

THE VOYAGE TOWARDS OUR DESTINY

Assumption Speech of RADM ALEXANDER P PAMA AFP

32nd Flag Officer-in-Command, Philippine Navy

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AMENITIES. . .

By the grace of God Almighty, I stand before you here, today, as the 32nd Flag Officer-in-Command of the Philippine Navy. This is indeed one of the most significant way points in my naval career. In fact this is a defining moment for me as I will, from now on, have the CONN of our Navy. Levity aside, I have indeed gone a long way as I take command of the 22 thousand strong Sailors and Marines. I take this as a significant part of a personal voyage towards a destiny still unfolding, which is invariably intertwined with a larger and a more important destiny, that of the Philippine Navy's.

I am fortunate that I inherit from a line of illustrious Flag Officers-in-Command, a Navy that is steaming ahead on a voyage towards vision and destination of A STRONG AND CREDIBLE NAVY THAT THIS MARITIME NATION CAN BE PROUD OF.

That is our Navy's vision and that is our destiny! We are on a voyage towards that destination and we will get there!

Today, as I take the Conn, I assume the sacred duty to carry on the task of being the Master and Commander of our Navy as we navigate towards its destiny. Setting aside false humility, I come on board prepared, willing and able to face up to the challenges of Command. I am confident I have what it takes even as I acknowledge those responsible for what I am now. Please indulge me as I acknowledge some of them.

First and foremost, to GOD Almighty for all the good graces He has endlessly bestowed upon me and my family. GOD IS INDEED GREAT AND ALL GLORY BE UPON HIM AND ONLY HIM!

To my PARENTS, my father Artemio Sr. who has gone ahead of us to the next life but who has given me the indelible legacy of integrity and fairness to others, my mother Alice, for her eternal love and concern for my and my family's welfare;

To my BROTHERS AND SISTERS for their continuing support and belief in what I have always stood for;

And of course, to my WIFE, Carlette and SONS, Gorby and Archie for their unqualified love, patience, understanding and sacrifices so that I may serve our country better;

To my close PERSONAL FRIENDS some of whom are here with us today, for their friendship and support;

To my career MENTORS who have molded and guided me as I grew up in the service and become what I am today; from Capt Orais my first CO aboard ship, up to RAdm Cortez, my immediate predecessor as FOIC, PN who unflinchingly stood by his recommendation for me to succeed him. Sir, I wish you fair winds, clear skies and following seas as you move towards the horizon and embark on a new chapter of your life.

To my ever "Matapat" PMA '79 CLASSMATES and your lovely ladies for your loyalty and unending support;

MY PEERS, SUPERIORS AND SUBORDINATES IN THE NAVY and the AFP for your camaraderie, cooperation and help;

TO ALL OF YOU GO MY UNENDING GRATITUDE, MY APPRECIATION AND MY COVENANT TO LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

Indulge in me further as I pay special acknowledgement and express my grateful appreciation to the following:

The AFP BOARD OF GENERALS led BY THE CHIEF OF STAFF, AFP, GENERAL RICARDO DAVID, for their belief in my capability to lead the Navy thus formally recommending me to the national leadership to be the FOIC,PN;

The SECRETARY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE HONORABLE VOLTAIRE T GAZMIN with whom I was not a personal acquaintance before my name came up as a probable candidate for FOIC,PN, yet I recently learned, upheld the AFP BOG's recommendation in my favor mainly on the basis of my personal credentials and professional track record;

And, most especially to HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT BENIGNO AQUINO III our Commander in Chief who, on the basis of recommendation of the DND/AFP Chain of Command, gave me his trust and confidence to lead the Philippine Navy and provide me the singular opportunity, the distinct honor and responsibility to be a part of his team to serve our country and people the RIGHT WAY to achieve his vision of a better Philippines.

TO ALL OF YOU SIRs, YOU ARE ASSURED OF MY PERSONAL AND TEAM NAVY'S COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT OF FULL SUPPORT AND COOPERATION TO THE CHAIN OF COMMAND.

Your Navy is literally and figuratively in an eternal voyage that started 112 years ago when it first left port and set sail. It has cruised through both calm seas and large waves, navigated through both charted and uncharted waters and, survived squalls and storms as it provided selfless services to patrol and conduct sealift operations in guarding our borders, protecting our maritime heritage and interests, and assisting in nation-building. It has been performing various roles on land and at sea. In security operations in recent years, we have effectively engaged and neutralized terrorists, such as the classic fleet-marine counter terrorism operations led by the then Commodore Ernesto de Leon and then Capt Danilo Cortez in neutralizing the notorious ASG leader Abu Sabaya.

In 2006, not used to resting on its laurels and aspiring to take its service to the nation to the next level, your Navy – with its sailors and marines, with Vice Admiral Mateo Mayuga at the helm, and with invaluable help from its friends headed by former Secretary Jesus Estanislao and former Senator Leticia Shahani – adjusted its pre-plotted course towards the next waypoint and eventual destination, and came up with the Philippine Navy's Strategic Sail Plan 2020.

Since then, the Philippine Navy was steered by Vice Admiral Rogelio Calunsag, Vice Admiral Ferdinand Golez and Rear Admiral Danilo Cortez as we continued the voyage in accord with the sail plan.

Rest assured Sirs, that today, as we have just relieved the watch, our voyage towards our destiny will be in accord with the Philippine Navy Sail Plan 2020.

