

Adm. Samuel Paparo Keynote Address at ADMM+EWG (As Prepared)
August 24, 2022

Good afternoon to all. Thanks very much.

First, I'd like to thank **Vice Admiral Supapat** and **Deputy Assistant Secretary Ford** for putting together and hosting this consortium of great minds.

I'd also like to thank Rear Admiral (retired) **Pete Gumataotao** – represented today by Brigadier General (retired) **Jim Hirai** - and his team at APCSS for hosting this important event and inviting me to speak with you today about “Security and Stability in the Indo-Pacific.”

The United States and ASEAN are Enduring Partners

This year marks 45 years of U.S.-ASEAN partner relations.

We are working together to address pressing regional and global challenges.

The United States supports the international rules-based order, and in close cooperation with our allies and partners, we promote a free and open Indo-Pacific in which the freedoms of navigation and overflight are enjoyed and respected by all states in accordance with international law.

SLIDE 2: What's at Stake in the Indo-Pacific?

The Indo-Pacific comprises of **four** of the most populous nations of some **4.3 billion** people or **60%** of the world's populations... with the **three** largest democracies, **three** largest economies, **seven** of the **ten** largest militaries.

Roughly **\$10 trillion** in financial transactions travel via Indo-Pacific submarine cables each day

The current Maritime Security environment in the Indo-Pacific is extremely complex.

It is home to some of the world's most abundant natural resources from extensive fishing grounds... to offshore oil and gas fields.... minerals....sand and gravel.

It is home to the world's most biodiverse area... with **1/3** of the world's shallow marine fishes, about **3,000** species in comparison to 1,200 in any other region.

However, malign actors often take advantage of the region's plentiful natural resources, benefiting themselves at the expense of others through corruption and criminal activity associated with fishing...

More than half of the world's population depending on fish for at **least 20%** of their animal protein and **20%** of the global catch is illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. This is an unsustainable mismatch for the well-being of peoples.

While **80%** of global trade by volume and **70%** by value is transported by sea...**60%** of maritime trade passes through the Indo-Pacific and **1/3** of global trade through the South China Sea.

The economic importance of the region makes it of utmost strategic value, not just to the nations of ASEAN, not just to the United States, but to the entire globe.

Security in the Indo-Pacific has become a prerequisite for the prosperity of world trade as the **two** most important maritime choke points – the straits of Bal al Mandeb, which is in the Indian Ocean, and the Malacca Strait, are located on either side of the Indian Ocean region.

The Strait of Malacca alone has more than **83,000** vessels pass through it every year, which represents **40%** of the global sea traffic including approximately **1/3** of the global petroleum production.

Shipping routes that avoid the South China Sea add **2.5** days per transit – that difference multiplied by **84,000** ship transits per year EQUALS an additional **575** years of lifetime.

In this context, all countries in the region and beyond have a stake in keeping an open, free and peaceful Indo-Pacific anchored to the same international rules-based order that our security, our freedom, and our prosperity absolutely depend.

SLIDE 3: What is Threatening the Indo-Pacific?

Maritime security is no longer just threats to sea ports or infrastructures. They include threats to the livelihoods of coastal communities as well as measures to promote economic development by sustainable use of seas.

Remember we build navies focused on maritime security, our first duty is the sovereignty in the exclusive economic zones in our territorial waters to support the populations who absolutely depend on each and every one of us that wear the uniform for their well-being and for their sustenance.

Illicit Activities by Non-state Actors

Over the past decade, the Indo-Pacific has faced emerging maritime crime from non-state actors.

40% of piracy occurs in Southeast Asian waters.

In the Bay of Bengal criminal gangs prey on fishermen through armed robbery and kidnappings at sea.

In Southeast Asia thefts from vessels transiting the Straits of Malacca are on the rise and the Sulu Sea is confronted with a string of piracy and kidnap for ransom incidents.

The region has been quick to respond to this form of maritime crime through initiatives such as coordinated patrols and increased information sharing through entities like ReCAAP and the International Fusion Centers in Singapore and Delhi, both of which I've had the honor to visit and whose excellence has been on display for all of us.

IUU Fishing

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is a pervasive, far-reaching security threat. It has replaced piracy as the leading global maritime security threat.

As discussed earlier, that number 20%, **1 in 5** fish caught around the world, are believed to originate from illegal fishing.

93% of the world's major marine fish stocks are classified as fully exploited, overexploited, or significantly depleted.

IUU fishing undermines the sustainable management of these precious renewable resources, pushing them to the brink of their capacity and ability to sustain themselves.

First sale of global fish production in 2018...IUU Fishing results in tens of billions of dollars of lost revenue to legal fishers every single year.

And healthy fish stocks underpin the food security of coastal communities, maritime regions, and entire nation-states. The sustainable harvest of these resources is directly linked to economic security – both for the United States and for nations around the globe, many of whom rely on revenue from fish for substantial portions of their gross domestic product.

Today, the world's fish stocks are under stress not only from growing consumption, demand and changing ecosystems, but also from deliberate efforts to exploit gaps in existing governance structures.

Illegal transshipment operations, heavily-subsidized distant water fishing fleets, and nations who choose to systematically engage in IUU fishing amplify these stressors and catalyze additional criminal activity which further undermines the international maritime rules-based order.

Violations of UNCLOS

Freedom of the seas is particularly crucial in our region and to each of our national interests.

This not only means that we must prioritize safeguarding the freedom of commercial and military vessels to transit international waters but also ensuring they can exercise all of the rights and uses of the sea and airspace recognized under international law.

