

THE NOMINATION OF ADMIRAL JOHN C.
AQUILINO, USN, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE
GRADE OF ADMIRAL AND TO BE
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC
COMMAND

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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MARCH 23, 2021
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THE NOMINATION OF ADMIRAL JOHN C. AQUILINO, USN, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF ADMIRAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2021

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:31 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Inhofe, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, and Tuberville.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Let me call the hearing to order, and this morning the committee meets to consider the nomination of Admiral John Aquilino to be the next Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command, or INDOPACOM. Admiral, we thank you and your family for your willingness to serve in this important position. We welcome your wife, Laura, and your daughter, Jessica, along with your colleagues from the Pacific Fleet. Thank you very much.

You have most recently served as the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, an experience that will serve you well.

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the Department of Defense's priority theater. As Admiral Davidson highlighted at his posture hearing earlier this month, the region will be home to two-thirds of the world's population and generate two-thirds of the global economy in the next 10 years. Maintaining U.S. leadership in this consequential region will take a concerted, whole-of-government effort, but the U.S. Military, specifically INDOPACOM, will play a central role.

Secretary Austin has appropriately labeled China as the "pacing threat" for the United States military. I agree with experts who have stated that China is a long-term challenge that must be "managed" rather than "solved." Part of managing our strategic competition with China and ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific is the need to maintain a strong presence in the region and a credible conventional deterrent to military aggression.

For this reason, in last year's National Defense Authorization Act, the committee created the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, or PDI. The PDI is intended to better focus Defense Department resources on key military capabilities, reassure United States allies and partners, and send a strong signal to the Chinese Communist Party that we are committed to defending United States interests in the Indo-Pacific. Maintaining momentum behind the PDI will be a key focus of this committee as we begin work on this year's National Defense Authorization Act. Admiral Aquilino, we look forward to hearing your views on how the PDI can be used to bolster U.S. Military presence and conventional deterrence in the region.

China and the United States have a shared goal of avoiding unnecessary and costly armed conflict. Last week's United States-China diplomatic meeting in Alaska was not without its challenges, but provided an important opportunity for us to engage China, express our concern with China's conduct in the region and around the world, and reiterate our commitment to the region. We should look to build upon last week's meeting by establishing more robust means of military-to-military communication, particularly to avoid miscalculation in a crisis. We should also seek greater cooperation with China when it is in our interest, including in areas like climate change, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and counterterrorism.

Effectively managing our competition with China also requires that we continually invest in our relationship with allies and partners. The last few weeks have demonstrated just how central these relationships are to the Biden administration's approach to the region. On March 12, President Biden participated in the first-ever leader-level meeting with other members of the Quad—Japan, Australia, and India. Just last week, Secretary of Defense Austin and Secretary of State Blinken held in-person meetings with their counterparts in Japan and South Korea. Admiral Aquilino, we look forward to your views on how these alliances and partnerships can be strengthened and how we can attract new partners across the region.

Perhaps our most immediate security challenge in the region is North Korea. We must approach this challenge clear-eyed and in cooperation with our regional allies and partners, most notably Japan and South Korea, who are most directly threatened by Kim Jong-un's belligerent behavior. While we maintain significant sanctions pressure on North Korea, we must also pursue diplomacy with the goal of achieving a formal moratorium on nuclear and missile testing in the near-term. Admiral Aquilino, I would appreciate your views on the regional threat posed by North Korea and the prospects for greater trilateral cooperation between the United States, Japan, and South Korea on missile defense and other issues.

Admiral, if confirmed, you will lead INDOPACOM at an incredibly consequential time, and we thank you again for your willingness to serve.

Now let me recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Inhofe.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JAMES INHOFE

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral Aquilino, we are real pleased to have you, and moving into a position where you are certainly the person most qualified for that position. With over 1,150 carrier arrested landings and 5,000 hours of flying time, I think that you have spent a lot of time on the sea but also a lot of time in the air. I have to say that I may have twice the hours you have, but you have twice the miles I had.

Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks said China is the pacing threat for our military, and General Milley said the Pacific is the number one regional priority. We all understand this. This administration is saying the right things about pushing back on Chinese aggression, but the key indicator of whether or not we are serious about this competition with China will be what we do with the defense budget top line, the great growth. The words do not have real meaning.

The top line of the defense budget and the amount of funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative will be the Biden administration's first and most important message to China. What we do and do not do to deter China in the military domain will underwrite and determine the success or failure of diplomatic, economic, and information efforts as well. Simply put, if you fail to invest in defense, and as a result fail to deter China's use of military force in the Indo-Pacific, nothing you do in those areas will really matter. Admiral Aquilino, if confirmed as commander of INDOPACOM you would be on the front lines of the military competition with China. There must never come a day when the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party decide today is the day they can achieve their goal by using military force.

At the beginning of March, General McMaster told us that since the 1900s China has undertaken the largest peacetime military buildup in history. This ramp-up in the past decade, when China increased real purchasing power in the defense sector by \$200 billion. Meanwhile, primarily during the Obama administration, America cut some \$400 billion of purchasing power from our defense spending. As China was quietly increasing investments in defense, many United States leaders naively assumed when China joined the WTO [World Trade Organization] in 2001, that it was integrated in the global economy, somehow this would make the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) friendlier and more open to the West. I predicted it would not, and I was right. The result of that bad assumption is American military advantage and the credibility of our deterrence has eroded, and comes to erosion.

So we have got a problem out there, and you are going to be right in the middle of that, and we are anxious to make some really good things happen. As General McMaster told us, Taiwan may represent the most dangerous flash point for war, and when Admiral Davidson was asked what the most likely target of the Chinese military action would be in the next 5 to 10 years, he said, "I would say Taiwan is the first." So we know where our problems are, we appreciate your service, and look forward to this hearing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Inhofe. Now let me recognize Senator Hirono to introduce the admiral.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I very much appreciate your remarks and Ranking Member Inhofe's remarks in recognizing the importance of the Indo-Pacific region.

Our country faces an array of challenges and opportunities in the Indo-Pacific region, and AORs [area of responsibility] stretching from the west coast of the United States to the western border of India, and from the North Pole to Antarctica, covering about half of the Earth's surface.

At a time when we are confronting an increasingly aggressive China and looking to deepen our defense ties with allies in the Indo-Pacific, it is imperative we have an experienced leader at Indo-Pacific Command capable of meeting the urgency and sensitivity of the moment. With this in mind, I would like to introduce and enthusiastically endorse today's nominee, and, of course, welcome his family, Admiral John C. Aquilino, to serve as the next Commander of the United States Indo-Pacific Command.

Admiral Aquilino's 37 years of Navy service, highlighted by command of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, make him well suited for this new role. Since assuming command of the Navy's Pacific Fleet in 2018, I have seen how the admiral and his leadership team at PACFLEET have worked to ensure the readiness of the fleet to protect the security of our nation. From his headquarters at Pearl Harbor, "Lung" Aquilino, as he is affectionately known to those under his command, has guided the 140,000 sailors and civilians of the Pacific Fleet to meet challenges and opportunities presented.

I have to admit, Lung is such an unusual nickname, and I had to ask how he got it. It was coined years ago by his fighter pilot buddies who thought his last name sounded like Aqualung, and with that the name Lung was born.

Lung's message of, quote, "deter, assure, compete, and win," end quote, is the right message for INDOPACOM today. I have gotten to work with Admiral Aquilino during his time in Hawaii and know first-hand he believes in the power of working together to find whole-of-government solutions, the importance of our alliances and partnerships, and the imperative for a well-trained and postured force.

I have appreciated the interactions Admiral Aquilino and I have had on issues of importance to Hawaii and the Pacific region, including the strategically vital Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. In operating the Red Hill Facility, the Navy has a critical responsibility to protect Oahu's drinking water and keep the community updated. The admiral knows the importance of transparent and open community engagement.

Admiral Aquilino also has a personal appreciation of the significance of Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard to our community. The shipyard is our largest industrial employer, with thousands of military and civilian workers who support our forces and broader in the Pacific region to advance our strategic interest. Admiral Aquilino participated in shipyard visits with Senator Kaine, former Senator Perdue, and me over the past 2 years.

As evidenced throughout his years of service, Admiral Aquilino has demonstrated a deep understanding of Hawaii's strategic importance to our national security, and he advocates for capabilities

and nurtures relationships to help Hawaii fully realize its role in America's continued access and influence in the Indo-Pacific.

If you speak to those who serve in his command, you will find Admiral Aquilino has deep and abiding care for his sailors, civilians, and their families, by working to instill an environment of dignity and purpose. This skill was evident in Admiral Aquilino's actions after a gunman took the lives of Roldan Agustin and Vincent Kapoi Jr., and seriously injured another man during the horrific shooting at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard on December 4, 2019. Admiral Aquilino paid special care to the families of the victims and the shipyard community during this intense time of grief. A few months ago, he organized a memorial service marking the 1-year anniversary of the tragic event, and installed a permanent memorial plaque to honor the lives and service of Mr. Agustin and Mr. Kapoi Jr.

I am confident that after today's hearing my colleagues will join me in supporting Admiral Aquilino's nomination to lead INDOPACOM.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Admiral, you are recognized for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL JOHN C. AQUILINO, USN, FOR RE-APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF ADMIRAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you very much, Senator Hirono, for that kind introduction. Congratulations on your selection as the chair of the Seapower Subcommittee. It has been my pleasure to work with you these past 3 years, and from all the sailors in the Pacific theater and their families I would like to thank you for your constant support. Thank you very much, ma'am.

Thank you, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and committee members for this opportunity to appear before you today. I am both honored and humbled to be here as the nominee to lead U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. It is a great responsibility. I am honored to President Biden's nominee for this important position.

I would also like to thank Secretary Austin, General Milley, Acting Secretary Harker, and Admiral Gilday for their support and confidence.

I would not be here today without the love and support of my family. My wife, Laura, and my oldest daughter, Jessica are here with me today, and my daughter, Lisa, was unable to attend from Los Angeles. Like every military family, they have endured many sacrifices and they tirelessly advocate for military members and their families. They set a tremendous example of service to our nation, and I am proud of each of them.

Also with me here today are members of my Navy family, and they are led by Fleet Master Chief Jim Honea. He is my right-hand man and he personally cares for over 140,000 Navy sailors and their families in the Pacific Fleet every day.

I would be remiss if I did not highlight my constant admiration and respect for the men, women, civilians, and families of our joint force, who faithfully serve, many deployed as we speak to defend

our nation and protect our way of life. It has been my greatest privilege to have served alongside them for 37 years.

The Indo-Pacific is the most consequential reason for America's future and remains the priority theater for the United States. Residing here are four of the five security challenges identified in the Department of Defense—China, Russia, North Korea, and violent extremist organizations. The Indo-Pacific region also experiences frequent natural and man-made disasters, the negative impacts of climate change, rapid population growth, drugs and human trafficking, and, of course, disease and pandemics.

Of all the threats we face, Secretary Austin was very clear when he stated, "China is our pacing threat." To meet this challenge, it will take all elements of national power, working together and with a sense of urgency. Together with our allies and partners, our professionally trained and lethal joint military force, postured forward will provide the deterrence required while enabling diplomacy from a position of strength to ensure peace, stability, and prosperity for all in the region.

The Pacific Deterrence Initiative is a strong example of the effort required to compete and win. I thank the committee for your leadership and your vision in establishing PDI. These efforts are foundational to ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.

As the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance points out, America's fate is intertwined with events beyond our shores. Global peace and prosperity depend on our presence in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed for this great responsibility I look forward to working with this committee as we advance our shared national security objectives while continuing to serve alongside Indo-Pacific's men and women to accomplish this important mission before us.

Thanks, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and to the committee. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, sir. Let me point out, for the benefit of my colleagues, that if we get a quorum I will interrupt. We have thousands of military nominations we would like to pass out of committee. Also since this is a hybrid hearing, we will not be following the early bird rule. Instead, we will handle the order of questions by seniority, alternating back and forth. This message is getting a little old but let me reiterate it.

We will do the standard five-minute rounds. I ask my colleagues on the computers, and at their desk, to observe the 5 minutes. Then, for everyone to be heard, please mute your microphones if you are not speaking.

Thank you very much, Admiral, for your testimony, for your distinguished service, and the service of your family.

One of the most important aspects in any theater is joint warfighting operations. We fight as a team, not as individual platforms or individual services. I know the Joint Staff and INDOPACOM have been working on joint operations, joint techniques and models. COVID has interrupted that a bit. Can you give us kind of a status, from your perspective, of how we are doing in integrating our forces?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Thanks. So there are two initiatives. Admiral Davidson, along with the Joint Staff, is working on a joint warfighting concept. Those focus areas are designed to spe-

cifically ensure that the joint force is integrated, that command and control that is required exists, and on top of that, from the Indo-Pacific position, it has the ability to also expand to our allies and partners. It is extremely important, and if confirmed, Senator, I will continue those efforts. They are that important.

Chairman REED. Can you briefly prioritize what are the key elements? My notion would be if you cannot communicate effectively then you cannot do much. But your sense of what the priorities are, and are they budgeted in that order, or do we have to do some work collectively?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, the Pacific Defense Initiative I think is kind of the poster child for what the capabilities and things look like in prioritized order, and again, I thank the committee for that support. Those capabilities, as I see them, are force protection, there is the ability to command, control, and communicate in the mission partner environment, then there is the ability needed to train both with the joint force and our allies and partners, and that linkage between the ranges, from Guam to Hawaii to Alaska to the west coast of the United States, PMTEC, is absolutely required.

Additionally, there is ISR capabilities needed. There are long-range joint integrated fires capabilities that are needed, and underpinning all of that is the need to be able to execute logistics across that great distance.

Chairman REED. So we have a ways to go, frankly, to get to the point where you are satisfied. Is that fair?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, again, I think PDI is foundational, but it will take a longer-term sustained investment to be able to generate the deterrence required.

Chairman REED. A final point on this issue. First of all, integrating Army, Navy, and Air Force is tough. I would assume integrating our allies is even more challenging because of obvious differences in language and other equipment, et cetera. Is that fair?

Admiral AQUILINO. That is absolutely fair, sir, but it is also extremely important. We operate with our allies and partners each and every day, so it is certainly not a hurdle we cannot get over, and it is critically important.

Chairman REED. Thank you. You mentioned this has to be a whole-of-government effort, not just a military effort. Within our partners, particularly the Quad, are there issues that we can rally around, issues like climate change and other issues like that? Is that something that your State Department and colleagues are talking about?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, there are many areas where we certainly cooperate across a whole-of-government approach—economic, diplomatic, informational, legal, as well as military. All of those efforts will be required to do the deterrence needed, and if confirmed I am certainly interested in working across the interagency to achieve that goal.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much. Just a final question here. I think we have come to realize that we were overly optimistic about China's role in the world for several decades, when we saw it as simply an economic power that would come into the world stage with a benign, not malign, attitude, and that has changed. The danger today might be overestimating China, of not seeing

some of their vulnerabilities. Can you comment upon some of the shortcomings you see or some of the weaknesses that might not be explored?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. Certainly we have seen the largest military buildup by China. That does bring with it certain vulnerabilities, whether it be training, command and control and operations across a broader scale. Again, if confirmed, I will look through that lens to see where we can really have some effect to deter.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Admiral. Before I turn it over to Senator Inhofe I am required to ask questions of the nominee, and I have been reminded by my staff to do so. Just like the master chief, I do what I am told.

Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Have you assumed any duties or taken any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

Admiral AQUILINO. No, sir.

Chairman REED. Exercising our legislative and oversight responsibility makes it important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receives testimony, briefings, reports, records, and other information from the Executive branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify before this committee when requested?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Do you agree, when asked before this committee, to give your personal views, even if your views differ from the administration?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Do you agree to provide records, documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate committees of Congress and to consult with the requestor regarding the basis or any good-faith delay or denial in providing such records?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established by this committee for the production of reports, records, and other information, including timely responding to hearing questions for the record?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Will those witnesses and briefers be protected from reprisals for their testimony at briefings?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Admiral. Senator Inhofe, please.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me draw on your experiences as a fighter pilot. It has been concerning to me for quite some time the criticism of our F-35 that we hear, from a lot of people. I will not even mention the sources, but it is

something that really bothers me, when you stop and think about what we do not have in terms of fifth-generation fighters. Admiral Davidson's testimony, and this is way back in March, to the House Armed Services Committee, he said that our adversaries are already developing or fielding fifth-generation fighters, that we know from our own gaming and emulations that fifth-generation fighters are a game-changer.

Now as a fighter pilot, kind of explain why the F-35, as a fifth-generation fighter, is so critical to deterring, and, if necessary, defeating China's uses of military force, and in your opinion, why it is important to the ability to fight and win inside the first and second island chains. I can remember when we had the F-22, and we talked about the fact that it was a fifth-generation fighter. We started out we were going to have 700 of them. We ended up getting 200. I remember that very well and the criticism that I had at that time, and we have had the same problems now. Yet now we know it is a different game now, because our competition has fifth-generation fighters. What are your thoughts on that?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. As you know, the Chinese Communist Party has generated some capabilities in the region that are designed to keep us out. Some refer to those as A2/AD, and when we talk about them we talk about operating in contested space. Fifth-generation airplanes, and beyond, are required to be able to generate a lethal force and posture it in a place where it is needed to generate the deterrence that I mentioned.

Senator INHOFE. Are your concerns like mine in terms of the attacks on the F-35 and what our capacity would be if we became weak in that area?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, I would be concerned if we lessened our capacity of fifth-generation airplanes. I think they are needed to win.

Senator INHOFE. Mm-hmm. Okay. As General McMaster told this committee, and this is a quote, "Taiwan may represent the most dangerous flash point for war." He went on to say because of that very real threat, quote, "it is immensely important to keep forward-positioned capable forces in the Indo-Pacific."

So, Admiral, I have been co-chairman of the Taiwan Caucus for quite a while and I have been concerned that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would represent the hardest test from United States military response time. Can you talk about why the U.S. forward-positioning forces are so important, and what do you mean by forward-positioning, and where do the forces need to be?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. I agree with General McMaster's discussion on the most dangerous concern is that of a military force against Taiwan. To combat that, the forward posture west of the International Date Line is how Admiral Davidson describes it, and I concur with that. Forces positioned to be able to respond quickly, and not just our forces, those forces combined with the international community, with our allies and partners, those nations with common values, those two things would position us very strongly for the deterrence required.

Senator INHOFE. Okay, good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Inhofe. Now let me recognize Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Admiral Aquilino, congratulations on your nomination and thank you very much for your service to this country.

I am a big supporter of the legislation that was signed into law in 2017, the Women, Peace, and Security Act. It was legislation that I sponsored, and I think having a government-wide strategy to include women in all aspects of our security decisions is very important.

Implementation at DoD is underway, and, in fact, USINDOPACOM has played a really important role implementing the legislation, hosting the first gender insecurity cooperation course in January of 2020. USINCPACOM also hosted two operational gender advisor courses to train personnel to serve as advisors. Can you talk about why you think it is important to have this kind of legislation and how you would continue the work that Admiral Davidson has begun?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Thanks. Again, this is one of our asymmetric advantages, the Women, Peace, and Security Initiative. Admiral Davidson took it extremely seriously and he implemented his own program aligned with the larger program, that really stepped out in the form of the example you mentioned. Those have events are even more broad than that. If I am confirmed, ma'am, I would continue those efforts and work to expand them. It helps for other nations to understand and align with the values that we believe in, human rights, and it is a great initiative. If confirmed, I would certainly continue that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. When you talk about the asymmetric advantage that it gives us, can you describe that a little better?

Admiral AQUILINO. I would say it is a focus. When we think of a member of the military sitting in front of you, that the entire focus is military, but it is not. There are cultural aspects. There is sharing of values. There is education, training, schooling. All those things are resident in the military lines of effort. So that is why I view them as asymmetric.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thanks very much. Much of the discussion today, and in this committee, when we are talking about INDOPACOM, has focused on China. But, in fact, Russia continues to also engage in malign activities in the region. We saw General Austin, when he was in India last week, talking about India's planned purchase of Russia's S-400 defense system, which is a concern for us because of the insights that it gives Russia into our technology.

Can you talk about how we balance still getting along with our allies and the efforts that Russia has underway, and in particular, do you have any thoughts about India and the S-400 and what we can do there to address that?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. As Senator Hirono identified, half the globe encompassed in the Indo-Pacific. Seventeen hundred miles of Russian coastline in that region. So we watch and we will continue to compete with Russia in the Pacific.

That said, India is really a terrific partner, and as we have seen from the recent Quad discussions, I think the importance of India and the rest of the nations in the Quad will increase.

We are at a balance, however. India has had a long-standing relationship with the Russians for security cooperation and for military equipment. So we will have to work through this, and one of the ways we can do that, again, if confirmed, I would work to continue to encourage India to look at and consider United States equipment. Number one, it is the best. Number two, it generates interoperability and makes it easier to work together, and I think we should encourage India to do that through all the elements of national power and see where that goes.

Senator SHAHEEN. Should we sanction India if they acquire the S-400?

Admiral AQUILINO. Ma'am, I think I would leave that to the policymakers to determine if that is a path. I think we certainly should understand where we are with India, and I think potentially the encouragement angle in providing alternatives might be a better approach.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, and I am almost out of time, but I just wanted to raise one other issue with you, and that is the mysterious brain injuries that have come to be known as the Havana Syndrome, which have affected our diplomats and other personnel, not just in Cuba but also in China. Are you aware of the challenges around these injuries, and can I just urge you to take the attacks seriously and respond if you have any personnel that you come in contact with who say that they have been harmed by these kinds of attacks?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. I am aware. I will certainly treat it seriously, if confirmed, and the care and welfare of our servicemembers, their families, to include the diplomatic corps, is certainly of interest, and I will keep an eye on that, if confirmed, and make recommendations as we see what the causes might be.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator Wicker, please.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, let's talk about the size of our fleet and the capability. I want to quote Admiral Davidson earlier this month, before this Committee, when asked about the gap between the Chinese and United States naval forces. He said, "If we don't make changes in our posture forward, the Chinese will have greater capacity than us."

Given what you know about China's rapid naval buildup and projected growth, do you believe our naval forces still present a credible deterrent to Chinese aggression in the region today, and what do you say to that projected 5 years from now, sir?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. From my current seat I would to highlight that the United States Navy is the most powerful, greatest navy on the planet, still, despite numbers. That said, as you have highlighted, the Chinese are increasing their capability and capacity and closing that gap.

So I would like to thank CNO Gilday for his efforts in identifying the 30-year shipbuilding plan that identifies the need for a larger, more lethal, networked and ready force to be able to compete today, as you have highlighted.

Senator WICKER. Do you support that plan, advanced by Gilday?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Do you agree with the statement by Admiral Davidson a few days ago?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Let's ask then about carriers specifically. What kind of carrier presence is needed in the Western Pacific, and does the Navy have enough carriers to support those needs?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, currently the Navy is in alignment with the law of the land of 11 carriers. As you know, today's carrier strike groups are a tremendous form of deterrence, and that is globally against all competitors. You see that by the continued requests for additional carrier deployments, and I believe we need to have persistent presence by all of the joint forces, to include carrier strike groups west of the International Date Line.

Senator WICKER. Well, okay. We have complied with the law of the land at 11, but is that enough, though? Just tell us. We need to know. We can change the law of the land if we get up enough votes.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir. I think currently that the size of that force is correct, unless additional challenges show themselves.

