Admiral John M. Richardson, Chief of Naval Operations
@America, Indonesia
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Admiral Richardson: Good afternoon, everybody, and thank you for that very kind introduction.

This is a very cool place. A great venue. Everybody in stadium seating. They said this is one of the more cutting-edge happening places to come to speak and I have to agree. So thank you all for having me. This is my first trip to Indonesia, and I’ve got to say Jakarta has a vibrancy that’s evident, undeniable, immediately upon touchdown. So it’s just a real pleasure to be here.

I want to also thank Hazel and U.S. Indo for hosting us here. As I said, it’s a pleasure.

Before I go any further in my remarks I do want to take a moment and just offer my condolences for the tragedy of Lion Air. I just want to ensure that our thoughts and prayers are with those who perished on the airline, and we pray that their families can find consolation quickly. We also keep in our thoughts all those responders who are out there working so hard to mitigate this tragedy. So I just wanted to take a moment and recognize that.

It’s a privilege to represent the 600,000 members of the United States Navy, and if there’s just something to, the reason we’re here is to affirm our commitment to the strategic partnership between Indonesia and the United States.

I started my visit by paying a visit out to Admiral Siwi, Chief of the Indonesian Navy in his headquarters in [Chi Lan Ka]. And we both agreed during that visit to continue to deepen our navy-to-navy relationship, a relationship that’s already strong, and deepening it still further with more interoperability and more bilateral and multilateral training at sea.

The foundation of this partnership runs very deep. The roots are very deep. They’re the very core of who we are as a people and as two nations. We are both democracies, both large democracies. We both have large economies -- world-class economies. Economies that have global impact. And furthermore, those economies are both fueled by the sea. We’re both maritime nations with a common outlook on the importance of the sea.
The United States and the United States Navy is committed to the strategic partnership as we continue to sail together as we have for many years. In fact I’m very proud that the United States and Indonesia are about to recognize the 70th Anniversary of our relationship -- a landmark in 1949 as we recognized Indonesia, it’s a landmark for both of our countries. I’m also very conscious that we’re here on the host nation for ASEAN and we recognize the absolutely fundamental and critical role of ASEAN, a constellation of partners promoting security and order and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. So it’s very exciting to be here.

I recently hosted in Newport, Rhode Island, the International Sea Power Symposium. The 23rd episode of that. And during that we have about over 100 navies and coast guards that are represented there in our Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. The Indonesian Navy was there, of course. And it was a valuable chance to talk about our strategic partnership in the context of that global maritime community. And the context, the framework for that symposium was the idea of security, order and prosperity on the seas and oceans. I see this visit to Indonesia as really a continuation of that discussion. A chance to advocate for the rules-based international order that underpins the global maritime economy, that is critical to both Indonesia and the United States.

I think when we get the opportunity to pause and recognize that, we should do so.

Like the United States, as I said, Indonesia is clearly a maritime nation. The world’s largest archipelago, over 17,000 islands. A tremendous portion of the Indonesian economy comes from the maritime sector. You’re here right next to the Straits of Malacca. Your imports and exports, your trade, almost all of it travels by sea. It’s very similar to the United States. And you’re here on the border of the South China Sea where over $5 trillion in trade, 50 percent of the world’s oil travels by sea. Indonesia possesses the world’s richest maritime biodiversity and it relies on sea lanes to connect it to the world and maybe just as important, to connect the thousands of islands of Indonesia to one another.

I would argue that we are embarking in a maritime era. You hear about this in many different ways. The Blue Century, the Blue Economy. And so I was looking forward, and we’re going to be increasingly dependent on the seas for our prosperity.
I thought it might be useful just to think about some of the dynamic maneuvering that is going on in the seas as we speak. It’s interesting to remark that although people have been going to sea in ships for about 6,000 years — thousands and thousands of years. The amount of traffic the amount of shipping on the seas has increased by a factor of four. It’s quadrupled in the last quarter century. Really almost a spike. You can imagine going 6,000 years and then in 25 years quadrupling, 400 percent increase.

This traffic, this maritime traffic accounts for 90 percent of all international trade that travels by sea. So it should be no surprise to anybody in Indonesia, in fact anybody in this region of the world that this maritime traffic, this maritime trade has fueled prosperity around the world. The global GDP has roughly doubled in the same period of time, and Indonesia has also profited by that. The Indonesian economy has increased by about 250 percent in the last 25 years, fueled by this increase in maritime activity.

