

**DCN SPEECH****THE ROLE OF INDIAN OCEAN POWERS:  
MARITIME SECURITY - COMMON AND COLLABORATIVE INTERESTS****6 AUGUST 2010**

Good afternoon Vice Admiral Samarasinghe, Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy; **other VIPS TBC**; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a privilege for me to be asked to present here because the importance of a collaborative role among Indian Ocean powers to preserve regional maritime security strikes me as being essential. In this afternoon's presentation, I want to canvass briefly the span of interests that we need to accommodate when speaking of Indian Ocean nations and highlight the importance of cooperation and mutual understanding in pursuing security for all users of the seas. We are already working towards greater cooperation to deal with many of the threats facing us including legal cooperation, intelligence cooperation and enforcement cooperation. Nowhere is this more evident than in our efforts to work together to address piracy in and around the Gulf of Aden and Somalia.

Australia and the Royal Australian Navy in particular, is no stranger to the Indian Ocean. We have operated in the Indian Ocean since World War 1 and have a proud history of cooperation with littoral states. Since 1979, the RAN has maintained an almost continuous presence, broken only by a short period from

1987 to 1991. I well recall my times in HMA Ships *Brisbane* and *Perth* in the early 80's when I was fortunate to visit countries such as the Seychelles, Mauritius, Kenya, India and Sri Lanka. Our ships have also visited South Africa, Tanzania, Pakistan, the Maldives, Oman, The Comoros and La Reunion, amongst others in the region.

Of course, as this afternoon's program makes clear, other regional and external players also have interests in the Indian Ocean region, and I am sure that this session will produce a range of perspectives and ideas for discussion.

For most of our recent history, nations and military forces around the world have increasingly been confronted with terror as a fundamental threat. The re-emergence of piracy in the Indian Ocean and its threat to the global system of trade has also grown to be a dominant theme which has caught the world's attention.

However, I think it is important to note that there is a range of threats against which we are required to defend our countries and our region. Threats to maritime security are not limited to terrorism and piracy. Other threats within the spectrum of crimes at sea emphasise the increasing importance of naval planning to counter transnational crime and activities which can adversely affect the economies of regional states. These may include:

- the illegal exploitation of natural resources, including fisheries. For example, coastal prawn, snapper, skate and sardine fisheries are essential to the livelihoods of many coastal settlements in the Indian Ocean;
- illegal activity in protected areas, which may place the environment at risk;
- irregular maritime arrivals, which affect border control and immigration regimes, and create risks to safety of life at sea;
- threats to each nation's customs regime, not necessarily limited to illegal substances;
- threats to bio-security through the deliberate or accidental introduction of pests and disease, which can have wide-ranging and adverse economic effects; and
- marine pollution, again with attendant environmental and economic impacts.

Australia's unique geography as the largest island continent, especially reliant on sea lines of communication, makes us susceptible to many of these threats. The 2009 Australian Defence White Paper stated clearly that "*Over the period to 2030, the Indian Ocean will join the Pacific Ocean in terms of its centrality to our maritime strategy and defence planning.*" We are, for example, the 5th largest user of shipping in the world in terms of tonnage carried and distance travelled, so the Indian Ocean is fundamentally important to our strategic interests. However, we are not alone, and these geostrategic circumstances are common across the Indian Ocean region.

We could probably sum up the interests of Indian Ocean powers in our region as protection of economic resources within the ocean areas of coastal states, security against violence at sea, security for coastal states against incursion, and security for maritime trade. The last is especially important given the prevalence of trade routes to and from Indian Ocean states in this vast maritime area. Additionally, the volume of ship movements through our ocean imposes a heavy responsibility for our search and rescue capabilities (SAR) and one which has often been called on in recent years. For Australia, the red line on the slide indicates our SAR area of responsibility – a significant proportion of the earth's surface.

Just as importantly, our collective commitment to the rule of law in our region and globally determines the need for us to commit ourselves to maritime security in the interests of all peaceful users of the sea in our region. The most recent Indian Ocean Navy Symposium, which Vice Admiral Crane, Chief of Navy attended for Australia in May, reflected this united approach to security.

We have all become increasingly aware that states cannot act in isolation to effectively protect these interests.. A case in point is the united effort to suppress piracy in the western reaches of the Indian Ocean, which reflects not just our regional involvement but that of other interested powers as well.

Currently, Indian Ocean nations have a broad spectrum of cooperative regimes aimed at maritime security in our region. Against the background of the Law of the Sea Convention, Indian Ocean nations participate in a range of legal instruments which specifically target the threats I have mentioned, including

- *Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Navigation (SUA);*
- *UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances;*
- the Proliferation Security Initiative;
- MARPOL

- and the *International Ship and Port Security Code*.

Without this jurisdictional background, which provides the means to pursue and prosecute those who threaten maritime security, actual cooperation between ships and navies cannot produce effective results.

Australia's experience in cooperative enforcement at sea is broad and is based on three focus points. Our strategy builds on our experiences in counter-terror and piracy operations in the Middle East area but also in law enforcement in our Southern Ocean region and in waters surrounding the Australian mainland.