Senator WICKER. Tell us about the *Ford*. There have certainly been some hiccups and slips. But where is that program now, and what do you think about that vessel going forward?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I am supportive of the *Ford*. We took a lot of great, new technologies. We have put them into that carrier. It is the first of the class, and if you go back through history you will find we have challenges when we go first of a class. I am confident that the Navy will overcome all of those challenges, and I know my counterpart of the East Coast is working to get *Ford* deployed as soon as possible.

Senator WICKER. Have they pretty much already overcome most of those challenges or are there still—you say “will.” I might have expected you to say that we have overcome those challenges.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. I would argue almost all of those have been completed. All but two of the weapons elevators are repaired, as I understand it, and we are certainly through all those technological challenges. The next thing you should see will be *Ford* deployed.

[The information referred to follows:]

Admiral AQUILINO. I am providing this insert for the record respecting my commitment to keep the Committee apprised of information that impacts the accuracy of testimony. During my 23 March testimony, I stated on page 29 of the attached transcript that my understanding was that all but two of USS *Gerald R. Ford's* weapons elevators were repaired and that the next thing you should see will be *Ford* deployed. I should have said that all but two of the weapons elevators turned over to *Ford's* crew were operational. There are four remaining elevators that have not yet been turned over. The next scheduled event is *Ford's* shock trials this summer.

Senator WICKER. Lastly, I joined Senator Inhofe in stressing the United States' friendship and support for Taiwan. Would you like to see greater official coordination between our military and that of Taiwan, and if so, what measures do you think could be taken in the near future to strengthen this critical partnership?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. I think our operations and efforts through all of those training exercises are currently in ac-

cordance with the Taiwan Relations Act, the three communiques and the six assurances, which is the current policies. Should we choose to change those policies we could have a conversation on what might be expanded as it applies today.

Senator WICKER. But you are declining to give your opinion as to whether you would like to see greater cooperation between our military and Taiwan.

Admiral AQUILINO. Sir, we do many things with Taiwan, again, under those current policy guidelines. We do exercises. For the Navy it is called Blue Sea. We do have interactions that contribute to the defense of Taiwan.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Now via Webex, Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, I want to discuss further INDOPACOM's utility with addressing some of the human rights and humanitarian challenges in the region. As we all know here, our competition with China will also include a competition of values, and I believe this is a great opportunity to connect with our allies in showcasing our values, to support human rights and human security.

What changes do you foresee making to INDOPACOM's humanitarian role while also ensuring our work coalesces with that being done by Australia, New Zealand, and others? While we have a number of key allies in the region, some more reluctant in this space than others. How will you use INDOPACOM's influence in the region to improve coordination with reluctant allies? Last, in the case of countries like Myanmar where a democratic backsliding is clearly occurring and where there are complex security dynamics, how would you work with our allies to approach this issue, as INDOPACOM's commander?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. I think you highlighted, again, the key advantage that the United States has in the region, and that is our relationships with our allies and partners, all of those based on our values. Like-minded nations continue to work together, and as you described, humanitarian assistance and then response to natural disasters is something that we monitor, track, maintain every day, whether they be earthquakes, eruptions, tsunamis.

There are many examples in history of those things that we have done. I think back to the tsunami in Banda Aceh, Indonesia in 2004, when the USS *Lincoln* showed up on the scene to rescue and administer support to thousands of Indonesians. We are prepared to do that every day. As you know, the region hosts the Ring of Fire, and is prevalent to those events. Continued engagement with those allies and partners, and as soon as they need help we are prepared to respond. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure that we are ready to do that with our allies and partners.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Admiral, as you mentioned in your statement prior to the hearing, it is the commander's responsibility to set a culture that prevents sexual harassment and sexual assault, and you referenced the array of tools in the commander's toolkit to carry out this duty.

Wouldn't you agree that a skillful commander should be able to accomplish this mission without convening authority? After all, a very small percentage, approximately 3 percent of commanders ever need to invoke convening authority or have the responsibility to invoke convening authority and are still required to create a culture that is inhospitable to harassment and assault.

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, we rely on our commanders every day to ensure that they take care of their personnel. The sanctity of the chain of command is critical to ensure that military operations can be executed. It is also critical to ensure that the unit is prepared and ready. There is certainly no place in our military for sexual harassment, discrimination, or any other form that makes us ineffective.

I know the Secretary of Defense is executing an independent study. If confirmed, I would certainly like to see the results of that study. But I am open to any options that it identifies that would make us more effective in this role.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, obviously that 90-day commission will provide some guidance on this issue. But with regard to your view, given that 97 percent of commanders do not have convening authority for general court martials, do you agree it is not necessary to maintain good order and discipline?

Admiral AQUILINO. Ma'am—Senator, I would have to look at that a little more deeply and understand the percentages that you identified. The convening authority still runs through the chain of command, as I am aware, but like I said, I would be certainly open to anything that does more and is more effective at taking care of our servicemembers and their families.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, just for clarity, convening authority for general courts martial is for O6's and above, and obviously you have lower-ranking commanders more junior to O6's and above, and they have to maintain good order and discipline within their unit, for each level of command, before you get to a colonel and above. Do you agree with that?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Gillibrand, and now via Webex, Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Admiral. It is good to see you again today.

One of the issues that you and I spoke about when we met last week was the evolving dynamic between India and China. The deadly skirmishes between Indian and Chinese troops underscored the high level of tension along the border, and China has made no secret of its ambition to encircle India with military and economic influence.

As INDOPACOM commander, how would you approach this dynamic, and what do you see as the future of the United States-India military cooperation?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. The work with India, the Quad, as well as all the allies and partners in the region continues to be the strength, and it highlights our ability to ensure that the entire force, the entire region understands the cooperation

and the alignment with international norms, standards, rules, and laws.

The work, or the effort that India has taken on to protect their northern border I think is noteworthy. The fact that the PRC has decided to instigate that skirmish on the northern border is noteworthy to all of us. So the strength of multilateral operations within India and with all allies and partners is certainly a mechanism to add to our deterrence in the region.

Senator FISCHER. You know, you spoke about the [inaudible] of international laws by China along the border with that skirmish. We also see their island-building campaign in the South China Sea and their use of the debt trap diplomacy that they have elsewhere.

What do you believe are China's goals with regard to this border region in India?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. I think the goals are to supplant United States security leadership in the region, overall, whether they be in the South China Sea or on the northern border of India and generate a change to the international rules beyond what the nations all agree to, under the 1982 UNCLOS [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea] treaty, and ultimately to change those rules to the benefit of the PRC.

Ultimately, it would change the view of the region from those who believe in a free and open Indo-Pacific to those that might want a more authoritarian might-equals-right closed Indo-Pacific.

Senator FISCHER. If I could ask you more about the islands in the South China Sea. The President of China, in 2015, stated, quote, "Relevant construction activity that China is undertaking does not target or impact any country, and there is no intention to militarize," end quote. Would you agree that this is a false statement, that it has been proven false?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, I would. It has certainly been evident to me that when we listen to the words that come from the PRC we have to look at not just words, and listen to words, we have to look at deeds. Your example of the islands in the South China Sea are probably the best examples. All of those islands have been militarized, whether it be with missiles, jammers, but it is in exact opposition to what has been said.

Senator FISCHER. What capabilities and projections of power has China gained from those facilities that they have constructed?

Admiral AQUILINO. It certainly expands the footprint, and we talked before about contested space. It makes it easier for the PRC to be able to operate further from their coast —

Senator FISCHER. Do you think the United States should continue the Freedom of Navigation missions in and around these disputed territories that they have?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. I am sorry. Did you say yes, you would support that?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer. Now via Webex, Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, I ask the following two initial questions of all nominees who come before any of the committees on which I serve, so here are the questions.

Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

Admiral AQUILINO. No, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. Have you ever faced discipline or entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

Admiral AQUILINO. No, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. Admiral, it was a pleasure and a privilege to introduce you today to the committee. President Biden and Secretaries Lincoln and Austin have taken several steps in recent weeks to engage with our partners and allies in the Indo-Pacific. In particular, I want to highlight the President's call with our Quad allies—Australia, Japan, and India. If confirmed, what steps will you take in your new role to strengthen our partnerships with the Quad nations?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator, and thanks very much for the kind introduction again.

As you heard me state many times, the allies and partners that we have are clearly an asymmetric advantage, as the PRC has, I would argue, only one ally or partner, and that is North Korea. So we would continue to work towards increased multilateral operations, if I am concerned. Again, the Quad we talked about would be an example of only one of those. We do many things with the ASEAN nations. We do things with our Japanese counterparts and our Korean counterparts in the form of missile defense, and I think, again, if confirmed, we would continue to expand those efforts and operations to work together on a broader scale.

Senator HIRONO. Admiral, I know that we have a very important partnership with South Korea, but they are not part of the Quad. I am a little bit curious and concerned that they are not, but can you assure me that they are definitely in the mix of the relationships that you consider very important in that part of the world?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Certainly one of five treaty allies in the region. Our relationship with South Korea, they are a linchpin as part of the alliance. Their capabilities, the equipment that they have, we are extremely interoperable. There is currently an exercise that is going on right now, that we continue to train and build readiness with the South Koreans. As it applies to the Quad, that would have to be discussions with the other three members to determine if they would like to pull those in. If not, there are many other opportunities to generate additional multilateral events with the South Koreans.

Senator HIRONO. I know that you are aware that many of us are very concerned about the issue of sexual assault and harassment in the military, and I just want to note that we will continue to focus on this, and we are, of course, aware of the DoD Sexual Assault Commission, and I would certainly hope that you will pay much attention to the recommendations made by the commission, because the issue of sexual harassment and assault continues to plague our military. I know that Senator Gillibrand also questioned you about that.

Regarding the PDI, Admiral Davidson's new PDI report called for significant increases in spending across all lines of the PDI effort. Do you believe the increase in spending proposed in Admiral Davidson's PDI is sufficient to deter our adversaries in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. As I have looked at PDI, Admiral Davidson's strategic, very thoughtful approach, aligned with this committee, has identified the foundational capabilities needed to do deterrence, and it would have to be sustained to ensure that we can execute this on a longer term.

Senator HIRONO. Admiral Davidson listed the Aegis Guam Defense System, GDS, as his top priority in the PDI, but similar Aegis Ashore facilities in Romania and Japan have had delays and been over budget. With that, do you believe the cost and time estimates for deploying of GDS are accurate, and will GDS also be your number one priority in this region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, it certainly would be a top priority—170,000 United States citizens on Guam, over 20,000 servicemembers that force protection is absolutely required for. I am not aware of the different cost comparisons of the overrun, but if confirmed I will certainly look into that, ma'am, and determine. It is not the first one we have put in, so I would hope there would be some learning, and the ability to stay on cost and schedule would be easier.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, and I realize I think I am running out of time, but I am very concerned about our missile defense structure. So I will continue to work with you, should you be confirmed, of course.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. Admiral, thanks for your appearance, thanks for your service, and congratulations on your nomination. I want to talk a little bit more about Taiwan, and I want to very much get your professional military advice. Taiwan is a very vibrant democracy—a very vibrant democracy—and we respect our democratic partners like Taiwan.

But I want to hear from you about why Taiwan is so critical from a military and strategic standpoint. Why would Beijing so desire to have Taiwan annexed to the mainland, and how would it complicate your military planning if Beijing did invade and annex Taiwan? Strictly from a military and strategic standpoint. I do not want to talk about protecting Taiwanese democracy. I am clear on that and I know you are as well. From a military and strategic standpoint, why is it so important to Beijing that they annex Taiwan?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. As you know, they view it as their number one priority. The rejuvenation of the Chinese Communist Party is at stake, very critical as they look at the problem. From a military standpoint, the strategic location of where it is, as it applies to the potential impact of two-thirds of the world's trade, certainly a critical concern.

Additionally, the status of the United States as a partner with our allies and partners also is at stake, should we have a conflict

in Taiwan. So those two reasons are really the strategic main concerns that I would see.

Senator COTTON. What would it mean for the PLA's [People's Liberation Army] enhanced capabilities if they were able to turn Taiwan essentially into a military base, if they were able to base aircraft and ships on the island of Taiwan, much like you discussed earlier with those islands they have got in the South China Sea. What advantage would that give to them?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, certainly it would extend their reach. It would extend the contested environment. It would threaten our allies and partners—think the Philippines, and it extends their reach initially away from their coast and to challenge the entire region, all allies and partners and friends.

Senator COTTON. You spoke earlier about continuing Freedom of Navigation Operations in the South China Sea, despite those militarized, manmade islands. If Taiwan were annexed to the mainland and the PLA navy were based there, would you be able to continue Freedom of Navigation Operations in the South China Sea, or is the fact that Taiwan sits right at the top of the South China Sea significantly impede those operations?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, we would still execute those operations. It certainly would be at greater risk.

Senator COTTON. Then speaking about the point you made about our allies, if you were sitting in a treaty partners capital, conducting military planning, say Tokyo or Seoul, or for that matter sitting in any Southern Asian capital and thinking the United States might support you in the face of Chinese aggression, if we stood idly by while China invaded Taiwan and annexed it to the mainland, how would you feel?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, that was my second point. It certainly would impact the credibility of the United States as a partner in the region.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. Last week, Admiral Davidson testified that he thinks the PLA may have the capability to effectively invade Taiwan in as soon as 6 years, maybe less. Do you agree with that view?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, there are many numbers out there. I know Admiral Davidson said 6 years. You have to ask him where he made that assessment. There are spans from today to 2045. My opinion is this problem is much closer to us than most think, and we have to take this on, put those deterrence capabilities like PDI in place, in the near term and with urgency.

Senator COTTON. I share that view. It is not a 2045, it is not a 2030 problem. I suspect it may not even be a 2026 problem.

From a military planning point of view, what is the best time of year, given light, weather, and sea conditions, for the PLA to launch an invasion of Taiwan? Is it the middle part of the spring?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir, that is certainly a better time as it applies to sea state and environmental.

Senator COTTON. Do you recall when the Sochi Winter Olympics ended in 2014?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

Senator COTTON. February 23rd. Do you recall when Russia invaded Crimea?

Admiral AQUILINO. I do not have the date, Senator. I apologize.

Senator COTTON. February 27th, 4 days later. The Beijing Winter Olympics end February 23rd of next year.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Admiral Aquilino, congratulations on the nomination. I enjoyed our conversation. I enjoyed visiting you in Hawaii last year with Senator Hirono.

Senator Hirono was asking you questions about the Quad, and I have been very interested in this since we started to hear about it at this committee a number of years ago. I was intrigued that the first-ever head of nation meeting of the Quad was about vaccines, and even though most of the discussion about the Quad has been in the armed services hearing, this first big initiative with the heads of states was about funding vaccine development in India, that could be used to vaccinate the Indian population but also could be used to produce vaccines that could be used throughout the region. That made me want to get your perspective on, if we are thinking about our national security challenges in the INDOPACOM, how much of our thoughts should be about a whole-of-government approach rather than just an armed services approach?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. We need to engage with every aspect of national power to be able to compete against the PLA. So whether it be diplomacy, whether it be scientific, whether it be informational, every aspect has an ability to generate deterrence, extend the cooperation with our allies and partners, and that is one example. From the military perspective this last year, the Quad, or in the form of India, Japan, the United States, and Australia, executed Exercise Malabar. So the cooperation of those nations currently has and needs to expand across all elements of national power.

Senator KAINE. I have always said to witnesses here about the Quad is that if the Big 12 can have ten teams, and the Big 10 and A 10 can have 14 teams each, there is no reason a Quad cannot have more than four nations. So I would encourage us to always broaden our reach in that way.

Missile attacks on United States Forces in Iraq over the past year have shown a level of precision that our forces have not experienced during much of the early years of the global war on terror, and so the attacks display both accurate and devastation but also the vulnerabilities of our systems to defend against them. Any conflict in PACOM is guaranteed to see a widespread use, in my view, of precision guided missiles against both bases and ships. Do you think there is adequate attention paid in current budgeting for medium- and long-range air defense weapons?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I think the Pacific Deterrence Initiative has identified a need that you just articulated, to ensure that we can protect our force. It is combined with not just missiles but the ability to integrate and the ability to command and control them, as well as tie those with our allies and partners. It would give us a broad ability to protect and defend all of our citizens, and sailors, soldiers, airmen, Coast Guardsman, and Marines.

Senator KAINE. Thank you for that. The Navy is in the early stages of replacing the F-18 Super Hornet with a program called Next Generation Air Defense, which I guess goes by two acronyms, NGAD or F/A-XX. Where do you see gaps emerging in our current fleet structure of F-18s and F-35s that have to be addressed by a new platform like the NGAD?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. The capabilities that are needed against this competitor need to be more technologically advanced. To Senator Inhofe's questions, the need for fifth-generation aircraft has been identified and is needed to enter and operate in those contested spaces. NGAD or F/A-XX I think is our next step to advance the technology and provide even more capability to be able to operate in those contested spaces. It is very important, and the Navy is currently working on the development of the air wing of the future. So think of those carrier strike groups we talked about before being even more lethal, being able to enter and operated in those contested spaces. It is critical to the deterrence needed.

Senator KAINE. Do you have a sense of the timeline for when NGAD may come online in the INDOPACOM?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I do not have a sense of that exact date. I think they are looking at IOC in 2030 or 2031.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine. Now let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Rounds.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, first of all let me just say thank you very much for your service and your family's service to our country. I appreciated the discussion that we had last week and believe that you are the right person at this time, in this critical position.

A couple of thoughts. Number one, I want to go back and visit just a second an issue that Senator Hirono brought up, and that is Guam. We did not really get into it, but would you talk with us a little bit about just how critical Guam is in terms of any of our strategies with regard to this AOR. Right now, part of the discussion has been how do you defend Guam, what are the options available? I know that Admiral Davidson had recommended, and Congress did not agree last year, with the funding for the GDS, the Guam Defense System.

But I would like your thoughts on it as well, because it seems to me that without that in place we leave, as you indicated, literally thousands of our own military men and women at risk.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. Guam, as we all can agree, I think, is an incredibly strategic location in the Indo-Pacific. It is west of the International Date Line, the ability to host over 20,000 of our U.S. Forces to be able to respond if needed, and the force protection for those servicemembers, families, as well as the 170,000 U.S. citizens is critical.

Admiral Davidson highlighted the need for 360-degree coverage. He also highlighted the need for those systems to be in place by 2025. It goes back to our point of near term and with a sense of urgency.

So I certainly believe we need that capability, and if confirmed I look forward to working with you to ensure we can get it in place.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. I agree, and I think as Senator Cotton indicated in his remarks most certainly time is of the essence, and we cannot simply sit back and just say this is just something that we can put off for another day.

An area that I think is going to continue to be an item of discussion I think in your AOR, just like in any other place in the world, the DoD's cyber strategy, which was published in December of 2018, charges DoD to defend forward, shape the day-to-day competition, and prepare for war. We have experienced highly sophisticated attacks within the cyber domain from the lines of both Russia and China in the past, and most recently we have seen some other capabilities, with the most recent attacks on business and some of our governmental entities as well.

Can you discuss how you view this threat from the perspective of the INDOPACOM, and how you would approach it through the lenses of strategy, operations, and exercises? What exercises are you doing, and how do you fill this in? I mean, when we talk about the issues of cyber it is the least expensive part of defense, and yet it impacts all of the other domains—air, land, sea, and space.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. As we have seen, many of our competitors are operating at the level short of war through the cyberspace domain that you identified. It is critically important. In many cases it is an indicator of follow-on events that we might see. If confirmed, I think our focus needs to be on, number one, the strongest defense possible to ensure that those competitors are unable to take advantage of that space, and combined with that it is important that we have those same conversations with our allies and partners so that they are just as defended and we do not provide an alternative path for anyone to enter in our cyber domain.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. One last item that I just wanted to bring up that I think, when we talk about fifth-generation aircraft and the need for more of them, and particularly right now we are talking about those that could be used within the carrier-based fleet that we have got. But we have also got the B-21 coming online and will probably be operational well before the next-gen fighter systems will be available. The B-21, which would be based in safe bases, South Dakota and Texas, is the knock-down-the-door type of a system which basically will slow down our adversaries who think that they may very well be safe from a carrier-based operation because of their land-based defense systems that they have in place, specifically China.

Could you talk a little bit about the integrated need and capabilities that the B-21 would bring in the Indo-Pacific region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. I just want to highlight before it was a specific Navy question that I answered, but that said it will obviously take the entire joint force to be able to compete. Again, as it applies to where might be the best place I would love to see the results of the Secretary's posture review, that global posture review, and if confirmed, to see what does that mean and how does it impact the Indo-Pacific.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rounds. Let me recognize, via Webex, Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to follow up on Senator Rounds' questions, Admiral. I can guarantee you that at this very moment, hundreds, if not thousands of very smart software engineers and hackers are in China, attempting to figure out how to compromise our command and control systems, our IRS systems, our force projection software. I cannot stress more to you the urgency of being prepared for this. All of our preparations, all of our money, all of our systems are useless if we cannot communicate with them or, on the other hand, if they are rendered inert by a cyberattack.

So I hope that you will see this as an extremely high priority. You should be having people trying to hack your own systems to determine how safe they really are.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. It truly is important, and the word "urgency" I use frequently as it applies to all aspects of the missions assigned, additionally in cyberspace. We actually have cyber aggressor teams that execute the role that you just described, and I believe it is worthwhile to ensure we expand those tests, if you will, into all of our operations and exercises. Sir, and if confirmed, I will continue to do that.

Senator KING. Thank you. One of the things that worries me are the continuing friction, if you will, in the South China Sea and the potential for an accident, for an accidental conflict. Do we have mil-to-mil communications established with the Chinese, a kind of red phone, where you and your counterpart in China can have direct communication if there is, for example, a Chinese fighter jet flies too close or actually clips a destroyer in the South China Sea on a Freedom of Navigation mission?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. I do not have a direct communication with my counterpart. I know Admiral Davidson has advocated for that ability at his level, and I know the chairman does have a connection that he can utilize. If confirmed, I would continue to advocate for that connection to ensure there is an ability to de-escalate if there were an event, and the ability to not let it go out of control. I think that communication mechanism could be effective if that connection was with someone who had decision-making authority.

Senator KING. I appreciate your interest in pursuing that. I think it could be critically important.

Law of the Sea, you mentioned what the Chinese are doing in the South China Sea in terms of planes. The Russians are doing similar things in the Arctic. Do you believe it is in the national interest for this country to enter into the Law of the Sea treaty?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, I do.

Senator KING. I have asked every flag officer that has appeared before this committee that question, just pretty much regularly for the last 8 years, and I have never gotten a negative answer. Why do you think it is important that we be part of this treaty structure?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, there are really two main reasons. Number one, as the group gets together it would be certainly beneficial if we had a seat at the table when there were discussions occurring as it applied to potential adjustments and the interpretations of those international laws. The second reason, it puts us in

an increased position of credibility. We adhere to the UNCLOS treaty in our operations, and it would make our position much stronger if we were signators.

Senator KING. I appreciate that, Admiral, and hope to persuade my colleagues of those arguments, indeed.

I mentioned the urgency of the cyber threat. I think another urgent concern is vulnerability to hypersonics. Do you see that as an issue that we really need to be accelerating our defensive, not only our hypersonic capacity but our ability to defend against hypersonic attacks, particularly since forward-deployed carrier strike groups, for example, are part of the essence of our deterrence.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, absolutely. It is the next step. It is capabilities that our competitors are pursuing, and I see we need to pursue both offensive capability in the form of hypersonics and defensive capabilities.

