

Remarks by
The Honorable BJ Penn
Secretary of the Navy (Acting)
Joint Integrated Air and Missile Defense Summit
Huntsville, Alabama
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Good evening and thank you. It's a real pleasure to be here this evening. I always enjoy a trip away from Washington, especially during budget season.

I'd like to keep my remarks on the short side – but I need to tell you the story about how I got invited to speak here tonight.

Several weeks ago, Raleigh Durham told me about this conference and Lonnie, and asked me to give a short, fifteen minute speech. “Fifteen minutes?” I said. “How can I possibly tell them all I know about air and missile defense in fifteen minutes?”

And Raleigh responded: “I advise you to speak *very* slowly.”

I'd like to thank this year's Chairman, General Urias, for putting this summit together.

Many of you know that General Urias served admirably in the Army. However, I couldn't help but notice his degrees from Naval Postgraduate School and Naval War College. Now, I can't blame an Army guy for wanting to spend as much time as possible with the Navy. So, General, if you're looking for a ticket in our cheering section at this year's Army-Navy game, let me know. If the score is anything like last year's, you're in for a *real* nail-biter.

Mayor Battle is here - Mayor, thanks for your hospitality.

I'd offer you a ticket to the next Army-Navy game, but Huntsville is an Army town, and I understand that cheering for Navy would make your next *election* a real nail-biter.

I'd like to thank the sponsors, whose support does so much to sustain this incredible Summit, and is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Finally, to everyone who has had a hand in making this such a spectacular event, I thank you for your hard work. You have been passed the torch once carried by this summit's founder, Lonnie Polling. He would be so proud of your accomplishments.

Tonight, I'd like to discuss some of the threats we face as a nation, and how the Navy, as part of a joint force, plans to address them. Let me be more specific.

Last spring, the world eagerly followed reports of a dead satellite containing harmful materials on a crash course with the earth.

Intelligence sources predicted that satellite ‘USA 193’ would produce a toxic cloud the size of two football fields, and pose a risk to human life. Fortunately, that satellite didn’t make it here.

It was stopped in its track by a dedicated group of military, government and industry experts. From USS Lake Erie, an SM-3 missile made a direct hit with the satellite – which was flying at an altitude well above 125 miles over the Pacific at a speed of more than 17,000 miles per hour.

Scientists have compared the USA 193 shoot-down to hitting a bullet with another bullet. That’s a pretty amazing accomplishment.

As you may know, the SM-3 was not designed to shoot down objects falling from outer space. Rather, it was designed to take out missiles on a predictable, known trajectory.

That’s the kind of flexibility that will be required in the 21st century.

It’s the same kind of flexibility that was demonstrated by last week’s ‘Stellar Dagger’ exercise, conducted by 3rd Fleet.

The objective of ‘Stellar Dagger’ was to test our ability to intercept a ballistic missile in its terminal phase and destroy an incoming anti-ship cruise missile. It was a huge success.

Additionally, the exercise was coordinated closely with our counterparts in the Air Force.

As many of you know, working with other services can be a challenge. But I assure you, the benefit of increased national defense far outweighs the extra effort, and the ‘Stellar Dagger’ exercise was no exception.

The Joint Integrated Air and Missile Defense community makes it all possible.

When faced with an abnormal challenge, we hear people in many professions say “that’s not my job.”

During my years with the service – both as a naval aviator and now as a civilian - I have been amazed by the teamwork and commitment that goes into solving our country’s greatest challenges.

The overwhelming sentiment has always been “how can I serve?”, and that’s what makes our defense team the best.

The success of these joint missions has reflected well upon our Navy, our Nation, and each and every one of you as part of the team.

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Clearly, America has improved its air and missile defenses. But we must not forget that our enemies are making progress as well. In fact, our success has them more determined than ever.

In 1972, there were just 24 types of ballistic missiles available in 7 countries. Today, there are over 63 different types of ballistic missiles in 24 countries. This is a disturbing trend.

We've seen freedom's enemies seek to influence their regions with missile threats. In particular, Iran has crept closer and closer to becoming a major nuclear power on the world stage.

Equally troubling is North Korea's recent exercise of a Taepodong-2 missile launch over Japan – a country of 127 million citizens, and host to 50,000 U.S. service members.

While the missile landed in the Pacific Ocean, we need not imagine for long where it *could* have landed. Nor is it a stretch to assume that North Korea desires a weapon with even farther reach.

The President declared the launch a “provocative” act. Clearly, this is a step in the wrong direction for international relations with North Korea.

While State Department officials work closely with the international community to sort out the diplomatic ramifications of the launch, we must continue developing the systems and technology to be prepared if called upon in the future.

If history is an indicator of things to come, state and non-state actors will continue to gain access to delivery systems with considerable reach. This reality concerns Americans and citizens worldwide - and rightfully so.

With increasing access to missile capabilities comes a greater responsibility on you to improve our missile defenses.

Indeed, the future of our Nation requires it.

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For that reason, the Navy established the Navy Air and Missile Defense Command. It was officially opened for business just a few days ago.

NAMD Command, located at Naval Support Facility Dahlgren, enables the department to bring teams of experts together to work IAMD-related issues. The establishment of this command reaffirms the significance of air and missile defense.

Currently, it employs 25 staff members. By 2012, we anticipate staff will increase to 75.

In other words, this is a growing field, and we're hiring - something not many employers can boast right now.

I assure you that the Navy will be placing its brightest minds and greatest problem solvers in these positions – from the top down.

The team will be led by a superstar in the field, RADM Brad Hicks. Reporting directly to Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet, RADM Hicks is responsible for supporting existing organizations to assess maritime ballistic missile defense at the fleet, strike group, and unit levels.

Additionally, NAMD Command will implement training standards, provide mission support to operational commanders, promote rapid delivery of new IAMD technologies – from “Process to Product” - and advocate Navy positions and capabilities in joint forums like this one.

By providing an exchange of expertise amongst the services, and fostering working relationships, the JIAMD Summit directly benefits the Navy, and its new NAMD Command. This is why your efforts are so relevant, timely, and important.

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In closing, I'd like to stress the continuing need to work together to solve some of the greatest challenges our nation has ever faced. I say this not just from a Navy-Marine Corps perspective, but from the perspective of the joint services as a whole. After all, these are challenges that will require joint solutions.

AMD integration is a revolutionary capability for the Navy. It's the right thing to do, and that's why I'm here today.

So on behalf of all the services, I need you to stay focused. You are vital to our Nation's defense.

While our weapons and technical capabilities may be far advanced, these systems are only as good as the people who design and operate them.

We need you to ensure our air and missile defenses are the best in the world.

I know you will do this because you feel, as I do, a very, very deep pride in America. You are the ones who, when faced with extraordinary challenges, have answered the call to duty, honor, and country.

In his famous State of the Union address, George Washington said: “To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.”

His message, uttered over 200 years ago, endures today.

Your efforts are a vital part of ensuring peace, so that our children and grandchildren can live in a safer world.

I look forward to seeing the processes discussed at this summit become products to support our air and missile defense programs. I know you have worked very hard this week, and I can't wait to hear the results of tomorrow's hotwash up .

Congratulations on a job well done. May you continue to build upon what Lonnie Polling established with this great summit. I know you will.

God bless you and God bless America.