
Keynote Address
Maritime Security Challenges 2016 Conference
Tuesday, October 4th, 2016

By Rear-Admiral Art McDonald, MSM, CD
Commander Maritime Forces Pacific/Joint Task Force (Pacific)

Ambassadors, senators, fellow flag officers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Art McDonald, and I have the honour and privilege of commanding Maritime Forces Pacific, Canada's west coast naval formation.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to address you at the beginning of the seventh Maritime Security Challenges conference.

This highly successful series began in 2005 and has grown over the years. This year we have participants from 23 countries around the world.

Unfortunately, Vice-Admiral Lloyd, Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, is unable to be here in person this morning. However, we will be hearing from him shortly when he addresses us by video.

Vice-Admiral Lloyd is a keen student of seapower. He is particularly attentive to developments in the Indo-Pacific region and, as I will note later in my remarks, his interest in and commitment to the region is reflected in a series of ambitious naval deployments that will be the centerpiece of Maritime Forces Pacific's upcoming fleet schedule.

This conference is an incredible forum, one that brings together a deeply impressive array of maritime experts to describe and debate the dynamics of Pacific seapower and, as I'll attest in a moment, that debate may never have been more appropriate or important as it is today.

But, first, before I move on to the core of my address, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our host, the Navy League of Canada, a national organization that does superb work with naval cadets and through its maritime affairs programme. I'm delighted that the League is represented here this morning by Captain Harry Harsch, RCN retired, the honorary MSC chair.

I would also like to extend a particular thanks to the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. APCSS has been a warm, enthusiastic, and

indefatigable supporter of the MSC conferences series, and I am very pleased to have the Center's deputy director, Brigadier General James Hirai, U.S. Army retired, with us as well.

I would, of course, be remiss if I did not thank the organizations that make this all possible, our sponsors:

- Thales
- Atlas Elektronik Canada
- General Dynamics Mission Systems - Canada
- L-3 Communications MAPPS Inc.
- Raytheon Canada
- STRATFOR
- Babcock Canada
- Lockheed Martin Canada
- and Royal Roads University.

Their support is one of the keys to the vitality of this conference and it is a pleasure to welcome them on board.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is a new oceanic age. Not since the great era of exploration in the 16th century have oceans played as important a role in global affairs as they do today. Unprecedented levels of commerce move across the

world's oceans, great power politics are being played out at sea, and oceans are central to the health of the planet in an age of profound climate change.

What is more, we are on the cusp, for the first time in human history, of acquiring a new ocean, the Arctic. The recent discovery of the remains of HMS *Terror*, one of Sir John Franklin's ships, in the high Arctic has brought home to us, yet again, the courage and vision of those who strove to discover a sea route to Asia. Now, more than a century-and-a-half later, the steady diminution of polar sea ice promises to give Canada - and indeed, the world - a new and navigable ocean.

Franklin's vision presaged a global transition of the most profound sort; the shift in the global centre of affairs from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific. This phenomenon has unfolded with remarkable speed and the stellar rise of China is, in many ways, a metaphor for that transition.

We are all well-acquainted with the American pivot, or rebalance, to the Indo-Pacific region; a timely diplomatic, military, and economic recognition of global realities.

I would suggest that there has been an equally momentous pivot, the realignment of China's axis of interest from the interior of Asia towards the sea. This realignment has entailed a cultural and intellectual revolution in the sense that, traditionally, the Chinese tended to view the sea as a barrier.

The meteoric growth of the Chinese economy changed all that. Beijing came to appreciate the supreme importance of the smooth, predictable, and uninterrupted flow of maritime commerce to its continued prosperity.

Furthermore, over the past thirty years, China has come to fully appreciate the flexibility, mobility, and authority of seapower.

This revolution in national thought has been manifested in the appearance of a powerful new Blue Water navy, the People's Liberation Army Navy. The rapid growth of the PLAN, both in size and sophistication, has fundamentally altered not just the architecture of the region, but of the world.

In addition, it has meant that the existing hegemon, the United States, and the aspiring hegemon, China, find themselves competing for power and influence in the same oceanic realm.

This new reality, with its competitive dimensions, places a premium on cooperation at sea.

I cannot stress the importance of maritime cooperation enough, especially as many maritime security specialists point to a naval arms race developing in the Indo-Pacific region, and the existence of several disturbing - and even potentially dangerous - flashpoints in Asian waters.

Fortunately, we have an increasing number of examples of regional navies working together. The anti-piracy patrols off the Horn of Africa are a case in point, as is the recent decision by Indonesia and the Philippines to inaugurate joint anti-piracy patrols in the Sulu Sea.

It could be argued that the remarkable prosperity enjoyed by much of East Asia over the past half-century was largely due to the rules-based stability brought to

the region by American seapower. It is a cliché to say that such conditions are like oxygen - you don't miss them until they are gone - but a lack of rules invites disorder and even anarchy. We cannot afford to contemplate such a prospect at a time when global interconnectedness and interdependence have reached unprecedented levels.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was one of mankind's greatest achievements, a constitution for the world's oceans. This convention has had the effect of safeguarding the interests of coastal states, but it also dramatically reduced the area of the high seas, and brought states into collision when their claims have overlapped.

Fortunately, we have mechanisms for resolving these issues. The Permanent Court of Arbitration is one such mechanism. Its ruling in July of this year, with respect to disputes in the South China Sea, highlighted the enormous importance of sustaining a rules-based order at sea and striving to resolve outstanding disputes. It is vital that these disputes do not distract us at a time when the competition for resources continues to grow, when fish stocks are under siege,

and when the very oceans themselves are beginning to exhibit dangerous signs of stress.

The acidification of the oceans is part and parcel of climate change, and experts suggest that the Indo-Pacific region is likely to suffer disproportionately in terms of the frequency and intensity of climate change-related phenomena, such as typhoons.

This being the case, there will be an even greater necessity for the navies, coast guards, and other maritime agencies of the Indo-Pacific to work together to bring humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to affected populations.

These same maritime forces need to cooperate together in search-and-rescue, as the multinational search for Malaysian Airlines MH370 illustrated. SAR will be particularly challenging in the Arctic, where distances are vast and the environment is unforgiving. What we are seeing, in fact, is not just the need for regional navies to articulate priorities and policies, but for a multitude of governmental ministries and agencies to coordinate their efforts to achieve the greatest effect at sea.

The Royal Canadian Navy is committed to maintaining peace and good order at sea. Canada was one of the key contributors to the formulation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and remains steadfast in upholding the rules-based maritime order.

[TRANSITION TO EXISTING DRAFT]