Senator KING. Thank you, Admiral. I appreciate your answers and look forward to voting for your confirmation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Ernst, please.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Admiral, thank you very much for being here today and for your willingness to continue to serve our great country. To your wife, as well, Laura, welcome. It is good to have you here, Jessica, as well, and to your Fleet Master Chief. You always need a battle buddy when you come to Capitol Hill. So thank you all for what you do for the men and women that serve within your fleet, and to those that will be serving upon confirmation in the Indo-Pacific Command as well.

So we have talked a number of issues today, and my colleagues have highlighted a lot of issues. All of these are nesting together quite well. I am going to dive in a little bit more, just a bit on China. But last week we did discuss some of the major influencers in the region, of course China, but then we also see the Russian influence, we see the Iranian influence, and North Korea as well.

So what are your thoughts on the Iranian influence first, within INDOPACOM? We are seeing them work alongside North Korea in logistical areas such as munitions. Is this alarming to you, and what other threats or concerns might you have with the Iranians engaging in the INDOPACOM AOR?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. Certainly contributions in the form of energy support that exceed the UN Security Council resolutions is concerning. Again, providing capability that we would be concerned about in the form of technology transfer, whether it be missile technologies, nuclear capabilities. All those would negatively impact the region and negatively impact all of the allies and partners.

Senator ERNST. So it is definitely something that we need to keep an eye on. Correct?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, ma'am.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Admiral, and as well, we have talked about China and why it is important then that we have interoperability capabilities with our regional partners and our allies. Some of the things we have mentioned today, Senator Kaine brought up

missile defense. Others have talked about humanitarian assistance. Are there other capabilities, whether it is hard infrastructure or munitions, things of that nature, or other soft capabilities that we can work on as well with our partners that would enhance our partnership in that region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, and again, the capabilities are across the spectrum. It is critical that we have allies and partners to support, whether it be logistics, whether it be access, whether it be combined interoperability in the form of operations. Every aspect of it is important. I do not think there is one piece that you can leave out and be effective and be able to generate the deterrence needed.

Senator ERNST. One of the soft capabilities that China does tend to offer, or benefits that China offers to a number of those countries in that region is training capabilities. They offer that assistance to many of our partners. Can you stress to us how important the IMET program is?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Again, it is one of those additional areas beyond operations and exercises that allow us to connect and get to that access, training, and improvement of our allies and partners. General Rudd supports all of the components currently, and in many cases he is the lead effort as it applies to being able to get access and get in and train our allies and partners. So it is extremely important. We have got to continue IMET, and if confirmed, I will continue to stress that.

Senator ERNST. Fantastic. As part of those training opportunities as well and other types of capabilities operating in the gray zone are our special operations forces. Can you describe what role you would see our SOF playing in the INDOPACOM command area of authority, and what role that they might have in pushing back against China?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, the SOF team plays an important role across all aspects in the entire spectrum. Currently, their leading role is in the information space, as a part of Joint Task Force Indo-Pacific, currently located in Singapore. So while they touch every aspect of the spectrum, they are leading a role in a couple of different places.

Senator ERNST. Thank you. My time is expiring so I will stop there, but Admiral, thanks once again for stepping up to this nomination, and I look forward to confirming you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Warren.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Admiral Aquilino, thank you for being here today. Congratulations on your nomination.

So the Indo-Pacific represents the most consequential and challenging region of the world for the United States and our national security, and as Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command you will be responsible for overseeing U.S. Forces in the region. One of your top priorities will be contending with China and its growing influence, both regionally and globally.

Earlier this month, Admiral Philip Davidson, the current Commander of INDOPACOM, testified that the greatest danger to the

United States is the erosion of conventional deterrence against China. He warned that without credible, conventional deterrence, China may be emboldened to take action and supplant United States interests in the region.

Do you agree with Admiral Davidson that the erosion of conventional deterrence is the greatest danger to the United States in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator.

Senator WARREN. So Admiral Davidson also warned that China was on course to double their nuclear stockpile this decade, and he agreed with a claim by one of my colleagues that if China quadrupled their nuclear stockpile they could, quote, "have nuclear overmatch against the United States." Now I want to look into the numbers on this. Last year's report on China's military power shows that their stockpile of operational nuclear warheads is only in the low 200s, far fewer than the approximately 3,800 in the United States' active stockpile.

So, Admiral, are you aware of any evidence that suggests that China intends to quadruple its nuclear stockpile in this decade?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I think what I would say is there are many opinions on what those numbers are. I think the numbers you quoted are accurate with regard to today. What I would say is we see China increasing at a rate that is faster than anyone previously believed, their nuclear stockpile. So while I cannot directly, at this point, understand their intent or what their end target is, they are increasing. If you were to look at what they have done with their conventional force, I would see no reason why I would expect anything other than to have them continue to increase their nuclear capabilities and aspirations.

Senator WARREN. So let me just ask that from maybe a different point of view. I understand what you are saying, and I appreciate it, but even if they did quadruple their stockpile, China would still have fewer warheads than the United States has currently deployed. Is that right?

Admiral AQUILINO. If it were to quadruple today, that would be accurate. Yes, ma'am.

Senator WARREN. Okay. So from your perspective, as the Commander of Pacific Fleet and the incoming INDOPACOM Commander, would you agree that credible, conventional deterrents are still the best way of protecting United States interests in the Indo-Pacific region and avoiding a conflict with China?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. That conventional deterrents to avoid crisis or conflict is certainly the main effort, as I would see it, if confirmed.

Senator WARREN. Okay. Thank you, Admiral. I appreciate your comments on this. China presents the greatest geopolitical challenge to the United States since the end of World War II, and it is critical that we face this challenge with clear eyes. Distorting the threat to justify building more nuclear weapons at home is not a recipe for success here.

So I look forward to your confirmation and I look forward to working with you to advance areas of shared interest. Thank you very much. Thank you for being with us today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren. Let me recognize Senator Tillis, please.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Admiral, congratulations to you and to your family and your team for your nomination. I would like to start just by asking a general question. About a week ago, maybe a week and a half ago we got an update from NORTHCOM [United States Northern Command] and SOUTHCOM [United States Southern Command] on China's engagement, primarily in Latin and South America. Can you give me a quick rundown within your area, or your future area of responsibility in terms of China's relationships, say, today, as compared to 5 or 10 years ago, ostensibly economic or non-military engagement, but we all know there is a military dimension to almost everything that China does. So just a quick rundown of the areas of greatest concern.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. I spoke to Admiral Faller last week, after he testified. I think the main point that comes out is China is a global problem. When you talk about their areas of influence and what does it mean globally, there are economic efforts that are underway by China across the globe. There are military efforts underway, and, you know, it furthers their reach. It would allow access, logistic support in time of crisis. So all of those things are a bit concerning, and for allies and partners across the globe, they have to understand what that means.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. A number of my colleagues have covered the fifth-generation F-22, F-35, the importance of those programs. The one question I had, I think with General Berger, there is some thought in the future of the Marine Corps force design of reducing squadrons from 16 to 10 aircraft, I think. What is the rationale behind that, and what impact could that possibly have in your area of operation?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. I think General Berger, in his former position as the Commander of Marine Forces Pacific, he got a front-line view of the main concern for the next generation, if you will. I appreciate his efforts to restructure, to take on adjusted mission sets, and to ensure that his forces are contributing to deterrence.

I would like to highlight that all of the service chiefs are on board with the same set of concerns. So I appreciate and admire the work done by CNO Gilday, by Chief C.Q. Brown, by General McConville, and by General Clarke.

Senator TILLIS. Actually I may have time for two questions. The 360 missile defense system in Guam has been raised, as the top unfunded priority. Do we have our priorities in order? Do we just simply have the resources to do it? In your opinion, why is it that we have this unfunded priority, and what should we do about it?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. I think Admiral Davidson and I highlighted the right priority order as needed to foundationally begin to identify and show that credible deterrence that is needed inside, or west of the International Date Line. There are a variety of opinions that there may be a better system, that there is an integrated air missile defense problem vice just a ballistic missile defense problem. So I think those are the different competition voices.

What I believe is there is a need in the near term to defend against all of those threats, from a 360-degree standpoint, and if that answer is Aegis, I am absolutely supportive. If there is a better answer that can be delivered in the near term, I would be ready to listen to that, if confirmed. But that is how I see it.

Senator TILLIS. One other question on the F-35 program. Several of our allies are participating in that program. We understand the military significance of it. But to what extent has that engagement been helpful, from a diplomatic perspective?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, it is always helpful when our allies and partners are operating with the same stuff we are. It absolutely makes us more interoperable. It opens up opportunities for logistic sites, supply cooperation, and other events like that, that just continue to expand our relationship and make us more effective in operations.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Admiral. Mr. Chair, if I had more time I would ask the admiral if the Aqualung nickname was inspired by the breathing apparatus or the Jethro Tull album, but I will leave that for the record. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Tillis. Let me now recognize Senator Peters.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, thank you for your service. Good to see you here with us today.

Admiral, the Marine Corps has been implementing its Force Design 2030 plan to support operations as a lighter, much more maneuverable force, as you are well aware. For example, they have talked about divestment of tanks in favor of joint light tactical vehicle equipped with some long-range precision munitions. Have you been monitoring the Marine Corps' progress, and if so, what are your thoughts about this approach?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. Commandant Berger is extremely thoughtful, as the former head of the Marine Corps in the Pacific, he has seen first-hand. I think his structure and approach is correct. It will really help to generate deterrence that we continue to talk about today, in the form of whether it be surface-to-air capability, anti-ship capability, and the ability to expand the competitive space from a land domain into a mostly maritime domain.

So his site picture is correct, and hopefully he can keep that plan on track. It would be better, under the sense of urgency needed to deliver sooner rather than later.

Senator PETERS. Very good, Admiral. Thank you. When Admiral Davidson appeared here 2 weeks ago, I questioned him on a strategy focused heavily on conventional deterrence would fare against China's three-pronged strategy of unrestricted warfare, given that its efforts are undertaken below the threshold of armed conflict. I think this also applies to our partnerships. The type and caliber of security systems we are providing should certainly reflect our mutual threats that we all have.

So my question is, to what extent do you believe our security assistance should include cybersecurity assistance or measures to enhance resiliency against information warfare?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, it should absolutely include it. First, a strong defense against the cyber problems that exist. Without a

doubt, resiliency—and I would go one step further, the potential for reconstitution.

Senator PETERS. Admiral, on March 4th, Admiral Davidson introduced his investment plan of needed capabilities for INDOPACOM, and this plan includes over \$2 billion for space-based radars. As you know, the Chinese are rapidly launching ISR satellites to better monitor the INDOPACOM, and last week they launched another trip of Yaogan-31 satellites. I think this is the third launch since January 29th of this year.

It is clear that we must improve our capability and capacity to monitor the region from space, and there are certainly a number of innovative commercial companies out there, such as Orbital Effects, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, which is quickly launching radar satellites with the necessary capabilities, and quite frankly, they are doing it at a fraction of the cost of traditional government efforts to address national security threats.

Admiral, do you support the use of these capabilities to more quickly and cost-effectively address this challenge?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. You highlighted the extreme build-up in the space domain, and that is certainly concerning. Any ability to increase capability, capacity, resiliency in the space domain would be of benefit, and if confirmed, I would support that.

Senator PETERS. Right. Admiral, the Department of Defense is currently developing a training program to enable servicemembers and civilian employees to better understand and better identify foreign malign influence campaigns and cyber exploitation, generally, as it is targeting members and their families. So my question to you, sir, is to what extent have you contended with these issues at the Pacific Fleet, and how will you inform your approach to INDOPACOM personnel related to this issue?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, my team reviews my profile in the cyber domain, and over the past 6 months they have removed over 250 false sites that are claiming to be me. I think that gets to the indication that this is a persistent threat, as was mentioned before, low cost, and we have to be on our game. We have to understand what it means and continue to defend against it.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Admiral. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. Let me recognize Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Admiral, for your service. I had the opportunity to serve in the Navy and it was a great experience. They did not pay me much, though. Of course, I was 18 and I had no experience too. They shouldn't have.

Do you believe that it is clear that we have got to prevent Communist China from controlling Taiwan, that it would be a strategic necessity for the United States to make sure Taiwan remains not controlled by Communist China, and the loss of Taiwan would devastate our ability to counter the aggressive actions of Communist China?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Again, the policy identifies that through the Taiwan Relations Act we support the defense of Taiwan. Three communiques and six assurances. It would negatively impact our standing in the region if that were to happen, and it

would challenge the rest of our allies and partners in the U.S., negatively impacting our ability to operate freely in that area.

Senator SCOTT. When you look at what Communist China has done with Hong Kong, why haven't they been even more aggressive with Taiwan, do you think?

Admiral AQUILINO. I do not know how to answer that one, Senator, judging from intent. I think what I would articulate is we have seen aggressive actions earlier than we anticipated, whether it be on the Indian border or whether it be in Hong Kong or whether it be against the Uyghurs. We have seen things that I do not think we expected, and that is why I continue to talk about a sense of urgency. We ought to be prepared today.

Senator SCOTT. I introduced the Taiwan Invasion Prevention Act to end the United States strategic ambiguity about Taiwan. I believe it is time for the United States to say clearly that we will not, absolutely not allow Communist China to invade and subdue Taiwan, and that both Taiwan and the United States need to invest in the resources, weapons, training, and strategic dialogue to ensure that Xi understands that he has nothing to gain from using force against Taiwan.

It is not calling for their independence, only that we need to meet the threat that Xi has announced through his aggressive actions. What are your thoughts on this?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, the current policies have been able to keep the status quo in place now for a number of years. I would be open to, and hope to be, if confirmed, included in any conversations should we decide to change or adjust that policy. We would have to ensure we understand the risk and be extremely thoughtful if we were to go down that path.

Senator SCOTT. What else do you think we need to do to make sure that Xi doesn't decide to invade Taiwan? What should we be doing that we are not doing right now?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I think an increase in our forward deterrent posture, as identified by Admiral Davidson in the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is a great first start. But capable, lethal forces west of the Date Line, to be able to respond on extremely short notice, combined with synchronization with our allies and partners to ensure that all understand that that is not within the best interests of anyone in the theater.

Senator SCOTT. Do you think we have the right resources so Taiwan will not get overwhelmed by the coercive acts of Communist China?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I am really encouraged by the actions of Taiwan in accordance with the Taiwan Defense Act with regard to the capabilities that they are purchasing, with regard to the indigenous capabilities that they are pursuing, all for the defense of where they live, and that has to continue.

Senator SCOTT. Do you think Japan is doing enough to get prepared for the aggressive actions that Communist China clearly is threatening for the region, to the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Japan is the cornerstone of the alliance in the region. I think they have watched all of the events you and I talked about a few minutes ago, and they understand what does that translate as it applies to them. If you were to think

of the Senkaku Islands, I believe that they are concerned. I am extremely happy with the interoperability, coordination, and relationship we have with the Japanese. I think it is a strong, as I said, cornerstone to the foundation in executing deterrence in the region.

Senator SCOTT. Thanks for your service. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Manchin, please.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Admiral, and first of all, thank you for your service, and I want to thank your family for supporting your service. I know it is a family event and an affair.

Sir, one of Admiral Davidson's top priorities is a mission partner environment that would serve as a common platform for our partners in the Pacific to work collaboratively in a cyber domain. Do you share the urgency of promoting greater interoperability of the cyber operations with our allies and partners in the Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, absolutely. The mission partner environment generates synchronization, the ability to command and control beyond just the cyber domain. So think ISR, think coordination operations of planning, all the way to execution. It is absolutely critical.

Senator MANCHIN. Have you had to coordinate with Cyber Command in your past? Have you worked with them in the past?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, at the Pac Fleet level I have a support organization in cyber, but I do not personally coordinate directly with Cyber Command. That is Admiral Davidson's role. If confirmed, I certainly would.

Senator MANCHIN. Our current major ballistic missile defense assets in the INDOPACOM include Thaad in South Korea and Guam, Aegis systems in service with United States naval assets in the Pacific and the Japanese navy, and Patriot missile capability in South Korea and Japan. With Japan's uncertainty on Aegis Ashore construction, we are at an even greater disadvantage to sustaining a credible military deterrence against our competitors.

So where do you assess the greater vulnerability exists when it comes to missile defense in the Pacific, and how do you plan to fix these?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, the missile defense concern is throughout the theater.

Senator MANCHIN. Sure. I think mostly with Japan pulling back because of public support, pulling out of the Aegis. Where do you see—that troubled me, being the great ally that they have been, all of a sudden public opinion, and they pull out of the defense that I think is needed for their own country.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Again, I think what they have done is they decided to relook at whether Aegis Ashore is the right answer. They certainly are partnered with us in the form of their Aegis destroyers. I think we have a shared responsibility and requirement to protect forces in Japan, and I look forward, if confirmed, to work with the Japanese to try to get to the right answer for them.

Senator MANCHIN. Are you aware of any assistance being offered by INDOPACOM to provide community engagement in Japan to

help relieve or ease the public concerns, at this point in time? If not, it might be a good position for you to take on that one.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. I am unaware in my current seat. If confirmed, I would look to work with the Missile Defense Agency to ensure—and I would be surprised if Admiral Davidson was not having those conversations with his counterparts.

Senator MANCHIN. Okay, and speaking of Admiral Davidson, back in 2018, during his confirmation hearing, China was already capable of controlling the South China Sea and any scenario short of war with the United States. Here we are 3 years later, and we have heard repeated testimony that China has increased its naval forces, its coast guard and other paramilitary forces.

So what is stopping them right now from exercising their capability whenever they feel like it, of controlling the South China Sea?

Admiral AQUILINO. The U.S. Joint Forces in the region, Senator, the partner nations?

Senator MANCHIN. We are strong there. We have not done anything to deter it. They have taken these little outcrops and made them into major military bases.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yeah, I would somewhat disagree with that we have not taken any action. I think if you looked at the events we have executed over the past couple of years—and I will speak from my role as the Pacific Fleet Commander, multiple dual-carrier strike group operations in the South China Sea, the most FONs and Taiwan Strait transits that have been executed in recent years, multiple bilateral and multilateral operations with our partners and allies, all in the South China Sea I think would highlight that we can and will continue to operate there.

Senator MANCHIN. I did not mean that in a detrimental way. I meant that in saying that they have taken small outcrops and continually enlarge those into a military confine, if you will. We, or no one else, seem to be able to stop that or prevent that or took any actions before they got to the size they are now and to the operability they are.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. We certainly have not changed their desire nor intent nor ability to execute the largest military build-up we have seen in a while.

Senator MANCHIN. So is it safe to say that basically unless we are going to have a major presence, as you just outlined, in the South China Sea, then they will have total control of that?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think that credible forward presence, again, not just the United States but with allies and partners, is the best deterrent option to ensure that we can keep that space free and open.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir, and I look forward to your confirmation and look forward to voting for you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Manchin. Now let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Blackburn.

Senator BLACKBURN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much for allowing [audio malfunction] for being generous with your time. We appreciate that and appreciate your service to our country.

I want to talk with you just a little bit about China and our Chinese counterparts. You know that some deterrence and the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, these are things that are important to me, and our diplomats had a contentious encounter last week in Alaska. Beijing's Foreign Affairs Chief, Director Yang, this was his statement: "The United States does not have the qualification to say that it wants to speak to China from a position of strength." If Congress fully funds the Pacific Deterrence Initiative at the levels proposed in Admiral Davidson's assessment, and listening to you this morning it sounds as if you are in complete agreement with that, talk to us about how we communicate that we believe we hold that position of strength in communicating with Beijing.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. I think what you described is what competition looks like in the future. Actions that we would take to ensure credible deterrence, the desire to not have conflict by the actions and operations that we execute and understanding that there are things that we will do that our competitor will not find very good for them. So I think we have to be ready and have to understand what does that competition space look like and continue to execute those things that will allow us to keep the status quo.

Senator BLACKBURN. Well, and I think probably, too, that you would agree that keeping these budgetary top lines that are going to give you what you need should be a priority as we look at our INDOPACOM initiatives.

Let me ask you this. Okay, when you look at PDI, combined command, control networks, and the mission partner environment, in relation to interoperability and the needs of our regional security partners, and we look at this through the lens of cyber, through the lens of technology, tell me what concerns you about China's aggressiveness in this great power competition when it comes to technology, to hardware, to setting standards, to infrastructure, to their cyber capabilities.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. So the key with the mission partner environment is that it absolutely must be cyber secure. We would not benefit from allowing the PLA to be able to infiltrate that network. So all the benefits that it provides, for interoperability, for command and control, for resilience and reassurance, the concern would be the cybersecurity of that environment, and it would have to be top on the list of priorities as it were developed.

Senator BLACKBURN. Well, in that regard what about the vulnerabilities that are associated with cloud computing and integrated systems?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. So those technological advances, I think while they identify vulnerabilities also have opportunities. So as we shift and take advantage of those things, again, we have to make sure that they are cybersecure and unable to be infiltrated.

Senator BLACKBURN. Thank you. Just a quick yes or no from you. Should we be increasing our bilateral participation in exercises with Taiwan?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, we should continue to execute those things that we do with Taiwan, and should there be a policy shift, again, if confirmed, I hope to be in those conversations, we do exer-

cise with Taiwan, we have visits with Taiwan, we have consultations. All of those are contributing to Taiwan's defense.

Senator BLACKBURN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator. Let me now recognize Senator Duckworth via Webex.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral Aquilino, I appreciate our call last week and I am glad we were able to discuss some of the biggest challenges that you face if you are confirmed, including improving our logistics capabilities and capacity in the INDOPACOM region.

In addition to agreeing that our logistics enterprise is absolutely foundational for having a combat-credible deterrent, I feel that we were very much on the same page about the need to strengthen our partners with the various nations in the region. You and I have both heard our regional partners say that they want a greater United States presence in the Indo-Pacific so that they have alternatives to the Communist PRC when it comes to trading and security partners. But the tragic murders of eight people in Atlanta last week, six of them of East Asian descent, highlighted a disturbing trend of an increasing violence and hate towards Asians and Asian Americans in this country, particularly those of East Asian descent.

Regardless of the stated motive for last week's shooting, there is no arguing that cities across the country are reporting a drastic increase in violent crimes and discrimination targeting members of the AAPI community. It is also not hard to see a correlation between the stark rise in anti-Asian bigotry and our former Commander-in-Chief, Donald Trump, blatantly using hateful and racist language, such as calling the coronavirus the "Kung Flu" or the "Chinese virus," long after such terminology has been deemed inappropriate and harmful.

Shockingly, Trump spread such bigotry despite the FBI producing a report, as early as March 2020, that included a clear and chilling assessment. I quote, "Hate crime incidents against Asian Americans likely will surge across the United States due to the spread of coronavirus disease, endangering Asian American communities." Just last week, Gallup released a poll that found, over the past year, the percentage of Americans who consider China to be the United States' greatest enemy today rose from 22 percent in February 2020 and 45 percent when measured last month.

Let me be clear. There is a difference between expressing opposition to the Communist Chinese government's aggressive economic and military practices, which I absolutely support opposing them, and ignorantly blaming Asian people, especially those of East Asian descent, for the coronavirus pandemic. Blaming the AAPI community for a public health crisis is racist and wrong, and I am increasingly concerned that it will hurt our relationship with our partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

Admiral Aquilino, when American leaders make racist statements about Asians, and American citizens participated in anti-Asian hate, how does it harm the United States' credibility and reputation in the Indo-Pacific region? Please make sure to address how such bigotry and racist violence undermines our relationships with our allies and partners who may already be facing challenges

in defending our presence in their respective nation states as views and attitudes towards the U.S. evolve with the younger generation.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. To your first point, and you and I have had this conversation, professionals talk logistics, so all of our efforts in the region are underpinned, and the relationships with our partners and allies will certainly be required to help us set up this enabling network and support our logistics issues. So thanks for that.

