

UNCLASSIFIED

STATEMENT OF  
ADMIRAL HARRY B. HARRIS JR., U.S. NAVY  
COMMANDER, U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND  
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION  
FIELD HEARING ON “HAWAII FALSE MISSILE ALERT:  
WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT?”

05 APRIL 2018

UNCLASSIFIED

Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written statement and also allowing Rear Admiral Patrick Piercey, U.S. Pacific Command's (USPACOM) Director of Operations (J3), to appear on my behalf before you today as a subject matter expert. During my time at USPACOM, I have had the tremendous honor of serving with the almost 400,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Coast Guardsmen, and Department of Defense (DoD) civilians standing watch for America's largest and most diverse geographic combatant command. I am grateful for these men and women, and to their families, for their hard work and devotion to duty. I'm humbled to serve alongside them.

Since its inception in 1947, USPACOM and the joint military forces assigned to it protect the U.S., its territories, its people, and its interests throughout the Indo-Pacific region. To accomplish this, USPACOM works hand-in-hand with the other U.S. government agencies in this region to defend our homeland and our citizens. This is USPACOM's enduring responsibility and my #1 priority. The path to security is based on our commitments to mutual interests and partnerships, continuous military presence, and global readiness.

While it is unfortunate that the State of Hawaii erred in broadcasting a ballistic missile threat notification on Saturday, 13 January 2018, the event also provided a valuable learning opportunity. Other states can look to the proactive leadership and engaged approach the State of Hawaii has demonstrated to prepare for the new normal -- specifically, living under threat of a North Korean missile attack. Perhaps more importantly, this event provides an opportunity to collectively assess and refine our internal notification/coordination processes in civil defense scenarios to ensure command and component preparedness. To this end, USPACOM will continue to maintain a close relationship with the State of Hawaii. USPACOM will again participate in the triannual Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) Executive Steering Board (ESB) designed to facilitate, coordinate, align and prioritize support of DSCA efforts.

With reference to the 13 January 2018 incident, USPACOM's review of actions validated the fact that this alert was not generated through DoD channels. It was, in fact, a false alarm generated by the State of Hawaii. USPACOM assisted the State of Hawaii by validating that this alert was false and

**UNCLASSIFIED**

communicating the same to the military components in Hawaii. A timeline of the incident is as follows:

- 0807: An employee of the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) broadcasted the following emergency alert through the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system across the state of Hawaii:

Emergency Alert  
BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII.  
SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER.  
THIS IS NOT A DRILL.

- 0810: State Adjutant General, Major Gen. Joe Logan, contacted USPACOM to confirm there was no missile launch.
- 0812: HI-EMA initiated cancellation messages.
- 0813: The state issued an internal cancellation of the warning to prevent the false alert message from being broadcast further.
- 0820: HI-EMA tweeted “NO missile threat to Hawaii.”
- 0823: HI-EMA posted “NO missile threat to Hawaii. False alarm. We’re currently investigating” on Facebook.
- 0823: Following confirmation with USPACOM Joint Operations Center (JOC) Director that there was no threat, USPACOM sent an on-the-record statement via email to Hawaii and national media: “USPACOM has detected no ballistic missile threat to Hawaii. Earlier message was sent in error. State of Hawaii will send out a correction message as soon as possible.” A similar message was posted to USPACOM social media within minutes.

## UNCLASSIFIED

- 0824: Hawaii Governor David Ige retweeted HI-EMA's 0820 tweet, noting: "There is NO missile threat."
- 0825: Commander Navy Region Hawaii issued a radio broadcast to all ships in port stating the alert was a "false alarm."
- 0830: Hawaii Governor David Ige posted: "NO missile threat to Hawaii" on Facebook.
- 0835: HI-EMA initiated cancellation messages to the public.
- 0835: Governor Ige shared HI-EMA's Facebook post: "NO missile threat to Hawaii. False alarm. We're currently investigating."
- 0845: HI-EMA broadcasted EAS and WEA messages confirming the initial notification was a "False Alarm" and "There is no missile threat or danger to the State of Hawaii."