And at the same time, while we can talk about shipping, there’s much more changing in the maritime domain. The global information system is something that’s sprung upon us. Information fuels everything, right? This, again, ties us to the sea. Ninety-nine percent of all the international internet traffic flows on undersea cables.

So we talk about the cloud, you think about a cloud, you look up. The fact of the matter is, all of the information is on the sea floor. Right? So we should be looking down into the depths. And it’s also interesting to note that if that traffic is interrupted for whatever reason, it cannot be reconstituted in the electromagnetic domain. Only about three percent can be reconstituted by satellites and radios. So this infrastructure on the sea floor that carries our information is extremely important.

The sea is also on the sea floor is becoming increasingly possible to reach the resources, the natural resources further and further out to sea. The amount of oil platforms, natural gas platforms, those sorts of features have doubled in the last 25 years from about 3,000 to 6,000.

The amount of protein and carbohydrate that we get from the sea, the amount of food that we get from the sea has increased. In fact, you don’t even have to go back 25 years. The amount of
fish that we consume as people for food has increased by about 20 percent in the last five years alone, amounting to about 150 million tons of fish each year.

So you can see in the last 25 years, and picking up speed, the oceans have been a very, very dynamic, rapidly changing place and have brought prosperity to millions.

Looking forward, it will be more of the same, in fact the pace will probably pick up.

If you think about the concept of a mega city, and it’s not hard to think about here in Jakarta, being a mega city. There’s about 30 to 31 mega cities in the world right now and in the next 10 years or so that number’s expected to grow to 40 or so. Those are projections. And like Jakarta, most of those mega cities will be near the sea. So again, there’s this coupling between our population and the oceans that’s undeniable. In fact President Jokowi has highlighted this even today in Bali at the Open Oceans Forum, highlighting that he sees, his goal is to make Indonesia a major maritime power. So there’s wide recognition of this movement going forward.

I think these facts that we just reviewed clearly demonstrate that nations across the world and their citizens have enjoyed an extended and almost unprecedented period of prosperity, again, fueled in many ways by the sea.

There’s much work yet to be done, of course, but billions of people around the world have benefited from the international order, the rules-based global commons that has lifted literally billions of people out of poverty. This order governs aspects of our diplomatic, economic, and military interests and the conditions arising from this order have created that sense of stability and predictability that will lead to prosperity.

But nations can only devote resources to fostering order on the seas, that order that fuels prosperity if the seas themselves are a place of security. These are a secure place. Secure seas shift our global mindset, but if citizens of the world consider the seas not as a competitive space filled with danger, but as a place of opportunity. To establish security, to create a sense of order that allows everyone to prosper, this job is bigger than any one nation and so that leads you to a sense, to a necessity to form meaningful partnerships. Nations joining together in a common effort to represent the strongest, most productive approach to promoting security.
No nation in this environment can succeed on their own. As the head of a Navy I might be accused of being a big biased, but I would say that navy-to-navy relationships are a very effective, perhaps the most effective way to strengthen nation-to-nation ties. If you think about what you can do with a navy-to-navy partnership, first, we go out to sea together. We’re in international waters much of the time so there aren’t sovereignty concerns. We can go out there and just start working together. And as sailors, and during those operations, exercises, as we work together, this is meaningful work. It takes planning, it takes communications, it takes exchanges of people, exchanges of information. And then of course you have to operate together.

So this is real partnership building type of activity. Furthermore, as sailors we share a deep cultural background. The knowledge and the love and the respect for what the sea can do to us and appreciation for what the sea can provide for us. This has never been more true than today. That shared understanding, the influence of the sea we share can withstand wind and weather. As the winds blow, strong navy-to-navy relationships serve as a strong keel for the ship of state, allowing the other elements of national power -- the political, the diplomatic, the economic, cultural and social dimensions to exercise with vibrancy and do their thing on a keel of stability.

But these partnerships do take work. You have to invest. They take practice. It requires us first to establish some sort of common vision, find some common ground, to be creative, to communicate our intentions clearly and continually. It requires us to adapt with our partners as the geopolitical situation around us changes. This is legitimate work that requires us to openly and transparently share information, lessons learned, and best practices so that we can all operate together safely and effectively and productively. And I would argue that military-to-military relations enhance and strengthen the bonds among nations when they’re done properly. The United States has been long committed to establishing this sense of security on, below and above the seas, and it’s the reason that the United States Navy deploys around the world, exercising with and operating alongside our partners just like Indonesia.