To your second point, what I owe, and what we all owe our incredibly brave servicemembers is a safe, comfortable place where they can work and execute the oath that they have taken. So there is no place in our ranks for any type of discrimination. Whether it be against Asians, whether it be race, creed, color, you name it, it is just completely unacceptable, it degrades from our readiness, and, if confirmed, I can tell you it will not be tolerated.

Senator DUCKWORTH. So how does the rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans and hateful rhetoric at the top ranks of government, and the absolute lack of representation at the very top ranks of the Biden administration of AAPIs in secretarial positions or higher levels, affect our relationships in the INDOPACOM region? I mean, you are going to be going in there trying to make alliances with folks in the INDOPACOM region, and yet we have Asians being shot down, and we have even Members of Congress targeting Asian Americans with hate rhetoric. How does that affect your job, trying to develop relationships in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, our relations in the region are critical. I have and will continue to say that. As a diverse military, we continue to ensure that our values are understood. I believe our allies and partners understand that when they talk with us that we speak from a position of shared values. As I said, if confirmed, I will do everything possible to ensure none of that discrimination is a part of how the Indo-Pacific operates.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. I have every confidence in your commitment to diversity, Admiral, and you have shown that in your service and you have shown that in your conversations with me, and I thank you for continuing to be a leader, both in the military but also when it comes to diversity in that military that we both love. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Duckworth. Senator Hawley, please.

Senator HAWLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, good to see you. I appreciated our conversations, and congratulations on your nomination.

I want to start by revisiting something that you and I talked about at some length when we visited, which is the situation in Taiwan. Both Deputy Secretary Hicks and Admiral Davidson have testified that the United States should maintain the ability to defeat a fait accompli scenario in Taiwan. Do you agree with that?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator.

Senator HAWLEY. Do you think the Department should also prioritize preparations for a Taiwan scenario so that we will be able to deter China from attacking Taiwan, should they attempt to do so?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. That credible deterrence forward is absolutely required with the correct forces, the right magnitude of forces, and the readiness of those forces.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. The Deputy Secretary and Admiral Davidson have also testified that a strategy of denial is essential for deterring Chinese aggression. Secretary Austin said the same thing to me in response to a question that I had for him for the record. Do you agree with that, that a strategy of denial is essential for deterring China?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator.

Senator HAWLEY. Let me ask you about a question that you were posed earlier by one of my colleagues. You were asked about the importance of conventional deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. But I just want to get clear on your views here. The necessity of conventional deterrence, which I think we agree on, does not mean that nuclear deterrence has any less of a role, doesn't it? I mean, wouldn't you agree that our nuclear deterrent provides a critical backstop to our conventional deterrent, and that both are necessary to be able to effectively deter China?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, absolutely. If I gave that impression then I apologize.

Senator HAWLEY. You also said earlier today that the threat of a Chinese invasion in Taiwan is much closer to us than most think. You and I talked about this at some length. Is it fair to say that this threat, what you said earlier, "much closer to us than most think," is it fair to say that this threat could materialize well before 2035, or some of those very later dates that folks have put out there?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, I believe it could.

Senator HAWLEY. Is it fair to say that we need to act now if we are going to prevent this threat from materializing in the future?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, absolutely. A strong posture forward, linked with our allies and partners I believe is the leading path for prevention.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Reports have indicated that Taiwan's upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review is going to emphasize the need for Taiwan to adopt an asymmetrical defense posture. This, again, is something you and I visited about. Can you just give us a sense, why is it so important for Taiwan to invest in asymmetrical capabilities, especially those that are low cost, high impact?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, as we discussed a bit, the resources they have require them to be spent in the correct manner to have the most effectiveness against the possible threat. I am encouraged by some of those capabilities that they have purchased, and I am encouraged by the capabilities that they are investing in, in an indigenous fashion, for their defense. The example I would give you is the harpoon system. I thought it was very thoughtful and the right capability, for one example.

Senator HAWLEY. What can the United States do to help encourage Taiwan to adopt a more asymmetric defense posture as quickly as possible?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think it is a part of the Taiwan Relation Act. Offering the right capabilities with the right support is the best way to ensure that they certainly understand all of their op-

tions, they get to make their own choices, but by providing credible, realistic options with recommendations would be helpful.

Senator HAWLEY. Let me ask you about something else we discussed on the phone. The Guam Defense Act has been INDOPACOM's top unfunded priority for the last 3 years. Just generally speaking, give us a sense of why Guam is so important, from a military operational standpoint.

Admiral AQUILINO. It is certainly in a strategic location, west of the International Date Line, distant enough to be able to protect our forces, muster our forces, and as you know, there are over 20,000 servicemembers on Guam. So combined with the 170,000 American citizens, we certainly are responsible to protect those people. But the strategic location is critical to be able to provide forces quickly in the area we need them.

Senator HAWLEY. Let me just ask you, finally, the Quad appears to be forming the basis for a regional coalition to stand up to Chinese aggression. How do you see the Quad contributing to deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, now and in the future?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think it is extremely important when you look at India as the world's largest democracy, combined with three other nations of shared values and beliefs. When an organization of that magnitude comes together it would generate concern for anyone with an opposite opinion.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Thank you, Admiral. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hawley. Senator Sullivan, please.

Oh, excuse me. Senator Rosen via Webex. Excuse me. Senator Rosen, please.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. I thank you, Ranking Member, and I want to thank you, Admiral, for your service, for your willingness to continue to serve and step up and take on this extremely important role in our national defense. I really appreciate that.

I would like to talk a little bit about maintaining our technological edge, because at the heart of China's military modernization efforts of course there is Beijing's investment in next-generation military capabilities. I know we have talked about that earlier in the hearing, when I was in the room. We want to close that technological gap. China is making advances in critical areas like artificial intelligence, cyber, robotics, hypersonics, and they are, at the same time, rapidly procuring commercial technologies that can be used for military purposes.

So do you believe that China has achieved technological parity with the United States in its operational systems, and are there any areas that you are concerned about that they have outpaced us?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. I do not believe they have achieved parity. I think they have a desire in the technological world to increase and ultimately to gain an overmatch. I think it is extremely important that we do not let that happen.

So one of our competitive advantages is our ability to do S&T research and keep that technological edge, and we have to continue to do that.

Senator ROSEN. So if you are confirmed, how would you incorporate this increasingly technological nature of warfare into our domains of warfare, into joint coalition exercises, like we do, of course, many of them in the Nevada and, of course, around the world.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. So if confirmed I think there is a lot of opportunity to be able to do that, as you highlighted, the efforts that are executed at both the Nellis ranges and the Fallon ranges are places where we certainly experiment and try to work to get to those improved technological advantages. I think that it is applicable across the entire region to ensure we can develop tests and ultimately implement those advanced capabilities.

Senator ROSEN. Well, I could not agree with you more. I am proud of all the training that we do in Nevada. But I know that this training requires improved skill sets—retraining, improving training, and, of course, new training for young men and women who are joining our military.

How are you planning to recruit and retain, build up that workforce that we are going to need within INDOPACOM, particularly in these areas of technology?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. So the services have that responsibility as a part of their Title 10 taskings. If I were confirmed I would highlight to the service chiefs certainly what is needed in an increased technological footprint, and if you look from a Navy perspective, currently the CNO does a great job at recruiting and retaining the best. It is getting extremely competitive across the workforce to recruit and retain, and all of the services are doing a really good job at maintaining that capability and advancement.

Senator ROSEN. I am pleased to hear that. I have instituted a bill that was in the NDAA last year, about adding a cyber track to our Junior ROTC program, and hopefully that will build up our force.

But I would like to, in the last remaining minute or so, talk a little bit about the state partnership program. Of course, this initiative links our states' National Guards with the armed forces. We cooperate, it is a mutually beneficial relationship, and I know that INDOPACOM maintains ten of these SPP relationships. So in Nevada, our Nevada National Guard, we have existing partnerships with Fiji and Tonga to support INDOPACOM's mission in the South Pacific.

Can you talk about how you are going to work with National Guards and these partnerships, of course, to be sure that they know what you are planning, going forward, so they can prepare and plan to complete their mission sets by improving the skill sets of our National Guard as well?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. It is extremely important. You know, I have had a chance to work with Ken Hara, the head of National Guard in Hawaii, and it continues to pay dividends. As it applies to foreign partners, it is just as helpful, and if confirmed, I would continue to execute those ten partner linkups and look for additional opportunities, because I think there are some there.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator. Now let me recognize Senator Sullivan, please.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, good to see you again. I appreciated the opportunity to have another discussion, and I look forward to more discussion going forward. Congratulations on your nomination.

I want to just talk a little bit about Alaska and the Pacific. Have you been to the great state of Alaska?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I have not yet been, but I will come and visit Alaska at first opportunity.

Senator SULLIVAN. Good. We need to get on that, and I am going to talk a little bit of the reason why.

I was just home. I just got back. You know, there was a lot of fireworks with this United States-China meeting in Anchorage. I had the opportunity to meet with Secretary Blinken, National Security Advisor Sullivan, and Kurt Campbell, who is also doing a really good at the NSC, right after the meeting. I was glad to see our Alaska-based military on Thursday. When the Chinese were approaching we were doing some exercises with F-22 Raptors there, right around the hotel, give the Chinese delegation a little view of what is in Alaska.

As you know, we are going to have over 100 fifth-generation fighters, F-22s, F-35s, by the end of this year, and then on Friday, when the Chinese are still in Alaska, the Air Force announced four new tankers, KC-135s, going to Alaska.

The previous Secretary of Defense called this combination tankers, 100 fifth-generation fighters, giving our country extreme strategic reach. These fighters could be in the Taiwan Strait, if they are supersonic, within 5 hours.

These forces are actually OPCOM to PACOM, as you know, in Alaska. What do you see as the role of these combat-credible forces from Alaska play within the Indo-Pacific, given that you will be in command of them?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. I have to correct a previous statement. I said I would visit Alaska. I have to say, if confirmed I would visit Alaska at first opportunity, so Senator Reed, I apologize.

The forces in Alaska are critical for both the defense of the homeland, Senator, as you know. They support the different ACL levels in the event of either Russian bomber flights and would be critically needed as a surge force in time of either crisis or conflict, as you clearly identify.

Senator Inhofe identified the capabilities needed in fifth-generation to be able to enter that contested space, to fight and win. So I agree with all those comments that you made.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me, real quick—and sorry to interrupt, but I have got a couple more questions. There is oftentimes, and you have mentioned it already, this kind of delineation west of the International Date Line as the delineation for PACOM. But as you know, Admiral, the further north you get, the International Date Line in some ways does not matter, just so I am kind of aware of your geography, your recognition of geography. We have a lot of forces in Alaska, a lot of forces in Hawaii, a lot of forces in Aus-

tralia. Which of these are closer to Korea and Japan—our forces in Hawaii or our forces in Alaska?

Admiral AQUILINO. Well certainly Alaska would be closer to Korea and Japan.

Senator SULLIVAN. That is correct. Yes, and how about Australia versus Alaska, closer to Korea and Japan?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Alaska is closer.

Senator SULLIVAN. Yeah. A lot of people do not know that, believe it or not. So it is not just International Date Line, it is how north you are and how close you are. So keep that in mind. You are going to be in charge of these, and you are going to get confirmed, and I am going to strongly support it.

Your recommendations are going to be important. This, I believe, is going to certainly be viewed now, going forward, as the most important combatant command that we have anywhere around the world.

In 2015, President Obama and President Xi Jinping stood in the Rose Garden, and President Xi Jinping promised the President of the United States and the American people not to militarize the South China Sea. Did President Xi Jinping keep that promise?

Admiral AQUILINO. No, Senator, he did not.

Senator SULLIVAN. He did not. Not even close. What I refer to as “promise fatigue,” right. The Chinese make promises over decades. They rarely keep those promises. Promise fatigue—we are sick of it.

It was widely reported, and this committee followed it closely, that because of this we said let’s do Freedom of Navigation Operations. As a matter of fact, your predecessor said we need to do it. John Kerry, then the Secretary of State, said, “No, we have a good climate deal in Paris, with the Chinese no-FONOPS.” Was that a good idea to exchange FONOPS [Freedom of Navigation Operations] for a vague promise on the Paris climate accords?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, just so you know, I am unaware of that agreement.

Senator SULLIVAN. Assume that happened, because it did. Was that a good idea, from Secretary Kerry?

Admiral AQUILINO. What I would say is we have continued FON operations.

Senator SULLIVAN. No, no, no. We did not then. Trust me. This committee was pressing for it. We would not do them. Was that a good idea—vague promises and the Paris climate accords from John Kerry and the Chinese for no FONOPS in the South China Sea for at least 2 years?

Admiral AQUILINO. Well, Senator, I think FONOPS are important. They identify our link to the need for international order through normal rules and standards.

Senator SULLIVAN. Was that a good idea? Assume that happened. Assume that could happen one more time. Let’s say John Kerry has got another role, and says, “I have got a good commitment from the Chinese. They just want us to not do FONOPS through the Taiwan Strait.” Would that be a good idea?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I think FONOPS have served us well over the past 3 years since I have been at the Pacific Fleet.

Senator SULLIVAN. So you would not agree with that idea if Kerry put it forward again.

Admiral AQUILINO. I think we—

Senator SULLIVAN. You are going to be asked.

Admiral AQUILINO.—I think we should continue FONOPS, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. In the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. Regardless of commitments from China on vague climate change commitments that they might get from John Kerry.

Admiral AQUILINO. I think that we should continue those operations to assure our allies and partners and ensure we can operate anywhere international law allows.

Senator SULLIVAN. Good. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Best for last. Put a football coach last.

I have been impressed. I have been in all these meetings for the last 2 months and I am impressed. Thank you for your service and your family being here. They are very important. What a job you have got in front of you, just sitting and listening to all the things going on in our world. Huge job.

You know, I have heard all the questions about Taiwan and China and all the things that go on. You forgot one, and we know about it, and we are going to be trusting you for that. It is important that we fight through the climate change and the diversity and all the things going on. I believe in that. You know, I was a football coach. I mean, you have to plug all that in.

But we need to build a team. You need to build a team, because we are getting ready to go in waters unknown over the next few years, with the money that the CCP is putting in, and the things that we are going to have to prepare for.

One thing I want to know, and I am going to vote for you. I believe, you know, you are ready to go, to turn it over to you and protect our world, not just our country. I just want to know, are you going to be able to stand up and fight, you know, this administration for more money? We do not need to be cutting. We need to be adding. Are you willing to say to us today that you are willing to fight for what you believe in, in terms of adding on to Guam, for instance.

You know, we have not added anything, hardly, in the last 10 years. We need to recapitalize. Will you promise that you will fight for that money that we need for our military?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, thanks. So if confirmed I will provide my best military advice and recommendations to request those things that are needed, to do the mission that I would have been assigned. If that is the case, I will give it absolute straight, with conviction, on what I believe is the right way forward.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Well, to me our freedom and our liberty and our families and our kids and grandkids depend on it, that we make sure that we defend not just this country but our allies and

the world, because these people over there that we are getting ready to deal with, that you know, that you have seen, you know, they do not play fair. They steal everything that we have got. You know, we develop it and they steal it, and it does not cost them near as much.

Do you think that is fair? We just saw what we went through with the pandemic. You know, we shipped everything over to China. They make everything that we do. Now we are scrambling to try to figure out how to handle the next pandemic. Hopefully it does not come along. Are we the same way in the military? Have you seen that? Do we have the capabilities to build what we need in this country right now?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I think we do. I think what we have learned over the past 10 years is we do have to protect those advantages, technological trade secrets, and advantages that we have. So we should be aware that competitors will intend to try to take it, and we have to be able to secure it and defend it.

Senator TUBERVILLE. You know, as Marines are operating in smaller units in the Pacific, how do you plan to float medical support? You know, the *Mercy* and the *Comfort*, they are large, you know, and they are slow to deploy. Would a smaller, *Ford*-based hospital ship capable of quicker and faster engagement, do you think that would be better served for what you all do in the Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, we have done a lot over the last 3 years on generating a concept of operations, how to ensure we can provide medical support to our forces in time of crisis and conflict. It looks a lot different when you look at an area that covers half the globe and most of it has water on it.

We are looking at all options to be able to quickly pick up, care for, and return our forces, joint forces, that may have been wounded. One of those things that is being looked at is a different form of hospital ship than we are used to, and if confirmed, will continue to look at those other options and what might be the best way.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yeah, I think it is important, because we are in a different part of the world, and we look at—of course, I am from Alabama, and we have Huntsville. We build all the missiles and the rockets and have 800 defense contractors. We build ships and boats down in Mobile, that hopefully you have seen some. I think the LCS or whatever, made out of aluminum, a little different.

But, you know, I am a common-sense guy, and I just want us prepared, you know. I see you are going to be hit from all different directions and I just hope when you are confirmed that you are ready, you are willing. I just hope you are able to get what you need to protect this country and protect our kids and our grandkids from future attacks, because they are coming, and you are going to be the first line of defense.

So again, thank you for your service and thank you for everything that you have done, and the things that you are going to do for us in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

Senator Sullivan would like to ask one question.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It might be a series of one questions. No, I am just kidding. It is going to go back to the PDI. Admiral, I am sure you saw that when Admiral Davidson was here, just 2 weeks ago, he talked about the full funding, \$4.6 billion of the PDI was something that would be critical in halting the erosion of our nation's conventional deterrence in the INDOPACOM region. He actually said, "PDI is the foundational approach to advancing capabilities and capacity while strengthening our allies and partnership for an integrated joint force west of the International Date Line." I already talked about how the International Date Line is in some ways an artificial construct that does not really fully reflect the force posture, particularly as you go north.

But the question is, given that he has been public about it, given that you have been public about it, given that this committee actually passed, in a very strong bipartisan way, the initiative of the PDI last year, in the NDAA, what message does it send to China if we have a robust, top-line defense budget that fully funds the PDI as you and Admiral Davidson have requested? Alternatively, what message does a declining defense budget and not funding the PDI send to China?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. I do believe it sends a strong message that the entirety of government and the United States is focused on the challenge that we have identified as it applies to the Western Pacific. I do agree that the initial funding last year—and I thank the committee for all of their work, \$2.2 billion to start. I think "foundational" is the right word. This is not a one-trick pony. It is going to take some sustainment to ensure we can generate that credible deterrence and keep it going.

Senator SULLIVAN. Again I ask two questions. Alternatively, if that is not funded, that \$4.6 billion, which is what the Admiral has requested, and you, I believe, support, and this committee supports, by the way, in a bipartisan way, what kind of message would that send if we do not do it, we, the Federal Government, we, the Biden administration, to be frank, if we do not do it, despite the fact that the PACOM commander has said we need to do it? What kind of message would that send?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think it is the wrong signal, Senator, a lack of commitment and a lack of ability to follow through on what we believe is needed.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Admiral, thank you for your devoted service to the nation and the Navy, and the profound support of your family and your colleagues from the fleet. Please convey to all of the men and women of your command our deepest and profound appreciation for their work. We look forward to moving forward with this nomination.

With that, the hearing is adjourned, and I will remind my colleagues that a vote is pending right now. Thank you very much, Admiral.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator.

[Whereupon, at 11:59 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Prepared questions submitted to Admiral John C. Aquilino, USN by Chairman Reed prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Question. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM)?

Answer. The Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, is responsible for deterring attacks against the United States and its territories, possessions, and bases, to protect Americans and American interests and, if deterrence fails, win our nation's wars. These duties also include expanding security cooperation with our allies, partners, and friends across the Indo-Pacific region and being prepared to defend allies according to mutual defense treaties and agreements.

Question. What background and experience do you possess that qualify you to perform these duties?

Answer. I have been honored to serve my nation for 37 years, and I believe my command experiences as Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, and my duties as U.S. Pacific Fleet Director of Operations, and the Director of Operations, Plans and Strategy for the Chief of Naval Operations have prepared me to assume command of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Multiple global deployments, service in senior Joint Staff and OPNAV staff billets, and command of a Carrier Strike Group have also prepared me to work collaboratively across the joint force, in line with Department of Defense (DOD) guidance, and closely with our allies and partner nations.

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Question. In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the next USINDOPACOM Commander?

Answer. The Indo-Pacific is the most consequential region for America's future, and remains the United States' priority theater with China as our pacing threat as the Chinese Communist Party actively seeks to displace the established rules-based international order. Residing here are four of the five priority security challenges identified by the DOD: China, Russia, North Korea, as well as violent extremist organizations. The Indo-Pacific Region also experiences frequent natural and man-made disasters, the negative impacts of climate change, rapid population growth, drug and human trafficking, and disease and pandemic.

Question. If confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that forces in USINDOPACOM are both credible and lethal, and complement the administration's focus on deterring through diplomatic, development, and economic means, to ensure our presence and posture defend against China's hegemonic rise. I believe that the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) is the foundational approach to advancing capabilities and capacity in lethality, force design and posture, logistics, exercises and experimentation, while strengthening our allies and partnerships for an integrated joint force west of the International Date Line (IDL).

Question. If confirmed, what broad priorities would you establish in terms of issues that must be addressed?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be to execute credible military deterrence against our competitors to maintain stability, peace, and prosperity in the region. Fielding an integrated joint force west of the IDL, interoperability with our regional allies and partners, and evolving the current exercise and experimentation program are essential to maintaining our advantages while increasing doubt in our competitor's ability to meet their objectives through military means.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Question. In accordance with Title 10, U.S. Code, the President and Secretary of Defense exercise authority, direction, and control of the Armed Forces through two distinct branches of the chain of command.

One branch runs from the President, through the Secretary of Defense, to the combatant commanders for the execution of missions with forces assigned to their commands. For purposes of organizing, training, and equipping forces, the chain of command runs from the President, to the Secretary of Defense, to the Secretaries of the Military Departments.

Do you believe this dual structure provides for clear and effective chain of command?

Answer. Yes. I have worked in this dual structure at both Military Service and Joint commands, and I believe it is effective, practical and clearly understood throughout the Department.

Question. If confirmed as a Combatant Commander, on what types of issues and decisions would you coordinate with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and civilian officials within the Department of Defense?

Answer. USINDOPACOM performs his duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense. He is directly responsible to the Secretary of Defense for the Command's ability to carry out missions assigned.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense, OSD, as well as the Chairman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to ensure I have the guidance and achieved the alignment to carry out the mission of the Indo-Pacific Command. I will maintain a close relationship with the other functional and geographic combatant commanders to ensure applicable national and defense strategic guidance execution is characterized by mutual support, frequent contact, and productive information exchanges on critical issues.

The successful execution of USINDOPACOM's mission responsibilities also requires coordination with the Service Chiefs. The Service Chiefs are valuable sources of judgment and advice for the combatant commanders. If confirmed, I will provide frank and transparent explanations of my most pressing warfighting needs through direct consultation with each Chief as their staff prepare and develop their budget profiles.

As a subordinate unified commander, the Commander, United States Forces Korea, receives missions and functions from USINDOPACOM. I recognize his role as Commander, Combined Forces Command, and United Nations Command and fully support his actions in that sensitive and demanding role.

Among other notable leaders and organizations within DOD who may require close coordination on occasion are the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY (NDS)

Question. Does the NDS accurately assess the current strategic environment in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility (AOR), and if not, what changes need to be made?