Overall, 38 minutes transpired (0807 to 0845) before HI-EMA retracted the false emergency alert of a ballistic missile inbound to Hawaii by the same communication channels as the original alert (EAS and WEA).

As the State of Hawaii has no means to independently detect a missile launch, the proper sequencing of ballistic missile notification to State of Hawaii authorities is from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to HI-EMA. Simultaneously, USPACOM validates the occurrence of a launch to HI-EMA and notifies other DoD command centers in the Pacific via a classified conference call.

USPACOM remains in close coordination with HI-EMA, FEMA Region IX, U.S. Northern Command, and DoD stakeholders to gather lessons learned, identify areas requiring improvement and refine notification processes.

Of the things that went well, perhaps most importantly, the event validated the importance of coordination between civil and military authorities. Emergency management spanning the spectrum of state and local governments and communities is a core mission of the State of Hawaii, and USPACOM

## UNCLASSIFIED

will continue to work in close coordination to ensure the effective synchronization, integration, and coordination of disaster prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts. This coordination has taken place since 2009 and has been used during every ballistic-missile event.

USPACOM learned from this experience as well. For example, we discovered that the USPACOM JOC, as configured at the time of the event, was unable to receive unclassified Short Message Service texts and, as such, did not directly receive the erroneous missile warning or the following cancellation messages on 13 January.

USPACOM also identified an inefficiency in the reporting process which, in addition to the notification requirements maintained by the USPACOM JOC, required a separate unclassified phone call to HI-EMA designed to provide validation to the notification report HI-EMA receives from FEMA.

Additionally, the event highlighted the importance of maintaining an independent and dedicated unclassified line into the JOC for senior USPACOM leaders to communicate in the event of an emergency, regardless of call volume.

In response to the HI-EMA's false missile alert, the following USPACOM actions have been implemented:

- Two unclassified dedicated conference calls (Commander's Conference Call and Director's Conference Call) have been established to ensure USPACOM senior leaders maintain the ability to contact the JOC regardless of call volume.
- The first dedicated unclassified conference call is the Commander's Conference Call which uses a USPACOM Bridge (managed by the USPACOM Command, Control, Communications and Cyber Director) and is limited to senior USPACOM personnel, to include the Commander, Deputy Commander, their designated principals, and the JOC Director (Conference Manager).

## UNCLASSIFIED

- The second dedicated unclassified conference call is the Director's Conference Call which allows for a greater number of conference participants and is managed by the JOC Operations Officer (Conference Manager).
- To ensure the USPACOM JOC has the ability to receive HI-EMA alerts, USPACOM has coordinated with HI-EMA to add the JOC to their AlertSense system distribution which transmits emergency alert via unclassified email. The email messages have the same content as the cell phone alerts and display on the unclassified consoles of the JOC watchstanders.
- To facilitate expediency of information flow, HI-EMA was added as a participant to the classified USPACOM conference call, the Pacific Missile Defense Event Conference, allowing for near-simultaneous validation and redundant notification from the initial report that HI-EMA receives from FEMA.

While the false ballistic missile threat notification event was unfortunate, it served to underscore the complexities facing not only the State of Hawaii, but all 50 states, when it comes to alerting the public of a possible ballistic missile attack. The State of Hawaii has taken a proactive approach in this regard, and this event is likely to strengthen its capability to notify the public in any future emergency situation.

USPACOM stands ready today to provide DSCA for emergency management drills, alerts, exercises and response operations within the Hawaiian Islands. Moving forward, we will continue to exercise missile notification procedures with HI-EMA and will continue to support Nation State Threat planning for ballistic missile notification and response, to include integration with FEMA's National Warning System.

Thank you for your enduring support to the USPACOM team and our families who live and work in the Indo-Pacific.