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The Indo-Pacific is home to the greatest threat we have faced in generations. In North Korea, we have a madman who would rather build an illegal nuclear arsenal than feed his starving people. The world has sat by while Kim has lobbed ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles] over his neighbors, rebuilt his nuclear testing facility, and expanded his inventory of warheads.

Last week’s announcement that North Korea tested a solid-fueled ICBM is the latest extremely troubling news. It eliminates the time-consuming liquid fueling process, making it much harder for us to detect a missile and neutralize it before launch.

That is why it is so imperative for us to invest in missile defense and accelerate the next generation interceptor program.

A strong missile detect and defeat capability is also critical to our deterrence of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP]. We have talked a lot this year about the growing threats we face from the CCP. They have tripled defense spending in a decade, and that is what they admit to. Rapidly modernized and expanded their conventional forces. Made unprecedented advancements in space, hypersonics, AI [artificial intelligence], and quantum computing. And increased the number of launchers, missiles, and warheads in their nuclear arsenal at a dizzying rate.

The CCP’s extraordinary military buildup is certainly concerning. But what is most alarming is the increasingly provocative actions President Xi has taken in recent years, pushing out China’s borders with new defense agreements and military bases in foreign nations; illegally building militarized islands, and trying to limit
freedom of navigation in the South China Sea; threatening our allies in the region when they work with us; and cozying up to Putin and the ayatollah and other tyrants. And attempting to coerce Taiwan with military exercises simulating a blockade and invasion of the island.

It has gotten to the point where Xi’s foreign ministry is now seeking to intimidate the Speaker of the House and other Members of Congress just for supporting democracy and self-determination for the people of Taiwan.

This is not how responsible nations act, especially not nations armed with nuclear weapons. We have no choice but to take Xi’s threats seriously. And we have to be resolute in our response.

We need to accelerate our own military modernization. We need to enhance training and readiness in the region. We need to better distribute logistics throughout the Pacific. But we won't prevail in any conflict with the CCP on our own.

We need to expand and strengthen our partnerships in the region. We need to better arm our allies with agreements like AUKUS [Australia, United Kingdom, United States]. And we need to expedite the delivery of arms and training to Taiwan so they can better defend their own democracy.

But most importantly, we need to take action now. China is not going to give us 10 or 20 years to prepare for conflict. We simply cannot procrastinate further.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on their assessment of the threats and what they support in the need—and what they need from this committee to deter China.

And with that, I yield to my friend and colleague the ranking member for any comments he may have.

STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I think you did an excellent job of outlining the threats and the concerns that we have in the—the—in the theater in North Korea and in the Indo-Pacific theater as well more broadly. It is a very challenging part of the world, and one that contains a lot of threats to our national security and to global security without question.

We have our, you know, as the National Defense Strategy says, the pacing threat in China, clearly our largest competitor both economically and militarily.

And right next door we have our most unpredictable rogue threat in North Korea, as you outlined their development of nuclear weapons and the way they are closed off from the rest of world that puts us in a position to not exactly know what the leverage points are to deter them or work with them makes them a significant threat as well.

I appreciate both of our witnesses being with us today to help us walk through that. On North Korea, there is no easy answer to the question. But what is our best deterrent strategy? How do we contain that threat, given the nuclear capabilities that North Korea is developing and the unpredictable nature, how does one reach a
country like North Korea that is so isolated from the rest of the world.

And China is a much broader threat. We will talk a great deal today about Taiwan. And certainly that is the biggest flashpoint, China's militant attitude towards Taiwan, their increasingly aggressive language about possibly reunifying China through military means, something that we must deter.

A conflict there would be devastating for the entire world. We need to figure out how to deter China from taking that aggressive action.

But it is also important to point out Taiwan is but the largest flashpoint. As the chairman alluded to, China is aggressive and bullying across the world in countless ways. As mentioned, they are claiming territory in the sovereign nations of at least a half dozen other countries.

But also the best way to think about the threat that China puts to the world is you cannot criticize China without them launching an economic war against you. And there are a number of examples of this, but Australia is perhaps one of the best.

Back during the pandemic, I think it was sometime in late 2020, Australia dared to suggest that China could perhaps be ever so slightly more transparent in how they were dealing with COVID [coronavirus disease]. In response to that mild criticism, China literally launched an economic war against Australia.

Now, one of the positive outcomes of that was Australia, you know, woke up and said wow, you know, doing business with China is going to be problematic. We better find other allies and partners to deal with that.

But it happens across the world. Lithuania said something about Taiwan that China didn't like, same thing. But even in industry, if anybody in industry says something that China doesn't like, they will use their economic might to pummel that country, or entity.

There was, I think it was the GM [general manager] for the Houston Rockets who said something pro Hong Kong, and the NBA [National Basketball Association] was instantaneously cut off by China. If you are going to make a movie in this world and you want to sell it in China, China has to approve the script, literally, okay. And if they don't, it doesn't get sold there.

The level of aggression that China has to restrict the freedoms of the entire world is I think far greater than most people realize. We need to present an alternative.

Key to that is our presence, us being actively involved in the Indo-Pacific region. I applaud the efforts of the people before us today to make clear that we do that.

President Biden's national security strategy prioritizes China, we are present there, we will continue to be. We need to have that adequate deterrence. But we also need partners and allies.

We look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about those partners and allies. Obviously, you know, Japan, Australia, South Korea, India, the Philippines, Thailand, these are some of the most important.

But all the other players, as I was struck by Indonesia as a place that is just, they are trying to get along with both. How do we work with them to help us in this fight?
Because ultimately, and the final point is, our goal with China has to be peaceful coexistence, which sounds weird given everything we have said about the problems and threats that China presents.

But we are not going to defeat China. China and the U.S. are going to be major global powers for as far as the eye can see. How do we find a way to nudge China back in a more positive, less aggressive, and less bullying direction?