Answer. The 2018 NDS provides a candid assessment of the strategic environment, the priority it places on preparing for great power competition, the enduring value of alliances and partnerships, and readiness and lethality. As the Department reviews its strategy, adjustments could reinforce U.S. Force design and posture requirements to improve our qualitative advantage.

Question. From the USINDOPACOM perspective, what capabilities do you believe the Joint Force needs to prevail in competition with China, as described by the NDS?

Answer. USINDOPACOM requires a combination of advanced multi-domain systems that are capable of operating in highly contested environment—including sensors, weapons, and the requisite Command, Control, Communications, Computers & Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) to support those systems.

These systems must be fully integrated across the joint force, and where applicable, fully interoperable with coalition partners. This interoperability provides credible deterrence and maintains a healthy competition with China.

Question. What does “expanding the competitive space,” as referenced in the NDS, mean for competition with China?

Answer. “Expanding the competitive space” describes the United States’ ability to seize the initiative in great power competition by exploiting areas where we possess advantages over our competitors, and identifying where we can work with others in the U.S. interagency and allies and partners to address shared challenges. The United States can expand the competitive space by investing in next-generation capabilities (e.g., long-range, ground-based munitions, space and cyber). Expanding the competitive space also speaks to the need to develop a global, integrated whole-of-government approach toward countering malign Chinese influence across all instruments of national power. This includes working with the U.S. interagency to build partnerships and identify areas of economic, technological, and informational opportunities.

Question. Do you believe additional resources or new authorities for USINDOPACOM are required to support this line of effort associated with “expanding the competitive space”?

Answer. PDI, combined with service efforts, provides the initial resources needed to deliver combat credible deterrence, build partner capacity, and field an integrated joint force. If confirmed, I will assess the need for any additional authorities.

Question. In your view, what non-military elements of national power need to be strengthened to effectively compete with China?

Answer. Competing with China requires all elements of national power to be strengthened. The Interim National Strategic Security Guidance asserts that we invest in our people, economy, and democratic institutions. We must compete in economic, diplomatic, military, legal, and information spaces to be effective against China.

FORCE POSTURE

Question. In your view, is the current U.S. Force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support our security strategy in the region? How would you restructure the United States security posture in the Indo-Pacific best to compete with China, reassure allies and partners, and deter Chinese aggression? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Increased persistent presence through forward-based and rotational joint forces inside the first island chain is the most credible way the military can demonstrate our commitment and resolve to competitors, deter unwanted aggression, and assure allies and partners. Forward posture locations should be capable of supporting operations and exercises and projecting combat power. Distributing a forward-deployed, joint force across the battlespace, while balancing lethality and survivability, helps demonstrate the capability, capacity, and design to rapidly and seamlessly transition from competition to crisis or conflict.

Question. How important is a forward basing strategy to the ability of USINDOPACOM to execute its day-to-day mission? What about its operational contingency plans?

Answer. Sufficient capability, postured forward to deter with the capacity and readiness to respond should deterrence fail is essential. The force posture recommendations identified in the Section 1251 Independent Assessment provide the foundation for fielding an integrated joint force west of the IDL and a sophisticated improvement in interoperability with our regional allies and partners.

Question. In your assessment, does DOD need to invest in a wider range of primary bases as well as alternate operating locations throughout the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. The Indo-Pacific geography is expansive and access throughout the region is essential, requiring close associations with our allies and partners. The Department's global posture review represents an opportunity to focus on a broad range of basing options and alternatives for persistent presence of forward-based and rotational joint forces west of the IDL.

Question. In the event of a contingency, do you have any concerns about the timing and readiness of follow-on forces arriving in USINDOPACOM to meet operational plans? If yes, what are they, and how can they be resolved?

Answer. Being ready and on-time are required to respond to any contingency. I do have concerns about the manning, training, and equipping of all of our follow-on forces. Credible deterrence is based on a highly trained, properly equipped, quick-response and surge force. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for the necessary forward-deployed forces and the associated readiness to meet our nation's most pressing needs. I will also continue to advocate for improvements in strategic sea and airlift to reduce the timeline necessary for surge forces to arrive in the theater.

Question. How do you view the relative value of permanent versus rotational forces in the USINDOPACOM AOR?

Answer. Permanent, forward-based forces provide the most visible sign of U.S. resolve and commitment to supporting regional peace and stability. Rotational forces allow us to maintain a high level of readiness without sacrificing the ability to respond quickly and effectively to contingencies. USINDOPACOM requires a mix of rotational and permanently stationed forces and a recalibrated force posture to be able to mass effects without the vulnerabilities associated with fixed forces' concentration.

Question. How does the planned relocation of United States Forces from Okinawa to Guam and other locations in the Pacific align with United States security objectives in the USINDOPACOM AOR?

Answer. The Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) strengthens our alliance with Japan and maintains the right permanent forces that enhance our deterrence and interoperability, while ensuring the joint force is prepared to fight and win should deterrence fail. It allows the joint force to disperse and enable quicker re-

sponses to areas outside Okinawa. Additionally, the relocation to Guam also provides increased training opportunities with allies and partners.

JOINT FORCE REQUIREMENTS

Question. What, if any, are the major United States capability or capacity gaps you assess in the USINDOPACOM theater that are needed to enhance deterrence against Chinese aggression?

Answer. To adequately compete and defend American interests, the most critical are those that address the gaps in force protection, homeland defense, joint force lethality, long range fires, ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), training, and logistics enablers. Additionally, we must enable modernized integration and information sharing across all domains with our allies and partners.

Question. What capability and/or capacity shortfalls in the current Joint Force present the most significant challenge to addressing the broader range threats in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. The tyranny of distance from CONUS to forward operating locations in the western Pacific makes sustainability the biggest challenge. This requires a sophisticated balance of distribution capacity to sustain the joint force. Access in the First and Second Island Chains offer is needed to support crisis and contingency operations in establishing dispersal locations, airfield repair capabilities, C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers & Intelligence), munitions storage, mobility procession, and fuel storage. We must also improve interactions, coordination, and command and control with our allies and partners.

Question. Which programs, in your assessment, are the highest priorities for mitigating current and emerging warfighting capability and/or capacity shortfalls in the Joint Force?

Answer. If confirmed, and as outlined in the PDI, ensuring the protection of our force, fielding an integrated joint fires network, interoperability with allies and partners, as well as improved ISR and logistics enablers would be my highest priorities.

Question. The NDS specifically mentions challenges posed by robust anti-access, area-denial capabilities (A2/AD). What would be your approach to overcoming these challenges in the USINDOPACOM AOR?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for investment in technologies that negate our competitor's A2AD capabilities. Additionally, adding long-range offensive networked fires would put any potential adversaries on the defensive. We must be able to operate in contested space at the time and place of our choosing.

PACIFIC DETERRENCE INITIATIVE

Question. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2021 authorized \$2.2 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) to support the stability and security of the region and deter Chinese aggression.

In your view, is PDI a useful tool to improve U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. Yes, PDI investments will improve our posture and it is a powerful tool in identifying the resources necessary to meet identified operational requirements in the region.

PDI investments will have an effect on deterring our adversaries' decision calculus while reassuring our allies and partners that the United States is a reliable partner, focused on ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific. PDI also encourages other like-minded nations to be net-providers for regional security, working multilaterally to reinforce the security architecture the region has benefited from for over 75 years.

Question. In your view, what strategic objectives and specific areas of investment should be prioritized for funding under the PDI?

Answer. Defending Guam as United States territory, including the infrastructure to manage an integrated joint force west of the international date line, should be PDI's number one priority. This includes establishing a distributed force posture, establishing a Mission Partner Environment (MPE), and advancing Pacific Multi-Domain Training and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC) to modernize our ranges.

Question. Do you believe that continued, dedicated funding for PDI is required to support implementation of the NDS in the Indo-Pacific? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes. The funding profiles provided for FY21 in the 1253 Independent Assessment and the most recent 1251 for FY22 outline the funding requirements through FY27. Dedicated, sustained resources will effectively support NDS initiatives to provide credible deterrence.

MISSILE DEFENSE

Question. How would you assess the threat to United States Forces and bases from Chinese and North Korean missile forces and our ability to address such

threats? In your assessment, have U.S. investments, concepts of operations, and posture shifts sufficiently addressed this threat?

Answer. Although the ballistic missile threat facing United States interests in Northeast Asia remains significant, we are well postured to protect against existing and emerging DPRK threats. Additionally, United States Forces Korea continues to benefit from the significant investment and performance enhancements to their current ballistic missile defense systems.

However, the ballistic and cruise missile systems of China and the development of hypersonic weapons increase the risk and cause challenges. Continued investment in integrated air-missile defense is imperative as we seek to proactively defend against such threats while simultaneously integrating offensive and defensive fires. Discussions regarding concepts of operations and posture shift require discussion at a higher classification level.

Question. Do you assess that rotational missile defense capabilities such as THAAD, Patriot, and Aegis ships, that need to be deployed to protect major combat projection platforms such as air bases are adequate to deter Chinese aggression given anticipated indication and warning timelines?

Answer. No rotational missile defense capabilities are currently postured that will adequately address the threats we face from China, and a more robust defensive posture is the most pressing priority for the Indo-Pacific. The People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces have a growing inventory of medium and intermediate-range ballistic missiles that can threaten United States bases in the region, including those in South Korea, Japan, and Guam, as well as naval forces operating inside the Second Island Chain. Additionally, China is constantly evolving its missile technology, increasing its range, survivability, accuracy, and lethality.

Question. What additional steps, if any, would you recommend to address the emerging threat that highly maneuverable hypersonic glide vehicles pose to U.S. and allied forces across the region?

Answer. The Hypersonic Glide Vehicle threat poses a serious threat to the U.S. and Allied forces in the region and we require a near-term initial defense capability to meet this challenge. If confirmed, my aim is to work with the DOD to develop capabilities, including survivable and resilient space-based sensors to detect hypersonic threats and enable ground and sea-based defenses.

CONTESTED LOGISTICS

Question. Over the last several years, DOD and USINDOPACOM have conducted or sponsored several studies on contested mobility and logistics which have resulted in more than 50 recommendations. However, the GAO recently found that DOD has failed to implement many of these recommendations. As a result, DOD and USINDOPACOM may be missing an opportunity to leverage existing knowledge on mobility challenges in contested environments and increase resilience for major conflicts as envisioned in the National Defense Strategy and as part of the Joint Warfighting Concept. Given the "tyranny of distance" in the Pacific, there are significant challenges specifically related to energy and munitions requirements in a contested environment, some of which could be mitigated by making targeted investments and operational energy improvements to both military platforms and installations.

If confirmed, how will you implement the multitude of recommendations and take actions necessary to decrease the logistics vulnerabilities in a contested environment?

Answer. Our efforts to improve our ability to sustain the joint force must build off our efforts to move toward a more distributed force posture and increase the locations and availability for naval and air forces to rearm and refuel during exercises and access these locations during contingencies. If confirmed, I will work to implement appropriate recommendations of the report to maximize key logistics enablers.

Question. How will you implement recommendations to make significant operational energy improvements throughout USINDOPACOM?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Services, Combatant Commands, the Joint Staff, and OSD to enhance Indo-Pacific energy resilience. I support the Secretary of Defense's focus on investing in energy RDT&E and incorporating energy resilience into emerging joint operational concepts through exercises, war-games, modeling and simulation, and other means. An ever-increasing energy demand, currently based on fossil fuels, is our greatest logistics distribution challenge and directly impacts force effectiveness. The pressures on fuel requirements, in particular, are a significant concern and I will review the operational risks and ongoing planning efforts related to sustaining the joint force and identify specific actions we must take to address our shortfalls.

INFORMATION OPERATIONS

Question. During the COVID-19 pandemic, China has embarked on a misinformation campaign to sow confusion over the origins of the virus and malign the response of the United States and other nations. This appears to have been done not only to shield China from blame for the initial outbreak, but also to undermine democratic nations and institutions.

What is your assessment of the ability of DOD and USINDOPACOM to conduct effective military operations in the information environment to defend U.S. interests against malign influence activities carried out by state and non-state actors?

Answer. With coordinated Information Operations across the Interagency, the information environment can be an asymmetric advantage for the U.S. I understand the Department is updating the 2016 Strategy for Operations in the Information Environment. A posture review will inform this update of capabilities, the current defense strategy, and an Irregular Warfare Annex designation of information operations as a joint function. If confirmed, I will support the development and implementation of this strategy and ensure the Command's efforts are appropriately coordinated and appropriately aligned with the Interagency.

Question. Are DOD and USINDOPACOM efforts in this regard appropriately integrated with other United States Government organizations and activities?

Answer. DOD efforts throughout the information environment cross traditional department and agency lines. USINDOPACOM has strong relationships with the Department of State, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). If confirmed, I intend to sustain these relationships and make information operations a force multiplier.

Question. What organization with the United States Government do you assess would have the overall lead to integrate information operations during day-to-day competition below the level of armed conflict in the Indo-Pacific in order to defend United States interests against malign influence activities?

Answer. As the United States Government leverages DOD information operations capabilities in day-to-day competition against malign influence activities, the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance has identified the U.S. State Department as the lead in shaping and driving information operations across the U.S. Government. My assessment is DOD information operations require effective inter-agency coordination in order to elevate diplomacy and other whole-of-government approaches to defend U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will work with DOD to complement civilian departments and agencies with critical roles and responsibilities to engage the public domain and protect against malign influence activities.

Question. Does DOD and USINDOPACOM have sufficient authorities and resources to conduct information operations effectively? If not, what additional authorities and resources would you request, if confirmed?

Answer. At this point in time, I am not currently aware of new authorities required, but I understand that an Information Operations posture review is being conducted pursuant to the FY20 NDAA. If confirmed, I will regularly assess our authorities, resource availability and allocation, and strategic alignment to prioritize essential information operations.

CHINA

Question. How would you characterize the current United States relationship with China?

Answer. The United States and China have different visions for the future that put us in a competitive relationship. Theirs is in stark contrast to our free and open vision centered on democratic values, and while the United States can cooperate with China on issues such as North Korea, counterpiracy, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief, etc., it is increasingly evident that China wants to shape a world aligned with its authoritarian model inconsistent with the rules-based international order.

Question. What is your assessment of the current state of United States-China military-to-military relations? What do you believe should be the objectives of United States-China military-to-military dialogue?

What are the limitations on this kind of dialogue?

Answer. Consistent with Interim National Security Strategic Guidance and DOD guidance, I will continue to seek a constructive, stable, results-oriented defense relationship with the PRC that reduces the risk of misperception and miscalculation. The limitation to this type of dialogue is that military-to-military dialogue's effectiveness depends on both militaries approaching a security dialogue in a candid, transparent, and genuinely willing manner.

Question. What do you believe are the objectives of China's steady increase in defense spending and its overall military modernization program? In what technology areas are you most concerned about the erosion of United States advantages?

Answer. China's military modernization is a critical component in China's overall strategy to achieve "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049. While China has clearly articulated this, there are indications this strategy is being reassessed and may be accelerated to achieve its ends within this decade. This strategy, designed to displace United States access and influence, includes economic, political, social, and military efforts to expand China's national power, push its governance system, and revise the international order by changing the value system of international norms, rules, and laws. PRC leaders have repeatedly stated that transforming the PLA into a "world-class" military is an essential element of this strategy.

Today, every domain—air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace—is contested. The pace at which the PRC is fielding advanced capabilities is accelerating at an alarming rate, and working hard to exploit any perceived vulnerabilities to gain an economic, diplomatic, and military advantage while remaining below the threshold of conflict. Our advances in AI, offensive fires, directed energy, hypersonics, and quantum computing must keep pace.

Question. What is your assessment of China's militarization and other aggressive activities in the South and East China Seas? What challenges do these activities pose to USINDOPACOM's current operations and operational plans?

Answer. China's militarization in the region and aggressive activities creates additional contested space, endangering free flow of trade, limiting freedom of navigation, threatening the sovereignty of our allies and partners, and undermining regional stability. This aggressive posturing challenges operations and maneuver, extends their influence, and ultimately challenges U.S. presence and credibility in the region.

Question. What is your assessment of China's increasing military presence overseas, including such installations as its base in Djibouti and across Africa as well as other infrastructure projects across the Indian Ocean?

Answer. China's expansive infrastructure projects are designed to expand its influence worldwide and establish a more robust overseas logistics and basing infrastructure for the PLA. Greater access to foreign ports and airfields enable China to pre-position the logistics support necessary to sustain military operations abroad, including naval deployments in the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. A global PLA logistics network will enable Beijing to project and sustain military power at greater distances from China, interfere with United States military operations, and provide flexibility to support offensive operations against the United States.

Question. What is your assessment of the strategic and military implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative? For the United States? For countries in the USINDOPACOM AOR?

Answer. One Belt, One Road provides the PLA an opportunity to expand its global reach by gaining access to foreign air and maritime port facilities and foreign economic markets. The One Belt, One Road initiative produces only ONE winner – China, in their effort to gain broader access and influence. For the United States, this means loss of access, influence and credibility in the region. For our allies and partners in the region, this means pressuring nations to deny U.S. Forces basing, transit, or operational and logistical support, thereby making it more challenging for the United States to preserve international orders and norms.

Question. The smaller number of nuclear weapons possessed by China relative to the United States and Russia is often cited as an impediment to nuclear arms control talks with China. What do you think could motivate China to participate in nuclear arms control negotiations in a genuine and meaningful way?

Answer. As China strives to become a nuclear power with parity, I believe it is increasingly critical that Chinese leaders take the responsible approach and begin arms control negotiations. Active participation in arms control negotiations is not simply about placing limits on nations but gaining more significant insights, removing ambiguity about potential competitor capabilities, increasing confidence, and reducing the potential for miscalculation. Pressure from the international community would motivate China's participation in arms control talks.

Question. Recent public reports point to updated satellite imagery which indicates China is increasing the pace of its nuclear force modernization and expansion.

This acceleration comes less than a year after the Defense Intelligence Agency assessed China would at least double the size of its nuclear arsenal by 2030. Do you believe China sees nuclear parity with the United States as in its interests? What

do you believe would be the impact on regional and strategic stability if China were to achieve such a goal?

Answer. As China strives to achieve conventional parity, it is logical to expect China's ambition to become a "world class" military will include a similar approach to its nuclear forces. Three "at-parity" nuclear powers would a complicate global deterrence.

TAIWAN

Question. How do you assess the current cross-strait relationship between China and Taiwan, and how can the United States help prevent miscalculation on either side?

Answer. China continues to pressure Taiwan through increased air and maritime operations across centerline of the Taiwan Strait. The United States can help prevent miscalculation by sustaining a forward deployed, credible deterrence force, demonstrating continued support of the Taiwan Relations Act, to include military sales, deepening ties with democratic Taiwan, and advocating for like-minded allies and partners to inspire Taiwan's confidence in cross-strait relations.

Question. How do you assess the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait?

What do you believe should be the priorities for United States military assistance to Taiwan? Do you think Taiwan is making appropriate investments in its defensive capabilities and if not, what changes would you recommend?

Answer. The military threat to Taiwan is increasing. The PLA continues to field a broad array of advanced weapons and systems as part of ongoing force modernization specifically intended to achieve decisive overmatch against Taiwan. Taiwan is committed to strengthening its reserve forces, and I am encouraged by its continued funding of foreign and indigenous acquisition programs, as well as near-term training and readiness. If confirmed, United States Indo-Pacific Command will continue to advise Taiwan on the military's capabilities, interoperability, readiness, and professional development through security cooperation and foreign military sales in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act. Taiwan should prioritize acquisition of asymmetric systems that are highly mobile, distributable and lethal to enable Taiwan to defend themselves against attack.

Question. Some have argued that the time has come to explicitly state that the United States would respond militarily to any Chinese use of force against Taiwan as a means to deter such actions. In your view, what would be the benefits and risks of such a policy change?

Answer. The United States maintains its longstanding commitments as outlined in the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances. We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability.

If confirmed, I would be open to conversations with the Secretary of Defense to understand the risks and rewards of a potential policy change to ensure our efforts are supporting Taiwan and contributing to our ultimate objective to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Question. What is your assessment of the United States-South Korea security relationship? What measures, if any, would you take to improve this security relationship?

Answer. The United States-Republic of Korea alliance is ironclad and serves as the linchpin of peace and security on the Korean peninsula. Our partnership continues to grow by promoting economic cooperation, mitigating threats to regional stability, and fulfilling our commitments to other allies and partners in the region. The mutual benefits derived from this alliance given today's security challenges are enduring and I believe it important that the United States facilitates an increased role for the ROK, commensurate with its economic status and influence, in as many multilateral venues as possible. If confirmed, I will work hard to maintain close contact with USFK and ROK military and civilian leadership to further develop this essential security partnership.

Question. Do you believe the transfer of wartime operational control from the United States to the Republic of Korea should be conditions-based? If confirmed, what threshold requirements for transfer of control would you establish?

Answer. Both the United States and ROK are fully committed to a conditions-based OPCON transition and continue to work toward that end. The requirements for transfer are outlined in the 2015 Conditions-based OPCON Transition Plan (COTP) and the 2018 update to COTP (Change One). If confirmed, I intend to fully

comply with the existing plan and ensure the alliance is ready and well-prepared for the transition when that time comes.

Question. In your view, is South Korea carrying an appropriate share of the burden of the cost of the United States presence in South Korea?

Answer. The United States and ROK have recently reached an agreement in principle of a new six-year defense sharing Special Measures Agreement (SMA). This year, the ROK agreed to contribute over one billion dollars, the highest increase since 2004, with subsequent year increases pegged to the annual percent increase in the ROK defense budget. Overall, I believe this new SMA represents the ROK's pledge to provide a fair defense sharing of the cost of the United States presence in South Korea. The contributions to the alliance are not limited to cost-sharing alone. The ROK forces have served with us in Iraq and Afghanistan, continue to support the U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) enforcement mission, and execute counter-piracy operations near the Strait of Hormuz.

Question. Do you believe South Korea is investing appropriately in its defensive capabilities?

Answer. The ROK continues to demonstrate its commitment to enhancing its conventional deterrence through the development and procurement of modern and interoperable capabilities, some of which are core capabilities to support the conditions-based wartime operational control transition. Their defense expenditures remain the highest among our allies and partners as a percentage of their GDP. Although the ROK continues to acquire significant United States systems and platforms worth billions of dollars, it also prioritizes a substantial share of its resources to develop indigenous defense capabilities, industry, and export. Even with the introduction of their indigenous capabilities, both the United States and ROK are committed to maintaining interoperability, so the indigenous investments contribute to the combined deterrence and defense posture.

NORTH KOREA

Question. What is your assessment of the strategic and military risks of a potential conflict with North Korea?

Answer. There are both enormous strategic and military risks, and enormous costs associated with a potential conflict on the Korean Peninsula, despite efforts to lower tensions. The country has taken no meaningful steps toward denuclearization, despite promising signs of de-escalation in 2018. Kim Jong Un continues to advance both his conventional and strategic capabilities, recently parading new tanks, rockets, and missiles. Risk identification, management, and mitigations are integral parts of all military planning efforts, and this is no exception. If confirmed, I will make regular assessments of the risk and report that risk to the National Command Authority. Internal to USINDOPACOM, I will simultaneously pursue efforts to reduce the risk to U.S. strategic objectives and U.S. military forces should deterrence fail. As a critical element of these objectives, I will also continue the work of previous commanders on noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) planning as the Korean Peninsula situation develops.

Question. In your assessment, what changes, if any, to U.S. force posture and activity in the USINDOPACOM AOR would improve United States deterrence against North Korea?

