

An Interview with

Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III



How do you interpret the President's intention with respect to the strategic shift to Asia and the Pacific? What do you think he means by that?

Locklear: When we put out the new strategic guidance, "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," in early 2012, there was a fair amount of deliberation among all aspects of the government including the Defense Department, the National Security Council, and the President. This discussion followed a decade or two of the type of operations we had been doing in the Middle East. We wanted to understand if we had the right prism to reshape our force, reshape our thinking, and reshape our planning. And I think we got it about right. I thought that before I was the PACOM commander, when I was in my last posi-

tion in Europe and in NATO. So it's not just about where I'm currently sitting. If you take a look at the next century, and where the interests of our children and our grandchildren will be most impacted, all the vectors point to Asia, the Indo-Asian Pacific region.

What do you think are the major threats to international security or to national security emanating from Asia and the Pacific?

Locklear: You've got to start the hierarchy of threats with those that directly threaten the homeland. From a military perspective, certainly the most pressing is the nuclearization of North Korea and their ability to develop delivery systems that would not only threaten the Korean peninsula, but the Asia-Pacific region, and even the United States. We can't really underestimate the strategic importance or the danger of that scenario. That has to be solved. The question for our future security is how we see this playing out from this third generation of North Korean kings, and it's not getting any better.

How would you assess the stability of North Korea in this third generation of kings?

Locklear: The North Korean regime and the country are a pretty dark space as far as being able to assess exactly what is happening there. That is probably a strength of the regime – to keep their own people in the dark and the rest of the world sequestered from what happens in there. My sense is that the new leader has been able to take a relatively good handle on the leadership role. He appears to be fully in power. I believe what will fundamentally undermine him in the long run is that he is out of touch with the rest of the world. His people are not well fed; they are not generally well-attuned to what is going on in the world. They are denied the types of liberties and freedoms that most of the world enjoys today, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. They are not integrated in the international market place. If you look at South Korea, it has a thriving economy and democracy. People are moving on in South Korea, but in North Korea, they are frozen in time. In terms of stability, there is always speculation that it is going to collapse. I do not see that happening anytime soon based on the way the regime manages the country. But, I think there are indicators that are very disconcerting. On average, half the population receives 800 calories a day, and the medical care is poor. But I don't know if the problems are so grave as to cause a regime collapse anytime soon.

Middle East watchers might have said the same of Egypt, Libya and Syria ten years ago. If we can speculate say ten years down the line, can you envision a collapse of the North Korean regime, following which we would have U.S. troops on the ground?

Locklear: I think that we need to plan with our allies who would be impacted for a number of possibilities. One of those possibilities is a rapid regime change, or a collapse of regime, or a disaster in the country that causes the regime to lose control. First, humanitarian issues will need to be addressed. Weapons of mass destruction would need to be managed and controlled, otherwise they would be subject to proliferation or loss of control. This would not be the sole responsibility or role of U.S. forces, but an international community approach in which the U.S. would certainly play a role, and U.S. forces would possibly play a role.

The defense strategic guidance of 2012 that you referred to directs us to expand our network of cooperation with emerging partners throughout the Asia-Pacific region to ensure collective capabilities and capacity for securing common interests. What kind of progress has PACOM made towards that goal?

Locklear: We are making good progress, but it's a complex environment. The region includes 52 percent of the world, 36 countries, and the largest Muslim country in the world, Indonesia. There isn't a central security mechanism that manages the flow of bilateral-historical relationships, bilateral emerging relationships, or multilateral forums within the region.

Taking a look at the shared challenges, this is where the U.S. has an opportunity to build partnership capacity. In 2012, the President provided guidance that focused on refreshing and renewing alliances for this century. Because of this, there is a concerted effort across all parts of government and the DOD, including through our military-to-military

partnerships, to see those alliances and how they fit into the security architecture in the next 30, 40, or 50 years. To some degree that in itself is building partnership capacity.

