



CARNEGIE
ENDOWMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Transcript

Admiral Greenert on the Asia-Pacific Rebalance

Speaker: Admiral Jonathan Greenert
Chief of Naval Operations
U.S. Navy

Moderator: Douglas H. Paal
Vice President for Studies
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

September 8, 2014

This transcript has not been checked against delivery.

Douglas H. Paal: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being patient as everybody assembles. Congress is back in town and the traffic is thicker than the rest of the year, this week in particular, so I appreciate you coming out and coming out early.

I'm Doug Paal. I'm vice president for studies here at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and it's my great pleasure to welcome all of you here this morning, but also to serve as the person to introduce the chief of naval operations, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, who has come here to talk to us today about, I think, many things, but he's put a lot of time into a field that I can see a lot of people here know a lot about, which is China and China's military in the recent couple of months. We'll be doing more this next few weeks up in Newport when we'll have Chinese participants among many at the big symposium that will be held there.

Without further ado, I'd like to have the honor to welcome Admiral Greenert to the podium.

Admiral Greenert: Thank you.

[Applause]

Admiral Greenert: Well, this is going to be challenging in a whole host of ways. When I grew up and went to the Pentagon for my very first time, it became very clear to me that the colonels and the captains were always grouchier on a Monday morning following a Redskins loss. So I don't know where you guys stand and thank goodness we have baseball in this town, winning baseball. So maybe there'll be a decent balance here. I'm banking on that.

So thanks a lot, Dr. Paal, for that introduction and thank you for your service in the government. I was talking to Doug that in fact he was serving as the director of the American Institute in Taiwan during a very, very key and critical part of our time in the western Pacific. In fact, a certain election, had it gone a different way, history would show things very differently, but that's history. You did well. We're here.

This is a very prestigious institute and I'm very pleased to be here, honored to be here. If I'm not mistaken it's the oldest international affairs think tank in the United States and was, in fact, launched the same year as the first Navy aircraft launched from a ship in 1910, Eugene Eli's flight from the USS Birmingham down in Norfolk in Hampton Road across Willoughby Bay.

And in fact, if you go down there and you go down to Norfolk in the station, there's a nice little plaque there. You look across the way and they said that's where the Birmingham was anchored the same year that this institute was launched.

So I'm thinking, you're looking across there years ago. It's foggy. It's misty and somebody's saying, "Well, what's going on? Has he launched yet?" They say, "Yeah, yeah. He's launched." Somebody looks out through the fog and says, "Eli's coming. Eli's coming."

At that very moment, the way it goes, it is said that the grandfather of the writer for the group Three Dog Night was in fact in that crowd and scribbled all that down. In 1970, his grandson wrote a very famous song, but those of you laughing, you're showing your age. [Laughter] The fact that you actually realize that. If you believe that, you'll believe just about anything I say, so I was testing you.

I'll talk a little bit about what I call the presence mandate for the Navy, the Asia Pacific rebalance, and a little bit about the China relationship, delving, of course, in the Navy.

But for us in the Navy, our mandate is to be where it matters when it matters. And the question sometimes becomes well, where does it matter? We determine that in the Department of Defense by the Global Force Management Allocation Plan, where we distribute our forces, including Navy forces.

If you put up the first slide here, I just have a few graphics to show you.

So where are we today? Where does it matter out there around the world? Well, you can see the distribution. You can see that the Asia Pacific remains, over half of the ships or just about exactly half of the ships that we have, 101 ships deployed of the 291 that we have today. Oddly enough, 20 years ago we had 400 ships. We had 101 forward deployed.

A lot of those factors are how many we are actually putting forward, semi-permanently, where those ships are there with sailors, the ship and their families in what we call the forward deployed naval force. A lot in Japan, some in Rhoda, some in Bahrain, and other areas of the world or we'll forward station the ship and we'll rotate the crew. We're doing that in Bahrain today and we'll continue that concept with literal combat ships or we'll contract a ship with civilian mariners and they'll give us about 270 days a year, forward deployed, and we'll rotate military detachment.

But this is where we are today. It's about our mission's freedom of navigation and security in critical global regions. The areas here you can see – some of you have heard me talk, I go through this every single time – those are avows. They can be bow ties if you're a political science major, whatever. That is where a lot of the trade of our world moves, trillions and trillions of dollars. I call it the maritime crossroads.

It's Monday morning, some of you ran out and grabbed a coffee. If you grabbed a coffee by that famous maker in the Pacific Northwest, they get most of that coffee from the East Africa region. It's got to be fresh. It's got to get from East Africa, by Somalia, the Gulf Of Aden, the Bab-el-Mandeb Straits, the Suez Canal, the Strait of Gibraltar and then the Panama Canal up to the Pacific Northwest. It's a long trek. It has to be open all the time.

All the trade, as we're hyper-connected, has got to move and we can't afford interruptions. Even the thermal sleeve, when you got your coffee today, is coming from Scandinavia, and that's got to get down through the Panama Canal.