Answer. Our current posture and presence in the ROK provides for the ROK's mutual defense while deterring North Korean aggression against the United States and our allies and partners. I support bilateral efforts to modernize forces, equipment, and enduring locations to ensure combat credible forces in the ROK, particularly those that counter the DPRK's asymmetric capabilities. We must also continue to explore, improve, and resource our missile defense capabilities. Our airborne ISR allocation is less than what we require to support the theater's multifaceted problem-set and to enhance deterrence by detection; furthermore, development of the Combined/Joint Multi-Purpose Range Complex (CJMPRC) would provide air and maneuver space for a realistic coalition, joint, live-fire exercises for alliance armed services. In sum, a modernized, well-trained force positioned on the Korean Peninsula, paired with a credible, rapid reinforcement capability assigned and postured forward in the region, offers the greatest deterrent effect vis-&-vis the DPRK.

Question. What is your assessment of the Joint Force's ability to secure North Korean weapons of mass destruction sites in the event of a contingency? What capability and/or capacity shortfalls present the most significant challenge to executing such an operation?

Answer. Without transparency and clarity into the North Korea's nuclear program, it is difficult to assess our ability to secure North Korean weapons of mass destruction sites in the event of a contingency. If confirmed, I will review the major

operational plans, contingency plans, and associated execution orders outlining the joint force's ability to counter and secure North Korean weapons of mass destruction. I will work with our regional partners and allies—including Australia, Japan and the Republic of Korea—as well as with partners across the Interagency—to include the State Department and Department of Energy—to forge a comprehensive approach to addressing the North Korean nuclear, weapons of mass destruction, missile, and proliferation threats.

Question. What is your assessment of the Joint Force's ability to conduct a non-combatant evacuation of approximately 250,000 United States citizens from South Korea in the event of a contingency? What capability and/or capacity shortfalls present the most significant challenge to executing such an operation?

Answer. Conducting noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) in South Korea is highly challenging and dependent on the level of support, amount of warning and resources from South Korea and Japan. Inside South Korea, we are dependent upon their transportation assets to move noncombatant evacuees (NCEs) from assembly points to relocation centers and to air/seaports of departure from the peninsula. Still, if there are any delays in movements off the Korean Peninsula, USFK may be challenged to provide additional support to NCEs awaiting transportation. In Japan, we are dependent on their capacity and capability to receive, shelter and support NCEs as a temporary safe haven. Synchronization and coordination for access and use of these resources requires constant engagement with our partners in both countries.

Question. In your opinion, will sanctions alone lead to the denuclearization of North Korea? If not, what other incentives or disincentives could help lead to better outcomes?

Answer. I do not believe sanctions alone will lead to the denuclearization of North Korea. Still, economic sanctions, combined with diplomacy and UNSCR enforcement, should continue to be applied to convince the regime to return to meaningful negotiations. I understand an interagency North Korea policy review is currently underway, and the discussion of incentives or disincentives will undoubtedly be one component of the review. I believe that a robust force posture throughout the region to ensure the United States engages North Korea from a position of strength would be essential.

JAPAN

Question. How would you characterize the current United States-Japan security relationship?

Answer. The United States-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of regional security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. I view our military-to-military relationship with Japan as stronger than ever. If confirmed, I will continue to work to strengthen the United States-Japan defense relationship.

Question. How does Japan's relationship with its regional neighbors—including China, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan—influence the United States-Japan relationship?

Answer. The United States and the Government of Japan (GoJ) remain closely aligned on North Korea, long-term strategic competition with China, and maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. Our alignment has led to closer coordination and cooperation in addressing both current and future security challenges, while also expanding United States-Japan security relationship to new domains such as cyber and space.

The Japan-South Korea relationship remains strained due to historical and cultural issues. While Japan and South Korea must work through these issues on their own, I am concerned that others may try to exploit the situation and drive a wedge between the United States and either ally.

Question. What steps, if any, do you believe Japan ought to take to improve its capability and capacity to deter and, if necessary, respond to North Korean aggression? What about Chinese aggression?

Answer. The GoJ, working through its self-defense forces, must continue to invest in improvements to interoperable air and missile defense, air dominance, maritime security, and ISR capabilities. As Japan improves its capability and capacity, we must continue to execute the Joint Exercise Program and operate together frequently.

Question. Given the buildup of Chinese ballistic and advanced cruise missiles, how important is it for Japan to be able to defend itself against such missiles and do you see potential to reinvigorate United States-Japan cooperative missile defense efforts?

Answer. Japan's ability to defend itself is vital both for its own security and to enhance maneuver and positional advantages of United States and allied forces in the region. Cooperation in this critical capability will inevitably strengthen our deterrence. If confirmed, I intend to work with my Japanese counterparts to improve discrimination capabilities, sensors for detection, and the ability to defend against hypersonic weapons.

Question. Current plans call for the Marine Corps Air Station's closure on Okinawa after the construction of a Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) at Camp Schwab.

What is your opinion of the prospects for the successful construction of the Futenma Replacement Facility at Camp Schwab on Okinawa?

Answer. While the project has experienced delays, I believe both governments remain committed to completing the FRF and DPRI. Land returns to Japan remain dependent upon the successful relocation from Futenma to Camp Schwab.

Question. Is the cost-sharing arrangement between the United States and Japan to pay for the relocation of United States Forces from Okinawa to Guam and the costs associated with the continued presence of United States Forces in Japan equitable and appropriate? Why or why not?

Answer. I believe that Japan is contributing in accordance with our agreement to relocate forces from Okinawa to Guam. Besides paying a significant portion of the cost of the realignment of United States Forces in Japan, the GoJ took the unprecedented step of funding construction for United States forces on Guam—equaling more than \$3 billion. The GoJ is also proceeding with land acquisition in Western Japan to construct a new installation to support U.S. Field Carrier Landing Practice operations and has extended the current Host Nation Support agreement by one year to March 31, 2022.

Question. What is your understanding of the ability of United States Forces planned to be transferred from Okinawa to Guam to be able to train for full-spectrum combat, and are there mitigation plans to address potential training shortfalls?

Answer. It is my understanding that training sites in Guam and its neighboring islands will be adequate to meet training requirements for the Marines who will be stationed there. The Marines would also benefit from training opportunities with implementation of the Pacific Multi-Domain Test and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC). If confirmed, I will work to better understand any future needs and plans to address potential training shortfalls.

AUSTRALIA

Question. What is your assessment of the current state of the United States-Australia alliance and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

Answer. Australia is a reliable friend and ally with a 100-year history of supporting the United States in every major global conflict. The "unbreakable" alliance is key to promoting regional and global security and anchors Southeast Asia and the South Pacific Islands. This Alliance is key to promoting regional peace, security, and prosperity, and is vital to advancing multilateral dialogues.

With regard to priorities interoperability between United States and Australian forces is a top priority for both countries. If confirmed, USINDOPACOM will have an essential role in building greater interoperability with Australia through engagements, training and exercises to ensure combined readiness between our forces.

Question. What is your assessment of Australia's relations with China? What impact does that relationship have on the United States-Australia alliance?

Answer. Australia's relationship with China has been strained due to Australia's opposition to China's illegal and unfounded territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea, its investigation into the COVID-19 outbreak, their ban on the Chinese made 5G network, and China's crackdowns in Hong Kong. China has exacted economic retribution against Australia in response. Australia has articulated its belief in the importance of transparency, the maintenance of a rules-based international order, and adherence to international norms. Strains in Australia's economic, trade, and diplomatic relations with China are unlikely to affect Australia's close and longstanding relationship with the United States.

INDIA

Question. What is your view of the current state of United States-India security relations, and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

Answer. The United States-India military relationship is at the best level in years, and we continue to experience growth in both bilateral and multilateral engagements and exercises, high profile joint operations, and an increased number of

senior level engagements. Recent operations by the PRC have helped highlight the threat to regional security that China's actions pose to all nations, including India. The conclusion of enabling agreements over the past several years has allowed us to operate more closely, and we are able to work together more than ever before to secure a free and open Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, my priorities would be to maintain the momentum that has been generated by my predecessor and build info sharing and security agreements, support India's defense transformation efforts through exchanges and exercises, continue to encourage India's acquisition of United States equipment to promote interoperability, and increase military-military contacts throughout standing dialogues, senior leader contacts, and working-level exchanges.

Question. What is your assessment of the relationship between India and China and how does that relationship impact the security and stability of the region?

Answer. The mistrust between China and India is at an all-time high. In addition to the rupture of bilateral relations as a result of the LAC skirmish, and India is deeply suspicious of PRC activities as a part of the One Belt One Road initiative (OBOR). China's posture initiatives in both Gwadar, Pakistan, and Hambantota, Sri Lanka, also cause India concern. As is the case across the Indo-Pacific, PRC's lack of transparency and duplicitous actions in the Indian Ocean region threaten stability and security in the region.

Question. If confirmed, what steps, if any, would you take to ensure the close coordination of United States security policy with respect to South Asia—much of which is in the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to coordinate across the combatant command boundaries to synchronize and maximize opportunities for expanded cooperation. Recognizing that security in South Asia is influenced by events across the Indian Ocean Region—a diverse ethno-linguistic, political, historic, and economic region with 24 African, Middle Eastern, and Asian nation-states—my coordination would include both CENTCOM and AFRICOM.

PHILIPPINES

Question. What is your current assessment of the United States-Philippines alliance and the state of our defense cooperation?

Answer. In this 70th year of our Mutual Defense Treaty, the Republic of the Philippines remains a strategic ally. If confirmed, I intend to pursue deeper military cooperation and integration as we work with the Government of the Philippines to seek full reversal of the Visiting Forces Agreement termination process.

Question. What do you believe the United States goals should be in the Philippines, and how best can we achieve those goals?

Answer. I believe the United States' primary goals should be to strengthen the alliance with the Philippines and help build and maintain the capabilities of its Armed Forces to deter unwanted aggression against their sovereignty. It is also in the United States' national interest to encourage the Philippines to develop its counterterrorism capabilities, improve its maritime domain awareness, and lead multilateral approaches toward greater peace and stability across the region.

Question. What is your assessment of the relationship between the Philippines and China? What impact does that relationship have on the United States-Philippines alliance?

Answer. Bilateral relations between the Philippines and China have increased since 2016 with the implementation of new government policies intended to diversify the Philippines foreign partners and gain outside investment to include One Belt One Road initiatives. While the Philippines continues to seek closer economic ties with China, rival territorial claims in the South China Sea complicate bilateral relations. The Philippines' growing economic outreach to China has complicated its longstanding partnership with the United States. That said, we continue to honor our Mutual Defense Treaty, a key tenant of our Indo-Pacific strategy.

Question. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the United States military assistance being provided to the Philippines armed forces in its fight against violent extremist groups?

Answer. United States Military Assistance to the Philippine Security Forces is very effective in directly confronting ISIS in Southeast Asia. This assistance enhances the Government of the Philippines' ability to build and maintain internal stability, allowing for allocation of more resources to counter threats to its national sovereignty. USSOF assistance specifically to the Armed Forces of the Philippines Counter-Violent Extremist Organization efforts has provided a high return on a relatively small investment.

Question. What areas, if any, do you see that have potential to increase defense cooperation with the Philippines armed forces?

Answer. If confirmed, I look to increase the scope and depth of bilateral exercises to address training and readiness requirements with a renewed focus on territorial defense, counter-terrorism, and maritime domain awareness, and cyber engagement opportunities. The Armed Forces of the Philippines investment in high-quality United States defense equipment provides additional training opportunities. A General Security of Military Information Agreement between the United States and the Philippines will also provide increased opportunities for information sharing. Continued emphasis on the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement projects will improve U.S. force posture in the region and better position response time for humanitarian assistance/disaster recovery (HA/DR) events.

THAILAND

Question. What is your assessment of United States-Thailand relations, and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

Answer. The United States and Thailand alliance is America's oldest in the Indo-Pacific and has the opportunity to expand as outlined in the United States Thai co-signed Joint Vision Statement 2020. If confirmed, I intend to continue pursuing interoperability efforts as Thailand modernizes its force and to take full advantage of opportunities provided by the reinstatement of international military education and training funding.

Question. What is your assessment of the relationship between Thailand and China? What impact does that relationship have on the United States-Thailand relationship?

Answer. Thailand's cooperation with China has notably increased since the coup of 2014. China pursues influence through military cooperation and economic investment in Thailand to include OBOR initiatives. In terms of military cooperation, China continues to lobby Thailand's Defense Ministry to procure various military equipment—including main battle tanks, armored personnel carriers, and submarines. China and Thailand have also broadened bilateral training and exercises. Thailand is careful to remain neutral amid the intensifying great power competition in the region and prefers to maintain a traditional balanced foreign policy approach and remains a vital United States ally, thanks to its 200-year relationship with the United States.

VIETNAM

Question. What is your current assessment of the United States-Vietnam security relationship, and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

Answer. The United States-Vietnam security relationship has advanced exponentially since the 2016 lifting of the lethal weapons ban. The 2018 and 2020 aircraft carrier visits were historic milestones that were unimaginable just five years ago. Both sides continue to take progressive steps towards building a sustainable defense partnership that includes major defense sales and technology transfers. Vietnam has been vocal in its support for freedom of navigation and overflight, as well as the development of a legally binding Code of Conduct for the South China Sea. Vietnam's demonstrated commitment to stand up for the international order, especially in the face of coercive behavior by China, deserves our support.

If confirmed, I would prioritize areas of common interests, such as War Legacy issues, maritime security, maritime domain awareness, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. I would also support new areas of cooperation, such as cyber, defense trade, and collaboration between joint forces.

Question. What is your assessment of the relationship between Vietnam and China? What impact does that relationship have on the United States-Vietnam relationship?

Answer. Vietnam balances both economic cooperation with China and security cooperation with the United States. Vietnam is concerned over territorial disputes in the South China Sea, increasing People's Liberation Army influence in Laos and Cambodia, and impacts in the Mekong Delta region. Due to these concerns, Vietnam is the most vocal ASEAN country in multilateral forums, supporting rules-based international order, and Freedom of Navigation, and the binding code of conduct in alignment with United States values.

INDONESIA

Question. What is your view of the current state of military-to-military relations with Indonesia, and what specific priorities would you establish for this relationship?

Answer. United States-Indonesia mil-to-mil relations continue to progress and mature. In 2020, the United States and Indonesia agreed to execute over 220 bilat-

eral activities focused on five areas of cooperation: maritime defense, institution building, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and counter-transnational threats, making the United States Indonesia's largest bilateral defense partner. If confirmed, we will continue to prioritize events that support these five focus areas and look for additional engagement opportunities by all components.

Question. What is your assessment of the relationship between Indonesia and China? What impact does that relationship have on the United States-Indonesia relationship?

Answer. Indonesia has a significant economic relationship with China and simultaneously balances its security relationship with the United States. Territorial disputes in the South China Sea, Chinese operations in Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and safety concerns for Indonesian fishermen generate friction between Indonesia and China. These identified areas of concern have provided opportunities for cooperation as Indonesia seeks increased engagements and defense purchases from the United States.

STRENGTHENING ALLIANCES AND ATTRACTING NEW PARTNERS

Question. In your view, how can USINDOPACOM more effectively cultivate multilateral cooperation in the AOR?

Answer. The regional network of alliances and partnerships is a strategic advantage that our competitors cannot match and critical to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

If confirmed, increased multilateral events will be a priority. Implementation of PDI, specifically the Mission Partner Environment, would provide opportunities for increased multilateral collaboration, planning, information sharing, and operations.

Question. What is your assessment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia, and India? How can such efforts be strengthened, and what do you view as the challenges to doing so?

Answer. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is an important venue for four Indo-Pacific democracies with common values to address shared interests. Addressing political, economic, and development opportunities will inform security priorities and increase the likelihood for more collaborative mil-to-mil activity among the four nations.

Challenges to the Quad could come in information-space activity by any nation threatened by the Quad's objectives.

Question. In your view, what are our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the USINDOPACOM AOR? How would you prioritize the types of programs or activities that should receive support under these security assistance authorities?

Answer. The strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations are to build relationships, enable our partners to promote stability in the region, and ensure access and influence.

If confirmed, I would prioritize building partnership capacity authorities to support security cooperation initiatives or activities, and bolstering our partners' land, maritime, and air forces to resist coercion and protect critical information. Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), and the Global Peace Operations Initiative are critical tools to meet these objectives.

Question. Given the emphasis on strengthening U.S. alliances and attracting new partners in both the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, do you believe we need to reevaluate our security cooperation funding to ensure it properly prioritizes the Indo-Pacific region?

Answer. Given the critical nature of the region and the global impact regional instability would generate, continuous reevaluation of Security Cooperation funding would be helpful in making USINDOPACOM more competitive for FMF, IMET, and other security cooperation funding (Title 10 Section 332, Section 333, Maritime Security Initiative, and Asia-Pacific Regional Initiative).

Question. What is your assessment of the Maritime Security Initiative (MSI)? How can MSI be leveraged to build shared maritime domain awareness capabilities and build multilateral cooperation amongst participating nations?

Answer. The Indo-Pacific MSI has increased maritime security, improved regional Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), supported the development of a common regional maritime picture, increased regional information sharing, and provided reassurance to regional partners while helping to build and sustain maritime relationships. It has accomplished this by increasing the scope, scale, complexity, and value of maritime exercises with MSI recipient nations; assessing capacity and capability and filling gaps with focused training and security assistance. MSI has been and

will continue to be leveraged to augment our existing exercises to promote information sharing technologies, platforms, and procedures that allow our partners to experience first-hand the benefits of shared maritime awareness while operating in a coalition with the U.S. and other like-minded nations.

Question. Over the last several years, China has exerted its influence with our partner nations throughout the USINDOPACOM region regarding competition over economic resources, fishing areas, access to water, concerns over rising sea levels, and elsewhere. Often due to a lack of United States engagement, some of these nations have voluntarily or involuntarily turned to support from China.

If confirmed, how will USINDOPACOM seek to engage with partner nations to better support their ability to protect their sovereignty and natural resources?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue engagements with allies and partners to ensure alignment with the rules-based international order as identified in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Speaking with a common voice directly helps to protect the sovereignty and natural resources of allies and partners.

I will ensure we maintain our military presence in the region, especially in the South China Sea where we conduct regular combined maritime operations and exercises with our allies and partners to enhance MDA capabilities, and improve interoperability to maximize preparedness of all allies and partners

Question. Respect for human rights has long been a core principle of United States foreign and security policy.

In your view, what role does U.S. Military engagement, including efforts to help professionalize foreign partner militaries, play in encouraging respect for human rights?

Answer. U.S. Military engagement with allies and partners in the region plays a critical role in the development of professional military standards and demonstrates our values including respect and dignity of human rights for all.

LAW OF THE SEA

Question. Do you support U.S. accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea?

If so, why?

Answer. I support U.S. accession to UNCLOS. Accession would reinforce the customary rights and freedoms reflected in the Convention, and support the free and open international order. Accession would not impose any additional constraints on the U.S. Military's ability to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, but would give the United States greater credibility when calling on other states to adhere to the same rules. Protecting freedom of navigation and overflight worldwide is vital to the defense of our national security interests, and is necessary to maintain the mobility of U.S. Forces in all areas of the globe. Accession to the Convention puts the U.S. in the best position to do so.

Question. Would U.S. accession to the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention benefit the United States military's mission in the Asia-Pacific region? If so, how?

Answer. Accession to UNCLOS directly benefits the military mission in the Asia-Pacific region. Accession would formally establish the customary rights and freedoms reflected in the Convention and support a free and open international order. Accession also directly aligns us with our allies and partners in the region and provides us the legal means to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Question. The Department of Defense has developed comprehensive policies and procedures to improve the prevention of and response to incidents of sexual assaults, including providing appropriate resources and care for victims of sexual assault.

What is your view of the steps taken to prevent and respond to sexual assaults in USINDOPACOM, including assaults by and against U.S. civilian and contractor personnel?

Answer. As leaders, we owe all personnel a respectful and inclusive work environment in which to execute their mission and fulfill their oath to the Constitution. We must continue our work to eliminate sexual assault and sexual harassment.

I have seen great focus by DOD on the prevention of incidents and the immediate response to reported incidents, but despite continued efforts, sexual assault remains a significant problem and many victims do not feel supported by their command nor safe reporting crimes. We need to do more.

I agree with Secretary Austin that the challenges posed by sexual assault constantly evolve and that our efforts must also continue to adapt.

I fully support the work of the Secretary's Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault (IRC), headed by Lynn Rosenthal, which is re-evaluating the full spectrum of sexual assault prevention and response policies and procedures with all options on the table to making meaningful and lasting progress.

Question. What is your view of the adequacy of USINDOPACOM policies and procedures to protect victims of sexual assault from retaliation for reporting the assault?

Answer. I believe that USINDOPACOM has strong policies and procedures in place to protect victims of sexual assault from retaliation, and if confirmed I intend to reinforce them. USINDOPACOM has created its own SAPR Program Manager on staff to improve support for sexual assault victims and to strengthen the larger SAPR programs within the theater.

If confirmed, my expectation is that commanders under my cognizance will create a culture of belonging where every member feels valued and is treated with dignity and respect and will be intolerant of retaliation. Setting the right unit climate encourages cohesion and discourages harmful behaviors. If these behaviors are to occur, the reporting of any crime or misconduct, and ending retaliation is crucial to effectively addressing sexual assault in the military.

USINDOPACOM will fully support the 90-day IRC and will benefit from the review of all current policies and programs.

Question. What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources in place in USINDOPACOM to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault?

Answer. Each of the services has established guidelines for a 24 hour, seven-day-a-week sexual assault response capability in all locations. Additionally, USINDOPACOM provides oversight for ensuring that adequate resources are present at deployed locations to maintain the ability to appropriately respond to incidents. I understand that the IRC will make further recommendations in this area as the Department evolves its policies to continue to meet the challenges posed by sexual assault.

Question. What is your view of the willingness and ability of military leaders to hold servicemembers accountable for sexual misconduct?

Answer. Sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct are crimes under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). I believe military leaders take their responsibilities under the UCMJ to ensure good order and discipline seriously. However, we must not relent until we are able to eliminate sexual assault from our ranks. If confirmed, I will ensure we not only have a force at USINDOPACOM that embodies our expectations for good order and discipline, but that we hold our leaders, at all levels, accountable for these expectations.

Question. What is your understanding of the adequacy of the resources and programs in USINDOPACOM to provide victims of sexual assault the medical, psychological, and legal help they need?

Answer. The services have enhanced the availability and effectiveness of Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC) Programs, and care and treatment for victims of sexual assault. From my perspective, these high-priority, mission-readiness support services have been effective, but I welcome any findings and recommendations of the IRC.

Question. What is your view about the role of the chain of Command in providing necessary support to the victims of sexual assault?

Answer. Positively engaged commanders are vital to providing the necessary support to those in their unit who have been harmed. Beyond this, commanders are responsible for maintaining a climate of inclusion, respect, and where any form of retaliation or reprisal is unacceptable. Leaders are accountable to get this right.

Question. What is your view about the role of the chain of Command in changing the military culture in which these sexual assaults have occurred?

Answer. My view is that the culture of a command is ultimately the Commander's responsibility. Change starts, and momentum continues, from the top— but it takes leadership at all levels of an organization to fully implement and sustain changes in culture.

Question. What is your assessment of the potential impact, if any, of proposals to remove disposition authority from military commanders over felony-level violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including sexual assault?

