



A Combatant Commander's Perspective on Security in the Asia-Pacific

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I thought we'd spend a couple of minutes talking about the Asia Pacific region. We'll start with a pitch for the men and women of the Pacific Command. Fifty-one percent of the surface of the earth; half of the world's population. While that's important, the critical part for us here tonight, as we have ROTC cadets among us, is the fact that there are 325,000 men and women in uniform who do the heavy lifting for us all every day – soldiers, sailor, airmen, marines, Coast Guard and DOD civilians who support us in the headquarters of the United States Pacific Command.

So, it's a big chunk of the earth. I'll talk about some of the things we have going on, but I'll start and I'll end tonight by emphasizing the fact that each and every one of these young men and women – your sons; your daughters; nieces; nephews; your neighbors – they serve because they choose to serve. As we come upon the anniversary of 11th September this Friday, I'd ask for you to take a minute and think about those 325,000 men and women who serve, and all the rest of the members of the armed forces. Without them we in the Pacific could not get done what the President and Secretary and Defense ask us to do. None of us here would enjoy the freedoms and liberties that we enjoy today if it weren't for their service and their sacrifice. So think of them, please, as we start and conclude tonight's discussion.

We'll start with Japan. They just had an election there as, you're well aware, for the first time in many many years. There's a new party coming into power in Japan and we watch with interest as democracy unfolds in Japan. We have about 50,000 – 50,000 of those 325,000 armed forces – who are

permanently stationed in Japan. Think of that number, and how important that is strategically. We have air force fighter squadrons. We have marines. We have navy. We have a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the USS George Washington, permanently deployed and home ported off the coast of Japan. Think of what a strategic linchpin Japan is to us.

I don't think there will be any significant strategic change with the new government in Japan. The prime minister has expressed his support for the alliance. It is one of the strongest we have in this region. Japan is a strategic linchpin for us at Pacific Command and I'm confident that as the weeks turn into months we will enjoy the same support from the government of Japan as we have in the many years leading up to this election.

I'll spend a second talking about the defense policy review initiative – DPR. I'll try not to bore you with accolades tonight but you might have heard about this. This is a movement of marines from Okinawa to Guam and some folks think this is a watershed change for those of us in the Asia-Pacific region. Some think that this is going to signal an entirely different way of doing our business. It will not be a watershed change. It's an important piece for us. Our president, the current Japanese prime minister, our secretary of state, our secretary of defense and their counterparts have re-affirmed time and again the United States commitment to execute the defense policy review initiative as agreed upon by the governments of the U.S. and Japan.

That means about 8,000 marines and 5,000-7,000 of their dependents will move from Okinawa to Guam. It's going to happen. It will take some money. It will take some time. Guam is a piece of the United States' American sovereign soil – our flag flies over Guam. So think how important that is to us at the Pacific Command and to us as a government. We will move those marines in time with their dependents; there are certain infrastructure and permits that will have to be made in Guam.

It's not going to be cheap. It won't be easy. It will take a little bit of time. There are some political machinations that are unfolding, but in time I'm convinced that our commitment to Guam will be effective. But don't forget that [when] 8,000 marines go from Okinawa to Guam that leaves 10,000 marines still in Okinawa.

We have about 18,000 marines currently living in Guam, so about half that will go from Okinawa down to Guam. Our president has expressed his commitment to that and it makes good sense to do this. The essential element for us at Pacific Command is that this is U.S. territory and we ask no one's permission to come and go. There are some important training opportunities available in that part of the Pacific – relatively unfettered access to the air and land and maritime domains, so I think it can be a very important piece for us.

So, by and large our relationship with Japan is solid. We're on the right track. We have been for decades and I see no reason for us to be overly concerned about our relationship with Japan.

A lot of folks are interested in the Korea Peninsula; North and South Korea. As you all know, former President Clinton visited North Korea as a private citizen and thankfully obtained the release of our two journalists. I'll be careful here because of certain classification issues but it seems to those who saw him [President Kim Jong II] that he is in better shape than we might have thought. We saw pictures of him standing next to President Clinton.

The reports we got [indicate] that Kim Jong II was conversant; he was cogent; he appeared to be relatively strong and, although the meeting didn't last a long time, the issue of who's really in charge in North Korea appears to be Kim Jong II. He has retained power and looks to be around for a while.

We want to reinvigorate the six-party talks. We are anxious to have North Korea come back to the table. I just spoken to some folks who work this on a daily basis and this is the overarching theme: We in the United States, along with the other members of the six-party agreement want to seek and achieve a certifiable denuclearization of the peninsula.

We want to make sure that whatever nuclear weapons North Korea may have; we'll want them to get rid of them and then check them – trust, but verify. So we are cautiously optimistic that in time North Korea will realize that the rest of the world regards their behavior conducting possible nuclear tests; launching intercontinental ballistic missiles and short- and medium-range ballistic missiles as irresponsible behavior. It's in clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions.