So as you look up there and you look at where those crossroads are, where a lot of that trade goes, ask yourself if that's a secure region, or has it been and will it be in the future.

That's why we're out and about – to assure, to dissuade, to deter and if need be to respond. We've done that as needed over the last 18 months, quite a few times.

About 18 months ago, it was North Korea. It was Iran's threatens in the Strait of Hormuz. It was Syria. We were ready in the Ukraine crisis, and now it's Iraq.

But also natural and manmade disasters. The Philippine typhoon, the tragic loss of the Malaysian airline, and then Japan's earthquake and tsunami that took place a while back.

So our mandate: where it matters when it matters. We have to be out and about. But a few words on the rebalance, as Doug said. I'll talk about that.

We've had a historic and an enduring interest in Asia, in the Pacific Ocean, and in the Indian Ocean. Over half of the world's tonnage passes through the Straits of Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok, down there in the Indonesia/Singapore region.

A third of the global crude oil and half of the liquid natural gas moves through the South China Sea. Five of the top 15 trading partners for us are right out there in that region.

We've been there for seven decades of continuous Asia Pacific Naval presence, and we're going to be there in the future.

For us the rebalance for the Navy, the rebalance can be put into three basic areas. Three ways I should say: forces, capabilities, and understanding.

In the area of forces, we put our most modern forces in the Western Pacific, and we are increasing the presence out there as we're moving forces out there.

Next year, in '15, we'll have two more destroyers – these are Aegis destroyers, high end fire control systems in Japan, another submarine in Guam, and many of you are aware we are working toward forward stationing four little combat ships down in Singapore at Changi Pier.

Capabilities wise, in the Pacific area of responsibility, we benchmark our capabilities. It's about electronic warfare, undersea warfare, advanced anti-air warfare, and, of course, cyber.

It's also about understanding, as I mentioned. It's about relations and exchanges. I'll get to that in a little more depth, but it's about allies and assuring those allies, developing new partners and assuring them and figuring out, how do we work with ad hoc partners? How do we gather together as an international, if you will, network of Navies to work on a tragedy or something that involves all of us, such as the loss of an airliner or a natural disaster?

So we're going to be in this region economically and politically. It's critical. We'll be staying in the South China Sea, and we'll be staying in the East China Sea. And our collective actions, all of us, have to promote stability and trust.

Now recently, [in] April, in China, in Ching Tao at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, I think we took a pretty good step forward. "We" would be the 22 navies that border the Pacific that agreed to sign a code for unplanned encounters at sea, laying down the protocol that will govern our interactions.

Again, it was voluntary, and it will establish the professional behavior and the clear communication that we need to help reduce the uncertainty of what's going to happen when we encounter each other, and [to] increase safety.

Now we exercised this CUES, as it's known, recently at RIMPAC just in July where Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, the Chinese Navy and the United States, we gathered together. We met right around Guam, and we sailed to Hawaii where we had the RIMPAC exercise, and we worked through these details and the different processes of CUES.

We're going to meet again, as Mr. Paal mentioned here, in the International Sea Power Symposium next week, 113 delegates from navies around the world, and we'll discuss the idea of expanding to our Coast Guards and other global regions this CUES concept.

With multilateral exercises and standards of behavior we can move ahead, and I would say it's a mandate for all of us to do this, so that we can contribute to safe operations in the international waterways and the air space around there, prevent accidents, but most importantly, preclude miscalculation.

We've got 38 to 42-year old commanding officers out there responsible for 300 to 700 people, on average, out there at sea, at various countries steaming in the areas of the world, and it's getting tense in some areas.

They need to have a clarity of purpose and an understanding of how we will interact with each other – having the right protocols, reinforcing international law, and the norms that need there and frankly, using confidence building measures among all of us.

Now the rebalance – a little more on it. We've been strengthening our relations in the Pacific region for decades. Could you put the first build up there? That has resulted, I would submit, in the vibrant part of the international economy that we have, especially in the Asia Pacific, and especially in the East Asia Pacific.

We have stalwart allies and interests in the region and, well, five of our seven U.S. treaties – Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Southeast Asia – are right out there in this region.

The United States and Australia just recently solidified and formally signed the force posture agreement, where we will provide... or we have been offered and we will do rotational deployment of Marines to Darwin there in Australia. So we recently sealed the deal on that one, if you will. We have critical alliances with Republic of Korea and with Japan, and we've recently completed exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian. Some of you may have known it as Ulchi-Focus Lens, because it's been going on for 60 plus years with Korea. We will continue to do that exercise.

With Japan we've had a recent development that is still working its way through. That would be the idea of collective self-defense, enabling, in my world, the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force to do more operations together with us in collective defense.

Our focus in this region is improved interoperability. To me that's the number one thing we need to work on, and we're doing that. As I mentioned earlier, we just completed RIMPAC in July timeframe. Just before RIMPAC, the Republic of Korea Navy, the Japanese Navy, and U.S. Navy did a tri-lat exercise called Pacific Dragon, where we shared the tracks for a ballistic missile launched off of the island of Kawai. That's kind of unprecedented.

