Admiral Richardson: On behalf of the more than 630,000 active duty and reserve sailors and civilians of the United States Navy, I’m honored to represent the United States Navy here at this very distinguished Inter American Naval Conference. It’s also wonderful to be back in South America and in Colombia, a continent and a country with which we have a personal connection. My daughter-in-law, my son’s wife, her family, the Castillo family, is from Bogota. Also Gachantiva. So it’s very much a pleasure to be here.

It’s also great to be among such wonderful friends, fellow Americans, for here, we are all Americans.

The United States has a very rich history working with your navies in Central and South America and in the Caribbean, in the waters off North America and in other waters around the world for decades. In fact, over 100 years ago, the U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt authorized an around-the-world naval expedition known as the Great White Fleet, and during his voyage, that fleet made ports of call and paid visits in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Punta Arenas and Valparaiso, Chile; and Callao, Peru. And this goodwill extended through well into the 2nd World War where the nations of this hemisphere united against evil to counter the axis powers during a global conflict that played out on, above and below all of the world’s oceans. For instance, the Brazilian Navy escorted more than 3,000 merchant ships, more than 16 million tons of cargo, through the waters so effectively that out of 3,000, only three ships were lost while in their protection. All navies represented her patrolled the coast lines, safeguarded key waterways in the Atlantic and the Pacific, controlled the seas, and never ceded to the enemy.

Moving forward, during the Cold War and continuing to the present day, partnerships that emerged from a shared vision of what our world can and should look like when nations enjoy prosperity afforded by access to the seas grew even stronger. We have worked together alongside many of you to build, refine, maintain and exercise a wide spectrum of capabilities from law enforcement to antisubmarine warfare and everything in between.

As Americans, we are bound by much more than our shared geography. We share inter American values and a commitment to
regional and global institutions designed to confront common security challenges.

The fact that we are here together as Chiefs of Navy is no coincidence. International relationships, I believe that military to military relationships share a predominance, a preference, because we have a shared culture in the military. And amongst the military, I would offer that navy to navy relationships are first among equals because of what the sea does to bind us all together.

Since its start in 1959, the Inter American Naval Conference has been instrumental to strengthening the bonds of partnership, collaboration and friendship that define us both as fellow naval professionals and as neighbors. Its fundamental intent is to stimulate that permanence, professional, those contacts between navies to promote solidarity in our hemisphere.

These navy to navy relationships are so natural because we share the background, the culture, the knowledge and the love and a respect for what the sea can do to us and also what the sea can provide. This has never been more true than today.

Despite the challenges we face, internal to our nations, common to all, our regional security relationship forms the keel of our shared Americaship. And for me, this conference reaffirms that keep is as steady and as strong as it has ever been. Strong enough to withstand any political winds or seas that may come.

Our work together here and in oceans far away demonstrate that we are ready to sail into any waters, face any challenges, and emerge victorious together.

Our shared values are already represented in the work we have accomplished on the IANC’s 2018 theme -- responsibility of the regional navies against drug trafficking. We must make progress here. And I see there are three promising areas to support us. And since we’re all sailors here, I thought an appropriate way to describe these three promising areas would be to take a fix, the intersections of three lines of bearing can help to orient us so we can plot a course on our shared journey. So we’ll take three lines of bearing to define this fix.

Our first line of bearing, the first that unites us as naval professionals, is a deep respect for rules-based institutions. This region has long been a pioneer in that regard. The Organization of American States is the world’s oldest regional
organization, established to promote solidarity, strengthen collaboration and to defend sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

Earlier this year this organization celebrated its 70th Anniversary at the White House in Washington, DC where the U.S. Vice President Pence said, “The United States is proud to stand with free nations across this hemisphere in the pursuit of our shared goals.”

The Inter American Defense Board was created in 1942, again, the oldest regional defense organization in the world. Together with its 28 member states it is a vital institution to advise on and assist with military and defense issues in our hemisphere to fulfill the OAS Charter and preserve an order of peace and justice.

