

Chief of Naval Operations

Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert delivers remarks at the

20th International Seapower Symposium

October 19, 2011

Admiral Greenert: Thank you very much, John.

We have obviously a structured program, but it does my heart great good to look out on the video while we were waiting in the Green Room -- which is, by the way, white -- and see all of you out here doing the networking. That's what really makes a difference, and that's a lot of what this conference is about.

[Rear Admiral] John Christenson, thank you very much for what you've done here at the Naval War College. We are truly on a role with the good presidents, great presidents, and you are one of the better ones, I can just feel it now.

Thank you to the Naval War College staff. It's a big project, it's a huge effort to get the international program running and going as well as it does, and then of course to have us come up for this very important symposium. Professor Vince Mocini does just a marvelous job with this, and the behind-the-scenes work are truly impressive. It's running very smoothly.

Distinguished guests, alumni of the Naval War College, and of course my colleagues, the heads of Navy, heads of Coast Guard, heads of War Colleges, and distinguished delegates. Welcome to the Navy War College and welcome to the United States. I want to thank all of you. It's not lost on me the sacrifices that you and your nation put forth to bring you here to Newport, sacrifice your time and your effort to do what we're going to do.

I want to take a moment to welcome 12 countries who are here for the first time. Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominica, Granada, Guinea, Haiti, Panama, St. Lucia, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Thank you all very much for joining us. It is your attendance that will make this that much better. I'd ask our colleagues to welcome our new friends.

[Applause].

I wanted to be here with maritime colleagues, and I'll tell you that I've had good luck, after a first week in office I was able to break the suction of Washington, D.C. and get out and travel and see some of you, and I look forward to expanding my horizons and see so many more of you and learn from you in your environment as well as in our environment.

I'm very honored that you were able to bring your spouses here, many of you. As you and I both know, leading your Navy, leading any part of our Navy or our Coast Guard is a team effort, taking care of our sailors and our coast guardsmen. As John said when he introduced us this morning, this symposium is unique and it's unlike any other in structure and in attendance. First held in 1969 -- think about that. Last held here in 2009 where we were amazed we had 102 nations and 90 heads of naval services. I was here at that time as the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, and I was following closely the efforts of my predecessor Admiral Gary Roughead who has been a mentor of mine for many years. I find him an amazing visionary. He was a great boss and a mentor. And I hope to keep the momentum that he started going as we work together on the challenges.

This year, as John said, we have about 115 nations, and 96 heads of naval services. We're almost running out of countries in the world, but we're not doing very bad. I love the momentum, and thank you very much.

This is the largest meeting of naval leaders in the world. It is the capstone of a seapower conference, and it has prospered because all of you are willing to come together, leave your ego and your issues at the door, and sit down and discuss openly the common interests and the common challenges that we have. I'm hopeful that this year will be no different and our theme -- Security and Prosperity Through Maritime Partnerships -- will bear great fruit. We have important collective issues, you and I. We represent our countries' efforts to defend our shores and our maritime interests and to secure the global maritime promise in the world for economic growth.

The stakes are getting higher in view of the fact that we have emerging worldwide unrest and we have financial challenges out there. The security of the sea lines of communication are even more important in view of that.

Collectively what we need, you and I, we need trust and confidence. It can't be surged and you can't just stand it up. We need understanding among ourselves and we need cooperation. We need to establish it and we need to nurture it over time.

Our Secretary of Defense understands this. It's really a first principle of his strategy for our Defense Department. He has regretted his inability to be here to personally talk about these topics, but he sent a video for us to watch from him, and I'd like to take this opportunity now to have us hear from our Secretary of Defense.

Please role the video.

Secretary of Defense Panetta: I'm truly honored to be able to address all of you here today at the 20th International Seapower Symposium.

This meeting marks the largest gathering of naval leaders in history. Your efforts to advance mutual interests and collective security are absolutely essential to address the most important challenges we all face together in this very difficult and interconnected world.

Trust and cooperation between the world's maritime services has long been a key enabler of global security, of global stability, and most importantly, of global prosperity. A safe and secure maritime domain is critical to global growth. Lifting all of our nations towards a better future is what this is all about.

International cooperation on issues such as piracy, trafficking, natural disasters, and a range of other potential threats enhances security for all of us and all of our nations.

Strengthening maritime partnerships has become an even more imperative in today's seemingly complex operating environment.

This symposium provides a valuable opportunity for all of you as maritime leaders to shape the path forward, to increase mutual trust and confidence, and to come up with solutions to current and future challenges.