The capabilities have been there, but getting together and doing those tri-lats is something we need to continue to do. Then we went ahead and did RIMPAC [with] the other 22 nations; those three, Japan, Korea, and the U.S. working together.

So that area is an important, kind of a high-end area, but I think [it is] the key to this rebalance.

Now if you look down in Southeast Asia, the key, I think, down there is Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. We have an exercise series called Cooperation Afloat, Readiness and Training. That's been around for 20 years, but we are stepping it up more recently down in the region, down in there.

And there are possibilities out there with Vietnam. Recent deliberations with the Vietnamese have shown a willingness to develop a naval engagement activity strategy, something CARAT-like, something like Cooperation Afloat, but we're going to work on this in a manner that makes sense with the Vietnamese.

Recently the Malaysians have offered [to] us to fly detachments of P-8s out of in East Malaysia, so you can see the closeness to the South China Sea.

So, we have opportunities here and I think we [have] got to continue to nurture them, and that's a region that we'll continue to do that.

There's a strategic partnership that I think we need to take a hard look at, and we have a golden opportunity, and we're going to take it. That's with India. The new Modi government is an opportunity. We have had a long history of exercises, particularly with an exercise called Malabar, with the Indian Navy. At one point, about a decade ago, we were at the point where we had multi-carrier operations. So we shared air wing operations, carrier operations, and actually conducted sub-on-sub operations with the Indian Navy.

So I think if we can find those opportunities and work through the issues that we need to work through with the governments to get through that, we'll be further along. Much further along. Recently, this year in July, the Malabar exercise was a trilateral with India, Japan, and the U.S., including the George Washington carrier. It was in the, if you will, in the North Philippine Sea just south of Okinawa earlier this year.

So the China relationship – if I were to summarize it, I'd say we need to build a constructive relationship. That's what we've been directed to do, and that's where my focus of effort has been and will continue to be.

Clearly, we've got the potential to prosper with China. They have the world's second largest economy and we've got a big stake in one another. They're our number two trading partner, our number three export market, and our number one importing source. Our trade last year 2013, was \$562 billion, and we have almost 1.3 trillion in U.S. securities with them.

So we [have] got to go to work, in my view, and it's not a secret, it's pretty well known – the Chinese Navy is expanding into the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean. They want to become a global navy, but they tell me very clearly, their chief, that they don't intend to hold a global posture like we do. It's not something they want to do or something they can do right now.

They have shown an ability to embrace international norms and standards. They do counter piracy operations in the Aden area, and they do it quite effectively. We've done exercises with them there, in the Gulf of Aden.

They participated with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief with their hospital ship in the Typhoon Haiyan, in December of 2013. They participated in international naval exercise RIMPAC. Their ships that went there performed professionally, and fit in fairly well, and they were well prepared.

They have hosted and, as I mentioned before, we signed the CUES there in Ching Tao, so they've hosted, they're part of the international dialogue of the symposia that take place. I think that's commensurate with a rising navy, it makes sense.

I've had a lot of interaction with my counterpart, Admiral Wu Shin Lee, four times over the last year, which is more than I've had with other chiefs, but not to the exclusion of other chiefs, I should say. I visited their carrier, Liaoning, and I happened to be the first uniformed American, and uniformed officer and chief to visit the carrier. Held an all-hands call, and we talked about consistent issues that we have among our two navies.

I was able to get underway on what would be a Corvette, about a 2,000 ton ship, and take a two and a half hour cruise with Admiral Wu and the crew of the ship, one of their newer ships. Visited one of their newer submarines, and got a tour on a guided missile PC. So it was an interesting visit, I think there was more transparency and more openness that I had seen in the past. Admiral Wu and I had some pretty frank and candid conversations.

But in the end, we're working on seven initiatives. I would characterize them as such:

- to practice CUES in a deliberate and a structured manner;
- to move our navies ahead in this thing that we both agree to continue on;
- to increase the number of port visits between us and China and the United States;
- to establish kind of a drum beat of regular communications between Admiral Wu and myself;
- to increase academic exchanges, and I'm talking about our academies, our fleet schools and our work colleges;
- to work on our human resource best practices. He wants a diverse navy. I want a diverse navy. He has to build an officer corps. We're building an officer corps. So to talk about how to do that;
- and to work on preapproved exercises, so, as we mentioned before, when two ships pass in the Gulf of Aden or somewhere, we can take that opportunity for two skippers of two big navies to work together and do an exercise that's preapproved. Today, to do an exercise, that has to go up to their Minister of Defense and to our Department of Defense.

So these are the issues that we're working on, but as I said before, it's not the exclusion of working with our allies and our partners out there. We'll remain a strong navy ally out there to our partners. Although I have had a lot of time with Admiral Wu Shengli, in the last year I've been to Japan twice to meet with my counterpart, Korea, the Philippines two times, to Malaysia, and to Indonesia, and also to Singapore. So we're keeping a balance as we work out there.