That is ultimately what we have to do. Conflict with China is not inevitable, 100 percent not. We need to figure out how to peacefully coexist with them and deal with the threats that they present in a way that is—keeps the world at peace.

I look forward to the testimony from our witnesses, and I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the ranking member. And now I would like to introduce our witnesses. We have the Honorable Jed Royal is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs; Admiral John Aquilino, the Commander, United States Indo-Pacific Command; and General Paul LaCamera is the Commander, United States—United Nations Command Korea and the U.S. Combined Forces Command, the U.S. Forces Korea.

I welcome our witnesses. And Mr. Royal, we will start with you for 5 minutes to outline your statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. JEDIDIAH P. ROYAL, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INDO–PACIFIC SECURITY AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Mr. Royal, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on what the Department of Defense is doing to safeguard the interests of the American people, our allies, and our partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

I would first like to acknowledge the tireless work of those who serve the U.S. in uniform across the Indo-Pacific, as well as those who serve in the civilian workforce across the Department [of Defense].

The very first words of the Biden-Harris administration——

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Royal, could you pull the microphone a little closer?

Mr. Royal. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. There you go.

Mr. Royal. The very first words of the Biden-Harris administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy state that the U.S. is an Indo-Pacific power. And Secretary Austin has been clear about our commitment to seeking transparency, openness, and accountability; freedom of the seas, skies, and space; and the peaceful resolution of disputes in the region.

That vision and that commitment continue today. The Department does not take this vision for granted. We have seen the PRC [People’s Republic of China] increasingly look to the People’s Liberation Army [PLA] as a tool for coercion in support of its global aims.
The PLA has continued to conduct inherently risky intercepts against U.S., ally, and partner assets in the air and at sea, increasing the risk of an accident. And the PLA continues to conduct coercive military activities in the Taiwan Strait, the South and East China Seas, and beyond.

The PRC high-altitude balloon that violated our airspace earlier this year exemplified the PRC’s disregard for the basic principle of sovereignty at the heart of peace and stability. This is why the National Defense Strategy identifies the PRC as our pacing challenge.

At the same time, North Korea also continues to engage in provocative and destabilizing behavior, climate change will continue to place downward pressure on peace and prosperity across the region, and violent extremism continues to require cooperation with our partners on counterterrorism.

The Department of Defense is doing more than ever to strengthen deterrence and to ensure we can prevail in conflict if necessary. We are deploying the right capabilities now, investing in the capabilities we need in the future, and our budget request shows it.

Efforts like the Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve show how we are quickly delivering promising prototypes to warfighters. And the B-21 Raider, which the Secretary unveiled last year, is a clear example of a new cutting-edge capability.

Here is the bottom line: Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific is real and strong today because the U.S. military remains the world’s most capable and credible fighting force. Major investments like these will help keep it that way.

And the U.S. is not alone in upholding peace and stability in the region by investing in greater capability and connection. We have supported Japan’s decision to increase substantially its defense budget over the next 5 years and to introduce new capabilities, including counterstrike, that will strengthen regional deterrence.

We are taking clear and meaningful steps to modernize and strengthen our alliance with the Republic of Korea. We are working together with the Philippines to accelerate our allied capabilities.

We are making major investments in our defense ties with India and maturing our immensely beneficial security relationship. The AUKUS security pact exemplifies our collaboration with highly capable allies to expand our combined capacity.

Finally, we continue to fulfill our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act, which has formed the bedrock of peace, stability, and deterrence in the Taiwan Strait over the last four decades.

When it comes to modernizing our force posture in the Indo-Pacific to be even more mobile, distributed, lethal, and resilient, the Department of Defense is delivering historic achievements. In December, the U.S. and Australia announced a series of new force posture initiatives, including increased rotations of U.S. bombers and fighters at Australian bases.

In January, the U.S. and Japan announced a series of force posture improvements, including the first forward deployment of a Marine littoral regiment in Japan. Weeks later, the Secretary visited the Philippines and our governments announced that U.S. forces will have access to Philippine military bases in four new strategic locations.
These announcements add up to a historic improvement of our regional force posture. We are operating with allies and partners like never before, with bilateral and multilateral exercises growing in scale, scope, and complexity.

We have deepened our trilateral security efforts with our closest regional allies. We have broadened our initiatives with multilateral partners to deliver real results for peace and security, especially with ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] and the Quad.

States across the Indo-Pacific region are investing in their own capabilities, their connections with regional partners, and their relationships with us. Over the past decade, our five regional treaty allies have increased their military expenditures by double digits. That is what delivering on our shared vision looks like.

In closing, I appreciate the work of this committee, both members and staff, in continuing to sharpen our edge in the face of many challenges. In the past several years we have witnessed the growth of a strong bipartisan consensus around the scale and scope of the China challenge. We are working toward the transformation of that consensus into a coalition built around solutions.

The Department of Defense is deploying the capabilities, driving forward the force posture, and deepening the alliances and partnerships we need to meet our pacing challenge.

Thank you for your time and attention today. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Royal can be found in the Appendix on page 65.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Royal.

Admiral Aquilino, you're recognized.

STATEMENT OF ADM JOHN C. AQUILINO, USN, COMMANDER, U.S. INDO–PACIFIC COMMAND

Admiral AQUILINO. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the committee, first, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss the Indo-Pacific region.

First, just let me say that I appreciate and need your support and your continuous support for the service members, their families, government civilians, and all who operate in the Indo-Pacific Command.

And it is my distinct honor and privilege to serve alongside these brave men and women who execute our missions of deterrence and for defense every day. I can’t thank you enough for all of your support. It is instrumental in our ability to accomplish these missions. But there is more to do, and we must act with a greater sense of urgency.

Every day, INDOPACOM works tirelessly to prevent conflict, not provoke it. War is not inevitable and it is not imminent. However, this decade presents a period of increased risk, and I say that for the following reasons, and they are real.

