

Remarks as delivered by ADM Mike Mullen  
PACFLT Change of Command  
08 May 2007

What a great morning! And it's made that much greater by the company that is here. And that you would share your time with these very special families, very special Sailors means an awful lot to me.

Admiral Bird recognized so many special guests who are here. I won't repeat those names except to say you know how you are. We're very grateful for your support, your strength, your friendship and I believe that it has never been more important that we say that in these very challenging times.,

What an incredible privilege and honor for me to be among all of you. I also want to thank Tim, for making the long trek from PACOM headquarters to offer that mercifully short introduction.

It's great to be back in Pearl Harbor. There is emotion when I think about the four of us sitting here today and the privilege that we have to serve with thousands who also have made so much of a difference in our lives and in our service.

And a great place where the single word "Aloha" welcomes all with open arms and bids each of us farewell with the promise of friendship and an invitation to return. And I've returned to Hawaii for a special occasion on a great Navy day. Actually, the last few days have been great Navy days.

Just last Saturday Admiral Roughead spoke at the commissioning ceremony of the submarine USS HAWAII, the first Navy ship named after this great state, and a powerful symbol of the strategic bond between the Navy and the islands of Aloha. I am just thankful he didn't drag that east coast weather back with him.

I am also thankful to Gary for asking me to take part in this latest chapter of his amazing career.

Next to heroism in war, this ceremony represents the zenith of military achievement and a significant milestone in the careers of two great naval officers.

One of them, Rat Willard -- as most of us know him -- is sitting like a Tomcat at tension, throttle at full afterburner, and just waiting to launch, waiting for this speech to end. The other, Gary Roughead, the good SWO that he is, is no doubt reluctant to let go of the helm.

Well Gary, it's time to let go of this helm. Enjoy the moment, take a deep breath, and relax. You get a little more than a whole week off before getting back in the hot seat.

Just behind me are the ARIZONA memorial and the MISSOURI; two magnificent symbols of struggle and triumph.

They are reminders of a clear reality taught to us by Thomas Jefferson, proven to us on December 7, 1941 and again demonstrated to us by the events of September 11, sixty years later; "Eternal Vigilance is the price of Freedom." We must always be prepared for surprise, we must always stay engaged, and we must always be ready to defend freedom.

Today, as new lines in a great chapter of American history are written, I want to take a few moments to highlight how Gary's been engaged and how he's kept us at the ready.

As Gary can tell you, the most difficult part of leading a huge organization challenged by fast paced change is making those tough decisions that will shape the future while maintaining a flexible and agile organization today.

Let's face it, none of us have a crystal ball, and as baseball sage Yogi Berra once quipped, it's tough to make predictions, especially when they are about the future.

Well, Yogi Berra may have been right, but Admiral Roughead has proven very good at laying a path to the future.

With an almost clairvoyant flare he made critical decisions that both enhanced our capabilities and sent the right messages to our neighbors.

Gary, just yesterday I walked the deckplates of the submarine Pasadena and the destroyer Russell to see first hand the readiness you have delivered.

Both ships looked great, but what most impressed me were the Sailors. Their pride and professionalism filled my chest with pride. These are your people, our people. They are ready and they want to make a difference. They are a testament to your leadership.

Now, it's no secret that the challenges in this theater are as diverse as the Pacific Ocean is vast and clearly not everyone in this region has benign intentions

But should any challenger be foolish enough to try and threaten the peace, Gary has masterfully ensured the Pacific Fleet is ready to respond swiftly and decisively.

He stood up national Ballistic Missile Defense System operations and developed allied Missile Defense plans to ensure this region is safeguarded from any ballistic missile defense threat.

We take the threat very seriously. As a matter of fact just last month USS LAKE ERIE successfully destroyed a ballistic missile target and we are working hard to equip up to eighteen Aegis cruisers and destroyers with this capability in the near future.

As the submarine threat of the Cold War disappeared, so too did our proficiency, but more and more nations in this region are building capable and quiet submarines that could threaten the sea lanes.

In response to growing regional submarine threats Gary took decisive action to revamp and revitalize our undersea warfare capabilities.

He re-focused the Pacific Fleet to improve every aspect of ASW and he obtained over 500 million dollars in near-term Navy budget investment to bring 21<sup>st</sup> century ASW capabilities like those found on USS HAWAII to the fleet.