So as I close here, let me tell you that we'll continue to engage, to shape, and to lead. We'll continue to be where it matters, when it matters.

As was mentioned earlier, next week we're hosting the biannual symposium called the International Sea Power Symposium. We'll host it at Newport, at our war college. We'll have 113 nations with 78 heads of navy, and a requisite number of heads of coast guard. We're going to talk about the shared challenges to security and prosperity.

So it's global solutions to common problems. That's what we're going to talk about, because to meet the challenge, no one nation can do it alone, and in my view, we have to use this network of navies. Thanks very much for listening, and I look forward to your questions.

[Applause]

Douglas H. Paal: Well, Admiral, thank you very much for those remarks. I think we all benefit from periodic exposure to the amount of activity that you and the American armed forces are engaged in around the world.

Admiral Greenert: Thank you.

Douglas H. Paal: You hear about it when somebody's dispatched a carrier to the Gulf or something like that, but you don't realize that there's day-to-day hard work that goes on to be prepared for what has to be done.

Everybody's talking about what happened in 1914 in the beginning of World War I. I [spent] a lot of time this year reading about the beginning of the Second World War, 1939 to 1941. One of the things that really struck me was how it was the internationalized, experienced navy officers in Japan who were most reluctant to support the effort to go to war with the United States back then. They had seen the U.S., they'd gone to school in the U.S., and when you jump forward to today and you talk about getting to know the Chinese, and trying to keep people from misunderstanding each other, and having a good appreciation of your potential adversary, you think China basically took itself out of the Navy game 600 years ago, when they scuttled the world's best fleet in the early 1400's.

Now they're coming back, and they've got a long way to go. As I'm sure you're experiencing yourself, when people call for this to be cut off for this reason, or that reason, I say, "We've got a bigger game to play here and I hope we can keep it up." Thanks for letting me make that advertisement.

I wanted to ask you, sir – you haven't mentioned it today, but one of the things that was a signature initiative of yours on arrival at your present position was in the air/sea battle concept. I wonder if you could give me a sense of how you see the air/sea battle concept today.

Admiral Greenert: Well, as we talked about it before, it is truly, it's a concept. It's a way to think about what I would call joint assured access. A lot of people say, "Oh. So you're talking about the western Pacific." Oh, it would certainly apply there, to get where we need to get, to get the things done we need to get done.

But more than anything, I would say it is a way to put into place a concept, a mindset, among our officers for dealing with getting access. We applied it in Japan to get access to a radioactively contaminated power plant to measure those levels. So how are we going to get in there to do that? We sat down and did that planning.

It would be effective in the Strait of Hormuz, it would be effective clearly in the western Pacific. So it's getting the mindset right, doing the exercises and thinking about that. It's about using cross-domain capability, and turning to the air and the sea, below the sea, space, and cyber and saying, "What's the best domain to get this done?"

Maybe it's a missile from a submarine, or maybe it's an air to surface missile from an aircraft, or maybe it's turning to a cyber-solution. But until you sit down and have that kind of mindset from the very beginning and bring that all home, you're going to start turning to your traditional manner. We do pretty well today proceeding with the forces that we have and figuring out how to operate jointly, but it's what we have and what we bring there.

What we don't do as well is, in our war colleges, sitting down with our folks, and training our kids, and doing our programs that we build here at the Pentagon, thinking in that kind of joint and interdependent manner. That's the foundation and what's going on in air/sea battle.

So we're looking much more at it as a broader concept than just, 'what is the Air Force and the Navy doing?' We're bringing in the other services, and the cyber element, and that's what the team is working on today.

Douglas H. Paal: Well thank you for that. I'm going to open the floor to questions. I'll remind you please, wait for a microphone so the cameras can hear you. Identify yourself and your affiliation, please, when you're called upon. Back here.

Audience Member: Thank you.

Douglas H. Paal: Just speak into it, it should work.

Audience Member: [Off mic] Thank you, Admiral. My name's _____ code of conduct _____.

I'm wondering what progress you have made in any area in this regard, and particularly on the issue of the U.S. surveillance activities nearby, in the international space nearby China. Are you concerned that this similar encounter will happen more frequently in the future? Thank you.

Admiral Greenert: Well I'll answer your last question first. Yeah, I am concerned that such unprofessional activity – and we've had clear documentation that it was unprofessional – I am concerned that that would happen in the future. But I will say this, that incident, and you're talking about the incident where one of our maritime patrol aircraft flying in international air space well over 100 plus miles from the coast, was intercepted, and that's fine...

That incident was inconsistent with how we've had air encounters in the future. The vast majority of them are professional. The Russians fly near our space and we intercept them. There is a norm for activity and for two aircraft entities operating safely and, as I said, with due protocol. That is pretty well known by all our pilots.