Take a look at our five formal alliance partners: Japan, South Korea, Australia, Philippines, and Thailand. In one way or another we are at different stages with each, of improving our ability to work together, working together on command-and-control, promoting shared interests in the security environment, forming access agreements, improving exercises, etc.

So with our allies I think we have a good plan. We are planning together, and we do that very deliberately. As it relates to other partners in the region, we are at various levels depending on the history or the background/relationships the U.S. has with them. We have some strategic partnerships such as with Singapore, who we have a very good partnership and friendship with, and partnership capacity building is already built into that relationship. In other areas, Indonesia, Malaysia, Oceania, China, all the ASEAN countries, depending on our mutually shared interests, we are pursuing capacity building in both directions.

Are there any U.S. partners in the region that require significant or more help than others to shore them up and to help them to help us?

Locklear: They all have their own individual security concerns. We are working to renew our relationship with the Philippines by better understanding what more we can do to help them develop a minimal credible defense. In developing this partnership, we are trying to develop our parameters of responsibility and resources within their plan. To be clear, the

Philippines have a good plan. They understand what they need. We understand where it is that we can help them and we are just working through some issues of how to go forward. In the Philippines there is always a concern of going back to the past, and we don't want to go back to the past. We want to move the relationship into the future. And that means that we need to build the type of access and relationships that allow us to help them with their defense, not detract from it.

What about Indonesia? As you mentioned, it's the largest Muslim country and recently transitioned from the Suharto regime to a democratic regime. What kind of relationship are we building with them on the military side?

Locklear: We are building a good relationship. There was a period of time when it wasn't as productive as it could have been. However, I believe the Indonesians have made very good progress in areas of concern such as human rights practices within their military and special operations community. I have recommended that we continue to step up our military-to-military engagement. The Indonesians will have a big role to play not only in Southeast Asia, but all of Asia as they grow economically and in influence. They, like all Asian countries in this last half of this past century and the early part of this century, are beginning to focus more on external security than internal security.

Do you think that Indonesia has the capacity in the near future to become a security exporter?

Locklear: Well, it depends on how far you talk about exporting it. I think they have a potential to be a real net provider of security in their sphere.

Many developing regions are confronting a lack of capacity across the board, not just military, but in their planning ministries, economic ministries, and generally throughout their civilian services. Some countries are finding that their militaries are the most functional institutions they have, which leads to the suggestion by some that they should be using their military to bolster their national economic development, education and public health systems, and even build infrastructure. Would you support those kinds of internal roles for the Indonesian military or the Philippine military?

Locklear: It's really up to each country how they structure their government organizations to provide public services. I believe that the model we use in our country is a good model. We rely heavily on other elements of government power to provide internal security and internal support. Mixing that with military, other than in cases of real emergency, I think adds complications to the way you manage your military. The system of civilian and military separation that works for us could probably work for them.

South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan had prolonged periods of military autocracy in the 20th century, and yet emerged as economic superpowers and very robust democracies. Do you think that there are any lessons we should derive from those earlier periods of military autocracy as we look at other countries in transition like Burma or Indonesia?

Locklear: In general, military autocracies don't have good luck historically. The military should have a limited role in the way the affairs of a nation are conducted. It should be in my view, confined to providing the overall security that allows the other elements of government power to work. In our own country, if you affirm the oath that we all take, it is to the constitution. It's not to a party, a king, or anything else. It's to the constitution. The constitution I would argue is not a perfect document and never has been; but it is the fabric that defines the checks and balances in our government. What the military provides to some degree is a defensive security network that allows that democratic architecture to work. So we encourage our partners, who are trying to shape their militaries and the roles and responsibilities of their militaries, to put it in the context of the "enabler" for security. It shouldn't be the thing that runs your government.

When PACOM engages with other countries in what we might call security sector reform, do you work closely with civilian agencies, U.S. agencies, like the State Department or USAID on those kinds of projects?

Locklear: Yes, absolutely. In the theater most of the nations in my area of responsibility already have mature forms of government and most are functioning adequately. In fact some of them are functioning very well, with the exceptions of outliers like North Korea and a few that are smaller that may be struggling.