The span of challenges that we face as partners is large. From disaster relief and protection of economic resources to confronting high-end security threats. But this also means that
the span of opportunity for our countries is large. The potential that exists for the United States and Indonesia to work together is really, I think, only just beginning to be realized. We have a strong history of cooperation. We’re dedicated to deepening and strengthening that cooperation and more fully realizing the potential that exists to work together.

When tragedy struck with the earthquake and tsunami in Sulawesi September 28th, the Indonesian Navy leadership sprung into action and I called up my counterpart during that time and we provided assistance during that time as well. We’ll continue to stand with the Indonesian people through what will be a long-term recovery.

But we don’t have to wait for disasters to strike to work together. This cooperation occurs nearly every day, all over the Indo-Pacific region. These deployed forces, the United States Navy operating around the world, are working in many ways with Indonesia. Earlier this year the United States and Indonesia worked to enhance interoperability for humanitarian assistance, to practice at getting better at that, disaster relief during Pacific Partnership 2018. We’re committed to continue devoting the energy doing these exercises, working together to deepen the bonds of trust and confidence between our navies and our nations and our people to better respond to natural disasters in the future.

We have a long history of partnership with respect to information sharing, to better understand the ocean environment. Our partnership is not limited to disaster relief and economic cooperation. We’re also committed to deepening our security partnership. Indonesia maintains a robust schedule of naval exercises. In fact this year Indonesia participated with the United States and 23 other nations in the world’s largest international maritime exercise RIMPAC. The deployment of the Indonesian Navy ships [Makassar] and [Martadinada] demonstrate Indonesia’s commitment to build trust and confidence with international partners practicing for the most sophisticated types of maritime warfare.

In addition to this signature exercise, our countries participate in a host of other bilateral and multilateral exercises. This year’s CARAT Indonesia exercise marks the first between the U.S. Navy and the Indonesia’s Navy newly designated 1st Fleet. They also sailed with each other during Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training with a dozen regional navies, in a multinational naval exercise Komodo. As the saying goes, iron
sharpens iron. Exercising, working together, steaming together, makes both of us stronger. We learn together through port calls, personnel exchanges, attending each other’s schools, and in so many other ways. Deepening the bonds of trust and confidence that enable a strong partnership.

As I mentioned earlier, as we are sitting here today, Indonesia and Bali are on the global stage hosting the 5th Open Ocean Conference. The theme, Our Oceans, Our Legacy, could not be more timely. Indonesia’s rich maritime marine biodiversity is a national treasure. Its existence benefits all people around the globe. Continuing dialogue on fisheries, scientific research, and the long term stability of the oceans and their abundant resources could not be more important. A U.S. Navy team is in Bali as well, attending, and I look forward to their insights when they return from the conference.

As a founding member, and by providing the geographic home for ASEAN, Indonesia also demonstrates a very visible commitment to partnerships that support security, order and prosperity.

AS an organization whose charger is dedicated to accelerating economic growth and promoting regional peace and stability, ASEAN exemplifies a team approach. Indonesia’s dedication to ASEAN also reflects respect and support for rules-based institutions.

The United States is dedicated to working with Indonesia and the other nations of ASEAN when and where we can to promote a safe and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

I’ll wrap it up because I think the most interesting part of our conversation will be the questions and answers. But I think that after just stimulating some thought on the maritime century in which we live and the maritime economy on which we all depend. After considering the ways in which our two navies collaborate, we can safely conclude that there’s strong momentum carrying us forward towards a deeper partnership, and that partnership is critical. The system which enables our prosperity, the constellation of partnerships, the rules-based international order that provides for a global commons did not appear overnight. It was created carefully, deliberately, and was the work of many nations, Indonesia and the United States among them, over many years. Safeguarding it requires diligence and vigilance.
We’ll continue sailing alongside Indonesia and any nation that seeks a maritime environment that is secure, orderly and prosperous for all.

So thank you again for U.S.-Indo for hosting the event. Thank you to Admiral Siwi and the Indonesian Navy for their partnership and their very gracious hospitality. To the Indonesian people for opening your doors here in Jakarta.

Thank you.

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