More broadly, it means unimpeded lawful commerce....respect for international law... and the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea.

The freedom of the seas is underpinned by a web of international laws and institutions, at the heart of which lies UNCLOS. It can be described as the “constitution for the oceans” – where the legal equality of all states, large and small, share the same rights and responsibilities at sea.

Climate Change

Additionally, climate change is likely to have significant implications for maritime security, particularly for the coastal and archipelagic states of Southeast Asia and the Pacific where **70%** of the world’s natural disasters already occur.

Sea levels in the western Pacific Ocean are increasing at a rate **of two to three times** the global average

90% of coral reefs in the Pacific Island region could suffer severe degradation

In terms of the region’s population, the UN Refugee Agency predicts rising sea levels will create a humanitarian crisis. In fact, between 2008 and 2020, **66 million** people became displaced due to natural disasters in the Indo-Pacific.

The UN estimates that by 2050, there will be as many as **89 million** climate human beings, climate refugees, most of whom will come from Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

This could overwhelm existing state resources and maritime security capabilities and increase the need for additional coordination and collaboration between our services and agencies..

SLIDE 4: How Are We Responding?

So how are we responding? As we are emerging from two years of the global pandemic and resuming our multilateral efforts, expanding the scope and scale with multilateral and multi-agency partnerships, this includes info sharing, bilateral and multilateral exercises.

Already having cited the information fusion center in Delhi and in in Singapore.

Information fusion centers area powerful tool to combat the complex, large-scale challenges we all face. Organizations like the Thailand's Maritime Enforcement Command Center (MECC) are improving MDA and cooperation across the region.

One detailed example: The Information Fusion Center in Singapore servers as the regional Maritime Security (MARSEC) information sharing and collaboration hub for the Indo-Pacific...with an integrated team of International Liaison Officers from more than **19** navies and coast guard; and personnel from the Republic of Singapore Navy.

The information fusing center facilitates maritime security, information sharing and collaboration between its partners to cue operational resources, responses.

Its linkages with more than **90** Operational Centers from navies, enforcement and maritime agencies in more than **40** countries, as well as linkages with the shipping industry... provide the information fusion cell with maritime situational awareness and enables collaboration beyond its area of interest.

The IFC provides invaluable support to the global community with its ability to collate and analyze maritime security information to produce accurate, timely and actionable products enables its partners to respond to incidents.

Vice Admiral Supapat, I would be remiss to not mention the great work being done by the Thailand Maritime Enforcement Command Center, the MECC. It's just another example of collecting, analyzing, and sharing maritime information to prevent, to protect against, and suppress illegal activities at sea. And that we have a robust exercise program as well as I honor these words.

Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT), the 21st iteration of its kind if ongoing, bringing together regional partners to engage in “real world, real time” training. Enhancing partner nations’ ability to communicate, coordinate and counter illegal smuggling and piracy.

Twenty-one nations are participating as I utter these words.

During the at sea phase, the Information Fusion Center in Singapore served as a centralized hub for crisis coordination and information sharing in the tracking of a contracted merchant vessel simulating a suspicious vessel of interest travelling throughout Southeast Asian seas.

We are employing new technologies to improve maritime domain awareness and conduct multilateral intergration.

The UAS workshop this year will work to develop a common concept operation and coordination mechanism for operating UAS systems throughout the region.

And it’s also the first deployment of unclassified satellite radio frequency geo-location from HawkEye 360, a source for maritime domain awareness during the sea phase of the operation.

This year represents our **28th** iteration of the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training exercise series. CARAT partners include: Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Thailand, and Vietnam.

These are typically bilateral Navy to Navy exercise, but we've conducted trilateral exercises as well.

And as all are aware of presently, right now, Pacific Partnership is ongoing having run from May through September. Now in its 17th year, Pacific Partnership is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific.

The mission team comprised of U.S. allies and partners, both military and civilian, are aboard the USNS, US Navy ship Mercy, which in itself is the eight largest

hospital in the globe. And is traveling from Guam, Vietnam, Palau, Philippines, Solomon Islands and Papua-New Guinea.

SLIDE 5: Way-ahead

But we unsatisfied with this progress. We're working alongside our regional partners to enhance cooperative capacity. Some of the projects include:

- Utapao airfield enhancements
- Bengkulu tsunami shelter
- Basa C2 Fusion Center
- Zambales Amphib Staging Area

These are just examples, but what they really do for all of us is decrease the amount of startup current to get up and operating in our multilateral operations to respond to the crises that we're talking about, we discussed all throughout this presentation.

We're presently slightly above pre-COVID levels for exercises, having begun the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Coast Guard Cutter Midget deployed to Southeast Asia and Oceania for security cooperation, and offering as a training platform again, harkening back to our first duty as those who wear this uniform, which is to protect one waters and our sovereign waters for the good of the people whom we serve.

New capabilities we're bringing to bear include:

- Unclassified satellite radio frequency geo-location
- Common Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and operational frameworks
- Netted self-powered unmanned surface systems...

which combined as a wide net of sensors with the ability to see and sense the environment, to use artificial intelligence tools in order to derive normal patterns of life for the purposes of identifying those elements that are not within the pattern of life. So that navies can respond to combat threats to maritime security.

Conclusion

So between vital sea lanes, the sovereignty of territorial waters, the sovereign use of exclusive economic zones, as the world grows more and more connected, as the sea becomes more and more important to the sustainment of our populations, the sea itself and maritime services become more important to our own nations, for the security and for the well-being of the people with whom we are appointed to protect.

And with that, I will open the floor to any question or any topic that anyone cares to bring up.