The illegitimate, illegal invasion and the war in Ukraine. The military buildup and malign behavior of the PRC, including a no-limits relationship articulated as a partnership with Russia. Continuous missile provocations and nuclear rhetoric by the DPRK
Democratic People's Republic of Korea]. And the constant threat of violent extremism in this theater.

Our National Defense Strategy identifies the PRC as the most consequential strategic competitor of the United States. And it is the only competitor capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological capabilities to mount a sustained challenge in an attempt to displace the United States and the rules-based international order.

“Seize the Initiative” is INDOPACOM’s approach to execute the National Defense Strategy and accomplish our priorities: defend the homeland, deter strategic attacks, deter aggression, and build a resilient joint force. By design, this approach prevents conflict through integrated deterrence, and it ensures we can fight and win should deterrence fail.

Lastly, it provides the Secretary of Defense and the President options for any contingency.

There are four key elements to Seize the Initiative. First, a robust theater posture. Second, a joint operations campaign comprised of lethal, persistent forces forward. Third, technologically superior capabilities to maintain our warfighting advantages in the near, mid, and long term.

And fourth, an enhanced network of allies, partners, and friends with common values and goals.

We respectfully request your continued support for these focus areas, recognizing that any delay in one area directly affects the others and puts the overall success of our deterrence efforts at risk.

I say it again, conflict in the Indo-Pacific is not inevitable. But we cannot rest on our past accomplishments to secure a peaceful future. Security challengers threaten our very way of life, as well as the peace and prosperity that the rules-based international order has enabled for nearly 80 years.

The investments we make today will allow future generations to enjoy the same legacy of liberty our ancestors entrusted to us. But we don’t have the luxury of time. We must act now to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Thanks, Chairman, I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Aquilino can be found in the Appendix on page 74.]

STATEMENT OF GEN PAUL J. LaCAMERA, USA, COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND; COMMANDER, UNITED STATES—REPUBLIC OF KOREA COMBINED FORCES COMMAND; AND COMMANDER, U.S. FORCES KOREA

General LaCamera. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, the distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as the Commander of United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and the United States Forces Korea to discuss the current situation on the Korean peninsula.

Korea is as important today as it was in 1950 when the international rules-based order was first challenged and successfully de-
fended on the Korean peninsula. Located on the Asian continent, the Republic of Korea is crucial to regional and global security.

When North Korean communist forces invaded South Korea with the blessing and assistance of the Soviet Union and China, the United States, along with 22 members of the United Nation, stood together with the South Korean people to expel the aggressors. The Korean War taught us that we must always be ready and forward-postured with our allies.

To ensure continued peace and stability on the peninsula, I have five priorities that are nested within the Indo-Pacific commander’s Seize the Initiative approach to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

My first priority is to defend the homelands, the United States and our allies. The Korean War has not ended, we are in armistice, and the Kim regime has developed capabilities that reach beyond Seoul, Tokyo, Washington, DC, and the capitals of the United Nation command sending states.

By defending forward in this strategic location, we better protect our people and the Korean people. Defending forward reinforces our ironclad commitment to the Republic of Korea.

My second priority is to strengthen the United States and the Republic of Korea alliance. We must never take the alliance for granted. This is our center of gravity in deterring the Kim regime. The alliance has effectively deterred the Kim regime’s resumption of large-scale aggression for almost 70 years, allowing security and stability to flourish and the Republic of Korea to develop into an economically prosperous, vibrant democracy.

In contrast, the Kim regime ignores the needs and rights of the great majority of its population and continues to invest its resources in developing weapons that it uses as leverage. External leverage coerces concessions from the international community; internal leverage maintains control of the people and ensures Kim regime survival.

My third priority is to prepare for combat. This is decisive. Our alliance alone cannot deter aggression. Our power of resistance deters.

Maintaining the highest state of combat readiness is our main effort. Because readiness is perishable, we must continue realistic training in order to respond to aggression and defend our homelands.

My fourth priority is to build coalitions to dissuade aggression in the region. Our network of allies and partners with common interests on the Korean peninsula represents our greatest asymmetric advantage.

My fifth priority is to ensure our personnel are taken care of and prepared to execute our mission on the Korean peninsula. Mission first, people always. Our people serving on the Asian continent have the extraordinary responsibility of providing security and stability throughout the Republic of Korea and Northeast Asia.

Our focus remains taking care of the mental, physical, and spiritual needs of our service members, civilians, and families. Since 1953, the United States and the Republic of Korea remain ready to deter and respond to North Korean aggression. Our mutual de-
The Force Protection of the United States and the Republic of Korea

The Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953 expresses our common desire to live in peace with all peoples and governments.

It also expresses our common determination to defend ourselves against external armed attack so that no potential aggressor could be under the impression that either the United States or the Republic of Korea stands alone in the Pacific area.

While the United States and the Republic of Korea alliance began out of military necessity, it has evolved to become the linchpin of stability and prosperity in Northeast Asia.

The soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Guardians, civilians, and contractors are proof of our ironclad commitment to the alliance and ensures that the authoritarian regimes of North Korea, China, and Russia cannot unmake the international rules-based order.

Should the Kim regime resume hostilities, with your continued support, we are ready. I am proud to serve with them and am honored to represent them before you. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General LaCamera can be found in the Appendix on page 117.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General. I thank all the witnesses.

We are now going to move into the question period. And I want to emphasize to the members, but also to the witnesses, we have a 5-minute time limit.

You should have a clock in front of your microphone. At 5 minutes, I will cut off any answer, so you might want to be succinct. I don't want to be rude, but I want to treat everybody the same when it comes to answers, questions and answer period. And that applies to the chairman and the ranking member as well.

So I will recognize myself first.

Mr. Royal and Admiral Aquilino, what actions do we need to take in the near term to improve Taiwan's self-defense capability?

Mr. Royal. Congressman, thanks for that question. The interest of the Department is very strongly connected with the ability of the United States to meet the Taiwan Relations Act. The Taiwan Relations Act has been the foundation of deterrence in the Taiwan Strait over the last 40 years.

