

Brigadier General Stanley J. Osserman Jr., U.S. Air Force,

Mobilization Assistant, U.S. Pacific Command

Remarks at the Galle Dialogue Maritime Conference

August 6, 2010, Galle, Sri Lanka

Brigadier General Osserman: I'm honored to join you all here today and I am sincerely appreciative of the opportunity to deliver this presentation on the role of "External Powers" in achieving Maritime Security. Although some may consider the United States role in the Pacific and Asia region today as "external", I assure you that Admiral Willard considers this region vital to U.S. national security, and he is echoing the sentiments of the U.S. Secretary of State, and our President. As a life-long resident of Hawaii, I am a U.S. Citizen, and I certainly consider myself a Pacific islander. I would propose that in our ever increasing inter reliance on trade, and the importance that we all must place on cooperating to combat violent extremists, natural disasters and other global challenges, the term "external power" is somewhat a misnomer. International cooperation and transparency of national intent are becoming more important with each passing day, as we all face challenges on many fronts. Before I go further, however, I would like to congratulate and thank our hosts, and organizers for bringing us together for these important talks.

There is certainly no need to explain to an esteemed group such as this, the vital importance of the oceans of the world, not just as a medium for transportation, but as source of great natural resources, a means of generating critical revenues for thriving economies, a common heritage of cultural practices, a link to other friends or potential foe, a moat of protection, or a hindrance to communication. The oceans literally give life to millions of people, and it is in our collective best interest to protect our oceans and manage the many aspects they represent to mankind wisely.

As a frame for reference, I'd like to define Maritime Security as a sovereign nation's ability to protect its maritime territory, consistent with national and international laws. This task is simple in concept, but highly complex in practice when the elements of politics, economics, culture, historical and sometimes ethnic friction points come into play. Maritime Security must, therefore, address a broad spectrum of concerns and situations, not only with respect to these friction points, but the many natural and human threats that we face today. These threats include natural disasters, climate change (regardless of the cause), trans-national crime, use of the seas to facilitate proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, violent extremist movements and terrorists, misappropriation of natural resources (illegal fishing, mining, de-

forestation, manufacture of illegal drugs, and trafficking in persons, just to give some examples).

Of course, no discussion on maritime security would be complete without including a few words on piracy, which can be state sponsored, or as it appears to me in the case of our most prolific threat today off the east coast of Africa, mostly criminal in nature. If there is any upside to Somali piracy activity, as my colleague Captain Brogan points out to me, it's the fact that the pirates have kept the fishing poachers at bay and fish stocks have rebounded well in the gulf! I will assume that you agree this is not the preferred method for conducting fisheries management! I would hope that working together; we can find solutions to piracy and leave fisheries management to a more capable maritime law enforcement component.

I'd like to focus now on the Pacific and Indian Oceans. I subscribe to a service that gives me news briefs directly to my Black Berry, and I can confidently report that there will be an earthquake, typhoon, mud slide, flood, drought, or some other natural calamity, somewhere in the Pacific or Indian Oceans today. The earthquake and resulting tsunamis in December of 2004 are still fresh in my mind. And my own officers deployed to American Samoa just over a year ago to help U.S. citizens there after a tsunami ripped through the island, but only after we braced for a potential tsunami at home in Hawaii a few hours before. Other Pacific nations were there as good neighbors and helped mitigate the devastation on many Pacific islands that day. Helping your neighbors in a time of need is the right thing to do, but to help, your economy and your infrastructure needs to be strong, and for Asians, and Pacific islanders that is facilitated (or not facilitated) by a robust maritime security apparatus, and established cooperative relationships.

Disasters may be the most apparent potential threat to many in the Asia Pacific region, but you are all aware of the devastation that could visit your economy if there is a disruption anywhere in the international shipping mega-system. Over 70,000 ships per year transit the Straits of Malacca alone, and disruption of the legitimate cargo on many of these ships, even for a few days, sends damaging ripples through manufacturing and trading economies world-wide. In addition, each ship is a potential target for pirates or, more likely, a transporter of some kind of contraband. Each of your nations pays a dear price to combat criminals (organized or not), violent extremists, and "traffickers" of all kinds. I'm certain your government has other things they would like to invest their capital resources in rather than detecting, deterring, and prosecuting perpetrators of illegal activity, but today it is a simple reality for us in the Asia Pacific region. An excellent example of success in thwarting piracy came earlier this decade when Lloyds of London imposed a "war tax" on all shipping through the Straits of Malacca in 2005 due to a spike in attacks on commercial shipping. That spurred Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore to collaborate and decisively gain control of the situation, immediately reducing

incidents of piracy resulting in withdrawal of the insurance “tax” by Lloyds. Today the Straits of Malacca have no serious piracy threat, thanks to cooperation by these nations.