So it shouldn't have happened, but it shouldn't also define our relationship. But we will continue to operate in international air space. We've made that clear, and we'll proceed ahead from there. We will continue the dialogue, we have to have the dialogue with our requisite counterparts. I might get that opportunity next week, when I see Admiral Wu in Newport, to discuss this with him.

Douglas H. Paal: In the third row.

Audience Member: Hi, _____ China Daily_____. I just want to continue on that because, you have, as a U.S. officer you seem to avoid whether U.S. going to reduce that surveillance, which Chinese have expressed as being offensive or provocative. Many of your experts also said something like that.

The other, from your talk, is [that the] Chinese see maybe some of your strategy very differently. Say you say, going to stress military cooperation with Vietnam, but certainly it's not directed at North Korea. So how you convince Chinese it's not directed at [the] Chinese? Thank you.

Admiral Greenert: Well that will be an interesting conversation, which I assure you I will have – we will have with the Chinese Navy as to -- first step would be, what is the interest of Vietnam? And we'll have to have that conversation. I've not had that conversation.

For example, what kind of skills would we want to work on with the Vietnamese Navy, as an example. We work on predominantly counter-piracy, we work on counter-terrorism, we work on search and rescue, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief.

In that CARAT series that I referred to before, Cooperation Afloat Readiness Training, down in Southeast Asia. That would be the consistent kind of skills that we would work with, with Southeast Asia nations. What I just said, which is a common purpose for a common problem, as opposed to working together to target some other navy or nation. That's not consistent with how we do international operations in the U.S. Navy.

Audience Member: Surveillance.

Admiral Greenert: Come again.

Audience Member: Surveillance.

Admiral Greenert: Surveillance. You mean with Vietnam?

Audience Member: No, I mean reduce the surveillance in our Chinese parts.

Admiral Greenert: There's no intention that I'm aware of to do that. We're flying in international air space. China comes and steams in our exclusive economic zone. We don't make a big deal out of it. The Russians have in the Cold War flown in international air space. So this is not new, the whole concept of it.

Douglas H. Paal: Over here on the aisle, Bud Cole.

Audience Member: Admiral Bud Cole, National War College. One of your predecessors once said that a full sequestration takes effect, that the Navy's not going to be able to maintain the usual sort of constant deployments that you mentioned, but would have to go to a sort of "fire brigade" reaction. Would you agree that's one of the dangers, or do you believe the Navy's modified operational context enough that that would not be a factor?

Admiral Greenert: Well I don't know what a "fire brigade" – I think that's what you said. Fire brigade?

Audience Member: Yes, sir. Everybody'd be home port and you'd only deploy when they're –

Admiral Greenert: Oh, I see. Yes. No, that would not be my approach. I believe our mandate is presence, and during my tenure and as I've studied this before and as I look into the future, we have to be, as I say, we have to be where it matters, when it matters.

If we go to budget control act numbers, that presence, we will work toward the same principles that I described before. Our strategy won't change, but we'll be in a tremendous struggle to maintain an

industrial base, to maintain an appropriate-size Navy, and we won't be able to maintain that strategy, that is, the defense strategic guidance missions that we do today. It will be a completely different look. We've been pretty clear testifying to that, all of the chiefs, but no, I wouldn't propose that we would go to, if you will a more-- where we would return home and only respond in search.

My experience as I've watched the world today and I look around, I rattle off all those things that happened just in the last 18 months on that slide. If you put the Navy Today slide up there, please. On the lower left hand corner there you see how long it takes to get from CONUS to a place. Three weeks to get somewhere, two weeks! It's either festered into a really bad situation, or it's over. And I don't think we can do that.

Douglas H. Paal: Here in the front row.

Audience Member: Thank you, sir. Admiral Sydney Friedberg, BreakingDefense.com. You mentioned electronic warfare, you mentioned air/sea battle. I wanted to get your reaction, your thoughts on an issue that Alan Shaffer from Department of Defense Research Engineering raised the other week.

He said, it was kind of startling, we have lost the electromagnetic spectrum, that we need to regain dominance or at least parity. He was deeply concerned about the proliferation of affordable, low-cost jamming, for example, around the world. An issue beyond the West Pac, but clearly Asia is where a lot of the trends come from.

How concerned are you about having lost parity, or losing our edge in the electronics spectrum?

Admiral Greenert: I disagree that we've, if you will, lost parity, but we have lost momentum. I would put it that way, but I think we can regain it.

This is not a new realm for us. First thing you [have] got to do is you [have] got to be able to maneuver in the electromagnetic spectrum. You [have] got to understand your emissions, your potential adversaries' emissions; so that would be frequency, wave length, where they're using it. Then you [have] got to get out there and manipulate yourself in it.

So there are a lot of programs in that direction, Sydney. We have got to inject adrenalin into the whole concept. You know that, I've been talking about this for a while. That's my view of it, but I believe we have to remain focused on it, both investment-wise and operational-wise. We have lost momentum, but I don't think we've lost parity.