We need to make sure that Taiwan is, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, is able to defend itself. And we are looking here, sir, at the opportunity for Taiwan to understand what threat is posed against the Taiwan Strait.

In this regard, ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] command and control battle management systems are absolutely critical. Taiwan also certainly needs to be able to make sure that any invading force is caught dead in its tracks in the strait as it comes across to be able to defend at the beaches and to be able to be resilient in depth on island.

The CHAIRMAN. Admiral Aquilino.

Admiral Aquilino. Thanks, Chairman. Every day we execute our responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act. The training that is required, the capabilities that have been identified by the Honorable Nelson are critical in getting them to the island as soon and as fast as possible is critical.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. I think the ranking member would agree with me that we are very confident that we will get a NDAA [Na-
tional Defense Authorization Act], a bipartisan national defense authorization passed not only out of committee in a timely fashion, but out of the floor and then the conference report.

There is more dialog in the Congress about the difficulty we are going to have in achieving appropriations bills in a timely fashion. And the consequence of Congress not achieving a timely and fulsome appropriations bill would mean a 2-year CR [continuing resolution] possibly.

And my question is this: Admiral Aquilino, you have said repeatedly in the public and talked about your need to go fast to help prepare us for conflict in your command, INDOPACOM. If you were to have a 2-year CR, would you able to go fast in trying to prepare for conflict in your theater?

Admiral AQUILINO. Chairman, a CR of any length is devastating to the Department of Defense, specifically for Indo-Pacific Command. Maneuvering in the industrial space, providing those capabilities we just talked about at pace and at speed, any new starts, loss of buying power, there are critical disadvantages to a CR.

Again, my assessment is it would be devastating.

The CHAIRMAN. So I would take that as a no.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. The ranking member is recognized.

Mr. S MITH. Thank you. Just two questions. One, General Lacamera, what role do you see China playing in the North Korea challenge, both positive and negative in terms of containing that threat?

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Congressman. I don't see anything on the Korean peninsula that does not involve Chinese and Russian involvement with DPRK, and quite frankly with the ROK [Republic of Korea]. They have put economic pressure on the Republic of Korea in the past. And but, they also have their own people that are stationed in the Republic of Korea.

So in a NEO [noncombatant evacuations operation] operation, getting them off the peninsula I think would be in their best interest.

Mr. SMITH. What would they do to put pressure on North Korea to not continue, to not do nuclear tests, to not to continue them?

Are they just going to monitor it, or is there something that, you know, where if North Korea did this, China would leverage North Korea to try to get them at least somewhat under control? Or is China just going to go, not our thing?

General LACAMERA. No, they have—they are a treaty—they're their only treaty ally.

Mr. SMITH. Right.

General LACAMERA. The borders are back open, so there is goods that are coming back and forth across the border. I think they can put pressure on DPRK in that respect.

Mr. SMITH. Okay. And Admiral Aquilino, when you look at the broader China threat in terms of our allies and partners, can you sort of walk us through that world of those partners? I believe we have five treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific region.

But then you also have a lot of other countries that are navigating the world between the U.S. and China and Russia. And that
is the piece that I find most interesting about this, the way this plays out.

If we are going to be successful in both containing the threat from China and Russia and hopefully nudging them towards a more cooperative rules-based approach to resolving differences, we are going to need the Indias, the Indonesias, Vietnam.

So what does that look like and what is your strategy for trying to get as much help as possible out of all of the countries in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yeah, thanks, Congressman. Certainly foundational to our strategic deterrence approach and integrated deterrence is the allies and partners, and it is an asymmetric advantage.

Let me just say that the strategy and approach is competition, not containment. And the five treaty allies of Japan, Korea, Australia, Philippines, and Thailand are foundational, right. Those are mutual defense treaties that stand through Senate ratification and are truly important.

But our approach is to pull in as many additional allies through a set of layers of mini- and multi-lateral engagements, operations, and work we do together for a variety of reasons.

Number one, we are like-minded nations with common values. We have deep people-to-people ties, and that is beyond just the treaty allies. Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, all the nations in the region, and we operate and exercise with them frequently, 120 exercises a year. Deep engagements in the form of key leader and other events.

So pulling that layer together, Congressman, is really important. And it is the asymmetric advantage, because it is the one thing China doesn't have, and that is partners.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Colorado, Mr. Lamborn.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having this hearing. Thank you all for being here.

Admiral Aquilino, one of my top priorities is accelerating our work on offensive and defensive hypersonic capabilities. China’s significant investments in their hypersonics, which they view as an important element of their regional warfighting strategy, are extremely troubling.

Their progress is undeniable. In 2021, they did an around-the-world fractional orbital bombardment demonstration. They have intermediate-range hypersonic capability that can hit targets thousands of miles away and possibly penetrate our defenses.

And by contrast, our progress has been slow and has lacked urgency. And I think we need if not quantitative parity, at least qualitative parity.

Can you share the challenges you face in deterring China based on their current superiority in hypersonics, and what is your best military advice on the need for the U.S. to field these hypersonic capabilities?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. So again, in alignment with the theme that I have starred here today, we need to go faster, right. The concerning part about the PRC is both the pace, the speed, and the advanced capabilities that they continue
to deliver and demonstrate. And to deliver a credible deterrent, we certainly need the ability to counter and/or exceed.

Currently, our military far exceeds anything China can deliver. In this particular lane, we need to go faster.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you. What can you tell us here in open session about what you know about their plans for hypersonics in this decade?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think we would have to take that in a classified hearing, Congressman.

Mr. LAMBORN. Okay, we will follow up on that. Also, Admiral, the pace of China’s strategic nuclear breakout has been, as former STRATCOM [U.S. Strategic Command] Commander Admiral Richards said, breathtaking.

We have learned recently that they have three new intercontinental ballistic missile fields. They have more mobile and land-based launchers for ICBMs than the U.S. They are working with Russia to produce plutonium now.