So we're hopeful that North Korea comes to its senses, if you will, and eventually decides... to seek a peaceful reunification of the peninsula. The first step there is certifiable denuclearization of the peninsula. My view after 2½ years in office is that we're closer to it than we were 2½ years ago. But we all have a lot of work to do.

Just to put a number on it, it could be five, 10, 15 years away and it will take some change in administration in North Korea, and that's the \$64,000 question. What's next? Who's next? We're not sure. We're working on a wide range of options to prepare for "what if," and we are very careful to have unilateral options available to the President and secretary. We are looking to go about this in a multi-lateral forum with the other five members of the six-party talks – China, Japan and South Korea foremost among them, of course.

Moving on down around the corner, the Philippines. Not a lot of attention paid these days to the struggle against violent extremism we saw in the Philippines. That's good. That's important. That's progress. Abu Sayyaf Group

and Rajah Solaimen are still active in the southern Philippines, and they are active within a large part of our air responsibility. We will talk about violent extremism in just a minute, but in the southern Philippines in particular we have about 600 special operations forces in the southern Philippines, not conducting kinetic military activities – that’s what they’re *not* doing. They’re not out there pulling triggers. They’re out there helping the armed forces of the Philippines fight violent extremism.

We’re helping by providing some logistic support; by providing certain transportation capabilities. We’re providing information and intelligence. Our guys are out there helping the armed forces in the Philippines understand what it takes to combat violent extremism, so as to help capture the hearts and minds of those men and women in southern Philippines and disabuse them of the notion that it’s OK to support violent extremists.

As an example of how effective our work there has been, and how effective the work of the armed forces of the Philippines has been, I took a trip about a year-and-a-half ago to the extreme southern regions of the Philippines with our ambassador there. Some of you may know her, Ambassador Kristie Kenny – dynamo, powerful powerful instrument of diplomacy for the United States in the Philippines, and a good friend. We ended up in the Joseph Conrad, heart-of-darkness jungles of the southern Philippines.

We were riding on very rough, unprepared roads in the recesses of the jungles of southern Philippines, and young kids were running out of mom and dad’s reach on these unprepared roads as we were bouncing along in the convoy, and followed by Armed Forces of Philippines soldiers and marines. The kids were by the side of the road clapping and waving – youngsters, four, five, six, ten years old – jumping up and down waving at the Philippine soldiers and marines.

Ambassador Kenney said, "Two years ago the moms and dads would have grabbed them and pulled them inside and wouldn't let them come out by the side of the road." So, if the battle is for the hearts and minds of the men and women so as to make it increasingly difficult for violent extremists to move, operate, and enjoy logistical financial support, a good example of the progress we're making in the Pacific Command is the work being done by our 600 special forces in the southern part of the Philippines.

India. When I was a Lt. Commander... I was the aide and flight lieutenant to the then-commander chief of the Pacific Command, Admiral William J. Crowe. Some of you may have heard of Admiral Crowe, a great American by any measure. I was his flight lieutenant; I was the guy carrying the bags and touching the glass of Chardonnay. We went to India in 1984. We tried very hard to insure that Admiral Crowe was happy; we didn't want him to be sad. His trip to India didn't make him happy.

The reception he got was rather chilly. The conversations were rather pro forma. They weren't very substantive. Agreements that he hoped to achieve were not satisfied. All I remember is his Indian colleagues saying, "We're a fiercely nonaligned nation and we don't particularly want to be exercising with you or working with you."

Well, fast forward 25 some years to where now yours truly goes to India, about six months ago; our second visit in two years, and the reception is warm. The dialogue was fulfilling, the commitments were concrete and are being executed as we speak. We now do about a dozen full-scale military exercises – army; navy; air force; Marine Corps. We have Indian fighter pilots coming to [our] air force base, flying a red flag. We have Indian aircraft carriers and Indian ships participating in multilateral exercises with Japan, Australia, Singapore, the United States and India.

Multilateral – five nations. Think about their size; how powerful a statement is that? And India is resolute and committed to that and, remember, they just had an election. We were in India the day the polls closed; they voted for three or four days. Our embassy folks say this is the greatest show on earth. About 750 million people – think about that number – 750 million people – vote in the Indian national elections.

Not all of them are as gifted in terms of language capabilities as some of us in this room, but they go into a polling booth and they vote for a symbol, a color, a shape. They get out and they vote and the current leaders of the Indian government expressed to us on the day after the election their resolute commitment to enduring bonds of friendship and support and engagement with the United States of America.

In their view, a centerpiece of that is the military-to-military relationship with the United States specifically, and for that we are indeed grateful. Look on your map, look where they sit. That's an important geo-strategic position in the world. When we were there, our Indian colleagues would say to us, "Now, share with us your Indian Ocean strategy." First time I went, I had to admit, "Well, we really didn't have one." We didn't think of it that way.

Our Indian colleagues pay close attention to the name – it's the Indian Ocean. They look at it as kind of their front yard. So it matters very much to them how people who use that for free unfettered access to the maritime domain regard that, and that we appropriately concede to India certain oversight considerations that they think are important for them.

