

COMMENTARY: We Can't Do It Alone

By ADM Mike Mullen

Maritime security used to be a fairly simple thing. We knew exactly who the bad guys were, what their ships looked like, and generally, how they were planning to fight us. That knowledge during the Cold War didn't make the task of defending the sea lanes any easier, but it sure focused our operational planning. Those days are long gone.

Today, the safety and security of what we call the "global maritime commons" are being challenged by a host of new threats and enemies that are transnational in scope and complex in nature. Terrorism, environmental attack, smuggling, the movement of weapons of mass destruction and illegal immigration are all difficult problems to solve.

And they are made more so by the rapid expansion of world markets. The world's fleets carry 90 percent of global exports totaling nearly \$9 trillion and help employ 2 million people. Those numbers will likely grow as the global economy becomes more interdependent and more reliant on the vital lifelines of the sea. Maritime forces are uniquely placed to secure these lifelines of economic prosperity while deterring those who threaten them.

Consider piracy. If you had told me five years ago that I would be sending U.S. warships to conduct anti-piracy patrols off Africa, I am certain I would have been skeptical. But the truth is that piracy can no longer be viewed as someone else's problem. It is a global problem because of its deepening ties to international criminal networks and the disruption of vital commerce.

There's no one right solution, and even if there were, there's no one nation that could come up with it. All maritime nations are affected by these challenges, and all of us must bear a hand in taking them on. The future of maritime security depends like never before on international cooperation and understanding. Frankly, we need each other.

That's why this week's Western Pacific Naval Symposium, hosted by the U.S. Pacific Fleet, is so important. It provides the leaders of

18 Asia-Pacific navies an open and collegial forum to discuss common issues and concerns, while sharing information and lessons learned. Most importantly, it gives us all a chance to look for solutions.

A quick look at these facts makes it clear just how important those solutions are:

- Half the world's economy and nearly 60 percent of its population calls the Asia-Pacific region home.
- The region accounts for a third of U.S. two-way trade — more than \$500 billion annually — and \$150 billion in direct U.S. investment.
- More than half of Asia's oil is imported from the Middle East and must pass through the narrow Strait of Malacca before reaching its destination.

Indeed, the success of Indonesia's Integrated Maritime Surveillance System and the positive relationship between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore in patrolling the Strait of Malacca are great examples of how maritime forces can cooperate to improve security.

We must find more.

A year ago, at the International Seapower Symposium in Newport, R.I., representatives from 72 countries — including 49 chiefs of navies and coast guards — discussed something called the "1,000-ship navy," a global maritime partnership that unites maritime forces, port operators, commercial shippers, and international, governmental and nongovernmental agencies to address mutual concerns.

Membership in this "navy" is purely voluntary and would have no legal or encumbering ties. It would be a free-form, self-organizing network of maritime partners — good neighbors interested in using the power of the sea to unite, rather than to divide. The barriers for entry are low. Respect for sovereignty is high.

In fact, national sovereignty comes first. Nations which can provide assistance should always be prepared to so. But nations which need that help must first be willing to ask for it.

Not everyone will welcome U.S. participation in 1,000-ship-navy operations, for example, but they may welcome that of their neighbors and allies.

The name itself captures the scope of the effort. It's not actually about having 1,000 international ships at sea. It's more about capabilities, such as speed, agility and adaptability.

Everyone brings what they can, when they can, for however long they can.

We saw this idea in action during international relief efforts in our own country after Hurricane Katrina struck. And we saw it most recently in the eastern Mediterranean, where nearly 170 ships representing 17 nations came together to evacuate their citizens from Lebanon during the Israeli-Hezbollah war.

The concept was discussed two weeks ago at a European seapower symposium in Venice,

supportive. People really are, pardon the pun, climbing on board.

For it to work, of course, we must move past dialogue. We must find tangible, practical ways to make it a reality. I hope this week's symposium in Honolulu offers such an opportunity, because the global maritime commons is too vast, too important and too vulnerable not to do so. Our future and the futures of our children depend on it.

Adm. Mike Mullen, chief of naval operations, is a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the principal naval adviser to the president and to the secretary of the Navy. He wrote this commentary for The Advertiser.

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where 30 navies and coast guards were represented from around the world, including Russia, Mexico and Singapore. Commercial shippers and the International Maritime Organization were also present and very