

Remarks as delivered by Admiral Mike Mullen
Western Pacific Naval Symposium Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
31 October 2006

It is nice to be back in Hawaii and very special. One of the ships that I had the fortune of commanding was actually home-ported here, so it is a part of my wife Deborah's heart and mine that will always live here in Hawaii.

Gary, thank you for that kind introduction and for hosting this very important gathering.

I know that the staff here has devoted a great deal of time and energy to make this a success. We're off to a great start.

I have truly looked forward to this meeting. Like all the countries represented here, the United States is, and always will be, not only a maritime nation, but a Pacific nation.

This region's progress over the last fifty years has been truly remarkable.

In fact, rising freedom and economic opportunity in the Pacific are an example for all the world.

In 1945, there were only a handful of democracies in the Pacific and today, most countries in the region are free. At war's end, many economies were wrecked by conflict; today, the growing economies of the Pacific are large engines of hope.

Yet, we cannot forget that the tyranny of distance – the vastness of the Pacific Ocean – the prevalence of transnational threats – old rivalries and new competition for resources – all could undermine that growing prosperity.

To prevent that, we must work together.

There is an old Hawaiian saying among canoeists:

“Paddle together, bail together. Unite and move forward.”

It is good to be amongst so many good friends, who agree that we must unite and move forward in the interest of our common prosperity and maritime security.

It was the same when I was in Italy, three weeks ago, for their Regional Sea Power Symposium. It was a great meeting.

I would like to tell you much of what I told them.

For me, last year's International Seapower Symposium in Newport was truly a special event – as they always are.

But last year was even more special, because of an idea and a common aspiration that resonated so powerfully.

As mariners, we knew instinctively that the greatest power of the sea is to unite, not to divide. There is a common bond between us.

My country saw this on our Gulf Coast during Hurricane Katrina, just as others have after the tsunami in Indonesia, the earthquake in Pakistan, the submarine rescue off Petropavlovsk, the mudslides in the Philippines and many other places.

These events encouraged us to think about and to believe that we could bring together a “1000-ship navy”, a global maritime partnership that unites navies, coast guards, maritime forces, port operators, commercial shippers, and many other government and non-government agencies to address mutual maritime concerns.

Many of you have heard me talk about this. Many of you have written and talked about it yourselves.

It has been an exciting dialogue that we must continue. But we must move beyond dialogue.

It is now the time to take tangible steps to make it real to bring it to life to put these powerful ideas to work at sea.

There are three compelling reasons to do so, the first and most dominant of which is the rapid pace of globalization.

As you all know, that pace today is measured not in months or days or even minutes – it can be measured in seconds.

In all my years in uniform, I have never seen so much going on – in so many places all at once.

It doesn't take long for the pace of events in one region to be felt in others, nor does it take long for those events to affect strategic decisions.

We have witnessed that again and again, in London and Lebanon, in Bali, in Madrid, in North Korea and in many other places.

We are all now connected. We all face the same dangers. We all share the same opportunities.

And since most of the world's commerce still travels by sea – some 90 percent – the opportunities before us in maritime security have become more critical and more promising.

In this global era, the economic tide of all nations rises – not when the seas are controlled by one – but rather when they are made safe and free for all.

Clearly, it will take an international effort to ensure that security.

Because the second reason we must act quickly to develop global maritime partnerships is that the threats we face are real and pervasive.

Globalization, with all its benefits, has also brought new vulnerabilities.

It has empowered us as nations and as individuals. But it has also empowered our enemies, those who would exploit lower barriers to commerce and communication to infiltrate, manipulate, and attack our collective security.

These ideologues, pirates, proliferators, criminals, and terrorists are prevalent throughout the coastal regions that we are all obligated to protect.

They are innovative, smart and determined, and can often act – and react – faster than many of our traditional governing bodies.

Without maritime cooperation – we cannot hope to effectively battle these forces of instability.

The good news is that globalization offers us a third compelling reason to cooperate – the promise of significant technical progress.

Technology and information technology, in particular, may very well be the single largest contributor to our maritime security in the future.

I am convinced that, perhaps even more than ships and planes and weapons, we must invest in the right technologies.

You can bet our enemies will. They are doing so, even as we speak.

Technology offers us the opportunity now, to help thwart their efforts by building and fielding, among other things, web-enabled global maritime awareness.

It will allow maritime forces to share knowledge – in real time, without regard to geography, distance, and eventually even language.

It will allow people and goods to move rapidly, efficiently, and safely.

For those within our maritime security network, we will maintain a high degree of confidence and trust, so that mariners won't be stopped and checked at every point along the way.

And that will enable all of us to focus more of our resources and our time on those outside the network, to find and fix the threats and to close the gaps where we are most vulnerable.

We see this with A-I-S, an approach we should expand.

In Europe, Italy is leading an effort to create the V-R.M.T.C. – a good example of what an unclassified maritime traffic system can do. It has matured significantly over the past two years.

We also see it at work in the Straits of Malacca, where Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia are coordinating patrols and have put in place what is clearly a model maritime network.

Not long ago, security at sea depended upon one's ability to remain unseen.

In the future, that security will depend upon the network, on being seen and identified.

Our Navy and Coast Guard are doing a lot of work on this in the United States, just as many of you are.

But as we develop new systems and networks, we must remain committed to compatibility and the ability, as well as the willingness, to talk to one another.

To the maximum degree possible we must use unclassified_databases that make it easier to connect and work together.

Just as the pace of globalization has exposed new threats, it has also linked us all together, offered us new technology, and allowed us to imagine new possibilities.

Vision, the maritime forces of many nations working together for global maritime security – while keeping the sovereignty of territorial waters secure as a core principle.

Think of a global maritime partnership where barriers to entry are low, where every law abiding country – no matter its size – is welcome to contribute when and how they are willing and able.

For me, it is not difficult to imagine.

Our hospital ship MERCY recently returned to the areas devastated by the tsunami, and hosted doctors and international relief workers from more than fifteen countries in a major humanitarian effort.

But the immediate international response to that natural disaster in December of 2004 represents the most dramatic example of the potential of a “1,000-ship navy.”

The same can be said, I believe, of the effort to evacuate people from Lebanon this summer – as 170 vessels from 17 countries came together at sea.

They self-organized – in free-form style – with no treaty or alliance, and seamlessly accomplished a vital mission.

So we can do much more than imagine possibilities, we can and must continue to seize opportunities.

A couple weeks ago, for instance, I met with many agencies of my government to discuss how they each might contribute to this global maritime partnership.

I found them very supportive of this idea.

I am looking forward to continuing to work my own interagency process, which is challenging. I am sure it will be for you, as well.

I encourage you to do the same in your own countries.

And when many of us meet at the International Sea Power Symposium next fall – my most sincere request is that you bring your ideas that have worked, and that might work, for implementation.

We must act quickly. None of us can do this on our own.

We need each other.

All of us know that maritime cooperation among nations is not simply desirable. It is critical.

I have discussed many things that make that so, but let me give you one more – and it is the most important of all.

It is something that binds us even tighter than the sea.

It is the common hope we all share for our children's and our grandchildren's future.

We all want them to live better lives.

But they will live in a world that depends even more upon maritime security, free trade and economic stability than we do today.

I believe the power to provide them that security to create global maritime partnerships is within our grasp, if – as good friends – we see challenges through each other's eyes, and if – as good friends – we unite and move forward.

Let us, then, turn to that task. Thank you.