

U.S. Japan Maritime Relations
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As one examines the global environment, I believe we are confronting a most challenging and potentially dangerous period in a very complicated world. How we respond to the challenges we face could likely determine the future of the United States as well as that of many other countries. Allow me to explain.

Today the United States is enmeshed in two wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan. There is no question that the international mood, particularly in Europe, suggests that the United States should withdraw from Iraq.

It is also evident that many in the United States share this view. As we near the election, it appears that the American people are on the verge of demanding an end to U.S. involvement. I think it is credible to assume that whoever occupies the White House at this time next year will not be faced with whether we withdraw our forces but when and how.

At the same time, and in this same region, we face the question of how we should deal with the country of Iran: should we employ sanctions or resort to military options against that nation which seeks to move ahead in its goal of developing new capabilities which would place it in a different military context.

And, of course, moving farther to the east, there is China, who aspires to a greater role in the community of nations. We see in China a country which will trade for whatever it can on the world market, including trading with Iran. It also acquires capabilities by other means, all in the quest to increase its national power. As we recognize the actions and determination of the Chinese it is clear we must think about the Pacific in a new light.

Since the founding of the United States, Europe has been the center of our nation's attention. This makes sense as most of our people came from Europe. It is the basic source of our culture, our history, and for most of us, our religion. In a sense we remain part of the European family more than 200 years after our nation was established. And so, culturally, emotionally, commercially, and militarily our ties are all with Europe.

But in the future we are likely to see a world in which the challenges to peace and stability come from the Pacific Rim. I won't provide you with a litany of systems outlining the dangers that we face, but we know that the North Koreans have certain military capabilities. We know too that they are developing

additional systems which threaten their neighbors. So too, the Chinese have their own sources of strength and have rapidly developed their capability since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Today we are focused on missiles from North Korea. We all seem to wish to ignore that the Chinese have this and more.

In light of these concerns we have recently been developing a closely linked relationship with Japan. Our two militaries conduct joint training exercises. Together we train with other Pacific nations. Our military officers study together. Many of the aircraft and ships in the Japanese inventory were designed in the United States and are the same type as those used in the United States military. Our ballistic missile defense Aegis missiles are identical.

Our two nations have agreements for American aircraft carriers to constantly patrol the waters around Japan and to visit and revisit Japanese ports. Although many of our Marines will move from Okinawa this is simply a realignment to the island of Guam. At the same time, the air base at Futenma will be relocated, not shuttered. And, our forces will be maintained in the Pacific.

These activities: training, planning and equipping can only be looked upon as very serious preparations to maintain peace in the region. The amounts we are investing will not be measured in millions but in billions, potentially as much as a trillion dollars over the coming years.

One of my learned mentors in the United States Senate was a Senator I deeply admired and respected over the years. His name was Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana. In 1977, soon after he was appointed by the President to serve as our Ambassador to Japan, he presented his first official speech. His theme was short and simple, yet profound. He said, "The most important bilateral relationship that America has today is with Japan." He maintained that our relationship with Japan and our presence in the Pacific Asian region would serve to maintain stability, thereby fostering peace in this area. To date, the Pacific Rim region has not experienced any warfare.

In 1992, when the American forces were asked to leave the Philippines -- Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base -- we began to hear diplomatic rumblings in that area. I visited with officials from seven different capital cities from Sydney to Beijing. Without hesitation, the message I received clearly was, "Please do not leave this area." They were concerned that our departure may signal the beginning of diplomatic discord and accompanying violence.

As one who has lived through several wars, I hate to anticipate another. I am very aware of the impact of war and in my heart of hearts I want to do everything to avoid another. Unfortunately, I have concluded over my many years of service that war is nearly unavoidable.

So today, let us pray that the efforts we are undertaking together to prepare for war, the training and the planning will ensure that we never have to use these weapons of destruction.