He brought back the Undersea Warfare Exercise series to make sure Carrier and Expeditionary Warfare Strike Groups, the core capability of our Navy are ready to face these threats.

And he forward based fast-attack submarines in Guam to keep them closer to where potential challenges might be, and to add more flexibility and agility to combatant commanders.

He was likewise utterly committed to environmental compliance, particularly programs focused on ensuring the Navy could train using mid-frequency active sonar.

Gary always championed a reality lost in the debate about the use of active sonar. We need to make decisions based on science, not on sentiment and the safety and security of our Sailors at sea, of our nation and our maritime partners depends on our training.

The Navy takes our environmental stewardship seriously.

We live and work on the sea; it's our home and we respect it. But no admiral wants to sign condolence letters to the families of Sailors of a ship sunk by a submarine we couldn't detect, a submarine we couldn't engage, or a submarine we couldn't sink if we had the chance.

Too much is at stake as nations build and operate more quiet and more lethal submarines. Realistic training is critical to national security. We will train responsibly, but we will train.

Gary's been an exceptional leader with a clear understanding of the strategic importance of seapower in this theater.

He understood that no Pacific nation – and America counts herself as one of them – can live peacefully in the world our enemies would create for us, or is immune from the violence delivered by those who would seek us out.

He also understood that though our nation had been rightly focused on the Middle East, we can't forget that the war of terror is indeed global.

On May 4th, Richard Halloran described the rise of Islamic terror in the Pacific particularly in Southeast Asia.

One of the points Halloran makes is that Islamists in Southeast Asia are increasingly driven by an ideology calling for an Islamic state centered on Indonesia. This serves to remind us that the war on terror is very much alive in this part of world as well.

But as we stay focused on countering the global threat of terrorism, we can't forget we are a maritime nation – a nation that can no longer consider the oceans as protective barriers but rather as avenues for the passage of good and ill, the seas are now the connective tissue of the world of the global maritime neighborhood.

And as Gary can tell you, it's a big neighborhood with lots of neighbors with a shared interest in creating a better future for our children, and for their children.

And though that future is clouded by the fog of uncertainty, Gary had the vision to see that not every challenge to our collective security requires a purely military response.

That's why he spearheaded Hospital Ship MERCY's historic Humanitarian Assistance and Civic Action deployment to Southeast Asia; showing the world the Navy is a Force for Good.

There's a great story illustrating how MERCY's mission had a lasting impact on the life of at least one child in Indonesia. This boy was treated by MERCY's crewmembers in the aftermath of the Tsunami in 2004.

For his courage as a patient, he was given one of those coveted ship's coins. That would've been the end of the story, but thanks to Gary's vision and leadership, it was not.

Last year, when MERCY returned to Indonesia, the same boy visited the ship. MERCY's captain noticed the child was rubbing a MERCY coin. The coin had been rubbed to a shiny luster and the image was almost unrecognizable.

The boy was offered a new coin. His father would have nothing of it. "You see" said the father, "that's his lucky coin; he rubs it as he prays." When the boy was asked what he prayed for, he answered "for this great ship to return."

Well, MERCY did return. That great white ship was the answer to a Muslim child's prayer.

If that story doesn't illustrate the power of engagement to undermine the conditions that spawn terrorism, nothing will.

The significance of that small encounter is very large indeed. The message is clear. This war we fight, this battle against self-proclaimed Islamic Jihadists is not a war of faith. It's a war of ideas, it's a war of competing visions of the future, and it's a war for hearts and minds.

That child will always have MERCY in his heart, in his mind. You see, with MERCY, we brought him hope.

And hope is the beacon that cuts through the fog of the uncertain future. A future we are building person by person, family by family, and nation by nation. A future that will take time to build.

Our Navy and our Nation are committed to building strong international partnerships – however long it takes – because fear and tyranny are a global threat to a peaceful future.

A year-and-a-half ago representatives from 72 countries, some from the Pacific Rim, many from the Pacific Rim, met and discussed the idea of a Thousand Ship Navy.

Together, we envisioned a global maritime partnership meant to unite maritime nations, commercial entities, governmental, and non-governmental agencies into a cooperative and collaborative framework of common interests. A partnership meant to bring us together to address mutual concerns, face common challenges, and offer a vision of hope, just like MERCY did for that boy in Bandar Aceh.

