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REMARKS BY

VADM SCOTT H. SWIFT CARAT BANGLADESH OPENING CEREMONY

**CHITTAGONG
SEPTEMBER 17, 2012**

Good afternoon, and welcome to the commencement of the second annual cooperation afloat readiness and training exercise in Chittagong – an event marking the most significant military exchange between our navies, and one that speaks to our growing security relationship.

I'd especially like to welcome Rear Admiral Habib, Rear Admiral Carney and all of our participants – U.S. And Bangladesh – to CARAT 2012.

Over the next eight days, CARAT will offer opportunities to develop interoperability, share information and strengthen relationships, both ashore and at sea. This navy-to-navy engagement is invaluable, and places both sides in a better position to address shared security concerns.

Two of the biggest are maritime security and humanitarian assistance disaster response. The first involves keeping the sea lines of communication open for the freedom of movement of goods and personnel that are important for all nations in this region. Navies are essential here by countering terrorism and violent extremism, piracy, and smuggling in the maritime domain.

The second involves our readiness to respond and cope with natural disasters, which are unfortunately more common than any nation would like. Our ability to confront these challenges has a direct bearing on promoting global peace and advancing regional stability.

In Dhaka yesterday I met with vice admiral Zahir Uddin Ahmed, Chief of the Naval Staff. We talked about the Bangladesh navy's evolving role as a key maritime leader in south

Asia - a region where the Bay of Bengal and the Padma River encompass sea lanes that are vital to international trade and investment.

Fulfilling this role is no small task. The Bay of Bengal features a range of security challenges, from maritime border and resource competition to piracy and illegal fishing activities. Moving inland, the heavily populated Padma delta has among the world's highest rates of annual flooding.

Bangladesh has worked with its neighbors to counter violent extremism, address maritime border disputes and protect maritime commerce. Efforts are also underway to improve information sharing and develop maritime domain awareness.

As I mentioned, the threat of piracy is always a concern but thanks to persistent Bangladesh navy and coast guard patrols, piracy is on the run from the anchorages right here in Chittagong out to the Bay of Bengal. Enforcement capabilities continue to rise with the Bangladesh Navy's acquisition of new patrol vessels. These security gains have allowed sustainable fisheries and offshore gas rigs to operate safely, and facilitated hydrographic surveys and dredging efforts following natural disasters. The net effect is an upward trend in maritime trade and investment in Bangladesh.

Placing carat in this context, our goal is to conduct a mutually beneficial exercise that focuses on capabilities unique to maritime security. The Bangladesh Navy, Coast Guard and elite units like Navy Special Warfare and Diving Salvage (SWADS) are well-equipped, highly-capable organizations. Their officers and enlisted members know how to protect Bangladesh's maritime interests from a range of conventional and asymmetric challenges.

Through CARAT, we are here to strengthen our growing navy-to-navy partnership through the venue provided by exercise carat. In this sense, carat is about connecting maritime professionals and sharing best practices. It leverages existing skills toward cooperative applications, increasing our readiness in response to real-world events and crises that would call upon our navies to work side-by-side.

In fact, the inaugural CARAT in 2011 was already an ambitious, complex exercise that flexed our forces ashore and at sea. Unsurprisingly, this year is more complex. It features a longer at sea phase with a sea-rider exchange program, shipboard helicopter operations and visit, board, search, and seizure evolutions. There are also key events ashore, including subject matter expert exchanges, a medical symposium along with a military operations and law conference.

While CARAT is a military exercise, it is also an opportunity for our sailors to connect with the citizens of Chittagong, evidenced by the community service event at the Ashar Alo School for disabled children.

By facilitating this evolution, carat helps our navies to break new ground in interoperability and build stronger maritime partnerships. By pushing the exercise further each year, we will deepen our security relationship.

To our Bangladesh navy counterparts and to the gracious people of Chittagong, we are grateful for your warm hospitality. My sincere thanks to each of you and best wishes for a successful exercise.

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Note: A Bangla translation of this press release is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8855500, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: [http:// dhaka.usembassy.gov](http://dhaka.usembassy.gov)