

**Chief of Navy Address to  
South West Pacific Heads of Maritime Forces Meeting**

**Nuku'alofa, Tonga**

**23 August 2018**

*Acknowledgements*

I would like to thank our host, Tongan Navy Component Commander, Commander George Fonohema for your invitation to join this second annual South West Pacific Heads of Maritime Forces Meeting.

Thank you to the Tongan Ministry of Fisheries, Department of Customs, Policy, Marine and Ports Division and Navy for your presentations yesterday

I have now entered my seventh week as Chief of Navy Australia, and it is with great pleasure that I am back in Tonga to meet with you all in my new role. It was important to me that I travelled to the South West Pacific early in my tenure, not only to reinforce the importance of the security and stability of the region, but also to enjoy an escape from the Canberra winter!

I am sure I don't need to tell you about our shared heritage, and with it our long history of political, economic, Defence and sporting ties. Though based upon our performances in the last

couple of years, I certainly won't be talking about Rugby Union today.

Australia and the South West Pacific Maritime forces enjoy a longstanding relationship based upon mutual respect, trust and close partnership; I am here today to reaffirm my commitment to that relationship, which will be a focus of my Command tenure.

During my time in the RAN, I have enjoyed visits to Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia and New Zealand, and I would like to think that I have an appreciation of some of the challenges we all face, collectively, in the maintenance of maritime security. Certainly my time as the Border Protection Commander in Australia opened my eyes to the damage caused by illegal fishing activity, and other maritime security threats.

Your threats and challenges are our threats and challenges. So I would like to hear from you and I would like to open the door to engage with you, as peers, to discuss challenges to our combined security in the region and work with you to determine the best ways that we can continue to tackle those challenges together, head on.

I also wish to invite RAN Lieutenant Commander Makaila Lasalo to speak with you about how the RAN capability improvements are good for us all and provides Australia with the ability to continue to provide support and assist in times of need and when a helping hand is requested.

LCDR Lasalo

## Slide Show

[To CN] Sir, thank you for the opportunity to speak at this meeting today.

Tulou, Tulou (to the senior Tongan dignitaries)

Fakatapu atu (senior dignitaries)

Ko hoku hingoa ko Lieutenant Commander Makaila Lasalo

Kae ata mo au, mei Australia keu 'I Tongani

Keu kau fakataha, mo fiefia

Mo fe'iloaki, mo moutolu,

He puke nima mo ngaue fakataha,

I he South West Pacific

(Translation – On behalf of Australia, we are honoured to be in Tonga working together with the South West Pacific)

I am Lieutenant Commander Makaila Lasalo, and I am honoured to be here today.

I spent part of my childhood on a yacht in the South Pacific with my family, including four years in beautiful Vava'u. My husband's parents hail from this very island. My experiences have resulted in a profound respect, appreciation and affection for our region.

I have proudly served my country as a Maritime Warfare and Marine Engineering Officer for 18 years.

Our new, but already tried and tested, Landing Helicopter Dock ships have greatly enhanced our ability to support Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations in our near region.

Our relationship with the South West Pacific Nations is strengthened and maintained by the collaboration and contribution of the RAN Maritime Surveillance Advisors and Technical Advisors with their host nations.

In this slideshow, I am hoping that many of you will be able to spot some uniforms of your staff, some photos of your patrol boats, and for those very in tune with the sea, the hue of your beautiful azure seas!

But most importantly, I hope that these images show us evidence of our countries and maritime people working together for security and stability of our region.

The good work that we have been achieving together for many years has played a pivotal role in the security of this region, and is integral to the continued security of us all.

The MSAs and TAs provide essential links to enable us to understand each other's challenges.

As the new Australian Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Noonan has new goals for the RAN, and new challenges to overcome. However, our time here together over the past few days is about collaborating on how we can all work together to conquer our collective challenges and overcome our toughest issues...

- Diminishing fishing stocks
- Rising sea levels

These are real concerns to us all.

We are striving to maintain our relationships with you all as reliable partners; partners of choice in our pursuit of regional stability and security.

Collectively, the military assets in our region may not be as numerous or capable as some of our Northern counterparts; but our strength lies in our experience:

- experience in partnering with like-minded countries;
- experience in leveraging our understanding of neighbouring countries; and
- experience in **this** region, **our** region

Our strength is to bond together, to secure our region **together**.

We want to keep an open dialogue, maintain lines of communication, and offer mutual support. And, most importantly, operate in an environment of mutual respect.

The RAN has been present within your countries, in this region for many years, and we are still investing in this region. I personally hope to return to Tonga in the future as the MSA.

The stability and security of **our** region is up to **us**. We share maritime borders and we share enduring maritime interests.

The highly successful Pacific Patrol Boat Program, which I have been involved in for 2 years as the Principle Naval Representative, will be further enhanced with the transition to the Pacific Maritime Security Program, and will provide *Guardian* Class replacement patrol boats to 12 Pacific Island countries from late 2018.

The Pacific Maritime Security Program is not an RAN aid program; but rather a way to enhance regional capability through assisting you and your crews to develop and sustain your own capability.

The gifting of the Guardian Class includes the provision of long term maintenance and training support and, in-country advisors. This will provide a modern and purpose built enhanced capability that will enable the surveillance and enforcement of your sovereign waters.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our thoughts on this most important forum.

Together, we can develop achievable maritime security arrangements through which we can create safe and secure seas in our region.

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