So how should we respond to China’s nuclear—ongoing nuclear breakout?

Admiral AQUILINO. So, sir, the speed at which the Chinese are delivering nuclear capability is certainly concerning. And Admiral Richards, and now General Cotton and I have had multiple conversations.

One thing we ought to be concerned about, the Chinese narrative is that the United States is beginning a nuclear arms races in the Indo-Pacific. And the only nation that is delivering a nuclear arms race in the Indo-Pacific is China. You just articulated the foundation and the speed and capabilities they are delivering.

So for the United States, our best strategy is to ensure that our force is modernized, and that we are able to hold a superior nuclear deterrent, as required.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thanks, Admiral. I will also point out, as you would agree, that the U.S. and Russia have engaged and are entering into, have entered into nuclear treaties, but not China.

General LaCamera, can you describe the challenges you face to maintain deterrence on the Korean peninsula, giving their—given the North Korean regime’s ongoing missile testing and capabilities?

General LaCAMERA. Thanks, Congressman. Our focus is on building readiness and focusing on all the warfighting functions in all the domains. Making sure that we are bringing in, you know, joint combined. So the focus is peace through strength and focusing on combat readiness.

But also working with the interagency, because it is not just a military solution.

Mr. LAMBORN. Okay, thank you. Now, Assistant Secretary Royal, given the discussion we have just had about Chinese and North Korean nuclear ambitions, I am amazed that the Administration’s fiscal year 2024 budget request once again attempts to cancel out funding for the Nuclear Sea-Launched Cruise Missile. I will call it SLCM–N.

And I expect and hope that Congress will once again overrule that impulse and continue the funding and research on this, and do—on this critical capability.
So, stepping back, how is the Biden administration going to address the growing Chinese nuclear threat? I hope it is not by canceling out other programs. How are we going to address these growing threats, and North Korea as well?

Mr. ROYAL. The Nuclear Posture Review is quite clear-eyed in its approach to these challenges. We understand them fully. In the President’s budget submission, we included $38 billion to modernize the nuclear triad. And we continue to look hard at our overall force posture, nuclear force posture and readiness.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman’s time has expired.

The Chair would like to recognize one of our former colleagues, a long-term member of this committee, John Kline, Colonel Kline. Good to be with—have you back with us.

Now we’ll go to, recognize Mr. Courtney for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Just one quick point regarding the sea-launched missiles. Last year’s budget, we actually included $25 million to have a fully thorough investigation by the Navy in terms of just the costs as well as the benefits of that program.

So there is no—whatever sort of is out there, we did not kill that program. But we really need to understand with our eyes wide open what the operational impact will be for our ships and submarines if we start installing nuclear warheads on, you know, attack subs or other ships.

Admiral Aquilino, in your testimony, you inventoried all the new cooperation that is going on with allies in the Indo-Pacific region over the last year. And I am very impressed, even within the last few months it is really quite striking in terms of how quickly things are moving out there.

Last month, at Naval Base Point Loma, President Biden, Australia Prime Minister Albanese, and U.K. [United Kingdom] Prime Minister Sunak released the, what they called the optimal pathway to implement AUKUS, which will include transferring to Australia conventional armed nuclear-powered submarines.

Congress has work to do in terms of enabling that execution of the agreement in terms of just dealing with export controls and other issues there. But from your standpoint, can you state what the strategic benefit of this arrangement is in terms of sharing these precious assets?

I mean, we are recapitalizing our own submarine fleet at the same time. But again, can you just sort of talk about what you see as the value of that arrangement?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Congressman. Well, we articulated the concern for the strategic environment, right, as the PRC takes more aggressive actions. I think all of our partners are seeing that same activity, and it has got them concerned.

So our work with both Australia and the United Kingdom as it applies to sharing some of our most sensitive technology in the form of nuclear propulsion and nuclear-powered submarines is a really large step.

So as it applies to deterrence effect, additional nations with the capabilities that we have being completely interoperable at any point over the globe brings a strong deterrent value to the problem.
Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you. And I think as you know, I mean, the last time we did this was with—and we have only done it once, was with one country, and that was in 1958. So I mean, obviously this is a huge step.

And again, can you just talk about Australia’s, you know, position regarding stewardship of these submarines, which is going to require obviously some training up to, you know, for their navy. But also just again their commitment to, again, complying with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But and also having their own sovereign control over that fleet.

Admiral AQUILINO. Congressman, so as we know, Australia is one of our strongest partners and allies. They have shared blood and treasure with us for over 100 years in every conflict that we have ever been in. Again, when you talk about people-to-people ties, they are deep. Our values, our interests.

So, having the Australians as a part of this program, I have no worries at all about, you know, losing that technology elsewhere. They will treat it at the highest level. We also treat other technologies with the Australians as it applies to space and cyber in the same kind of vein.

So I have no concerns about Australia taking this on and being able to be successful. And from my position, we are taking actions every day to ensure that we can deliver it as soon as possible.

Mr. COURTNEY. Well, thank you. And again, your comments about moving faster, you know, I think also applies to Congress in terms of really getting these authorities aligned so this thing can really move in the—at the speed it requires.

Mr. Royal, you also mentioned the AUKUS agreement in your testimony. And you know, one other part of the President’s budget that came over was new funding, additional funding, $640 million, for submarine industrial base capacity. Last year we actually put $750 million. That is again, workforce, supply chain, and facility.

Again, can you talk about really how this is a critical piece of making sure that both our Navy and also that the AUKUS agreement can be, you know, have the capacity it needs?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, your point is spot on with respect to resilience of the submarine industrial base. We believe that the budget submission there represents a sense of urgency with respect to maintaining the readiness of that force.

I am also proud that Australia has now committed to invest in the defense industrial base for submarines as well, to the tune of $3 billion, and we are very confident that they will deliver on that.

This represents a historic opportunity for us to be able to put increasing assets in the undersea domain and strengthen the interoperability with our closest allies. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Wittman, for 5 minutes.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank our witnesses for joining us today.

