

Harry Harris

Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired); Former Commander, U.S. Pacific Command; Former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea

As the highest-ranking Asian American in the history of the U.S. Navy, Ambassador Harry B. Harris Jr. oversaw all military operations for more than half of the world's geography as Commander, U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM). Widely regarded for his leadership, Amb. Harris was selected to serve by two presidential administrations – first to lead in one of the military's most challenging roles at a critical time when the U.S. confronted the rise of new world powers and nuclear threats, and later as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea.

With close to a half century in public service commanding highly complex, high-stakes organizations and advancing international relations, Amb. Harris offers a rare perspective on leadership, geopolitical affairs, and current events in a way that only an American diplomat and former military officer can. Sharing his experiences breaking barriers as the only American of Japanese descent to serve as a geographic combatant commander and the first to hold the rank of admiral, he also addresses societal dynamics, the role they play in achievement, and the positive impact diversity has on team culture and overall growth. Exclusively represented by [Leading Authorities speakers bureau](#), Amb. Harris is a truly captivating speaker who uses personal and real-life examples to deliver key messages on the multi-faceted issues both organizations and the world face today.

Amb. Harris took command of USPACOM in 2015, the oldest multi-service command that stretches from California to the Indian Ocean, and from the Arctic Sea to Antarctica. As commander, he led efforts for the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Prior to leading USPACOM, Amb. Harris served in a variety of roles in the U.S. Navy, including as representative of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry and commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. A naval flight officer, he served in every geographic combatant region and participated in several major operations, including Desert Shield/Storm, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and Odyssey Dawn. In total, Amb. Harris logged 4,400 total flight hours, including more than 400 combat hours. He retired from the military a four-star admiral in June 2018.

Following his military retirement, Amb. Harris was sworn in as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, serving in this position until January 2021. As ambassador, he led efforts in renegotiating the U.S.-Republic of Korea Special Measures Agreement and promote American interests in South Korea amid deepening economic ties between South Korea and China. He is currently a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

For his service, Amb. Harris has been awarded numerous medals including the State Department's Distinguished Honor Award, the CIA's Agency Seal Medal and Ambassador's Award, two Defense Distinguished Service Medals, three Navy Distinguished Service Medals, and three Legions of Merit. In addition to being awarded the Dr. Jean Mayer Global Citizenship Award from Tufts University in 2021, he has been nationally recognized for his work as a champion of diversity and has been decorated by the governments of Australia, France, Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Singapore. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Naval Institute.

Amb. Harris was born in Japan and raised in Tennessee and Florida. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, he holds master's degrees from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, did post-graduate studies at Oxford University, and completed the Seminar 21 fellowship at MIT.