Douglas H. Paal: Next one's John Zang from CTI TV.

Audience Member: Thank you, Doug. Thank you, Admiral. Two questions. Excuse me for not standing for the sake of the cameras in the back.

Admiral Greenert: I understand.

Audience Member: First off, I know you are not in charge of arm sales to Taiwan, but Taiwan has been trying to buy submarines for many years to no avail. As a mariner yourself, for many years, do you have any suggestions for the people in Taiwan or your colleagues in Taiwan in terms of building submarines on their own? That's the first question.

Second question – I know you were saying that incidents like the South China Sea stand up between Chinese and American Navies, and also the kind of intercept over the skies of the South China Sea, do not define U.S-China mil-to-mil relationship, but apart from expressions of ‘constructive relationship’ that both leaders from both sides want, all we hear in the press is these kind of standoffs or intercepts. What is the real situation? What is the current state of mil-to-mil relationship between the two countries?

Douglas H. Paal: Feel free to pass the sub-question to me.

Admiral Greenert: Well I’ll tell ya’. Yes, I’ve had conversations with my Taiwan counterpart. I won’t discuss them here, I can’t. So I’ll leave it at that and leave it to Mr. Paal from there.

But yeah, I don’t think that this air incident should define the relationship, but I think it should be noted. So I’ll go on and say remember the Cowpens incident. That would be before everybody goes, “Whoa. How about that?”

Well, what happened after the Cowpens puts on the brakes and comes to a halt is the commanding officer, of the Liaoning, gets on the international circuit and said, “What’s going on over there?” He and the commanding officer of the Cowpens have a conversation. The Cowpens’ intent, the Liaoning’s intent and what operations they’re doing. They work it out and they find mutual protocol, if you will, or a mutual understanding of who’s going to do it. The whole thing diffuses.

There are examples, I’ve given some, and I can connect you with my public affairs officer, where we’ve met. That is, we’re at sea and our two commanding officers, Chinese ship, U.S. war ship, have a conversation and go their ways.

Now I may note that this agreement is between two Navies. That doesn’t mean Coast Guard yet is going to comply, and that we’re going to all speak English, or some auxiliary or supporting ship on both sides, but we’re working toward that.

But what we’ve seen examples of, again, my public affairs can help you, are Chinese Navy ships coming in to help preclude, to help, if you will, run a blocking maneuver to keep somebody from getting in too close, and complying with the international norms out there.

So this is going on. I just gave you the exercise when we went to RIMPAC. It’s not going to happen overnight, but I think we’re progressing ahead.

Bottom line: we cannot have miscalculation. As Dr. Paal mentioned, opening this up, the beginning of World War II, the beginning of World War I – a lot of miscalculation, the more I read about it – people not understanding the intention of somebody else. I don’t want to be a part of that, and I think it’s my job to keep the South China Sea calm and the East China Sea calm. I think working together is a step in the right direction to do that.

Douglas H. Paal: In the front row here, Mitzi.

Audience Member: Mitzi Wertheim with the Naval Post-Graduate School. I’m thrilled, frankly, to hear what you’re saying because somehow I haven’t picked up your behavior in the press.

Admiral Greenert: That’s usually a good sign, when you use the term ‘behavior.’ But anyway.

[Laughter]

Audience Member: It's all about behavior. It's about human beings –

Douglas H. Paal: Funny. I didn't read about you in the paper today, that's good –

Audience Member: Anyway, I'm going ask a question as a member of the Joint Staff. Last week I heard Michele Flournoy talk about the QDR. To be quite honest, what I understood from her, it sounded like the stuff that was going on in the Pentagon when I was there 37 years ago.

I kept thinking, doing the QDR, do you start with...what are the lessons learned we've acquired in the last ten years, and how would that apply to creating our thinking for a new plan? And if that's going on I would feel much better, but I certainly didn't get that from Michele.

In an institution that's so big, it's so easy to fall back on "well, this was last year's budget, this was last year's plan, so we'll just continue to do that."

Admiral Greenert: Well, I'd say process wise, we have learned a great deal from things like counter-IED, how to stand up an organization which can take a today problem – and we need to stop casualties on the battlefield today – and if you read Mr. Gates' book, you'll see details of that how he fought through that and then put together a means to get what I call 'speed to fleet.' Gary Rough had actually started, I should give the kudos where they belong, but to carry that on.

So how do you quickly acquire something? MRAPs would be another larger program. How to put together an office to go out there and find – and Frank Kendall talks about this a lot today – find capabilities that are coming forward out of research and development and get them into test and evaluation. We have learned a good deal from that and that is being brought forward and applied –

Audience Member: _____.

Admiral Greenert: Come again.

Audience Member: And into training.

Admiral Greenert: And into training, yeah –

Audience Member: _____.

Admiral Greenert: Yeah. So air/sea battle is an example of the collaboration among the services, not just on getting together when you operate, that's when you already have all your gear. But it's backing up to, if not the gestation of the program, the concept, and then starting to share that and putting that together, because we call it interdependence. Joint operations is great, but interdependence among each other.

