



**Adm. Dennis C. Blair, USN, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Command
Remarks to Atlantic Council
20 March 2002
Barr Building, Washington D.C.**

I appreciate this invitation from my friend Curt Coward to speak before this important group.

However as a Pacific sailor, I'm as good a fit at the Atlantic Council as say, David Letterman is on *Nightline*.

However, I will press on. We need to build understanding within Washington of the Asia-Pacific region. You may have heard about the Washington corporate lawyer who recently took a vacation to one of our islands in the Pacific.

Down at the beach one morning, he saw a fisherman returning with a good catch, and in a friendly way, asked how the fishing was.

"Great," the fisherman replied. "Plenty more out there, too."

The Washington corporate lawyer, who also had an MBA, asked the fisherman, "Well what'll you do the rest of the day?"

The fisherman replied, "I'll sell my catch; then come home, play with my kids, take a nap with my wife, and drink a beer with my friends."

The Washingtonian said, "Listen, let me tell you what you could do. You could borrow some money, buy some more boats, stay out longer, catch more fish, and before too long, you'd have a big company making lots of money."

"How long would that take?" asked the fisherman.

"Oh, 5-10 years," said the Washingtonian. "But that's not the best part. In another 5-10 years, you could really build up the business, float an IPO, and then ... you could really retire with a bundle."

"And then what?" asked the fisherman.

"And then you'd have lots of time – you could play with your grandkids, take a nap with your wife, and drink beer with your friends."

This evening, I'd like to talk briefly about four subjects, then leave plenty of time for questions, comments, and discussion.

First, I'll talk about the campaign against terrorism in the Asia-Pacific region;

Second, I'll talk about our day jobs – maintaining security in the potential flashpoints of the region;

Third, I'll address security cooperation – the way to a more secure and prosperous future for the region;

And finally, I'll talk about the transformation of our forces in the Pacific to be even more quick and lethal in the future.

First, the war on terrorism in our part of the world:

Pacific Command forces have been in the middle of the combat operations in Afghanistan:

The *Vinson* carrier battlegroup arrived in the North Arabian Sea on 11 September 2001, and its aircraft were in action within a few weeks.

Soon the *Kitty Hawk* and *Stennis* battlegroups, and the *Pelelieu* and *Bonhomme Richard* amphibious ready groups joined, and it was Marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, from Camp Pendleton, California, who first went ashore at Camp Rhino.

American friends and allies in the APR quickly rallied behind our country, and provided crucial support.

In September of last year, the airbridge from the United States stretched westward across the Pacific to Afghanistan, rather than eastward across Europe, because our allies and partners in Asia were quicker in granting overflight permission.

Australia, New Zealand, and Canada sent forces to Afghanistan, while Korea and Japan – which passed new legislation to do it – provided logistic support.

Meanwhile, we went on the offensive in the Pacific against terrorism.

We don't have any Afghanistans in the APR – countries which share the international terrorists' goals, and provide a sanctuary.

We have governments which are generally willing, and often able, to go after terrorists in their territory.

The key to success against international terrorism in our part of the world is relentless pressure against the terrorists and their support, and unprecedented international cooperation in the campaign.

There have been initial successes – you may have read about the arrests in Southeast Asia, which thwarted planned attacks against U.S. forces and embassies, and broke up part of an extensive terrorist ring there.

Our largest military operation against terrorism is in the Philippines, where a U.S. Joint Task Force is

providing training, some equipment, intelligence support, and advisors to the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The objective is to keep a Taliban-like government from gaining a foothold in that part of the world.

The terrorists are patient, flexible, skilled, and can take advantage of both free societies and areas where governments are unable to maintain law and order. We must be persistent, aggressive, innovative, and cooperate – both within our own government and with other governments.

Second, let me address the flashpoints in the region, which are the legacy of past conflicts.

On the Korean Peninsula, an impoverished North Korea continues to starve its people ... as it maintains threatening military forces, and exports weapons – including missiles – to anyone who'll buy them.

We've maintained a strong deterrent posture on the Peninsula, while conducting combat operations in Afghanistan.

When the *Kitty Hawk* deployed to the North Arabian Sea, we moved a squadron of Air Force fighters onto the Peninsula ... to maintain the early effective combat power that's the key to defeating North Korean aggression quickly.

Across the Taiwan Strait, the military balance is more stable than you may have the impression from reading the newspapers.