To strengthen U.S. influence in this part of the world, we have to come at it with an inter-agency plan, even though we may talk about U.S. military power and moving more military

assets into the theater. The rebalance strategy that the President proposed is much, much more than just military. Our success will depend on the ability to understand how and when military power most effectively influences the other aspects of government and national power, particularly in the Asia-Pacific where they all have to work together.

Are you getting the kind of collaboration with the U.S. civilian agencies in your AOR that you were hoping for?

Locklear: Yes. Because of the size of the U.S. military, and our ability to plan, organize and execute (that's what militaries do well) we can be supportive. Not that the civilian organizations don't do those things well, but a large part of what we do is planning and we have the resources to dedicate to planning. The relationships with the interagency developed by bringing civilian agencies into those planning constructs are important; and it is important for the military to lead that process when necessary to ensure that the dialogue happens within a planning construct. The military has the broadest planning construct, particularly in the PACOM AOR. We have a theater campaign plan that goes out about five years that looks at how we interact with each country in the AOR and what the goals and objections are, not only from a U.S. perspective, but a regional perspective, an alliance perspective, and a multilateral perspective. It looks at each of the countries in the AOR and how they fit together through a variety of different lenses. There are inputs from State and our Embassy teams. I view the 27 or so ambassadors in my AOR as my customers. The defense attaches that work for them, work for me as well. I place them in the embassies and resource

them to provide insight from the embassy teams on how to use the elements of military power to synchronize with the other elements of national power. USAID, the State Department, Interior, Homeland Security, FBI, CIA... They all have a role in this plan.

Some argue that civilian agencies should be included on the COCOM staffs and that they add the necessary perspectives for successful foreign policy initiatives in the region. Do you have civilian agency personnel on your staff? And are there any problems integrating them in?

Locklear: I do have some on my staff. My command team consists of me, my Deputy, and my foreign policy advisor who is from the State Department, and is either a former ambassador or future ambassador. That position is vital to me because it provides me with a personal link to what Secretary Kerry and the State Department are doing. And that is the first and most important position. The next important position on my staff is my J-9; and embedded in that organization are my outreach or in-reach embeds from various agencies, such as the Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture. I also have representatives from the CIA, FBI, DIA, and Coast Guard. And in the development of this theater cooperation plan, they have a huge role.

To what extent have you developed the concept of Phase Zero planning in your theater plan?

Locklear: I am beginning to think that the world has moved beyond the Phase Zero, Phase One, Phase Two, and Phase Three planning mentality. That construct isn't flexible

enough for the theater that I am in. Phase Zero would indicate stability, but Phase One would indicate deterrence. So we are in Phase One in some places and Phase Zero in other parts of the AOR, and it could change at any minute. To think of your plan as just maintaining day-to-day stability misses the point.

We go deterrence phase with North Korea about every six months. I am walking away from the term Phase Zero although the rest of the joint community teaches and uses it. What I look at is how you manage a complex theater across multiple phases that aren't clear at any particular time, particularly concerning where you are in those various phases. The bottom line is to look at your theater cooperation plan, at all the things you do and invest in. We have aligned that plan to look at all these countries, and then break them up by sub-region and issue. Then we consider resources. We look out five years and give that as a planning factor for the services and components to actually fund the exercises, activities and billets.

In the year of execution, I put out a theater TCO or a theater command order that tells the services what are the highest priorities. Then I modify that command with fragmentary orders as I would in the other planning scenarios, and modify what the components do in order to ensure that we are being efficient with our allocated resources. So a big part of what we do at PACOM falls into Phase Zero, even though I think the Phase Zero terminology needs to be rethought.

You just think basically that the phasing concept is too...

Locklear : Rigid. It's too rigid. And that's one of the things that we always tend to do,

put things into neat columns so that they fit easily. But the issues are in a continuous state of flux across phases, even in peacetime.