Admiral Aquilino, I want to begin with you. First of all, thanks so much for your leadership there in the Indo-Pacific Command. That is an incredibly challenging time. We want to make sure we continue the effort to deter the Chinese Communist Party and
make sure we can continue to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

We also want to make sure too that the CCP and, for that matter Beijing, don’t test our determination to make sure the Indo-Pacific stays as a free and open place in the world.

I always think back to your predecessor’s testimony here in 2021, when Admiral Davidson said that he believed that China would make their move to reunify with Taiwan forcefully by 2027.

So I want to revisit that a little bit, and I want to ask, in your best professional military judgment, do you anticipate that Beijing will attempt to by force seek reunification with Taiwan before 2027?

Admiral AQUILINO. So Congressman, after having worked for Admiral Davidson, I know he came up with 2027. It was based on what Xi Jinping said, which was the challenge to his military to be prepared to execute a task by 2027. That was foundationally the approach of his comments.

Now, for me, it doesn’t matter what the timeline is. The Secretary could’ve given me this mission today. So I’m responsible to prevent this conflict today, and if deterrence were to fail, to be able to fight and win.

Mr. WITTMAN. Let me ask this, then. In your best professional military judgment, based on the buildup of the Chinese Communist Party and all their military assets and where we are today with what we bring to the table across the joint force, do you believe that the threat today is greater than it has been in the past?

Admiral AQUILINO. I believe that the trends for the threat are in the wrong direction.

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay.

Admiral AQUILINO. There is no doubt about that. But I will tell you, Congressman, that the United States military is ready today for any contingency.

Mr. WITTMAN. As you see the future of where China is going and where the United States is going, when do you think the balance of forces will be such that it could, it could motivate China to say here is our opportunity?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yeah, I am not sure that it is a balance of forces issue. I think there is a ton of variables on what might motivate President Xi Jinping to take that action, Congressman. And it is our job to convince him every day that it would be a bad choice.

Mr. WITTMAN. What is the most effective thing that we as the United States can do across the spectrum, strategically, economically, you name it, that has the greatest chance of deterring the Chinese Communist Party from forcefully reunifying Taiwan?

Admiral AQUILINO. As I stated, I think the PRC has taken on a whole-of-government approach to achieve their objectives. Again, diplomatic, military, informational, economic. And I think it is worth—now for me, I own the military piece in support of the Secretary.
I think our approach and what we have laid out delivers a deterrent effect. The entire whole-of-government approaching it the same way would be good.

And some of those things have occurred. The CHIPS [Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors and Science] Act, supported by the Congress, was extremely effective. The ability to protect technologies that are sensitive and important to the United States is important.

So we just need to compete across the entire spectrum, understanding that our security challenger will.

Mr. Wittman. Got you. Based on your best professional military judgment, do you believe that with everything that we are doing, that we will be able to effectively deter China, not only now, but also in the future?

Admiral Aquilino. I do. China is a near-, mid-, and long-term challenge for us. So we need to deter today, tomorrow, and the next day. And I do believe we are doing that, sir.

Mr. Wittman. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The Chairman. I thank the gentleman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Garamendi, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Garamendi. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentleman, thank you very much for your testimony, for your work, and for your commitment.

Two lines of questioning. We have discussed the allies in the Pacific in some detail, and thank you very much for making that clear and the importance of it. But we have not yet discussed another set of potential allies in the area, and these are the Freely Associated States—Palau, Marshall Islands, and Micronesia.

Mr. Royal, could you please talk to this issue, what we need to do in that regard? And then Admiral Aquilino, if you could follow up.

Mr. Royal. Congressman, thank you. We enjoy a substantial relationship with the Freely Associated States. I think that we have been extended some very favorable military terms. We have just completed some memoranda of agreement with these states for future access basing with the U.S. military.

This is an extraordinary relationship that we share with them. And in fact, I would just point out, their participation per capita in the U.S. military is higher than anywhere—any other part of the United States. And so we are very grateful for their service involved here.

We have the funding package that we have put forward onto the— to Capitol Hill here to make sure that we can continue this arrangement going forward, and would ask for Congress’ support with that funding package.

Mr. Garamendi. And that is also Palau, Marshall Islands, Micronesia?

Mr. Royal. Yes, sir.

Mr. Garamendi. Very good. Admiral.

Admiral Aquilino. Yes, sir. So I just got back from Yap and Pohnpei. As was stated, the amount of people who have served in the United States military, I met with about 25 people. I think 15 of them of them had service. Really impressive.
That said, we defend the Freely Associated States as if they are the U.S. homeland. So that history goes back. They were critical to our success in World War II. They are critical, and they are strategically located. So it is really important we get this agreement done.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Very good, thank you. I would like now to turn to the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, $11—$11½ billion authorized in 2023.

Admiral, if you could bring us up to date on the usefulness of that. What else you might need, or how you are deploying that $11½ billion.

Admiral Aquilino. Thank you, sir. So as you know, this body has passed a law that requires me to submit an independent assessment identifying the capabilities and the needs from INDOPACOM to support both the deterrence and defend-the-nation mission.

And as a part of this year's 1254, we identified the requirements as needed. That language articulates that INDOPACOM should provide that input to inform a PDI [Pacific Deterrence Initiative]. And as PDI is calculated inside of the Department, my needs were identified and recognized.

Mr. GARAMENDI. In the upcoming NDAA, do you have recommendations for enhancement, modification, changes in the language or authorities?

Admiral Aquilino. I don't, sir. I think the articulation as it applies I think meets both the intent of this body, and I am glad to provide my requirements.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Scott, for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here. Ranking Member Smith started talking about China and partnerships and how they conduct themselves. And you know, it is pretty clear to those of us on this committee and paying attention that China, Communist China, operates in the best interest of Communist China without regard for who they hurt or any of the rules.

