



Admiral Robert F. Willard
Commander, U.S. Pacific Command

National Committee on U.S.-China Relations: Speech / Q&A



7 April 2011

"Security in the Asia-Pacific: Strategic Challenges and Opportunities"

- AS THE COMMANDER OF PACIFIC COMMAND, I'M OFTEN ASKED WHAT'S MY GREATEST CHALLENGE ... AND MY ANSWER IS CONSISTENTLY, *THE CHINA RELATIONSHIP* ... NOT BECAUSE I THINK THE U.S. MILITARY IN THE PACIFIC IS ON AN INEVITABLE ROAD TO CONFLICT WITH THE PRC, BUT BECAUSE IT'S A RELATIONSHIP *WE MUST GET RIGHT* ... AND GETTING IT RIGHT IS FRAUGHT WITH CHALLENGES.
- FOR THAT REASON, I APPRECIATE THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE AND YOUR WORK TO FOSTER IMPROVED U.S. CHINA RELATIONS ... MY CHIEF ADVISOR ON CHINA IS A MEMBER OF THIS ORGANIZATION, AND MY PREDECESSOR, TIM KEATING, SERVES ON YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS.
- IN THAT WAY, YOU'RE IN A STRONG POSITION TO HELP INFLUENCE PACOM'S VIEWS AND GUIDE OUR APPROACHES TO PROPERLY MANAGING THE U.S. - CHINA MILITARY RELATIONSHIP ...

- SINCE MY LAST VISIT, THERE'S BEEN NO LACK OF ASIA PACIFIC ISSUES TO OCCUPY OUR TIME ...
- I KNOW I SPEAK FOR ALL AMERICANS WHEN I OFFER CONDOLENCES TO THE PEOPLE OF JAPAN FOR THEIR PROFOUND LOSSES ... 30,000 CITIZENS MAY HAVE PERISHED, ½ MILLION ARE HOMELESS, AND THE DAMAGE IN NORTHERN HONSHU IS STAGGERING ... MY WIFE AND I VISITED ONE OF THE WORST HIT AREAS AND CAN ATTEST TO SCENES THAT TRANSCEND THE MOST DRAMATIC NEWS COVERAGE YOU'VE SEEN ...
- THE MARCH 11TH 9.0 EARTHQUAKE, 10M TSUNAMI AND MULTIPLE NUCLEAR REACTOR ACCIDENTS AT FUKUSHIMA DAI-ISHI HAVE HELD MY FOCUS FOR THE PAST THREE WEEKS ... AND IT'S NOT OVER YET
- U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND HAS ABOUT 18,000 OF OUR FORCES IN DIRECT SUPPORT TO THE JAPANESE SELF DEFENSE FORCE, WHO'VE ASSUMED A LEAD ROLE IN JAPAN'S DISASTER RESPONSE, HUMANITARIAN RELIEF EFFORT AND REACTOR ACCIDENT MITIGATION EFFORT ...

- THE PEOPLE OF JAPAN AND ESPECIALLY THEIR DEFENSE FORCES HAVE SHOWN GREAT COURAGE, DETERMINATION AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY ...
- ... AND THE LEVEL OF COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE U.S. AND JAPAN HAS BEEN INSPIRING, AND IS REFLECTIVE OF THE MATURITY OF THE U.S./JAPAN ALLIANCE ...
- NATURAL DISASTERS, HOWEVER, REPRESENT JUST ONE OF MANY CHALLENGES AND CHALLENGERS IN THIS MOST IMPORTANT REGION OF THE WORLD ...
- NORTH KOREA CONTINUES TO REPRESENT ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS OF THEM ... CAUGHT UP IN AN ONGOING SUCCESSION AMIDST NUCLEARIZATION CONCERNS; DEADLY PROVOCATIONS AGAINST THE SOUTH, AND WEAPONS PROLIFERATION, KJI WILL UNDOUBTEDLY REMAIN BELLICOSE AND UNPREDICTABLE TO THE END.
- VIOLENT EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS LASHKAR-E-TAIBA, JAMMAH ISLAMIA, AND ABU SAYYEF GROUP CONTINUE TO EXPLOIT REGIONAL VULNERABILITIES AND EXPAND THEIR INFLUENCE ...