One thing that is emerging in other regions is evidence of the collusion, collaboration, and even convergence of illicit networks of various kinds, such as transnational terrorists, criminal organizations, etc., are you seeing any of that in your AOR?

Locklear: We've got 59 percent of the world's population in our AOR. Over 100 improvised explosive devices a month explode in our AOR, but as a country we have been focused on the Middle East, and we have assumed that the Pacific countries can manage their own environment. And to their credit, most of the governments are mature enough. Most of the security organizations in these countries are mature. A large percentage of them are working against the terrorist threat. Information sharing is rapidly increasing among all the players including India and China, in terms of how we look at terrorist threats. There are different definitions of terrorism depending on where you sit. We have a tendency to look at global networks; some of these countries look internally at what they would consider disruptive factors in their own countries that they categorize as terrorists. But none of us can afford a dangerous security environment in the Asia-Pacific, a region with four billion people, which will increase to six to seven billion in this century; a region that is very diverse ethnically, socially, and economically. We can't allow security features that permit organized terrorists organizations to come in and camp out without us knowing it, without taking action. What we want to do is stay

ahead of the problem in the Asia-Pacific region rather than lag behind it, which I think we do in other parts of the world.

How do we stay ahead of it?

Locklear: The biggest enemy that the terrorists have is information. If you know about them and what they are doing, they have less of an impact and you can manage them better. I think we have to share information better. And this is not just military-to-military; this is CIA, FBI, State Department, and other elements of government. We have to ensure that we have the right communication mechanisms to allow us to alert each other when things change. Certainly in the area of proliferation and weapons of mass destruction, we need to be very careful about first of all where they are, then where they are proliferating, and how they are moving around. And we have to work together. We have our proliferation security initiative, so we are increasing the number of people we bring into that initiative. We do multinational training, in-the-air training, special operations training between these nations to be able to do interdiction, consequence management, and all the things that have to do with weapons of mass destruction. And that portfolio is growing as we try and manage it in the PACOM AOR.

Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, used to speak about "Asian Values." Do you give any credence to the notion that our concepts of democracy and human rights are if not parochial at least not universal in the sense that Asian countries might perceive democracy and human rights in a different way?

Locklear: I have read his writings, and I respect him very much. I disagree based on my own personal perspectives. I tend to disagree that you can put a spin on liberty. Liberty is in the eyes of the individual, not in the eyes of the government in my view. We have to be careful how we define individual liberties; they are not necessarily for the good of the government. I'm not saying that he was doing that; Singapore is a great partner, and I think they do a very, very good job of managing their country. But, I would generally think that the U.S. position globally on human rights is the right thing for us to continue to pursue in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

Some people would argue that because of our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan in the last decade that we have been somewhat discredited as a global agent of democracy and democratization. Do you think that has extended to Asia, that our currency there has been diluted somewhat?

Locklear: I would say that our currency has not been diluted. First of all, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, we have been primarily the only superpower in the world and a lot of responsibility for the global security environment fell on us. In this century, other people in the world will step up and be contributors to that security environment in ways that will be beneficial to the United States as well. I won't say that we didn't make mistakes, but we tried at the time to deal with things in a way that would generally provide for a global, peaceful, security environment.

In Asia it worked, there hasn't been a big war here in a long time. And the region is prospering from a peaceful security environment that has been underwritten by U.S. global

security efforts. So I do not think that the U.S. position has been discredited. I think they are interested and anxious to see if the rebalance does actually occur. I think they do recognize that we as a government, as a country, have been pulled to the Middle East. They recognize that our interests and theirs are inextricably tied together. And I think the Chinese and Indians recognize that as well. So I get no sense from any country that they want the U.S. to withdraw or to retreat from the Pacific or to pay less attention to it than we should based on its importance to us.

In the late 1990s two Chinese Air Force Colonels wrote a monograph called "Unrestricted Warfare," in which they describe a kind of perennial and comprehensive state of conflict with the United States as the only way to overcome their technological disadvantages. Do you think they pose that kind of threat over the long-term and they view us as an inevitable adversary?