So our first line of bearing, respect for rules-based institutions, is indeed clear and on our chart.

So we’ll swivel, we’ll move our Polaris in the direction of our second line of bearing, our second navigational aid, security partnerships -- bilateral and multilateral, regional and international. Again, our conference here is indicative of those bonds. For nearly 60 years it has facilitated the exchange of ideas, knowledge, mutual understanding and developing common approaches to hemispheric maritime challenges.

These partnerships extend beyond the walls of this room and out onto the high seas. The greatest strength of these partnerships is the ability to adapt, to change as the maritime security environment has also changed.

You know, people have been going to sea in ships for almost 10,000 years, but it is in the past 25 years, the past quarter century, we have witnessed a 400 percent increase in maritime traffic. An amazing jump in the amount of traffic on the seas.

As you all know, 90 percent of international trade travels by sea, and it’s changing out there. Right? The Polar Ice Cap, both Polar Ice Caps are receding to form new trade routes and redraw continental boundaries and access to continental shelves and their attendant resources.

At the same time, the seas have affected nearly every aspect of our lives. Megacities, those cities with more than ten million
people along the coastlines have expanded, and there are more and more megacities growing every day.

Aquaculture, the harvesting of food from the sea, both protein and carbohydrate, has increased by more than ten times and it’s projected to increase ten times more in the next 15 years. The world’s fish production used for human consumption has increased more than 146 million tons.

Additionally, it’s not all about the natural part of the ocean. There’s underwater infrastructure, underwater cables have been laid that now carry 99 percent of all international communications. And we’re also developing technologies that allow us access to minerals and resources from deeper and deeper in the sea floor.

So it’s no coincidence that in this past 25 years the world’s gross domestic product has roughly doubled. It’s been fueled by the increase in activity on that maritime traffic. Free access to and movement on the seas has benefited all of us.

The sea clearly affords us great opportunities but it also presents us great challenges, and we will need to draw on our shared security interests to collaborate even more closely to meet those challenges.

Admiral Curt Tidd, the Commander of the United States Southern Command observed that in meeting these challenges, more often than not the best thing to do is to be the best possible partner to our friends and allies. That’s why the majority of our efforts here in this region, in this hemisphere, are focused on strengthening the partnerships that are the backbone of the regional security network.

So now we have our second line of bearing taken on our second navigational aid, security partnerships, and we can start to get a sense of where we are positioned on the chart.

But these two lines of bearing, these two navigational aids are the frameworks for collaboration, for cooperation. We need a third line of bearing, capability and presence, that translates these frameworks into action.

So just allow me to provide a brief snapshot of the U.S. Navy today operating around the world, including here in and around South America. And as I speak to you today we have approximately 90 ships and submarines forward deployed; three
nuclear powered aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships; and 60,000 sailors scattered across every ocean. So I think a legitimate question would be, what are you doing? What are you doing with all of that forward deployed naval power? Well, a lot of times we are working with our allies and partners, we are working with you.

Here in South America the USS Gunston Hall deployed for Southern Seas 2018, an annual collaborative exercise that includes combined multinational staffs consisting of Argentinian, Colombian, and Brazilian Naval officers. And while the deployment has been important for several reasons, one notable accomplishment this time was the use of unmanned aerial systems to increase overall maritime domain awareness and provide real time mission support on land, at sea, in day and night. Skills we must continue to refine as the maritime environment grows increasingly more complex.

The work with unmanned systems build on the progress of another ongoing deployment, Southern Partnership Station, aimed at strengthening regional maritime services and improving operational readiness for all participants across a range of mission areas from lifesaving techniques to countering terrorism to intercepting illicit networks.

As we gather here, Exercise RIMPAC, the largest maritime exercise in the world, is underway in the waters off of Hawaii with Brazil, Colombia and Peru all represented. Chile is participating for the 12th time, but in an historic first the Chilean Commodore Pablo Niemann serves as the Combined Forces Maritime Component Commander, in effect, commanding all maneuvering afloat forces in a series of high end warfare missions. This role is a worthy opportunity to showcase the Armada de Chile’s first-class capabilities during their navy’s 200th Anniversary and builds upon the momentum gained in participation in previous exercises.