And I have every faith in the world that if a situation kicked off with Taiwan, that between the United States and our partners, we could win that.

I am concerned, as the PRC has this whole-of-government, whole-of-world approach, though, that they are embedding themselves into the U.S. economy in such a way that even if we win the war, it would destroy our economy inside the United States.

And Admiral Aquilino, are you aware that less than 15 days after Communist China flew the spy balloon over the United States, that Ford Motor Company announced a multibillion dollar deal with Communist China to purchase their battery technology?

Admiral Aquilino. I did read something about that, Congressman.

Mr. SCOTT. I think we have to be very careful when we use the heavy hand of government. But I will tell you, if corporate America is going to, less than 15 days after Communist China does that to the United States, announce a multibillion dollar partnership with Communist China, I do think that the DOD [Department of De-
fense] needs to reach out to corporate America and say you know what, if you buy that technology from China, the DOD is not going to buy that technology from you.

And I just think this is one of those few instances where we are going to have to use that heavy hand to press back on corporate America and how deep they continue to embed themselves with Communist China and the financial ties there.

Every faith in the world in our ability to beat China in a war. I am not sure how we do it if our—if corporate America continues to get in bed with them like that.

But I want to, with that said, Mr. Royal, I'm concerned—Admiral Aquilino said that the trend was moving in the wrong direction. I am concerned it is moving in the wrong direction.

I was a little taken aback at the President of France going, with everything going on between Russia and China right now in their alliance in Ukraine, I was a little taken aback that the President of France went and sat down with Xi Jinping. Is he trying to protect France's investments in Africa? What is going on there?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, we were in touch with the French counterparts during the course of that visit and we have been in touch with our European allies very closely about the challenges that we see the PRC representing in the Indo-Pacific region.

We are very much impressed with the nature and the trend of the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] strategic concept and the way that it describes the PRC challenge to Europe. We have also seen progress in the EU's [European Union's] new white paper and the way that they talk about China as well.

So we believe that the conversation with Europe is advancing with respect to the nature of this challenge. And we also appreciate the fact that the French are sending surface combatants into the region and sailing where international law allows in the Indo-Pacific region.

Mr. SCOTT. But he did take, I mean, Europe is one thing. France is a part of Europe. But what Macron did, it seemed to be selfish and individualistic and not in the best interests of what is happening in the world at this stage. Are you defending him?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, I am not defending President Macron or any other European leader. I am telling you that our relationship with Europe is strong. We continue to advance the dialog and the discourse about the nature of the PRC threat. And we are seeing positive trend lines there in our engagement throughout Europe.

Mr. SCOTT. Okay. Well, I just, I want to—I want you to know I have every faith in the world in our ability to handle China militarily.

I'm very concerned about what I saw, I think Ford Motor Company is the best example, where less than 15 days after the Chinese flew a spy balloon across the United States targeting U.S. military installations, Ford Motor Company—and for the record, I drive an F–350, I am a Ford guy—partners with Communist China on their battery technology.

And I think that we have to bust those alliances between corporate America and Communist China. With that, I yield.
The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Gallego, for 5 minutes.

Mr. GALLEGOL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Royal, in your written testimony you highlighted the increasingly provocative conventional military activity that the PLA is conducting. I am also concerned about the threat in the gray zone and believe that irregular warfare training in the region and especially in Taiwan is crucial.

Do you believe the Department has the authorities it needs for special operations forces to collaborate with allies and partners in irregular warfare? And where can we further deepen or expand irregular warfare programs with allied and partner forces in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. Royal. Thank you, Congressman. Our special operations forces amount to a real strategic advantage for the United States. They complement and enable the strategy that we have articulated through the National Defense Strategy, and our budget reflects the importance and the value that they bring to the Indo-Pacific region.

It is important right now for us to focus on how we modernize our special operations forces, making sure that they are well-connected to the other components in the Department. And that they focus on that enabling capability going forward. But we believe that that is well-captured within the budget submission.

Mr. GALLEGOL. Thank you, Mr. Royal. As a follow-up, I also want to ask you about Chinese disinformation efforts in the region.

Have you seen a change in the approach to how the CCP conducts disinformation campaigns since the start of Russia's second invasion of Ukraine? And what lessons do you believe China is drawing from Russia's example in the disinformation space?

Mr. Royal. Congressman, I think some of that discussion is best left to a classified session. I will say that the PRC has demonstrated a significant appetite in its coercion campaign, and that is certainly inclusive of a misinformation/disinformation effort associated with that.

If we look at the high-altitude balloon, to me that is a very good example of the kind of intrusion that you are looking—that the PRC is undertaking in a variety of domains right now.

Mr. GALLEGOL. Okay. Admiral Aquilino, thank you for your testimony. I want to ask you about the no-limits strategic partnership between Russia and China that you referenced in your written statement.

Can you talk about what this enhanced relationship means in practice for military forces in the region, and is there a tangible effect on the security situation in the Indo-Pacific that we have noticed or we will be noticing?

Admiral Aquilino. Thanks, Congressman. This kind of ties to a couple of your questions here to Jed, because this is a different space, right.

Two large authoritarian nations coming together in an attempt to change the world order in ways that are beneficial to authoritarian governments vice the rest of the world. That is a pretty concerning space to be in.

Whether it is impact into the U.N. [United Nations] or ability to stifle any, you know, agreements that go forward, that is the ap-
They have no friends. They have identified that it is better if they are together in order to achieve their strategic objectives. That is a concerning world.

It ties directly to the misinformation/disinformation question. The PRC has been echoing Chinese, or excuse me, Russian disinformation in direct support, articulating that the war was—their war against Ukraine was derived from an expansion of NATO. Just not true.

So, misinformation, disinformation in today’s day and age is concerning, weaving through that mess, and the PRC have a million-man propaganda arm to generate it.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, and I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee, Dr. DesJarlais, for 5 minutes.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Royal, on three separate occasions we have seen President Biden commit the United States to the defense of Taiwan in a potential conflict with China, only to see his comments walked back by those in his administration.

