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"Protecting the Commons: Security Opportunities and Challenges in the Asia-Pacific"

Thank you Mike for that kind introduction. For those here today who don't know Maj. Gen. Mike Myatt, he is a true American hero. He led the 1st Marine Division in liberating Kuwait City in Operation Desert Storm. And as he mentioned, in retirement, he serves as CEO of the Marine Memorial Association. He's concluded that getting Marine veterans to agree is a lot harder to handle than liberating a country.

I'd like to especially recognize Secretary of State George Shultz, who's here today. As many of you know, Secretary Shultz was instrumental in negotiating an agreed status between the U.S., China and Taiwan in 1982. His work continues to be a cornerstone of our enduring relationship with China. I'd like to acknowledge Gen. Bailey, up from 1st Marine Division. I'd like to thank the World Affairs Council of northern California for the opportunity to be here today and to thank the Marine Memorial Association for co-hosting this event.

I've commanded United States Pacific Command for two years next month. It's a remarkable half of the world; comprised of 36 nations and three and-a-half billion people. It contains the world's two largest economies aside from the United States: China and Japan.

About five trillion dollars of commerce rides on the sea lines of communication each year. The U.S. share of that is almost 1.2 trillion dollars.

The region contains 34 militaries, including the world's five largest in China, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, and the United States.

We maintain five treaty alliances in the Asia-Pacific with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia.

The region also contains a dozen strategic chokepoints. All of which have been fought over many times throughout history. The Strait of Malacca is perhaps the most important today – it connects the Pacific and Indian Oceans between Singapore and Indonesia and is a bottleneck through which passes an incredible 70,000 ships per year – containing much of the world’s commercial trade and energy.

In this inherently maritime half of the world, where strategic sea lines of communication criss-cross the seas and oceans and concentrate at 12 choke points. The global commons stand out as the vital linkage to U.S. and global prosperity.

For the last six decades the U.S. military together with our allies and partners have undergirded the security of the maritime commons through continual forward presence. On any given day, 50 to 60 ships from the U.S. Pacific Fleet are underway somewhere in the Asia-Pacific. We even maintain a forward deployed naval force consisting of the nuclear powered aircraft carrier, USS George Washington, and a dozen surface combatants in Japan and fast attack submarines in Guam.

But in the 21st century, it’s important to discuss the global commons much more broadly than just the maritime sea lanes, vital as they remain, for the airways, space and cyberspace has become just as crucial to continued U.S. and regional economic prosperity.

And in 2011, all of these commons areas are being placed at increased risk, are intruded upon almost every day, and are targeted centers of gravity in any future conflicts.

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta recently said, “Security priorities in Asia include protecting U.S. territory, citizens and allies; deterring aggression to maintain regional stability; and maintaining free and open access to the maritime, air, space, and cyber domains...”

The Secretary was summarizing U.S. Pacific Command’s mission.

Within the U.S. Strategic Security framework being executed by Pacific Command is a pillar that is labeled: enable global development and prosperity.

This sub-strategy includes PACOM's responsibility to help set the security conditions for all other U.S. agencies to carry out our nation's business throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, it includes our security contribution to enable our allies and partners to carry out their transactions with the United States and with one another.

Protection of the global commons – creating the conditions for assured access and continuous security in the maritime, air, space and cyber domains – is the single most important line of operation for PACOM in its execution of this sub-strategy.

Consider the challenges:

In the maritime domain; piracy, contested sea-space and claims that can lead to conflict especially in the South China Sea, illicit trafficking in drugs, humans, and other contraband, and proliferation of weapons to include weapons of mass destruction; especially from North Korea.

Disputes over airspace and the air lanes we rely on for commercial transportation, the creation of anti-access strategies that can place air operations at risk, and use of the air for proliferation and for trafficking.

The expansion of anti-satellite and counter-space technologies and capabilities, especially by China.

And, the well-known exploitation of cyberspace by state actors like China and Russia, outlier nations like North Korea and non-state actors ranging from hackers all over Asia to extremist organizations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba in South Asia.

As I know you know, responding to many of these challenges is bigger than PACOM and the Department of Defense, and even bigger than any single nation.

For sure, it requires the whole of the U.S. Government working together.

It is the stuff of international diplomacy and the promotion of new policies and, where necessary, laws.

Multi-lateral organizations like [Association of South East Asian Nations and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation], whose members' livelihoods are inexorably linked to the common security, must collectively stand up to these challenges, and contribute as they're able to the protection of the sea lanes, air, space, and cyberspace.

Security of the global commons may be the foremost common cause among nations in the first half of the 21st century.

When I'm asked by our congress in testimony, 'what is PACOM's biggest challenge?'

I answered, 'managing our China relationship.'

To the extent that China, or any other nation, contributes to the challenges the U.S. faces in the commons areas, PACOM must help to mitigate those challenges whether they are occurring in the South China Sea, in cyberspace, or space.

But more important to our future, however, is the potential for China to contribute to the overall security of the global common for its own sake and for the sake of its trading partners, including the United States.

On multiple occasions, former Secretary of Defense Bob Gates encouraged the [People's Republic of China] to enter into a strategic dialogue with the U.S. On matters of space, cyberspace, and nuclear deterrence, and the PRC declined several times.

Finally in this year's security and economic dialogue, hosted by Secretaries Clinton and Geithner in Washington D.C., the two sides discussed maritime security and cyberspace security (for the first time).

Although it was a simple exchange of positions on both those subjects, it was nonetheless a start.

Protecting the commons will increasingly occupy PACOM's and other regional commanders' time for the foreseeable future.

Their security is not a foregone conclusion and the challenges, especially to maritime security, space, and cyberspace have been intensifying.

Commons security is the common cause for this part of the 21st century.

It requires your knowledge and leadership to expand awareness of its importance and all of our collective efforts to enable the unfettered access that assures connectivity in a globalized world whose prosperity demand it.

Thank you very much. I am looking forward to the discussion and your questions.