Sharing your thoughts, sharing your ideas will help every nation, both large and small, rise to meet the challenges that we face at sea. It will also build the deep and lasting relationships that we need in order to succeed together.

As we've all come to realize, globalization has generated a host of transnational challenges that do not recognize borders nor do they recognize nation states. No one nation has the resources or capacity to meet these many complex challenges alone.

As President Obama made clear at the United Nations General Assembly just last month, the need for cooperation among states has never been more urgent. From counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden to many other joint maritime partnerships, you, all of you, have contributed to the robust and expanding international cooperation that we all so vitally need.

On behalf of President Obama, on behalf of the American people, I want to thank you for your service and for your collective efforts to promote a more peaceful, a more stable, and a more prosperous world. Thank you.

[Applause].

Admiral Greenert: This morning with my remaining time I'd like to leave you with a few thoughts about putting our words into actions, the challenges ahead, and people which will really be our legacy.

As the Secretary highlighted, your efforts are important and we've been successful for your nation and for all nations in our endeavors. Daily today, collectively, our navies and our coast guard address the common issues -- piracy, illicit trafficking, terrorism, proliferation and smuggling of weapons of mass destruction, and the enforcement of our fishery boundaries. These are enduring issues. The operations will probably never really be complete. No one can do it alone. Success is going to be and has to be collective.

Tangible achievements have been done through partnerships. For example, our international counter-piracy efforts in the Strait of Malacca and the Gulf of Aden have reaped benefits. Piracy is down 70 percent in the Gulf of Aden since 2009. The economic community of Central African states have been patrolling the waters of mutual interest and there has been success. There are other collective successes out there. The skills that our folks have are built on bilateral and multilateral maritime partnerships and exercises, and through these we facilitate important training for our sailors, our coast guardsmen and our marines. We clearly enhance our interoperability. We enable regional and international disasters to have proper response and have those skills, and we provide humanitarian assistance.

Examples of our exercises and our operations:

The Rim of the Pacific Exercise is our largest. We enhance the interoperability among the Pacific navies and coast guards and promote stability in the region.

Pacific Partnership across the Pacific where mental, dental, veterinary and engineering assistance skills are brought together in an opportunity to train and practice these humanitarian assistance skills.

Malabar where five nations in the Indian Ocean conduct an annual exercise to develop a wide range of naval skills from power projection to maritime intercept operations.

Cooperation Afloat readiness and training in Southeast Asia which enhances our regional cooperation and strengthens skills throughout the Southeast Asia region.

Proud Manta, ten NATO nations working together to hone their AS sub use skills.

UNITAS, North and South America and European nations gathering together to focus on supporting stability in the Western Hemisphere.

The Panama Canal Exercise, 15-20 nations gathering to ensure the security of the Panama Canal.

Obangame Express in Africa where Central African nations and European nations focus on the maritime security of the Gulf of Guinea.

Operation Bright Star, 11 countries from the Middle East and Europe gathering in an air/ground/naval training exercise process.

There are many others. All are valuable, and all are rewarding.

Of course real world humanitarian assistance and disaster relief provides valuable training. Haiti's earthquake recovery effort involved 10,000 sailors, marines, coastguardsmen and soldiers from ten nations. The great East Japan earthquake and tsunami of 3/11 involved several nations and thousands of Sailors, Coastguardsmen, Airmen and Soldiers and Marines.

These exercises and partnerships are really a testament to progress and they're key to improving our ability to respond to our evolving challenge.

These examples provide wonderful progress, but we have to welcome new initiatives. We need to be innovative and we need to keep moving ahead. Some of our initiatives will be short term, some will be enduring.

During your breakout sessions I really encourage you to instigate discussion about current initiatives that you have in your navy and your coast guard. What's successful there? Keep the momentum in our maritime domain awareness where we're making such great progress. And maybe come up with three regional issues, three issues that we can work over the next two years, reconvene in two years, and see how it's going.

I encourage you to discuss your specific challenges.

Speaking of challenges, clearly this is a challenging era for maritime forces. Most of our nations are experiencing constrained budgets as we look ahead. Other are wrestling from transition from a land focus to a maritime focus. But threats of freedom on the seas still is growing. Criminals are out there in the ungoverned spaces, and we've got piracy emerging here and there.

Each country out there has their own perspective, but the challenges are similar.

We in the Navy, our Marine Corps and our Coast Guard examined these challenges five or six years ago, and four years ago at this very forum we laid out, Admiral Roughead brought forward along with Admiral Thad Allen from the Coast Guard and General Conway Commandant of the Marine Corps, to introduce our Maritime Strategy, cooperative strategy for the 21st Century.