We have Army Air Force. We have Navy Air Force. Navy Army. You get war fighter talks where we get together and take action on that.

So this is going on, but as you said, you don't read about it all out there, but it's happening. A lot of it is fiscal survival, being able to continue to get that capability out there. If it really resides in the Army

or in the Air Force, then they ought to be the ones to bring it forward, and then we have to make it compatible. So, compatibility.

Douglas H. Paal: You mentioned, Admiral, that Carnegie's the oldest think tank. As a representative example we have in the front row here, Michael Swaine from Carnegie.

Audience Member: The oldest. _____..

Douglas H. Paal: Microphone.

Audience Member: Thank you. Michael Swaine, Carnegie Endowment. I'd like to ask you a question that's sort of two questions, but they're related, because I ask you to look a little bit into the future.

One of them is to do with Japan. You mentioned in your remarks about Japan's move towards collective self-defense and re-interpretation. What would you like to see happen in terms of U.S. Navy and maritime self-defense force capabilities that the Japanese can't do today that you'd like to see them doing in the future? Perhaps in our collective self-defense or even further?

The other question is, can you see a time in the future when the U.S. and Chinese Navies would work together in a really interoperable nature to do things like SLOC defense. In other words, that that task would not be entirely left to the U.S. Navy in the big sense. Not just Gulf of Aden counter-piracy sort of thing, but the basic capabilities of keeping straits of LOC and other things open. Can you foresee a time when the U.S. and China would work together to do that sort of thing?

Admiral Greenert: Well, I'll answer the last one first. I can. I can see that. Those are the kind of skill sets that we exercised at RIMPAC. Although China came and did some complex...from simple to highly complex gunnery exercises and maneuvers and all that.

What we did together is a sort of an ad hoc coalition was maritime security operations. That would be what you described. Boarding - visit, board, search seizure. Then you have levels. You get up to the third level where somebody is opposing that. We worked at those very high levels.

Yes, I can see that. I think that's what responsible navies have to do. I think that the neighborhood of nations would turn to us and say, "Hey, we don't have what you have. So you guys should be keeping this place free." You know, freedom of navigation.

To answer your first question, two examples off the bat that I think should be non-, I think, concerning to other nations for us in Japan. Ballistic missile defense. We have a North Korean threat, and it's an international threat. They have the missile, Japan does, and they have the fire control program, and they have the proven ability to use it, and we are interoperable as I described earlier. That would fit in well.

The second would be counter-mine, and in particular, keeping the Strait of Hormuz open. We are about to do an exercise here in November called - what else - International Mine Counter Measure Exercise. Pretty simple. You get more people if you keep it simple.

We will have 40 nations there, which is extraordinary, because two years ago we had 20-- about 24 actually. So I think those are two clearly defensive, clearly international-interest items that we could operate with Japan

Douglas H. Paal: Back here in the fifth row, Mike _____. Mike.

Audience Member: Michael Mosettig, PBS Online News Hour. In 1995 President Clinton ordered the deployment of two carrier groups to the Straits of Taiwan with relative assurances from your predecessor at the time of the relative safety of those ships. Given what the Chinese have been doing with missiles and area denial, et cetera, would you or your successor be able to offer the President of the United States the same assurances with that kind of a deployment?

Admiral Greenert: Well, it's always dangerous to take something in history and then bring it in to today, but I'll speak in capability wise.

We've been working very hard. You're talking about anti-ship ballistic missile predominantly, which is the targeted many, say toward a carrier, and to some degree, anti-ship cruise missile. We've worked very hard on defeating that. It is a kill chain that has to take place.

What I mean by that is you have to have the capability to detect a ship, an aircraft carrier, anything that large, from quite a distance if you're going to be effective. So you have to detect it, you have to know that's what it is that you've detected, then you have to track it long enough to be confident enough to go ahead and launch this ballistic missile.

Then the ballistic missile has to travel far enough to turn its sensor on, turn and look and find what it's looking for, then track it, then move in and get a final strike, if you will. Any breakage in that chain or confidence therein is a mission failure. So I'm confident that we've made terrific headway in this direction, and we'll continue to move in that direction.

Douglas H. Paal: Good question. Great answer. In the third row, please.

Audience Member: Thank you. Leandra Bernstein, RIA Novosti. I would like you to address some more of these potential miscalculations. I know that you did just refer to China as a potential adversary. Obviously, not an adversary right now, but there is a perception that this pivot to the Pacific was for the purpose of containment. As far as I understand, that's still a perception.

So what's the potential for miscalculations? What's the actual threat that we're looking at in our presence in the Pacific? Then also, if you could just address this upcoming symposium in Newport also.

Douglas H. Paal: He's already done it

Admiral Greenert: And hurry up, will ya? Right? Yes. So may I leave you with a few things. I think China is an opportunity, and I underline that. We have to take that opportunity. So I think that's very, very important right up front.