Australia. We were just there last week. As soon as I mentioned one of our long-standing allied partners in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia does not have military nearly as large as ours but they are working all throughout the Asia-Pacific region. They're committed in Afghanistan. They're with us in

Iraq. They're helping maintain peace and stability in somewhat fragile, very small island nations in the southern Pacific. They're trying to help restore democracy in Fiji. They did a good job and continue to have folks stationed in Timor Leste, the Solomon Islands. We have a peace-keeping force stationed there led by Australians and populated mostly by Australians. They are engaging increasingly with us on military exercises.

Our time spent with them is time spent well. They are committed, fiercely committed, to stability throughout the southern reaches of the Pacific, and that's an important region for us all. And every time they send their soldiers, sailors and the marines to oversee; to guard; to train – that's a commitment we don't have to satisfy by our soldiers, sailors and marines. So, they're immensely helpful to us across a wide spectrum of issues.

Let me close with a discussion about the People's Republic of China. A lot of folks will say, "Hey, Tim, you must be losing sleep over China. That's the big threat, isn't it? Don't you worry a lot about China?" My answer is "No, I don't lose sleep over China." I don't want to be glib about it. We don't view China as a threat. I don't lose sleep over China. We're thinking about them. We're watching them pretty carefully. We're paying close attention to what they do.

Their military budget is increasing – got it. They have some capabilities that are interesting to us. They're building more submarines – they have about 65; maybe 75 submarines now. Some of them nuclear; most of them are diesel. They have some pretty sophisticated air-to-air weapons. They fly some reasonable fighters – nothing like ours – but they're pretty good. They are increasingly active in electronic counter-measures.

In the cyber world, we're not sure and – there are levels of classification I have to be careful about – but China is out there, as are other countries in the world, who are working in the cyber area. All of that falls into the broad

umbrella of asymmetric capabilities. China doesn't have aircraft carriers. They don't have F-22s. They don't have the people we have. They don't have the training we have. They don't have the equipment. But they're getting better.

When we talk to our Chinese colleagues and say, "Why are you developing weapons as you are? What capabilities do you hope to have in the near and mid-term and why are you doing this?" They look at us and say, "We only want to protect that which is ours." Fair enough. We in the United States understand protecting that which is ours. So, too do we understand Australia, Japan and many of our allies and colleagues throughout the Asia-Pacific region. We get that notion.

What we're not going to do is draw China out. We don't want to isolate them. We don't want to cut them off. We don't want them to feel threatened or challenged by us, the United States of America or any of the rest of us. I can't speak for our allied partners, but I can speak for the Pacific Command, and I have conversations with 29 countries we've now visited in the Asia-Pacific region in 2½ years. And without exception, those countries want us to stick around. Many of them view us as a hedge against China. Fair enough.

China wants us to stick around in our conversations with them as a hedge against the rest of them. Okay. It's a seller's market then, you might say. We're satisfied that the saw cuts both ways and we're on both ends of the saw, if you will. But the important thought I will leave with you – we don't want China to feel threatened by us and we are not going to be threatened by them. We will not threaten and we will not be threatened. We will remain a militarily prominent power in the Asia-Pacific region for decades and decades. That's not going to change, my friends.

But that's not the real point. It's not a case of us pounding our chests louder with more force than they do – quite the contrary. We want them to be

assured. We want them to be confident. There's lot of room in the Asia-Pacific region. The economies there; the fact that 80% of the oil that goes to China, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan goes through the Straits of Malacca, a tiny little body of water, critical, strategic, not to mention the Strait of Hormuz. So, also those two strategic choke points and from the Strait of Hormuz through the Indian Ocean; through the Strait of Malacca. Oil goes up to those four countries. They all want free unfettered access to the secure maritime domain. We too want that same free unfettered access. We do a trillion dollars in trade a year – a year – with countries in the Asia-Pacific region and most of it at one time or another is on a ship on the water.

So, at the end of the day, each of those countries that I've discussed – each of the governments in charge; each of the military powers with whom we deal, we get along with almost all of them. North Korea, I'm cautiously optimistic. Burma, a basket case. Who knows where they're going to go? I think we'll prevail. We've been there. We've tried to offer them relief in the wake of [the recent] cyclone, and they wouldn't take it. They told us, "No, no thanks."

But at the end of the day – I started here and I'll close here – the men and women of your United States Pacific Command are out there. They're on watch. They're flying. They're steaming. They're marching. They're patrolling. They are keeping the Asia-Pacific region more stable; more secure. They are helping insure more prosperity and the continued growth of democracy through this critical and important region.

I'm convinced that this next century will be the century of the Asia-Pacific, and you should go to bed at night comfortable; confident. Don't lose sleep over what's going on out there because you have 325,000 young men and women who are resolutely committed to partnership; to readiness; to maintaining presence.



They're well trained; well-equipped. They form the nucleus of the greatest army, navy, air force and Marine Corps in the history of the world. Think about that.

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