In that document our sea services brought together two major points. Preventing wars is as important as winning wars; and global maritime partnerships are absolutely essential to prevent disruptions and to contain conflict.

This central idea of global maritime partnerships is enduring and it's just as important if not more important now than it has been before. We desire to see a cooperative approach to maritime security and the rules of law on the sea. Our cooperative strategy for the 21st Century, our maritime strategy, has served us well and I think it will continue to do so. We'll need to sharpen its focus here and there as our challenges evolve, and many of you have developed your own maritime strategy, your own strategic documents. They will help you focus your navies as well and their efforts. They will deal with the unique and demanding challenges today and the challenges of tomorrow.

But although our strategic documents may be slightly different, there is one underlying theme in all of them -- to develop that cooperative relationship with partners, with those of us in this room. It's not an end in and of itself, this cooperation. The goal is maritime security. We need to prevent these disruptions and we need to contain conflict out there.

National and international partnerships are essential to maritime security. They allow rapid response in multiple jurisdictions. They provide the capacity to search wide areas and to be able to respond. And they know this maritime domain awareness we talk about where we bring together information from multiple sources.

I would submit we need to continue to focus these elements not just at the International Seapower Symposium, but the other symposia around the world that you and I attend from time to time. The Western Pacific Naval Symposium; the International Maritime Defense Exhibit and Conference at Doha; the InterAmerican Naval Conference; the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium; and Regional Seapower Symposium, just to name a few out there.

We need to be interoperable and we need to be able to respond. That's about awareness, it's about communication, it's about the synergy of our navies and coast guard and our ability to respond and to be responsive. We need to have a common understanding of the maritime domain awareness. It is out there.

Our agreements on information sharing will bring us the trust. The Automatic Identification System, AIS, we need to build common operations and a concept of operations for that. The Maritime Safety and Security Information System, we need to bring a common operational concept to that. Pull it all together so that we're looking toward that common operational picture.

Maritime domain awareness and that consolidation will bring us what I would call the speed of trust. If we trust each other, things will move fast. We'll have that speed that's necessary to be able to react. That need to coordinate the actions, the communications will be of course by way of hardware that we develop, but more properly that we've brought together by relationships.

Lastly, we need to be able to take effective action. We need to be able to respond. Knowing and talking is one thing. Responding is really how we're going to get it done. We have to have sufficient capacity through the cooperative agreements that we agree to. We need to have the sustainment whenever things happen. We need to posture ourselves to be able to react. And of course we've got to trust each other and be willing to cooperate.

A lot of this is going to take time. It's a long term project. The projects will be implemented by people who understand, the folks that work for you and I, the people who are out there at the international programs here. They'll learn how to work together. How to get past barriers to effectively communicate. Bring together the equipment and the organizations that matter. And to develop that military-to-military interaction and relationship.

I look forward to coming to see during my tenure many of you, to talk through what is important to us. But we, you and I, we need to build toward the future. We need to nurture the interaction and the engagement of our future leaders, our midshipmen, our officers, and our enlisted people. And it's more than just me having punch and cookies or drinks and talking; it's common training also that will be important. Every opportunity to learn together will be valuable.

And it's about training programs ashore. In 2011 we had 1400 international students attend our courses. That's good. We've had operational gaming that we've had good attendance, that's good. We need to continue the momentum.

Our training programs at sea. In 2011 we had 56 midshipmen underway from 16 nations out there, and we had several midshipmen ourselves, some of our midshipmen out with 16 foreign navies. A good exchange. I like it. Let's keep the momentum.

We've had some of your navies deploy with our carrier strike groups. Good start, let's keep the momentum.

These people will sit where we sit today. These young officers, these midshipmen, these enlisted. They'll be where we are today. The friendships being built today will endure for many years. We need to remain committed to this, you and I.

So in the end, successful efforts will be about people willing to get together, respect each other's cultures, beliefs, and find common solutions.

So let me close by saying thank you all again for your commitment, coming here. We've made remarkable progress. There will be more opportunities. And let's be reminded that the prosperity of the maritime nations is on the sea.

We are in a time of unprecedented global interdependence and we have abundant maritime activity and a lot of constructions out there. It's a time of budget constraints, so we've got to innovate, we've got to share capabilities, share technologies, and be willing to work together.

Maritime security is impossible for one nation. No one can do it alone. It's a team effort. It's a team sport.

So on behalf of my Navy I look forward to forming and continuing the partnerships today and in the future.

Thank you again very much for your attendance, and thank you for listening. Have a great symposium.

[Applause].

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