Answer. Commanders are accountable to the personnel assigned to them and responsible for maintaining the welfare, discipline, and combat readiness of all in their commands. Traditionally, the UCMJ is the Commander's tool for enforcing standards of expected behavior and performance.

This important question is being studied as part of the Secretary of Defense's 90-day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault. It would be appropriate to await that commission's results to inform further analysis of this issue. I personally

support and welcome all efforts to cultivate a safe environment for our DOD professionals to execute their mission and fulfill their oath to the Constitution.

Question. Do you consider the current sexual assault policies and procedures, particularly those on restricted reporting, to be effective?

Answer. Yes. Restricted reporting allows victim care to be a top priority. Victims of this crime can come forward and receive needed medical and support services while maintaining confidentiality. Without restricted reporting, some victims would not have an avenue to access needed services.

Question. If confirmed, what actions will you take to reassess current policies, procedures, and programs and to ensure senior level direction and oversight of efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assaults in USINDOPACOM?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure compliance with DOD's policies and procedures for leaders at all levels to take action to prevent sexual assault, and protect and support victims. I will set the example by establishing a command climate in which a victim can report a sexual assault without fear of retaliation and I will continue the programs and policies in place at USINDOPACOM which are designed to ensure necessary visibility and oversight within the theater.

I will monitor the IRC and support the Secretary of Defense's plan of action to expand the Department's prevention and response initiatives.

Question. What methods for monitoring overall trends and gauging the sufficiency of component commanders' efforts in preventing and responding to incidents of sexual assault do you consider appropriate and intend to implement as USINDOPACOM Commander?

Answer. I will emphasize the importance of command climate with respect to sexual assault to ensure sexual assault response capabilities continue to be available at all locations in the AOR.

I will not allow sexual assault to injure our personnel, friends, and families, destroy our professional values, or compromise readiness. Zero is the only acceptable number for sexual assaults in our military.

I will also monitor the IRC and incorporate guidance from the President and the Secretary of Defense on the best way forward.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Question. In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information.

What are your views on the state of USINDOPACOM's relationship with the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess USINDOPACOM's relationship with Congress in general and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular. My expectation is that these relationships will continue to be cooperative, productive and respectful of the Congress's oversight responsibilities.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and USINDOPACOM?

Answer. If confirmed, I will sustain the productive relationship between Congress and USINDOPACOM by maintaining open communication and information sharing. I will keep an active legislative affairs program to facilitate effective interactions and be personally available to Members of Congress and their staffs.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress?

Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications), and other information as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

SUBMARINES

1. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, can you speak to the importance of the *Virginia* and future *Columbia*-class submarines in United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)?

Admiral AQUILINO. The *Virginia* and *Columbia*-class submarines ensure the U.S. maintains our advantage in undersea warfare and strategic nuclear deterrence for the foreseeable future. The *Virginia*-class incorporates the latest technologies and enables our ability to operate in contested space. The *Columbia* provides the most survivable leg of the nuclear triad and will recapitalize the strategic deterrence currently provided by the aging *Ohio*-class submarines.

2. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, what has China been doing, that you are aware of, to close the technological gap in undersea capabilities with the United States?

Admiral AQUILINO. China has identified undersea warfare as a priority. China is aggressively invested in a range of platforms, including quieter submarines armed with increasingly sophisticated weapons, unmanned underwater vehicles, new sensors, new submarine hunting aircraft, and improved training. Additionally, the PLA Navy will add its first guided missile nuclear attack submarine in the Pacific by the mid-2020s. In combination, these developments provide the PRC with improved undersea awareness, more lethal anti-submarine warfare capabilities and capacity, and greater offensive strike capability.

3. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, do we have the capability to counter these emerging threats from China?

Admiral AQUILINO. From my perspective as the PACFLT Commander, USINDOPACOM has the capability and is poised to counter China's emerging undersea threats, but our advantage is shrinking. To combat this, we should continue funding our current and future undersea capabilities and increase our capacity. Currently, United States anti-submarine platforms are more technically advanced and provide the ability to counter Chinese submarine emerging threats. If confirmed, I will re-assess our joint force posture to meet these emerging threats.

4. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, if confirmed, do you feel you will be able to adequately perform the requirements laid out in the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) given the forces you will have under your command?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, if the capabilities identified in 1251 Report are properly resourced. PDI will enable the current force structure to establish a forward-deployed defense-in-depth posture that defends our interests, deters aggression,

assures allies and partners, and provides flexible response options should deterrence fail.

NON-TRADITIONAL NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

5. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, what steps would you recommend the Department of Defense take in the Indo-Pacific to swiftly respond to emerging non-traditional national security challenges, including global health and climate change issues?

Admiral AQUILINO. If confirmed, USINDOPACOM will continue interagency coordination in advance of nontraditional challenges or crises. We will also continue operations and exercises with allies and partners such as Pacific Partnership and Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) to build interoperability that will enable swift response to contingencies.

6. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, in your view, are the installations in your area of responsibility prepared to face non-traditional threats such as extreme weather due to climate change?

Admiral AQUILINO. Installations in the Pacific theater are prepared to withstand and postured to continue operations in face of traditional threats of extreme weather, as evidenced by our ability to protect and sustain the force against hurricanes and typhoons. However, upgrading our critical infrastructure and the survivability of our installations and ranges against rising sea levels will better posture us for the future.

7. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, do you believe that the forces in INDOPACOM are adequately resourced and postured to respond to natural disasters and humanitarian crises in the region quickly?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, I believe USINDOPACOM is postured and resourced to respond to natural disasters and humanitarian crises. Access to Overseas Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance and Civic Action (ODHACA) programs help facilitate our response. If confirmed, I will maintain strong relationships with the interagency, allies, and partners to continue to be prepared to respond to natural disasters.

8. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, can you speak to how the potential reinstatement of a 1st Fleet might impact our response time in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. The Navy continues to explore the potential stand up of 1st Fleet, with consideration placed on a range of factors including location, partner alignment, force distribution, resources and authorities. Working closely with SECDEF, CJCS, CNO, and CMC, we will ensure the ability to provide credible deterrence and response in the Indo-Pacific. If resourced, 1st Fleet could have a positive impact on response times in the region.

CHINA

9. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, given the recent steps China has taken to expand their military and increase their influence in the region, what is the role of our partnership with India in the Indo-Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. The Framework for the United States-India Defense Relationship includes the designation of India as a major defense partner and provides the necessary structure to continue our military collaboration. Cooperation has long been a strength between our militaries, and information sharing has grown significantly. Our goal is to increase our bilateral ties while building confidence to work multi-laterally on greater information sharing, increased mutual access to resources and facilities, and increasingly complex bilateral and multilateral operations with like-minded nations to reinforce our commitment to the rules-based international order.

10. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, what do you assess to be the likelihood that China attempts to upend the status quo in the region through military aggression?

Admiral AQUILINO. I believe the Chinese Communist Party has indicated their desire to supplant United States security leadership in the region and generate change to the rules-based international order so they favor Chinese interests. PLA actions in the region, such as militarization of the South China Sea (SCS) and aggressive activities, whether in the SCS or on the northern border of India, create additional contested space, endanger free flow of commerce, challenge freedom of navigation, threaten the sovereignty of our allies and partners, and undermine regional sta-

bility. These efforts ultimately contest operations and maneuver, extend coercive behavior, and challenge U.S. presence and credibility in the region. As PLA capabilities continue to improve and leadership confidence grows, the risk of more assertive military actions to achieve these goals will almost certainly increase.

11. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, how can we prepare to counter the potential threat of Chinese aggression in all domains, including less kinetic domains such as cyber and disinformation?

Admiral AQUILINO. China, as well as other competitors, have expanded operations at a level below armed conflict through the cyberspace domain and the use of disinformation to strengthen their position. Our efforts in these domains are critically important, and in many cases, it is an indicator of follow-on intent. If confirmed, I will focus on the strongest defense possible to ensure that those competitors are unable to take advantage of that space. It is also important that our allies and partners have tools to defend their information and cyber domains against the threat.

F-35 AND STRATEGIC CAPABILITIES

12. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, when you look at the strategic challenges in the INDOPACOM area of responsibilities, is a 5th generation fighter capability like the F-35 critical to mission success?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, 5th generation fighters are critical for USINDOPACOM to deter our adversaries. The integration of stealth with advanced sensors in the 5th generation fighters is essential for operating in the contested environment. Additionally, 5th generation fighters increase interoperability with our allies and partners in multiple domains.

13. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, can you speak to the survivability of 4th generation and 5th generation aircraft in a fight with China or Chinese equipment?

Admiral AQUILINO. Forward mix of postured 4th/5th-generation aircraft and beyond are required to achieve and sustain air supremacy. Networked together, 4th and 5th generation aircraft are especially survivable against all known threats. Specifically, the advanced sensors and stealth of 5th generation aircraft, combined with the advanced training, lethality, and survivability improvements to 4th generation aircraft, provides timely and survivable capabilities in a contingency should deterrence fail.

14. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, in your opinion, what has been the impact of the F-35 program on both military and diplomatic relations with these key allies?

Admiral AQUILINO. The F-35 program demonstrates the positive impacts of working with allies on common, modern weapon platforms. The F-35 program allows the United States to increase our level of collaboration and interoperability with key allies and partners such as Japan, Korea, Australia, and Singapore. This level of shared and protected technology enhances the fidelity of multi-lateral exercises, training, and operations, which strengthens diplomatic efforts.

15. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, can you explain the importance of stand-in capabilities, such as 5th generation aircraft, and what advantages they provide if an engagement with China were to occur?

Admiral AQUILINO. The ability of 5th generation aircraft to operate in a contested space is one important component of our credible deterrence. Integrated with our forward postured joint force, 5th generation stand-in capabilities contribute to force defense, air superiority, sea control, and power projection and are essential to fight and win.

16. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Aquilino, do you believe the Joint All-Domain Command and Control concept is going to be the most effective way to counter China's emerging technology and enhanced defense posture?

Admiral AQUILINO. To maximize the integration and lethality of the joint force, there is an urgent need for a common network to enable command and control, synchronized fires, force protection, intelligence, and logistics. If confirmed, I will examine the JADC2 concept and requirements and assess whether it can be implemented within the timeframe needed.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

MISSILE DEFENSE—NORTH KOREA AND CHINA

17. Senator HIRONO. Admiral Aquilino, General Robert Abrams, Commander of United States Forces Korea, recently testified before the House Armed Services Committee that there's a "significant gap" between North Korea showing off a nuclear sub-launched intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and having the actual capability to deliver a weapon. How do you assess North Korea's capabilities in this area?

Admiral AQUILINO. I agree with General Abrams. While North Korea recently displayed what it claims are two new types of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), North Korea's SLBM capabilities remain limited and we have not yet seen sea-based testing of this class of missiles.

18. Senator HIRONO. Admiral Aquilino, how do you assess North Korea's overall threat to our forces in the Indo-Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. North Korea's missile program is a growing threat to the region, to our allies, to our partners, and to the United States Homeland, including Guam and Hawaii. They have demonstrated improved mobile launch tactics, improved missile accuracy, and rapid-fire capabilities. North Korea maintains modest, but almost certainly growing inventories of theater-strike missiles. Their intercontinental-range missile program is still only partially proven, but North Korea is committed to developing a nuclear-armed ICBM capable of threatening the United States mainland.

19. Senator HIRONO. Admiral Aquilino, if confirmed, what steps will you take to address the emerging threat posed by China's hypersonic glide vehicles?

Admiral AQUILINO. China's hypersonic glide vehicle poses a serious threat to the United States and allied forces in the region. We require a near-term, initial defense capability to meet this challenge. PDI provides the foundation for the system and networks that will enable the integration of joint offensive and defensive fires to address the ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic threats. If confirmed, we will work with DOD, including the Missile Defense Agency, to develop capabilities, including survivable and resilient sensors to detect hypersonic threats and enable ground and sea-based defenses.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

REGIONAL DATA-SHARING

20. Senator ROSEN. Admiral Aquilino, as part of the Mission Partner Environment, the United States Indo-Pacific Command seeks to develop an integrated architecture to expand data-sharing among like-minded nations through the use of information fusion centers, joint centers where allies can share information using cloud-based technologies, integrated systems, and secure access controls. If confirmed, how would you enhance integration and information sharing across all domains with our allies and partners in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. If confirmed, I will prioritize implementation of a cyber-safe Mission Partner Environment (MPE), as outlined in Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI), to enable information sharing and interoperability, as well as bilateral and multilateral exercises and operations. Implementation of MPE will provide opportunities for increased multilateral collaboration, planning, information sharing, and operations.

21. Senator ROSEN. Admiral Aquilino, specifically, how would an integrated information technology (IT) architecture strengthen our ability to share information and fight together with our coalition partners?

Admiral AQUILINO. An integrated IT architecture is essential for interoperability with our allies and partners to include the sharing of sensitive and classified information. This capability would enable distributed key leader communication and coordination, training and exercises, sharing of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), sharing of intelligence, and facilitating combined mission planning and execution among coalition partners.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROGER WICKER

F-35 PROGRAM

22. Senator WICKER. Admiral Aquilino, as you know, many of our key allies in the Indo-Pacific region are participants in the F-35 program. In your opinion, has the F-35 program had a positive impact on both military and diplomatic relations with these key allies?

Admiral AQUILINO. The F-35 program demonstrates the positive impacts of working with allies and partners on modern, common weapon platforms. The F-35 program allows the United States to increase our level of collaboration and interoperability with key allies and partners such as Japan, Korea, Australia, and Singapore. This level of shared and protected technology enhances the fidelity of multi-lateral exercises, training, and operations, which strengthens diplomatic efforts.

GUAM DRY DOCK

23. Senator WICKER. Admiral Aquilino, a Department of Defense (DOD) review and analysis of Navy dry dock capabilities in the Pacific began in January 2020. The report was to be finalized in spring 2020, but the results of that effort have not been made public nor shared with Congress. Does the study point to a shortfall in dry dock capability in the Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. I am unaware of a 2020 DOD review regarding dry dock capabilities in the Pacific. My understanding is the most recent report to Congress on this subject titled “Western Pacific Ocean Ship Depot Maintenance Capability and Capacity and Business Case Analysis of Enhancing Western Pacific Ship Depot Maintenance” did not identify the need to increase conventional or nuclear-capable dry dock capacity or capability. If confirmed, I will review the results of the Secretary of Defense’s Global Posture Review to address any dry dock capacity/capability issues in the Pacific.

24. Senator WICKER. Admiral Aquilino, if the study does point to a shortfall in dry dock capability in the Pacific, what are your near and long term plans or ideas to alleviate this shortage?

Admiral AQUILINO. I am unaware of a 2020 DOD review regarding dry dock capabilities in the Pacific. My understanding is the most recent report to Congress on this subject titled “Western Pacific Ocean Ship Depot Maintenance Capability and Capacity and Business Case Analysis of Enhancing Western Pacific Ship Depot Maintenance” did not identify the need to increase conventional or nuclear-capable dry dock capacity or capability. If confirmed, I will review the results of the Secretary of Defense’s Global Posture Review to address any dry dock capacity/capability issues in the Pacific.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

TAIWAN

25. Senator COTTON. Admiral Aquilino, there is considerable room for further enhancing our defense ties with Taiwan. We need better integration between our Forces in support of Taiwan’s defense. These efforts could include individual—and unit-level training, as well as operational-level exercise programs that build interoperability, emphasize shared warfighting situational awareness, and culminate in joint planning. In your military judgment, would enhancing our bilateral cooperation with Taiwan in these ways be consistent with the command’s goals in the area of responsibility (AOR)?

Admiral AQUILINO. I believe enhancing bilateral cooperation with Taiwan, in alignment with the Taiwan Relations Act and United States policy, would help improve Taiwan’s defensive capabilities and is consistent with the command’s goals. Specific areas for improvement in their defensive capabilities include interoperability, readiness, training, and professional development through security cooperation and foreign military sales.

26. Senator COTTON. Admiral Aquilino, what would be the benefits of inviting Taiwanese forces to participate in military training exercises, and would we be better served by multilateral exercises involving American allies and partners in the United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Multilateral exercises in the USINDOPACOM region have the benefit of allowing participants to develop vital tactics, techniques, and procedures necessary to build interoperable forces. If confirmed, we will look for opportunities

to deepen and broaden our military interaction with Taiwan forces in exercises, visits, and exchanges consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, Taiwan Travel Act, and current administration policy.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

OPERATING IN AN ANTI-ACCESS/AREA DENIAL ENVIRONMENT

27. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, the People's Republic of China has the capability, capacity, and reach to employ thousands of missiles within the first island chain and hundreds of missiles in the second. This vast, asymmetrical arsenal will likely increase over the next several years. With that in mind, what do you consider to be the right mix of forward, blunt forces west of the International Date Line (IDL) and surge forces east of the International Date Line?

Admiral AQUILINO. The United States must have operational freedom of maneuver and persistent, visible, forward presence with sustainable maritime, air, and ground forces throughout the Indo-Pacific. To generate the deterrence needed, we need forces with a mix of offensive capabilities postured in a distributed manner, ISR capabilities to understand the battle space, and defensive force protection capabilities supported by sufficient surge forces with same capabilities, all underpinned by survivable and resilient logistics support. If confirmed, I will review the results of the Secretary of Defense's Global Posture Review regarding force posture mix both east and west of the IDL to ensure we meet current and future security challenges.

28. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, what concerns do you have regarding our ability to resupply and sustain operations—especially across a distributed posture—in an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) environment?

Admiral AQUILINO. Our ability to sustain the joint force in a contested environment is one of our greatest advantages, and at the same time a critical challenge. My concerns include capacity of the logistic force and ensuring the proper force protection for these forces. The right composition of logistics platforms, nodes, ports, and supplier networks, along with appropriate protection is critical. The joint force must also have sufficient access to and interoperability with our allies and partners to conduct integrated, combined, and resilient logistics sustainment in every domain.

29. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, what recommendations do you have to mitigate those concerns?

Admiral AQUILINO. We must move toward a more distributed force posture and increase the locations and availability for naval, air, and ground forces to rearm, refuel, and have access to these locations during contingencies. If confirmed, I will implement PDI posture initiatives that maximize key logistics enablers and work with allies and partners for enhanced posture. For example, aligned with PDI, I support efforts to enhance logistics capability and capacity with prepositioned supplies, infrastructure, and investments to store and re-position fuel in the theater. These investments are key to ensuring U.S. freedom of action and access to vital waterways, airspace, and other lines of communication in a contested environment.

30. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, what concerns do you have regarding operational concepts—such as agile combat employment—the Services are developing to achieve a theory of victory in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. I am encouraged by the operational concepts developed by the services, but concerned with the ability of the joint force to integrate the capabilities from each service being brought online. When completed, I expect the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC) will better integrate the services' concepts and capabilities. Implementation of the JWC to integrate the strengths of all of our services across all domains will help enable the full capability and capacity of the joint force.

31. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, what risk are we assuming provided the Services cannot execute those concepts for a sustained period of time today?

Admiral AQUILINO. Unless the services' concepts and capabilities are integrated and can be quickly employed, synchronized, and sustained, I see risk in rapidly denying an aggressive adversary's objectives. Ensuring the effectiveness and resilience of key joint warfighting functions such as ISR, command and control, fires, logistics, and information advantage is essential. The United States must have operational

freedom of maneuver throughout the Indo-Pacific informed by the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC).

ALASKA-BASED FORCES

32. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, Alaska is closer in proximity to the Indo-Pacific than it is to Washington, DC. In fact, Alaska is closer to Korea and Japan than Hawaii and Australia. Alaska-based forces—under the operational control of INDOPACOM which include the 4–25 Airborne BCT, 1–25 Stryker BCT, and the soon-to-be 100 5th-Generation combat-coded fighters—are strategic forces that will be needed in any competition, crisis, or conflict with China. With this in mind—what do you see as the role of these combat credible forces—based in Alaska—with in the Indo-Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. The joint force’s credible and lethal forward posture is critical to ensure deterrence, particularly in view of China’s hegemonic rise. Alaska’s force structure is essential to providing persistent homeland defense forces and forces ready to surge in support of any contingencies in the Pacific. Alaska-based forces provide support to USINDOPACOM routine operations and are critical elements in our warfighting readiness in the event of a conflict in the Indo-Pacific region.

33. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, in your personal opinion, what force posture and/or capabilities is Alaska missing that INDOPACOM views as a requirement?

Admiral AQUILINO. The joint force must have the capability to fully exercise synchronized multi-domain operations. Forces in Alaska continue to provide posture and capability, but can be further enhanced by linking the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) with other world-class ranges through Pacific Multi-Domain Test and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC) which would enable fully instrumented, live-virtual training areas throughout the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will review the results of the Secretary’s Global Posture Review for additional potential enhancements.

34. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, during the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on INDOPACOM posture, Admiral Philip Davidson stated: “... 5th-Generation fighters ... are the backbone of any of our planning for a crisis forward in a theater, and would need to be at dispersed locations within the first and second island chain.” Considering Admiral Davidson’s remarks, and with over 100 5th Generation fighter aircraft in Alaska, does it not make sense to base the next generation—KC-46—tanker in that state to fill the aerial refueling gap, and serve as an air bridge to rapidly surge those fighters to the forward edge of a conflict in the Indo-Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. Our 5th Generation fighters provide both homeland defense and deterrence both at home and abroad. These assets and their enablers, to include tankers, must be based in the locations that most efficiently and effectively meet COCOM requirements, provide the flexibility for contingency operations, and are postured in a way that ensures force protection. If confirmed, I will review the results of the Secretary of Defense’s Global Posture Review and work with DOD to ensure our force posture is designed to best meet these priorities.

PACIFIC DETERRENCE INITIATIVE

35. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, during the SASC hearing on INDOPACOM posture, I asked Admiral Davidson if the \$4.6 billion needed to fund the PDI was “something that can help” with halting the erosion of our Nation’s conventional deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. Admiral Davidson responded by stating: “[PDI] meets the strategic vision ... [for] the theater to present a conventional deterrent that would give China pause from any maligned military activity that they would undergo, against any of our allies and partners in the region.” You—yourself—in your advance policy questions further underscore that: “PDI is the foundational approach to advancing capabilities and capacity ... while strengthening our allies and partnerships for an integrated joint force west of the International Date Line.” At a cost of seven-tenths of one percent of DOD’s budget, PDI seems to come at a bargain compared to any future military conflict with China should the balance of power continue to shift unfavorably. Would you agree with that statement? And, what—in terms relative to magnitude of PDI—would a conflict with China cost us when considering both money and lives?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, I agree that PDI is both foundational and cost-effective as it lays the base for our commitment to deterrence in the Pacific. In particular, sustained investment is required to generate the posture to deter China, our pacing

threat, from acts of aggression. A key deterrence effort, PDI cost is minimal when compared to the potential loss of blood and treasure should conflict occur.

TAIWAN

36. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, Admiral Davidson stated in the open session of the hearing on INDOPACOM posture that: “Taiwan is clearly one of [China’s] ambitions . . . and I think the threat is manifest during this decade, in fact in the next 6 years.” Do you share the same view on the threat timeline as Admiral Davidson . . . do you believe China could seek to overtake Taiwan with a cross-strait invasion within 6 years?

Admiral AQUILINO. Predictive analysis to identify a specific date for potential action continues to be difficult. However, my opinion is that this problem is much closer than most think, and our deterrence actions are needed now to prevent conflict. The PLA continues to field a broad array of advanced weapons and systems as part of an ongoing force modernization specifically intended to achieve decisive overmatch against Taiwan. Additionally, China’s political leadership has publically announced their willingness to coercively pressure Taiwan in both the information domain and with increased air and maritime operations across the centerline of the Taiwan Strait. I believe that we have to have a sense of urgency and take immediate action, such as implementation of PDI, to deter any potential actions.

37. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, in your personal opinion, what additional measure—beyond the PDI—does the United States need to implement to adequately deter a high-cost scenario such as a cross-strait invasion of Taiwan?

Admiral AQUILINO. Beyond a properly resourced and sustained PDI, I believe the U.S. needs to continue its efforts to integrate all elements of national power beyond the military to deter the PRC. This includes efforts to protect our country’s intellectual property, level the playing field on trade, support allies and partners through diplomacy, and aggressively provide alternatives for increased international development consistent with a free and open Indo-Pacific. Additionally, we should continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act.

38. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, the United States Government announced \$5.1 billion in arms sales to Taiwan in 2020—all in the last 3 months of the year. The weapons sales included: communications systems, aerial drones, coastal defense systems, missiles, and artillery among other defense articles. In your personal opinion, are we selling Taiwan the right types of weapons?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, we should continue to advise Taiwan to acquire those capabilities that support their ability to defend itself against an invasion or efforts to coerce unification. Priorities include asymmetric systems that are highly mobile, lethal, survivable, and affordable that can be purchased in large quantities. Coastal defense cruise missiles (CDCMs), short and medium range air defenses, and sea mines are examples of capabilities that are critical to the successful defense of Taiwan.

39. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, how can the United States better position Taiwan to defend itself?

Admiral AQUILINO. If confirmed, United States Indo-Pacific Command will continue to advise Taiwan on capabilities, interoperability, readiness, training, and professional development through security cooperation and foreign military sales in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act. We will also coordinate with allies and partners for their assistance.

DEFENSE POSTURE REALIGNMENT INITIATIVE

40. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, Defense Posture Realignment Initiative (DPRI) is the program of record negotiated with the Government of Japan, which provided \$3.1 billion or about 1/3 of the estimated cost, to relocate Marine Corps Forces from Okinawa to Guam. The executive summary of the INDOPACOM report for section 1251 of the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA indicates the force design and posture effort: “. . . begins with completing the Defense Posture Realignment Initiative (DPRI) . . .” From your interaction with our host nation counterparts, how important is the execution of the DPRI program to the Government of Japan?

Admiral AQUILINO. DPRI is important to both Japan and the United States. It strengthens our relationship with Japan and postures our forces for deterrence. The Government of Japan (GoJ) strongly supports the DPRI program’s relocation of Marines from Okinawa to Guam and has committed significant financial contributions

toward this end. The United States–Japan Alliance is the cornerstone of our security objectives, and GoJ remains committed to the successful completion of DPRI to ensure our countries are aligned against future challenges to our mutual security.

41. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, there are some concerns about the ability of marines to train for full spectrum combat when they are moved to Guam. Can you outline what shortfalls currently exist if the move were to occur today?

Admiral AQUILINO. Training capabilities located on Guam, coupled with CNMI Joint Training complex of ranges and facilities, will provide a combined/joint training capability in the Western Pacific that will adequately address Marine training requirements. However, linkages with advanced capabilities between the ranges from Guam to Hawaii to Alaska to the West Coast of the United States will increase our ability to provide ready forces for highly contested environments. These linked ranges will help meet the full spectrum training requirements for Marines who will be stationed in Guam, as well as enable critical training with our allies, partners, and the joint force.

42. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, does the current DPRI program of record adequately address these shortfalls?

Admiral AQUILINO. Training capabilities located on Guam, coupled with CNMI Joint Training complex of ranges and facilities, will provide a combined/joint training capability in the Western Pacific that will adequately address Marine training requirements.

43. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, so that I can better understand some of the tradeoffs involved with respect to: a) deterrence, b) ability to do full spectrum training, and c) the confidence of our partners and allies—what would be the impact, in your opinion, of moving those 5,000 marines and their dependents to locations east of the International Date Line—say for instance, Alaska?

Admiral AQUILINO. Potential impacts of relocating Marines could be delayed response times during contingencies and increased un-programmed infrastructure costs. I believe the relocation of Marines per the DPRI program of record will correctly posture our forces for deterrence, allow for required training, and give confidence to our allies and partners. If confirmed, I will review the results of the Secretary of Defense’s Global Posture Review for force posture both east and west of the IDL to ensure we meet current and future security challenges.

NORTH KOREA MISSILE CAPABILITIES AND COOPERATION WITH IRAN

44. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, in Admiral Davidson’s statement for the record presented to this committee 2 weeks ago, he highlighted: “. . . North Korea will remain our most immediate threat.” Admiral Davison went on to state: “Pyongyang maintains a diverse and growing missile inventory, and North Korea unveiled several new ballistic systems . . . including two SLBMs [submarine-launched ballistic missile] and an ICBM.” Finally, you conclude that: “Pyongyang’s missile research and development efforts . . . are consistent with the regime’s stated objective of being able to strike the United States Homeland.” Can you broadly discuss how North Korea’s missile program has advanced over the course of your assignment as the Commander, United States Pacific Fleet?

Admiral AQUILINO. North Korea continues to demonstrate the desire to improve their missile design, ranges, and launch tactics, techniques, and procedures. It has conducted multiple launches in the last three years, focusing on combat readiness and mobility as well as precision strike and rapid fire capabilities. Additionally, in October 2020 and January 2021, North Korea unveiled new and larger ICBMs, two submarine-launched ballistic missiles, as well as short range missiles.

45. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, how would you characterize North Korea’s missile program advancement—in terms of risk—to both our regionally based forces and the United States Homeland?

Admiral AQUILINO. North Korea’s improved missile design, growing inventory, and better launch tactics, techniques, and procedures make it a growing threat to both our regionally based forces and the United States Homeland. DPRK has taken no meaningful steps toward denuclearization, despite promising signs of de-escalation in 2018. All of these factors directly increase risk to the United States, our regionally based forces, and allies and partners. If confirmed, I will continue to make risk assessments and report any concerns to the Secretary of Defense.

46. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, provided you are able to answer in this forum—how long would you estimate until North Korea’s missile capability and range can reach the continental United States?

Admiral AQUILINO. If confirmed, I will provide additional classified details of North Korea’s missile capabilities in an agreed upon forum/date.

47. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, the United Nations provided a report to the Security Council in February that confirmed North Korea and Iran resumed cooperation on development of long-range missiles last year. This reporting followed shortly after North Korea showcased their largest ICBM, believed capable of carrying a nuclear warhead across the United States. To me this is exceptionally concerning as both countries would greatly benefit from the leveraged gained in being able to strike our Homeland. In your personal opinion, are we doing enough to develop and field both regional/homeland missile defense systems?

Admiral AQUILINO. Missile defense is a central component of the Department of Defense’s responsibility to defend the Homeland. I believe increased threat capabilities require us to constantly assess our Homeland defense systems, and I am confident the Missile Defense Agency is working to ensure our capabilities continue to improve. The Secretary of Defense has indicated his commitment to review missile defense concepts, programs, and capabilities in light of the broader defense strategy. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for missile defense systems in the region, in Guam, and in Hawaii to support the Homeland defense mission.

48. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, how would you suggest we blunt the corrosive cooperation between these rogue nations?

Admiral AQUILINO. All forms of national power should continue to be brought to bear against this issue. UNSCR enforcement, diplomacy, and economic options should continue to be applied. If confirmed, I will ensure that forward-deployed and combat-lethal USINDOPACOM forces are postured to allow diplomacy to engage from a position of strength.

INDIA: HIGH-ALTITUDE, COLD-WEATHER TRAINING

49. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, the United States Army will host Indian forces in Alaska this year to exercise high-altitude, cold-weather combat skills. A Chinese military expert recently claimed that the Indian Army: “has the world’s largest and most experienced troops trained for high-altitude battles”. From my understanding, the same exercise will occur in the Himalayas in 2022. First, let me commend the efforts of INDOPACOM and U.S. Army in Alaska (USARAK) for cultivating this strategic partnership. Second, how can we advance it further to continue rebuilding robust Arctic capabilities that have atrophied significantly over the past decade?

Admiral AQUILINO. As the largest democracy in the Western Pacific, India is an important partner sharing common values. If confirmed, we will continue to advance our relationship with India, build interoperability, and work with the components to identify potential options to improve our cold-weather, high-altitude training/capabilities.

FOSTERING INDO-PACIFIC MILITARY EXPERTISE

50. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, given the Department of Defense shift in priorities from violent extremist organizations in U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) to great power competition in INDOPACOM—as laid out in the 2018 National Defense Strategy and expressed by incoming DOD officials in the Biden Administration—do you think the Service Academies and other DOD educational institutions are adequately focused on educating our military officers and enlisted members to best understand and operate in the Indo-Pacific region? If not, in your personal opinion, how do we get after this knowledge and expertise shortfall?

Admiral AQUILINO. U.S. service academies and DOD education institutions are known amongst our allies and partners as world-class. These centers for higher learning have been adjusting and aligning professional military education and talent management systems to further develop our military leaders and those of our allies and partners for 21st century challenges. If confirmed, I will highlight to the services the need to deliver the knowledge and expertise necessary to better operate jointly in the Indo-Pacific.

SECTION 1251 REPORT AND RANGE UPGRADES

51. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, the section 1251 report identified a number of range investments—which included the Pacific Multi-Domain Training and

Experimentation Capability (PMTEC)—with the objective of creating a fully instrumented, live-virtual constructive (LVC) training areas throughout the Indo-Pacific. How would upgrading ranges—like the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex—with a Secure, Synthetic Inject to Live LVC (SITL LVC) air combat training capability help INDOPACOM meet its requirement to provide forces capable of fighting in highly contested environments against technologically advanced opponents?

Admiral AQUILINO. Modernizing our ranges, as our capabilities grow and as replication of the battlespace becomes more challenging, will allow the joint force to train against an evolving threat and technologically advanced opponent with our allies and partners. Linkages with advanced capabilities between the ranges from Guam to Hawaii to Alaska to the West Coast of the United States will increase our ability to provide ready forces for highly contested environments. For example, Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex range improvements incorporating PMTEC, to include LVC capabilities, would offer the joint force more effective, realistic, all-domain training and experimentation at the tactical and operational level.

52. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, how would providing SITL–LVC at the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex, or other ranges, help increase overall readiness and combat capability of both INDOPACOM and allied forces?

Admiral AQUILINO. Live, Virtual and Constructive (LVC) capability is critical to readiness by enabling large scale, distributed training that provides our warfighters the opportunity to train in a threat-representative environment. LVC capability more effectively simulates the highly contested threat environment in a more cost effective manner. The Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex range improvements incorporating LVC capability would offer the joint force more effective, realistic, all-domain training and experimentation at the tactical and operational level.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARSHA BLACKBURN

INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES

53. Senator BLACKBURN. Admiral Aquilino, your predecessor's independent assessment calls for Ground-Based, Long-Range Fires. No longer shackled by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, how do you see the emergence of these weapons systems changing the landscape in INDOPACOM?

Admiral AQUILINO. The emergence of these new weapons systems will offer increased deterrence options and present additional dilemmas to offset our competitors' capabilities that have been unconstrained by, or not in compliance with, the treaty. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for investments that add new long-range, ground-based weapons to expand the competitive space and put any potential adversaries on the defensive.

CHINESE MILITARY-CIVIL FUSION

54. Senator BLACKBURN. Admiral Aquilino, what security challenges do you see now and anticipate moving forward from the Chinese practice of Military-Civil Fusion?

Admiral AQUILINO. China's practice of military-civil fusion facilitates the acquisition, diversion, or theft of cutting-edge technologies that could close the gap to our comparative advantage.

I expect the PLA will continue to focus China's civilian research and commercial sectors on its military and defense industrial priorities, including a number of critical technologies, weapons, and sensors.

55. Senator BLACKBURN. Admiral Aquilino, how do we strategically address Military-Civil Fusion while applying uniquely American competitive advantages?

Admiral AQUILINO. To address Chinese military-civil fusion, we must expand ongoing efforts to identify and protect key United States/Western technologies, especially those areas where the PRC lacks alternatives for acquisition or manufacturing. If confirmed, I will support DOD's effort to protect sensitive information, platforms, and infrastructure through mechanisms such as cybersecurity, resiliency in the supply chain, secure architectures, and export controls.

56. Senator BLACKBURN. Admiral Aquilino, what linkages do you see between the Belt and Road Initiative and Military-Civil Fusion?

Admiral AQUILINO. One Belt, One Road provides the PLA an opportunity to expand its global reach by gaining access to foreign air and maritime port facilities and foreign economic markets. China's practice of military-civil fusion will enable

greater PRC access to each host nation's critical infrastructure, technologies, and business architecture and make them vulnerable to further exploitation.

AIR WING OF THE FUTURE

57. Senator BLACKBURN. Admiral Aquilino, during your testimony you mentioned the Navy's "Air Wing of the Future" as enabling carrier strike groups to be more lethal and capable within currently contested spaces. Given the joint nature of your nominated billet, how does this capability enable the joint force within that contested space?

Admiral AQUILINO. The future Air Wing, able to operate in contested space with the advantage of maneuver inherent in a carrier strike group, will deliver capabilities that enable air superiority and precision power projection from our carrier strike groups and the joint force. These capabilities will challenge any adversary's ability to counter the joint force's capability to mass integrated and synchronized fires across all domains to confuse, degrade, disrupt and ultimately deny adversary objectives.

COMPETITION IN PARTNERING

58. Senator BLACKBURN. Admiral Aquilino, what is your assessment of China's bilateral and multilateral training efforts within INDOPACOM?

Admiral AQUILINO. The PLA has demonstrated intent to advance bilateral and multilateral training. The majority of PLA's foreign training events are relatively small-scale bilateral exercises focused on issues of mutual interest, such as counter terrorism or maritime security. However, in recent years, the PLA has deployed forces to participate in Russia's major annual exercise. China has participated in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) multi-lateral exercises for several years, and has recently executed maritime training with ASEAN.

DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION

59. Senator BLACKBURN. Admiral Aquilino, in which priority areas should the United States increase defense technology cooperation with Japan to deter regional adversaries?

Admiral AQUILINO. In cooperation with the U.S. and working through its self-defense forces, the GoJ should continue to invest in improvements to interoperable air and missile defense, air dominance, maritime security, and ISR capabilities. As Japan improves its capability and capacity, we should continue to execute the Joint Exercise Program and operate together both bilaterally and multilaterally.

60. Senator BLACKBURN. Admiral Aquilino, do you identify additional opportunities specific to artificial intelligence, unmanned systems, or dual-use technologies?

Admiral AQUILINO. Artificial intelligence and cognitive/quantum computing are areas we must invest in to deliver near-term warfighting advantage. These capabilities would enable improved decision making as well as man-machine teaming in the application of unmanned systems. These asymmetric capabilities can be used to increase our advantages operating jointly and with our allies and partners.

61. Senator BLACKBURN. Admiral Aquilino, what is the importance of regular, robust funding for regional Fusion Centers such as the Counter Terrorism Information Facility (CTIF), the Oceania Fusion Center, and the Indo-Pacific Maritime Coordination Center?

Admiral AQUILINO. Fusion centers are critical enablers for strengthening our alliances, enhancing partnerships, and coordinating regional understanding of key issues associated with transnational threats and malign influence. These centers allow us to build trust and improve understanding of each partner's capabilities for the purpose of information sharing in a multilateral forum. Fusion centers send an unambiguous signal to the region of U.S. commitment and support for issues of common concern.

[The nomination reference of Admiral John C. Aquilino, USN follows:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

PN239

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
March 5, 2021.

Ordered, That the following nomination be referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To Be Admiral

Adm. John C. Aquilino, 4901

_____, 2021.
(Date)

Reported by Mr. Reed _____
(Signature)

with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed.

☐ The nominee has agreed to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

[The biographical sketch of Admiral John C. Aquilino, USN, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]



**TRANSCRIPT OF NAVAL SERVICE FOR
ADMIRAL JOHN CHRISTOPHER AQUILINO
U.S. NAVY**

23 MAY 1984 Ensign
23 MAY 1986 Lieutenant (junior grade)
01 SEP 1988 Lieutenant
01 SEP 1994 Lieutenant Commander
01 JUL 1999 Commander
01 SEP 2004 Captain
01 SEP 2010 Designated Rear Admiral (lower half)
 while serving in billets commensurate
 with that grade
01 SEP 2011 Rear Admiral (lower half)
01 SEP 2013 Rear Admiral
28 AUG 2015 Vice Admiral
17 MAY 2018 Admiral, service continuous to date



<u>ASSIGNMENTS AND DUTIES</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
Naval Recruiting District, New York (Officer Recruiting Team Member)	MAY 1984	SEP 1984
Naval Aviation Schools Command, Pensacola, FL (Student)	SEP 1984	FEB 1985
Training Squadron TWO SEVEN (Student)	FEB 1985	JUL 1985
Training Squadron TWO SIX (Student)	JUL 1985	MAR 1986
Training Squadron TWO FOUR (Student)	MAR 1986	SEP 1986
Fighter Squadron ONE ZERO ONE (Student)	SEP 1986	AUG 1987
Fighter Squadron ONE FOUR TWO (Assistant Operations Officer)	AUG 1987	JUL 1990
Fighter Squadron FOUR THREE (Maintenance Officer)	JUL 1990	SEP 1993
Fighter Squadron ONE ZERO ONE (Student)	SEP 1993	MAR 1994
Fighter Squadron FOUR ONE (Operations Officer)	MAR 1994	DEC 1995
Strike Weapons and Tactics School, Atlantic, NAS Virginia Beach, VA (Operations Officer)	DEC 1995	JUN 1997
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (Flag Aide to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations)	JUN 1997	JUN 1999
Fighter Squadron ONE ZERO ONE (Replacement Pilot)	JUN 1999	MAR 2000
Fighter Squadron ELEVEN (Executive Officer)	MAR 2000	AUG 2001
Fighter Squadron ELEVEN (Commanding Officer)	AUG 2001	AUG 2002

**TRANSCRIPT OF NAVAL SERVICE FOR
ADMIRAL JOHN CHRISTOPHER AQUILINO
U.S. NAVY**

<u>ASSIGNMENTS AND DUTIES (CONT'D)</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs (Action Officer)	AUG 2002	AUG 2004
Naval Air Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet (Director, Carrier Air Wing Readiness and Training)	AUG 2004	MAR 2006
Carrier Air Wing TWO (Deputy Commander)	MAR 2006	AUG 2007
Carrier Air Wing TWO (Commander)	AUG 2007	OCT 2008
Fighter Squadron ONE ZERO SIX (Instructor)	OCT 2008	JUL 2009
U.S. Fleet Forces Command (Executive Assistant)	JUL 2009	SEP 2010
U.S. Joint Forces Command (Director, Strategy and Analysis) (J5)	SEP 2010	SEP 2011
Joint Staff (Deputy Director) (J31)	SEP 2011	MAR 2013
Carrier Strike Group TWO (Commander)	MAR 2013	MAR 2014
U.S. Pacific Fleet (Director, Maritime Operations) (DMOC/N04)	MAR 2014	AUG 2015
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans, and Strategy) (N3/N5)	AUG 2015	SEP 2017
U.S. Naval Forces, U.S. Central Command (Commander)/U.S. FIFTH Fleet (Commander)	SEP 2017	MAY 2018
U.S. Pacific Fleet (Commander)	MAY 2018	TO DATE

MEDALS AND AWARDS

Defense Superior Service Medal	National Defense Service Medal with one Bronze Star
Legion of Merit with four Gold Stars	Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal
Bronze Star Medal	Southwest Asia Service Medal
Defense Meritorious Service Medal	Afghanistan Campaign Medal
Meritorious Service Medal with one Gold Star	Iraq Campaign Medal
Air Medal with Numeral "6" Strike Flight Awards	Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal
Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Combat "V" and four Gold Stars	Global War on Terrorism Service Medal
Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with one Gold Star	Armed Forces Service Medal
Navy Unit Commendation	Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with two Bronze Stars
Meritorious Unit Commendation	NATO Medal
	Expert Rifleman Medal
	Expert Pistol Shot Medal

**TRANSCRIPT OF NAVAL SERVICE FOR
ADMIRAL JOHN CHRISTOPHER AQUILINO
U.S. NAVY**

SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS

BS (Oceanography) U.S. Naval Academy, 1984
 Designated Naval Aviator, 1986
 Designated Joint Qualified Officer, 2010
 CAPSTONE 2011-2
 Designated Level IV Joint Qualified Officer, 2013

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

None

SUMMARY OF JOINT DUTY ASSIGNMENTS

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs (Action Officer)	AUG 02 – AUG 04	CDR
U.S. Joint Forces Command (Director, Strategy and Analysis) (J5)	SEP 10 – SEP 11	RDML
Joint Staff (Deputy Director) (J31)	SEP 11 – MAR 13	RDML

**TRANSCRIPT OF NAVAL SERVICE FOR
ADMIRAL JOHN CHRISTOPHER AQUILINO
U.S. NAVY**

As of 28 August 2020

Years of active commissioned service: 36

Date of birth: 15 November 1961

Mandatory retirement date for age: 1 December 2025

Mandatory retirement date for years of service: 1 June 2024

Mandatory retirement for service in grade: 1 June 2023

[The Committee on Armed Services requires certain senior military officers nominated by the President to positions requiring the advice and consent of the Senate to complete a form that details the biographical, financial, and other information of the nominee. The form executed by Admiral John C. Aquilino, USN in connection with his nomination follows:]

117th CONGRESS, 2021 -- 2022
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
ROOM SR-228
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6050

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATION REQUESTED OF NOMINEES
FOR CERTAIN SENIOR MILITARY POSITIONS

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of "yes", "no", or "not applicable" is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

NOTE: Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC

1. **Name (Include any former names you have used):**
Aquilino, John Christopher
2. **Position to which nominated:**
Commander, United States Indo-Pacific Command
3. **Date of nomination:**
March 5, 2021
4. **Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in the service record extract provided to the Committee by the applicable agency/department/board):**
None

5. **Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution):**
None
6. **Memberships (List all memberships and offices that you currently hold, as well as any memberships and offices you have previously held, in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations):**
None
7. **Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements, in addition to those listed in the service record extract and biographical provided to the Committee by the agency or department):**
None

COMMITMENTS IN FURTHERANCE OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

NOTE: In order to exercise their legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress timely receive testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch. A simple "yes" or "no" response is appropriate.

8. **Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees of Congress?**
Yes
9. **Do you agree, if confirmed, and when asked before this Committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate Committees of Congress to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the position of the Administration?**
Yes
10. **Do you agree, if confirmed, to provide this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may**

be requested of you, and to do so timely?

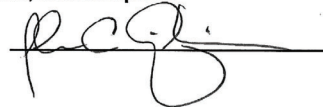
Yes

11. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you?
Yes
12. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided?
Yes
13. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request?
Yes
14. Do you agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee?
Yes
15. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress?
Yes

[The nominee responded to Parts B-E of the Committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee's answers to Parts B-E are contained in the Committee's executive files.]

SIGNATURE AND DATE

I hereby state that I have read and signed Parts A and B of the foregoing Senate Armed Services Committee Questionnaire, and that the information provided therein, and in any document appended thereto, is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, current, accurate, and complete.



March 5, 2021

[The nomination of Admiral John C. Aquilino, USN was reported to the Senate by Chairman Reed on April 15, 2021, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on April 21, 2021.]

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