Another aspect complicating the maritime security environment in our region is the disputed boundaries where Exclusive Economic Zones, or traditional borders or boundaries are contested between neighboring countries. The U.S. policy in these matters is to let international law and multilateral forums peacefully resolve these issues (using the U.N. Convention for Law of the Sea, for example). Overlapping claims are a barrier to effective maritime security, hinder economic development, impact the use of natural resources, impact food security, and results in political friction between neighbors that could potentially result in a confrontation, or in the worst case scenario, armed conflict. Peaceful resolution of disputed zones, borders and boundaries is critical to regional security and productivity. Possibly one of the most important roles that “external powers” play in the maritime environment, is helping facilitate and mediate these territorial disputes in an objective way and a in a recognized multilateral forum.

As I’ve already mentioned, criminal activities impact all nations, cost billions of dollars , and often cost the most for the nations that can afford it the least. Criminal activity, such as drug trafficking, has local impacts that include loss of worker productivity, destruction of families, overburdening social programs (medical treatment and rehabilitation), increase local violent crime and family abuse. Secondary impacts include declining tourism and trade, destabilizing corruption, loss of export capital and declining quality of life and political volatility and instability. Trafficking in persons likewise has devastating impact on the poor, particularly sexually exploiting women and children. Often Human trafficking is closely connected to the drug trade and governmental corruption, and this robs the legitimate government of tax revenues to support critical needs of the nations citizens. On a larger scale, nations that cannot single handedly support robust maritime security programs face exploitation from outside criminals. Unable to patrol and defend their Exclusive Economic Zones, Pacific island nations lose billions of dollars a year in fish and other marine resources. Even land based illegal activity, such as illegal logging or mining are facilitated by weak maritime security, by allowing unfettered shipping out of the country.

Certainly the biggest strategic criminal concern impacting not only our region, but the world at large is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This activity has the potential to destabilize the world economy, kill hundreds, thousands or hundreds of thousands of people. This threat can only be thwarted by world-wide cooperation, and thus may be the biggest driver for “external powers” to take an active role in maritime security. The need for all nations to cooperate and participate in comprehensive maritime security is compelling based on all that is lost, or potentially lost, when we fail in this area.

As nations, we have a responsibility to our citizens to protect our national resources, our citizens' lives, their livelihood, their children's futures, and maritime security is vital in attending to those responsibilities. For all nations to cooperate, to resolve border issues and combat crime in the maritime domain shows that those nations have respect for international law, and respect for other nations who have placed honor and integrity as a universal national culture. A robust and effective maritime security program says that a nation is serious about its sovereignty, and is a sign that the nation is committed to its economic future. So here is where "external powers" may play a key role. Fortunately, and sometimes unfortunately, certain nations become very good at handling crisis because they have a lot of first-hand experience, so we need to look to those nations for leadership in sharing their lessons and expertise. Some nations have the resources available to provide hardware or training or facilities to help economically challenged nations build capacity. That initial financial boost leads to tangible economic benefits gained by an effective maritime security. As maritime security fosters economic growth, the gains can be captured and, in turn, help grow and perpetuate that nations available capital resources until the maritime security program becomes self supporting. In so far as maritime security is a military or para-military operation, some nations can offer professional development and training to improve the capability and quality of the officers and non-commissioned officers charged with running maritime security operations. Sharing of information to combat transnational crimes is another area to develop. Participating in multinational humanitarian assistance exercises and training facilitates sharing of best practices and also builds the relationships between key governmental agencies and leaders before a disaster happens. These exercises also help develop standard procedures and protocols and point out gaps in communication and equipment inter-operability. In some cases, nations may find that logistic support capacity is needed, and other nations with that expertise can show the way. Finally, the presence of external powers in a region quite often has a stabilizing affect. A credible naval and maritime security force presence indicates the external power's commitment to the stability and peace of the region by forming and enhancing partnerships, and by being ready to defend our interests and those of our allies and partners

The United States and particularly the U.S. Pacific Command have played a vital role for many decades alongside our many allies and partners in the Asia Pacific Region, in helping develop the relationships and the capacity for Asia-pacific nations to realize their goal of effective maritime security programs. The U.S. stands committed to peace and security in the region, and we value friends and allies that stand beside us in support of that objective. I thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in this forum, and I again thank our Sri Lanka hosts for their efforts to make this event possible and I applaud your participation because it shows that your nation supports the critical need to continually improve maritime security in the Asia-Pacific Region.