This RIMPAC is a landmark, partners achieving their maximum potential power, improving together.

My representative here, Admiral Sean Buck, a hand-picked leader, proven competence, proven character, is working tirelessly with you, your navies, to strengthen the bonds of trust and confidence that form the foundation of our mutual naval operations at sea. One of the exercises under his command, UNITAS, has been going every year since 1959, the same year that this conference began. And UNITAS is the world’s longest-
running annual multinational maritime exercise focusing on high technology surface, air, amphibious and undersea naval training demonstrating our multinational maritime coalition. And we are proud that the Colombian Navy will host UNITAS in September of this year.

The expanding amount of international trade that travels along the world’s oceans transits some of the most important strategic passages in the globe, and one of these strategic passages is the Panama Canal, through which more than 235 million tons of good pass each year to sustain the world’s economy. And Exercise PANAMAX with countries from Central and South America is designed to prepare a combined response to potential threats to the Canal, keeping that waterway free and open for that important international traffic and commerce.

So these exercises and our mutual participation reflect the security interests and the prosperity interests of our respective countries. These deployments are really part of a broader enduring effort to work shoulder to shoulder, to steam together with your navies so that through training we can learn to communicate, navigate and operate together. These deployments serve a higher purpose as well. They enhance security. They maintain order. They preserve a system that is legal, transparent, and fair to everybody. And in doing so, they promote the prosperity of all.

These deployments, when and where they matter, are a clear recognition that this world order which has enabled shared global prosperity is only as strong as our shared commitment to defend it.

So we can now maybe review our position. The intersection of the three lines of bearing -- respect for rules-based institutions, strong security partnerships, and committed capability and presence -- all three lines of bearing convert to a nice tight fix right here in Cartagena, to work with and learn from each other. The strength and intensity of this meeting indicate that we are indeed fair in the channel, on course and speed together.

Now through my remarks there have been a couple of words repeated over and over again, and that was deliberate. Words like oldest, longest-running, continuous, enduring, consistent. Let there be no doubt, these words describing our relationships, describing our institutions, they describe our shared history and our consistent commitment to each other and to the
prosperity of this hemisphere. So the keel of our ship, our naval partnerships, is indeed hard and the ship is strong.

Like nearly all the countries in this continent and those represented here at IANC, the United States is and always has been and always will be a maritime nation. It’s ingrained deep into our maritime heritage, the recognition that especially in today’s complex environment nobody can compete successfully on our own. We have never competed alone in our past and we will not compete alone in our future.

We must choose our partners, those partners that are going to go the distance with us, with whom we can cooperate, partners with whom we can collaborate, and moving forward, partners we can interoperate with and maybe become mutually interdependent. And as the old saying goes, iron sharpens iron, exercising and deploying together makes each one of us stronger. Learning together through port calls, personnel exchanges, attending each other’s schools and in so many other ways, bring us closer together and make us better together.

This is what the United States Navy, as just one of the American navies, has strived to do for the past 70 years, and I would argue that the result has been a world in which all nations are free to control their territorial interests, access to seas, and sail freely on open oceans that have allowed all nations to prosper.

But this system did not appear overnight. It was created carefully, deliberately, and was the work of many nations -- mine and yours -- over decades. Safeguarding it requires the same diligence and vigilance. It requires us continuing to think together, to learn together, and to operate together, making commitment to improve and ensuring that our Inter American values serve as our Southern Cross or our North Star.

We’ll continue, the United States Navy will continue to prize every day that we have to sail alongside you and any nation that seeks a maritime environment that is secure, orderly and prosperous for all.

And again, on behalf of the men and women of the United States Navy, muchas gracias for inviting me today and for the hospitality that you’ve shown me. I wish us all fair winds and following seas. Thank you.

# # # #