As we break apart first with Vince Atkins’ departure, soon to be followed by General O’Shaughnessy, then General Berger and I suspect General Brown and perhaps General Yoo might not be far behind, one of my most cherished memories will be of having served with you. I will say with great unapologetic pride, as often as I can create an opportunity to do so, ‘Why yes, I served with them too.’

To the Pacific Fleet leadership team: I loved being a part of your team, from my staff, to my gifted fleet and type commanders, all the way to the incredibly talented task force commanders. Much was asked and more was delivered. Trish and I have been blessed with having you a part of our family. Great teams are determined by the manner in which they face their challenges. No one has faced the spectrum, scope and scale of the challenges you have with a level of professionalism I was profoundly grateful for and equally amazed by. You set an example that I struggled to match, and I am better for the experience of having tried.

Relationships are the greatest thing we will take with us at the end of a career. As you can imagine with my experience almost exclusively here in the Indo-Pacific I have many friendships that I have developed over the years. It is impossible to recognize them all and unfair to only recognize a few. Let me simply say that I have had a doctoral education from the finest professors drawn from all levels of military, government, industry and academia across the Pacific Fleet area of responsibility. I am deeply appreciative of your investment of trust in me and sharing your candid views of the best way forward in these troubling times. You have my commitment that I will endeavor to honor that investment in me by remaining engaged in this consequential theater wherever I might prove to be useful.

I am grateful for the opportunities the Navy has provided. Most of all I love the Navy for the relationships I have developed. But to finish my career here, in the Pacific Fleet, the only fleet I have ever sailed in, headquartered in the city I was born in, in the harbor of my father’s first command, doing what I love, is something dreams are made of.

But it is now time to open a new book, where the first chapter is family.

Part of that family are those inside and outside the Navy that have supported this journey, beginning with a number of members of my AOCs Class. Any stories they have are not to be taken seriously, especially any involving me.

Another group of supporters are those I have served with early in my navy career. Hook, Butt, Spud, Ray, ...have a twisted recollection of reality. They are prone to exaggeration at the expense of others, mainly me. We have to do better in the future than a "last man standing" celebration for us to get together. Thanks to all of you for going to the trouble of making the long trip out.

I mentioned my father's service and role in his children's lives. That experience was only eclipsed by our mother who provided the foundation of stability in our family during and after the navy. Both were key in their children's lives providing perspective, balance and compassion that we still draw on today.

My sister, Micaela and her husband Larry and my brother Mark are here. If you have not met my brother yet, you will think you have when you do. Micaela's son Ben, his wife Nicoletta and daughter Remi are here as well.

Play time is over. Time for me to start contributing to the family again, which means spending more time together. Thanks for being such committed and understanding supporters of this crazy lifestyle Trish and I have led.

Trish's parents and siblings could not make the long trip out. Her father is a proud Navy veteran of the Korean War. We look forward to connecting with them when we are soon again neighbors.

Our daughter Morgan who brought our grandson Charlie is here. Morgan, thanks for being here to make today so special for Trish and I. We'll connect with Blake, Laurie and the rest of the grandkids in San Diego after the packout.

So, down to Trish. Words cannot express all you have done in your commitment to Navy spouses and families. We met when I was XO of the Weapons School in Lemoore and married in my next tour as a squadron XO. Of our 12 tours together seven were in command.

She was just recognized at small ceremony by the CNO for that commitment to families with the awarding of the Navy Service Medal. CNO thank you for that recognition.

It is never easy to get a gift for Trish, especially at an event such as this. She is fugal, matching her needs to her wants. She loves flowers but not so much for presentation to her.

So I want the route of presenting her a flag. I know what is running through her mind right now. But this isn't just any flag. This flag has flown over all those places where you played such a significant role in the lives of the Navy families who served there with you. It flew over Naval Air Station Lemoore in recognition of all those command tours we shared there and Navy families you served, Naval Station Everett in recognition of our strike group tour, Naval Base

Yokosuka in recognition of our Seventh Fleet tour, the Navy Yard in recognition of the culmination of your many years of service to the command spouse leadership course, and this morning at the Pacific Fleet headquarters in recognition of your service to the thousands and thousands of families you have served here, especially those we memorialized in Yokosuka from Fitzgerald and McCain.

Oh, and Gus Gomes hooked us up by flying it over Fenway Park during the season opening series against Tampa Bay. There were actually two flags flown at each stop, one you have in your lap. The other will fly from the flag pole on the shore of the east branch of the Westport River, just down the hill from the house in honor of your sacrifice and the sacrifice of all those families that support those of us who have been fortunate enough to serve in uniform.

My last words are for the Sailors of the Fleet. Words that were once shared with me. Vice Admiral Bien, said at his air wing change of command words to the effect of; "On those quiet midnight watches, if you stand on the windward bridge wing and turn your ear to the far horizon, that faint voice you hear from the far shore will be mine, acclaiming all you do with such courage, sacrifice and selfless dedication." His words struck me then as they do now. To Sailors everywhere, it has been a humbling experience to be one of your shipmates for 40 years.

Thank you all for being here with me and Trish to share this great day of our life together.

I will now read my orders.