Locklear: I think inherently in all military planning and resourcing you ultimately need an adversary to plan against. Going back in history, it has been a central human phenomenon. Let me say first of all that we shouldn't draw parallels between the Chinese today and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The world then was much more isolated, countries more isolated, blocs more isolated, and now that is no longer the case.

Today, the world is interconnected from information and economics to energy. It is not just about China. It's about the whole world and that trend – that inter-connectedness – is escalating at an exponential rate. That inter-connectedness requires us to think through what that will demand of the security

environment. So, to some degree for the Chinese, after they came out of their Cultural Revolution and decided that they needed something more than a land army, and got their economy going, they became the second largest economy pretty quickly. And with that comes security interests that any nation would need to consider.

They have resource needs that require global access: fuel, energy, natural resources, minerals, food, water, etc. And so it is not unusual for them to say, "We need to build a military that can protect our interests wherever they are. That's why we have a military." So I think we should give them credit for how far they came in a short period of time. But I think they got misguided at some point in time because of their fixation on U.S. dominance in the region since the end of WWII, and their fixation on Taiwan. Those fixations have misshaped their military. It is misshapen for where they want to go in the future.

It's basically a military that they built for counter-intervention, which would try to keep the U.S. or others out of their local affairs. Their local affairs happen to be many of our allies' and local partners' affairs as well. But what happened is that they have a military that isn't effective in supporting their other global interests. And I think that will change, so you'll see them start to build nuclear submarines: that's because they want to go further. I think they need to go further. They are building aircraft carriers. Aircraft carriers are an instrument of stability, not necessarily an instrument of war as many people view them. They are big stabilizers. And the Chinese recognize that. They are conducting more operations in the Middle East, where their energy supplies come from. So, even today, they have much more interest in energy from the Persian Gulf than

we do as a country. You can see them start to be concerned about it, rightly so. Will they challenge the U.S. on a global military scale? No, not in the foreseeable future. It's just not possible for them to, not militarily. But why would they? Why would they want to? And then why would we create an environment that makes them have to?

So it's for both of our interests?

Locklear: Right. It's in both of our interests. There is a fine line to walk as they come forward and move in the future. I have said this in other forums. How do we help them or help ensure that they become a net provider of security and not a net user of it? And there are some challenges, because there are areas, where not only China and its neighbors disagree, which causes friction, but there are areas that the U.S. and China don't agree. But this is the way the world is; countries disagree. The future for the Asia-Pacific region and the world is to have a security environment where those disagreements can occur. But the security regime is strong enough that it doesn't break up during those disagreements. That may be Pollyanna-ish, but I think that is the way you have to approach it.

It's a goal.

Locklear: It's a goal. And I think that there are things you can do to reach that goal. We always prepare for the worst case. Militaries do that in every country, we prepare for the worst case, but we don't expect the worst case. And we should put an equal amount of energy into what we have to do to get to the good case rather than focusing only on the worst case.

What is the end game for Taiwan?

Locklear: Peace and prosperity is the end game for Taiwan. And I think it is also the end game for all of China. I keep getting asked about the U.S. policy on Taiwan and I say it's been clear—just read the Taiwan Relations Act. I don't think there has been any ambiguity about what the U.S. position is. We want peaceful, stable, cross-strait relationships. And we want the peoples of China to be able to be prosperous and we want them to be able to work it out. We want them to have dialogue, and we don't want that dialogue to be done under a condition of coercion. We provide them defense articles, we provide them basically with Taiwanese confidence, to be able to move forward and ultimately determine what this relationship will look like between China and Taiwan.

Do you think that relationship might change under your watch?

Locklear: It could change and I think it is changing. I think there has been productive change the last few years. We would like to see that change continue productively. But, what we don't want to see is either side do something that disrupts the peaceful progression that they have in place now. We are very appreciative of that. In the long run, the Taiwan issue is an issue of time. Such issues history will deal with to ensure the stability in the Asia-Pacific. **PRISM**