However, during my watch, I shall take the liberty of making some adjustments while en route, where and when it is needed, if only to correct occasional sets and drifts that will occur along our voyage.

In practical terms, the constant ebb and flow of the security situation, highlights the need for our Navy to be equipped with the necessary capacities and capabilities to meet strategic security concerns — ride the waves, - so to speak, while ensuring that we remain along the pre-plotted course.

While I acknowledge that capability building and capacity development are both means toward attaining the Navy's Vision 2020, I shall give added emphasis to the latter during my watch. We also need to focus on individual, organizational and institutional capacity development. A more profound assessment of the comparative rate of progress between capability upgrade and capacity building efforts reveal an evident mismatch. The effort for capacity building is lagging behind our capability building efforts.

Notably, among the Navy Sail plan's strategic objectives, the basic foundation is, and I quote, "highly competent and motivated professionals", unquote. In the area of competence, I would like to pay particular focus on educating and training our personnel in order to equip our sailors, marines, airmen, Seabees and support and maintenance personnel, with new skill sets. This is to prepare them to operate and maintain material assets that are newly acquired or those planned for acquisitions. In the context of motivated professionals, I intend to give new impetus on discipline, both individual and organizational. I shall continue to implement the admirable programs of my immediate predecessors in enhancing morale and welfare of sailors and marines by providing for their needs most especially those we send into harm's way at sea and on land. This time however, we shall likewise undertake significant

efforts to underscore discipline in our ranks through the alignment and maybe subordinate one's personal objectives to those of the organization. Our adherence to institutional and personal discipline will be non-negotiable.

Lest I get misunderstood, we will not set aside the equally important efforts for capability development. This includes acquisition of big ticket items of naval hardware such as the multi-role vessel, offshore patrol vessels, multi-purpose helicopters and amphibious assault vehicles and other equipment, subject of course to approval of higher authorities.

It is therefore essential that while we will remain unrelenting in our efforts and drive for capability upgrade, we will go on full speed in our efforts at capacity development, particularly our Human resources to attain parity in the level and velocity in our journey to our destination. While material or capability upgrading is no less important, we must not lose sight of the people who shall man these. Let us optimize the development of our human resources, knowledge base and skill sets. In turn, this shall ensure the optimization of the potential and utility of our capabilities. And all these are aimed at achieving Naval Dominance in All Mission Areas in our largely maritime nation, attaining the goals of PN Sail Plan 2020 and in reaching our objectives in the Philippine Defense Reform Agenda – all through the Defense System of Management. Above all, these endeavors are in pursuit of the Commander-in-Chief's intent to strengthen the armed forces in cost-effective, creative, and the RIGHT WAY.

While we are fully aware that the desired results of these endeavors will have some gestation period for us to fully reap the benefits, we will not lose track of the present imperatives for which the Navy continues to perform its mandate to contribute to the accomplishment of the AFP mission. We will continue with our voyage towards our destination even as we spare no efforts to strive to achieve and sustain Naval Dominance in the six (6) DND/AFP mandated Mission Areas. These are all to support the government's efforts for national development. In particular, we in the Navy, shall steam ahead in total support to the government's new security paradigm to win the peace. We will play a significant role in the implementation of the recently approved Internal Peace and Security Plan "Bayanihan".

As the guardians of our seas, the Philippine Fleet now ably led by Rear Admiral Jose Luis Alano, should be well-poised to act as the protector of our people's well-being in our seas and along our lengthy coastlines so our countrymen can freely enjoy the bounties and riches of our seas. The Philippine Marine Corps led by its Commandant Major General Rustico Guerrero shall continue to demonstrate its mettle in battle, readily take on the dual role of conducting focused military operations against armed threat groups while at the same time act as catalysts for community development in conflict areas. We shall continue to strengthen the synergy of our fleet-marine team as our unique contribution to the accomplishment of the AFP mission even as we leverage on our close working relations with other peace and security stakeholders.

Even as we look inwardly to our shores and the communities they host, the Philippine Navy shall not be remiss in its duty to guard the vast expanse of our seas as mandated in our territorial defense mission. Aside from the needs of local communities, the Philippine Navy is committed in securing our Exclusive Economic Zone including offshore petroleum operations and explorations. Beyond our borders, your navy will continue to contribute to regional maritime security and freedom of navigation as a reliable partner of ASEAN and Asia-Pacific region navies.

Given these immediate and long term imperatives for peace and security and our obstinate adherence to our sail plan, the vast challenges that face us require that we waste no time, effort and resources in leveling up not just our capabilities but also our capacities.

Under my watch, I will steer the Philippine Navy towards covering substantial distance on our way to achieving our Vision 2020. We shall be steps closer to achieving our Vision and eventually fulfilling our Destiny. **We will be a strong and credible navy that our maritime nation can be proud of.**

Before I end, allow me to quote what his Excellency President Benigno Simeon Aquino III, said in the last SONA, and I quote, " ...iba na talaga ang sitwasyon. Pwede na muling mangarap.", end of quote. Dito po sa inyong Hukbong Dagat, **"kami po ay nangangarap..... at ang aming mga pangarap ay magaganap"**.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. Mabuhay ang Hukbong Dagat ng Pilipinas! Mabuhay tayong lahat!

ALEXANDER P PAMA

Rear Admiral, AFP