Firstly, there is direct cooperation in enforcement operations. For instance over many years, RAN (and Customs) personnel and vessels have operated with the French Navy and the Republic of South African Navy on fisheries enforcement in our southern ocean zones. Earlier this year, we successfully conducted the first of what we hope will be more frequent coordinated fisheries patrols with the Indonesian Navy in the waters to our north. We are also assisting in the development of East Timor's emerging maritime security forces, which will hopefully develop eventually toward cooperative patrols in our areas of shared security interest.

Secondly, we pursue regional training initiatives, especially with nations with whom we share maritime boundaries, such as Indonesia, and nations with whom we operate at sea. Regular exercises, sea exchanges and training courses with many of our Indian Ocean partners provide a platform on which we can build increasing interoperability and responsiveness.

Thirdly, we focus on information sharing. In a world dominated by transnational threats and organisations, it is only through a cooperative approach to information transfer that we can succeed in maintaining effective maritime security. Information in this sense can be intelligence, or when a prosecution is brought, there will be a requirement to share information which can ultimately be used as evidence to prove the commission of an offence. For Australia and our partners in South East Asia, information sharing on people smuggling is an essential part of our regional approach.

This cooperative approach need not be limited purely to security issues. Indeed, Indian Ocean collaboration in areas such as Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Search and Rescue (SAR) provides valuable opportunities for us to explore frameworks for enhanced practical cooperation. Building confidence in the way regional navies operate, as well as shared protocols for engagement, will help us to respond effectively and efficiently to incidents which affect us

all. This will require increased multilateral engagement, often building on cooperative bilateral relationships.

A key part of this engagement is the development of organisations such as IONS. This has significant potential to advance our shared strategic interests, but it must have sustained and consistent support if it is to be an effective player in Indian Ocean collaboration. Australia has the privilege of also being a full member of the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, along with other Indian Ocean states such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, while India and Bangladesh are observers. WPNS is a forum with a similar aim and purpose to IONS and has proved to be a highly successful means of discussing shared concerns. It has also developed mechanisms to identify *how* we might work together more effectively, including shared tactical protocols. WPNS began in 1988 as a forum for the leaders of regional navies to promote mutual understanding and discuss common challenges and has grown significantly over the years into the respected forum it is today. I look forward to the development of IONS into a forum of renown and acknowledge the efforts of India in establishing this valuable forum.

Internationally, there is no doubt that the threat of piracy in the region has fostered a new mood of cooperation, which can only be to the long-term benefit of us all. It also highlights how cooperation needs to expand far beyond naval

forces, to include a wide range of government agencies and even industry groups.

In addition to operational task forces at sea, several organisations ensure that all sources of information and response are included in the anti-piracy effort. The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia brings together countries, organizations, and industry groups with an interest in combating piracy. It has four working groups covering military and operational coordination, information sharing, capacity building, judicial issues, strengthening shipping self-awareness and public information. Since protection of trade routes has been identified as a core function of maritime security, the perspective of industry is critical, even when corporate structures cross national borders.

Similarly, the Shared Awareness and De-confliction Group (SHADE) brings together nations contributing maritime forces to ensure multi-national de-confliction of activity, safety and cooperation. I see this kind of practical discussion and cooperation as critical. The day to day matters such as communications, refuelling, understanding of Replenishment At Sea [RAS] or boarding practices can make or break a cooperative operation.

The multi-agency approach also works effectively at the domestic level. Beyond the example of piracy, Australia entrusts domestic maritime security to Border

Protection Command, a multi-agency structure in which the RAN and Australian Customs Service take a lead role. Other agencies, including the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), are also involved and there are direct links with the Australian Federal Police. This whole of government approach has had a significant impact on our response to the principal maritime security threats we face, and emphasises that maritime security is not purely a naval concern.

The essence of a cooperative approach is a shared view of the range of maritime security threats we face and a consistent process to enforce the law against those who threaten it. We must collaborate with agencies in each of our nations and across the Indian Ocean region if we are to respond coherently and effectively to the spectrum of maritime security threats.

In summary, I think it fair to say that as maritime nations we largely agree on the range of crimes which threaten maritime security, including terrorism, piracy, drug trafficking and pollution. We are also agreed on other threats, such as illegal use of resources or protected areas or activities which affect bio-security and sustainable exploitation of offshore resources. We share an interest in allowing peaceful, free use of the seas to all. To that end we pursue naval collaboration, and current exercises such as the MILAN series are a solid

foundation, bringing together regional navies to focus on Indian Ocean cooperation.

Our challenge is maintaining an environment in which we can use the seas freely for peaceful purposes. Cooperation and collaboration is already an important part of our response, but there is always room to expand it. Open forum discussions such as this one provide valuable opportunities for us to exchange ideas, perspectives and concerns in order to improve our collective approach. To that end, I join with all of us present in thanking Vice Admiral Samarasinghe and the Sri Lanka Navy for facilitating this conference.

I am firmly convinced that it is only through cooperation at all stages that we will achieve our mutual goal of security at sea, not just against terrorists and pirates, but all who would threaten the economic wellbeing of the peaceful users of the Indian Ocean.