- AND, OF COURSE, CHINA'S INCOMPARABLE MILITARY EXPANSION, EVEN BEYOND ITS ALREADY-LARGEST STANDING ARMY IN THE WORLD, AND RECENT ASSERTIVENESS CHAFES THE NERVES OF ITS NEIGHBORS ... EVEN AS THEY RELY ON UNPRECEDENTED TRADE AND FINANCIAL RELATIONS WITH THIS SECOND LARGEST ECONOMY IN THE WORLD.
- DESPITE THESE CHALLENGES, I REMAIN OPTIMISTIC THAT THE RELATIVE SECURITY THAT THIS REGION HAS ENJOYED FOR DECADES CAN CONTINUE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.
- MY OPTIMISM IS FOUNDED ON THE BELIEF THAT THE UNITED STATES, TOGETHER WITH OUR ALLIES AND PARTNERS REMAIN COMMITTED TO ASIA PACIFIC SECURITY AND PEACE, AND THAT MULTI-LATERAL ORGANIZATIONS LIKE ASEAN AND EAST ASIA SUMMIT CONTINUE TO MATURE AND STRENGTHEN IN THE FACE OF PRESSURES THAT THEY BE MORE PASSIVE.
- U.S. ALLIANCES WITH AUSTRALIA, JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, THE PHILIPPINES, AND THAILAND CONTINUE TO FORM A

BULWARK AGAINST THE REGION'S GREATEST CHALLENGES AND CHALLENGERS ...

- INTERLEAVED WITH GROWING U.S. PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE REGION, THEY PROVIDE FOR LEVELS OF COOPERATION AND CONVERGENCE IN A WIDE VARIETY OF COMMON INTEREST AREAS, SUCH AS DR, HA, MARITIME SECURITY, COUNTER PIRACY AND COUNTER PROLIFERATION.
- INDIA IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE PARTNERSHIPS.
- AS PRESIDENT OBAMA AFFIRMED IN THE 2010 NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY, "THE U.S. SEEKS TO WORK WITH INDIA TO PROMOTE STABILITY IN SOUTH ASIA AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD. AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY, WITH A GROWING ECONOMY AND INFLUENCE THROUGHOUT SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, INDIA AND THE U.S. ARE NATURAL PARTNERS.
- OUR HISTORIES HAVE LED TO A RELATIVELY BRIEF RELATIONSHIP AND A NEED TO WORK CLOSELY TO ESTABLISH A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF BOTH OUR NATIONS.

- STILL, THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM REMAINS CHINA ...
- SECRETARY OF DEFENSE BOB GATES HAS TWICE PROPOSED HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON IMPORTANT ISSUES SUCH AS STRATEGIC NUCLEAR, CYBERSPACE AND SPACE ...
- CHINA IS CONSIDERING ...
- WE BELIEVE CHINA IS ESSENTIAL TO SHAPING NORTH KOREA'S BEHAVIOR ...
- WE BELIEVE CHINA WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE SECURITY OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ... A VITAL MARITIME COMMONS THAT IS A DECLARED U.S. NATIONAL INTEREST ...
- AND, WE BELIEVE CHINA'S CONDUCT IN SPACE AND CYBERSPACE MUST CHANGE AND BECOME MORE RESPONSIBLE, TO ENSURE THE FUTURE SECURITY OF THOSE COMMONS DOMAINS, BOTH INCREASING CRUCIAL TO AN INFORMATIONALIZED WORLD ...
- USPACOM'S ROLE IN THE REGION IS OVERSIGHT OF ASIA PACIFIC SECURITY AND THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE,

BOTH IN OUR NATIONAL INTEREST AND THE INTEREST OF OUR ALLIES AND PARTNERS ...

- ... WHILE WE ENDEAVOR TO ACHIEVE THIS *WITH, BY AND THROUGH* OUR PARTNERS, THERE IS A NATIONAL IMPERATIVE THAT MUST BE MET ...
- ... IN MY CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONIES, I'M ALWAYS ASKED WHETHER I HAVE THE MEANS ... THE FORCES, AUTHORITIES AND SUPPORT ... TO DEFEND OUR NATION'S INTERESTS IN PACOM.
- MY ANSWER HAS ALWAYS BEEN, YES.
- WE BELIEVE THE U.S. RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA MUST EVOLVE TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE ... AND CONTRIBUTE TO ASIA PACIFIC SECURITY, NOT THREATEN IT ... AND NOT PUT THAT QUESTION TO A TEST.