China is capable of causing a great deal of damage to Taiwan, particularly with its short-range ballistic missiles, which it's deploying at an increased pace and with increased accuracy. There are over 300 of them now ranging Taiwan ... from bases in China.

However, China is not capable of using military means to reach its goal of reunification. It's not capable of taking and holding Taiwan. The PLA is working assiduously to improve its capability, and is receiving additional resources from the Chinese government, but it's not making significant relative progress.

With recent U.S. undertakings to sell additional weapons to Taiwan, and with the increasing capability of U.S. forces in the Pacific, this military balance will continue for the future.

On the basis of this stable balance, the peaceful reunification – which is the policy of China, of Taiwan, and of the United States – can move forward.

Third, let me talk about security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Unlike Europe, where multilateral security structures dominate, the APR has a tradition of bilateral security relations.

In recent years, we've seen a healthy growth of multilateral security cooperation, directed towards missions common to many countries – peace operations, non-combatant evacuation operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, anti-piracy operations, operations against drugs, and – as I described earlier – ops against international terrorism.

These operations are not only solving real problems in the region, they're building habits of cooperation among military forces that contribute to a secure and prosperous future for the region.

Almost three years ago, Australia organized a peacekeeping force for East Timor. Since then, the force has been reduced in size, the lead nation has shifted to the Philippines and then to Thailand, and East Timor will become an independent country two months from today.

The Pacific Command has sponsored a series of seminars, workshops, and tabletop exercises to build a body of tactics, techniques, and procedures; and a cadre of experienced and knowledgeable officers to conduct multilateral operations in these missions of the future.

We've developed flexible networks for the command, control, and communications of international operations.

Other nations have taken separate initiatives in this area. Singapore has led multilateral exercises in submarine search and rescue and in mine clearance operations.

Japan has taken the lead in organizing multilateral efforts against piracy.

These efforts are flexible, *ad hoc*, and respond to real requirements in the region. They're building "security communities" – groupings of nations that are using military forces for common missions, habits of cooperation, and dependable expectations of peaceful change in the region.

Finally, a word about transformation of the Pacific Command – making our forces even more quick and lethal than they are today.

With the vast distances in our theater, which covers 52% of the world's surface – basically, as I like to say, from Alaska to Madagasca' – and a wide variety of potential contingencies, the key to success is speed of understanding, speed of deployment, and speed of decision.

Just as it's the key to changing our lives in fundamental ways every day, so information technology is the key to transforming the Pacific Command's warfighting ability.

About a third of my 300,000 forces are deployed forward, primarily in Korea and Japan.

Our commanders and forward forces are the core of our response to any situation, and they're continually planning to respond to contingencies as they practice their day-to-day skills.

We've connected the entire Pacific with wideband networks, so that as a crisis is developing, and we're deploying forces to join those already forward, we're refining the intelligence picture, collaboratively planning with commanders and forces on the move, and building our Joint Task

Force.

By the time clarity would emerge in a regional crisis, we can have:

- Forces on the scene with the full picture of the battlefield;
- A set of flexible plans developed, understood throughout the force, and rehearsed;
- And be ready for operations.

At the tactical level, through a series of exercises in the field conducted over the past year, we're developing the capability to have a detailed, accurate tactical picture in the hands of every echelon of the Joint Task Force – from the squad leader to the JTF commander. This picture will have perfect knowledge of the position and condition of our own forces, excellent knowledge of the characteristics of the operating area, and good knowledge of the position and condition of the enemy.

With this reliable common operating picture – which we call a COP for short – our forces will be able to move rapidly against enemy centers of gravity, take advantage of opportunities on the battlefield, and achieve decisive results very quickly.

You saw a taste of these kinds of operations in Afghanistan, but that ... is only the beginning.

The concepts I've described seem fairly simple. To put them into practice is anything but. The way to do it is to take the systems to the field – either in joint exercises or in joint operations – then to operate them, identify the deficiencies, and fix them.

The armed forces of the United States are better at this than any on the planet, and it's this drive to improve and transform that will maintain our warfighting superiority in the future.

Let me end my remarks here to leave time for questions.

We don't want this meeting to be like the Irish wake at which the old man was dying, the entire clan was gathered, and the immediate family went in at the very end.

As they emerged, one of the cousins asked one of the sons, "And what were your da's last words?"

"Ah," the lad replied. "He didn't have any. Mother was there."

Thank you very much.