

**Chief of Naval Operations  
Adm. Jonathan Greenert's Opening Remarks before the  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on Law of the Sea Convention  
June 14, 2012**

Chairman Kerry, ranking member Lugar, distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you to discuss the Law of the Sea Convention. You'll have to excuse me, I have a little bit of laryngitis but I'll get through this.

This morning, I'd like to make three points, if I may. Number one, the Law of the Sea Convention will help ensure the access that the Navy needs to operate forward. And Senator, operating forward is what we're about. That's where we are at our best, that's where we serve the nation best. That's key to our effectiveness. Number two, the Convention will provide a formal and consistent framework, with legal certainty to peacefully settle maritime disputes. And number three, the Convention will help ensure we remain consistent with our principles and will enhance our multi-lateral cooperation. That I have found in spades as I have interfaced with my heads of navies from around the world.

As the world's preeminent maritime power, the U.S. Navy will benefit from the support the Convention provides our operations, especially the broad navigational rights that are guaranteed on the high seas and inside exclusive economic zones of the other nations. For example, in the past several years, some nations in the Middle East and the Asia Pacific region have complained about U.S. Navy survey ships operating within their exclusive economic zones. Commanders have consistently responded by asserting our rights under the Convention and customary international law. However, our argument would carry much more weight if the U.S. were a party to the convention. Joining the Convention would give our day-to-day maritime operations a firmer, codified legal foundation. It would enable and strengthen our military efforts, it won't limit them.

The Convention provides a formal and consistent framework for peaceful resolution of maritime disputes. The Convention defines the extent of control that nations can legally assert at sea and prescribes procedures to peacefully resolve differences. It's an important element in preventing disagreements from escalating into a confrontationally-potential conflict. Recent interference with our operations in the Western Pacific and some rhetoric by Iran about closing the Strait of Hormuz underscore the need to be able to use the Convention to clearly identify and respond to violations of international law that might attempt to constrain our access. As a member of the Convention, our ability to press the rule of law and to peacefully deter conflict will certainly be enhanced.

Remaining outside of the Convention is just inconsistent with our principles, our national security strategy and our leading position in maritime affairs. For example, our forces in the U.S. Fifth Fleet and Arabian Gulf, lead a Coalition Maritime Force (CMF) that enforces maritime security in the greater Middle East. Out of the 26 nations that serve in the coalition, only three, including the United States, are not a party to the Convention. This coalition asserts rights on a daily basis under the Convention to visit vessels, counter piracy, and render assistance to vessels in danger. However, America's status as a non-party to the Convention is sometimes questioned by our coalition partners. Acceding to the Convention will enhance our position as a leader of that coalition and a leader in the world and maritime nations in the Middle East and elsewhere.

In closing, aided by the framework provided by the Convention, your Navy will continue to be critical to our nation's security and prosperity. I appreciate the committee's longstanding support of the men and women of the Navy and I look forward to continuing to work with you as we address the challenges. Thank you.