That vision of hope and collective security requires collective action and a collective will based on trust.

Trust is the "Coin of the Realm" as they say, the currency of this new world, the engine driving the Thousand Ship Navy.

Over the last two years, ADM Roughead has encouraged Pacific neighbors, and he has worked hard at building trust and constructive cooperation with one another rather than seek to compete destructively against each other.

In doing so, Gary has given life to the Thousand Ship Navy in the Pacific. But more importantly, he's laid the foundation of trust vital to creating that better future we seek. Gary we're all grateful for your leadership. We are safer because of it.

To be fair though, Gary's been lucky too. He's had the guidance and support of an incredible person who, more than anyone else, has been right along with him, faithfully giving rudder orders when he veers off course, which admittedly, as far as he would tell you, he doesn't do very often.

I speak, of course, of his wonderful wife Ellen, an inspiring woman who's been Gary's North Star and as much a part of this command and Gary's career as Gary himself. She's been a wife, a mother, and a leader. She's cheered Gary on during the good times and has loved and encouraged him during the trying times we all face.

Ellen, by your leadership in diverse activities ranging from developing one-on-one contacts with numerous U.S. and foreign dignitaries to improving the quality of life, quality of our TRICARE, child-care, family housing, education, our exchange, and commissary facilities, wide ranging impact; you've represented our Navy and our Nation well.

You've been a role model for our families in the Pacific and really, throughout the world. And I thank and I salute you!

Today, we also have the fortune of welcoming the Willards.

To say they are ready to return to the Pacific is an understatement.

They are excited and they are the right couple at the right time to assume the watch.

Our Navy has a way of finding good talent, of fitting just the right people in place even as superb ones move on.

That's sure is clearly the case with Bob and Donna Willard. Together they've served with great distinction in peace and in war.

A Pacific Sailor at heart, Rat knows this theater well. He's excelled at sea and in the air and he did a truly exceptional job most recently as our Vice-Chief of Naval Operations. I trust him entirely.

His able leadership during a volatile and demanding time has kept the Navy steaming in the right direction. He showed a gift for strategic thought and a penchant for action. Talents he now brings to the Pacific as he leads this important organization into the future.

It won't be easy Rat, nothing worth doing ever is. But if you look around you'll find Americans and friends of America who are ready to cast off with you and work together to bring long-lasting stability and security to the Pacific Theater.

Rat, though uncertainty clouds the future, one thing is certain; whatever surprises tomorrow brings, I know you and Donna will handle them well. We all know that; we've come to expect that.

At the outset of World War Two, Admiral Chester Nimitz received word from Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox that he was to take command of the Pacific Fleet. Nimitz would write about his assignment: "It is a great responsibility, and I will do my utmost to meet it."

Well Rat, you take the helm at a difficult time, and it is indeed a great responsibility that you are about to face.

I know that you will do the utmost to meet it and by your leadership this Fleet, like the Fleet Nimitz once commanded, will earn its rightful place in history, will remain at the vanguard and will be ready for anything.

So Bob, Donna welcome back to the Pacific. We'll miss you in DC but the Pacific Fleet is lucky to have you.

Your leadership will no doubt be a visible force in fostering friendship and cooperation between our Pacific Partners and the United States as well as continued improvements in the quality of life for our Sailors.

I wish you good luck to you both as a new chapter in Pacific Fleet history is opened.

Gary, Ellen, again congratulations and thank you for a job well done. I'll see you in about nine days in Norfolk!

I'd also like to take an opportunity and I know it's been done, to welcome back to the Pacific Tim and Wanda Lee Keating. Again I can't think of a couple that is a better fit for the job they're in. Great people, great family, great Sailor and we're blessed to have you back.

Lastly as I close, I would ask you to keep in your thoughts and prayers the families that are suffering as we lost five Sailors yesterday in a helicopter crash. I would ask you to keep them in mind. This is a challenging business, this is a dangerous business and young people give up their lives serving our country and we should keep them in mind. And I talk today about mission and I talked to day about partner ships and relationships, but none of that would be possible if we did not have the privilege of leading what I consider to be the greatest young men and women that I have ever had the privilege of leading and its not just Sailors, it is young men and women from all our services.

So that you again for all your support, God Bless You, God Bless Our Navy and God Bless Our Country. Thank you.