Two, I've had, as I said, numerous conversations with my counterpart, Admiral Wu Shengli. He's told me repeatedly he understands that we're going to be there in the South China Sea. He understands we're not going anywhere and he thinks we ought to, too, ought to be able to interoperate together.

His point to me is, "I'm going to be there, too, by the way because my nation says these are our near seas. These are of interest to us." So then we look at each other and we say, "So we're going to have to figure out how to do this right." We both agree.

You say, what's the potential for miscalculation? The potential for miscalculation is not educating our commanding officers and giving them the means and the protocol so that when they meet, instead of the first thing coming out of their mouth in a different language is something saying, "What are you doing? You don't belong here." The other one's saying, "In accordance with whatever." Where do we go from there? It's just not good.

It should start with two seasoned, professional mariners who are responsible for, like I said, 300 to 500 of their nation's folks aboard, having a professional dialogue about what they're doing in this international medium called the sea.

As I mentioned, there's trillions of dollars in economies at stake here. We can't screw this up through miscalculation. That's my view.

Douglas H. Paal: I haven't seen any hands way in the back. We want to recognize someone. About four rows from the rear a hand is up.

Audience Member: Ken Meyer Greg, World Docs. I thought it was instructive on your map of our deployments in the western Pacific that the United States was nowhere to be seen. You sail a long way from our shores. Can you envision a world in which the Navy is used actually to defend our shores rather than threaten other people's shores, other than forced upon us by budgetary constraints or is that slot above your pay scale?

Admiral Greenert: Well, what I didn't put up there because I'm going to clobber it with numbers, there's roughly 200 ships back in the United States and the east and west coast. Put the slide up there. The dots, yeah, there it is; 190 ships. They are on the east and west coast. So they are assigned to the commander called North Com, Northern Command. They are operationally-- upon his need, he says, "I need these." Whatever it is. And we say, "They're yours."

So there are a host of ships operating usually about 40 on the West Coast, and about – I don't know – 20 to 30 – I can get you the numbers if you're interested – on the East Coast operating, and they're readily available for defense of the United States.

The number one mission of the Department of Defense and the Defense Strategic Guidance, which is the foundation for all our programs, is homeland defense. That's just not strategic nuclear although that's a key and critical part of it. It's what we would provide, which is presence on the East and West Coast.

By the way, I failed to mention my little friend down there in Guantanamo Bay. Don't forget that. You have to pass within tens of miles from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, our U.S. base, it's that dot, when you go through the Panama Canal. So that's an important site.

Douglas H. Paal: Admiral, you've been terrific with your time, but we also have been sharing so much information with us, but we also know you have a regular job. So we'll take one last question before you head out. Anyone? Okay. Right here.

Audience Member: Thank you, Dr. Paal. Thank you, Admiral. I thank you for your service in this very challenging –

Audience Member: My name is Genie Ngyuen with Voice of Vietnamese Americans. I thank the Admiral for the very challenging jobs that you've done very well.

Admiral Greenert: Thank you.

Audience Member: You made the statement that the U.S. has been in the Pacific for the last many decades. Actually, the U.S. has done all it can to maintain peace in that area so that China can rise to this present day, when they expanding its naval forces. From what you [are] saying, we [are] still looking to embrace China to maintain the stability and the security in the region, especially in the South China Sea.

Recently, you also mentioned we should note the Cowpens situation in the recent almost collision in the air and in the sea and many different incidents, but the U.S. is still trying to embrace China. The question is raised by many of our Chinese news reporters –

Douglas H. Paal: Could you make a question, please --?

Audience Member: -- say that China did not appreciate that, and they question the U.S. being in the international air and they want the U.S. not to be there so they wanted to setup a new norms and new standards. The reason happening in South –

Douglas H. Paal: I'm sorry. Could you please just get to your question?

Audience Member: Yes. In the South China Sea what they building in the Johnson _reef_____ in the James shoal_____ and what they building in all other rocks areas to turn it into islands – meaning they're not honoring the international law. So to what extent without sequestration do you think the U.S. can continue to support China to violate all the international laws? [Laughter]

And to what extent do you see our allies and our partners, including Vietnam, can understand your purpose in maintaining peace and stability in the region to promote our trade which you said over 500 million--

Douglas H. Paal: I'm sorry. Miss _____, please –

Audience Member: -- last year, but our trade deficit was almost 500 million last year with China. Thank you.

Admiral Greenert: Well, we need to, I think, bring the Chinese, in all areas, to the table of international meetings and norms and fora, and have these discussions to your point on what, precisely and then we'll be clear with each other and everybody, what are the international laws? Because I think they're getting fuzzy here and there, [about] what's a law, what's a local law, if you will, a country law, a nation's claim, and what the international UN Convention for the Law of the Sea means--that tends to be what it means and what it stands for. Thanks.

Douglas H. Paal: Thank you, Admiral. Please join me in thanking him for his –

[Applause]

[End of Audio]