So I would ask who is driving policy in this administration on China and Taiwan? Is it the President of the United States, or unelected bureaucrats and appointees within the State Department, Pentagon, and White House?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, the Department stands by the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances as the foundation of our relationship with Taiwan. We continue to believe that our relationship there is aided well by the relationship we have.

We have maintained it on a variety of levels with key leader engagements and tight, cohesive understanding of one another’s defense requirements. And we spend a lot of time talking about the PRC pacing challenge as we are observing it operate in the region.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay, well, we like to talk about strategic ambiguity. Do you think President Xi has been ambiguous at all in his intentions on Taiwan?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, we agree with you that President Xi has been very assertive in his approach to conducting a coercion campaign against Taiwan. We believe that he does intend to build a capable force that could stand to threaten Taiwan over time.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. And would you agree that our Commander in Chief has been pretty clear in his position on the United States commitments to the defense of Taiwan?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, I believe that the President has been clear with his intentions. I certainly wouldn’t want to speak for him.

I will say again that the Taiwan Relations Act continues to guide our engagement with Taiwan, including supporting their self-defense and making sure that we are in a position, as the United States military, to counter any coercive activity in the region.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. What I struggle with on this committee when I go back home and talk to constituents, and I have heard other members say the same thing, is how do we message things like China/Taiwan, how do we message Russia and Ukraine. And it
seems when we don’t really know what the endgame is, it is hard to do that.

We have asked specifically what is the endgame in Ukraine, and there’s not a clear answer. Is there a clear answer for what the endgame would be if China invades Taiwan?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, I won’t engage in hypotheticals on future invasions. I will say that invasion is neither imminent nor inevitable. And the work that we are doing in the Department every single day is to focus on deterrence. And we do that by increasing our lethality, our posture, and our readiness.

We will continue to operate by the Taiwan Relations Act. And we will continue to work on counter-coercion readiness within the U.S. military to do that, and to ensure that we are supporting Taiwan in their ability to defend themselves.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. But we seem to be struggling within the military on recruiting and other issues and morale. And I think maybe a lot of it is due to strategic ambiguity and nobody really knows what’s going on within our military.

We seem unclear about what our strategy in Ukraine is. We are getting mixed message from our Commander in Chief and our State Department and Pentagon on China/Taiwan.

In the past, I remember Presidents going on TV and addressing the Nation. We can only reach so many people from within this committee or Congress, and you guys have the same challenges.

I mean, would it be important for the President to go on TV and maybe address the Nation on what is happening in Ukraine, what our strategy is there, and what our strategy would be? And let President Xi know clearly where the United States stands, and maybe some of our allies would come along.

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, I will defer to the White House on the President’s on-air time. Again, I think that the President is asking us to do the daily job of deterrence. And that he has submitted a budget that represents a real qualitative investment in our ability to maintain deterrence in the region.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. The saber-rattling about blockades in the Taiwan Strait and certainly China’s aggression in the South China Sea, we know that, you know, half the world trade goes through that area.

It seems like, as Representative Scott mentioned a minute ago, what corporations are doing financially with China may be the best way to get their attention. And certainly they can have a blockade of things coming it.

Is it possible we could have a blockade of things going out? I know it would impact all of us financially, but if—the best way to win this pending war is to not fight it.

So I guess I would just like to see more unification of our allies, more talk from Japan, Australia, and people who are committed. And maybe a better strategy economically to help deter China. But deterrence did not work with Russia, and I hope we can do better moving forward with China/Taiwan.

And I thank you for you all being here today.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman’s time has expired. Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Khanna, for 5 minutes.
Mr. K HANNA. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Admiral Aquilino, thank you for your leadership. You have spoken about the importance of the strategic relationship with India.

I co-chair with Michael Waltz the U.S.-India Caucus. And on April 26, we have a major summit with Secretary Mattis, the ambassadors, others. I hope if you are in the country you may be able to participate or send someone. But I would like you to reflect on the importance of the relationship post-colonialism.

India and China had a relationship to emerge as the Asian voice. But that relationship now has really soured with a concern that there should not be a hegemon in Asia and that China is treating other countries as junior partners. It seems to me that gives us an opportunity to ensure that China doesn't emerge as a hegemon, to strengthen the relationship with India. And I would like to get your thoughts.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. So we value our partnership with India, and we have been increasing it and doing a lot more over time. They have the same primary security challenger that we do, and it is real on their northern border.

Two skirmishes now over the past 9 or 10 months on that border as they continue to get pressurized by the PRC for border gains. So we have the same security challengers. We also have the desire to operate together based on they're the world's largest democracy.

We have common values and we also have people-to-people ties for a number of years. I met with General Chauhan, my counterpart at the Raisina Dialogue not long ago. I have been to India five times now in the past 2 years.

So the importance of that relationship can't be overstated. We operate together frequently with the Quad nations. Again, the Quad is not a security agreement.

It is diplomatic and economic. But the Quad nations come together often to operate together in multiple exercises. So we continue to work to be interoperable and to expand the relationship.

Mr. K HANNA. And I appreciate that. And we will follow up with your office if you are in the country or have someone for the April 26 summit. One question, I was out with Representative Mike Gallagher who chairs the China Select Committee, and we were out at Stanford.

And I was struck by Oriana Skylar Mastro who is a professor there. And she wrote in the paper, The Taiwan Temptation, a concern that are we deployed enough, do we have the capability if there was a blockade or an invasion of Taiwan. And in this article, she makes the argument that we don't, that we don't have enough long-range missiles to actually shoot down Chinese ships and that this makes our deterrence weak. I mean, I am not summarizing in all detail, but that was the gist of it. Do you have a sense, or anyone on the panel, if that is accurate, do we need more capability to make sure we have effective deterrence?

Admiral AQUILINO. So today, Congressman, let me just articulate that the INDOPACOM command is ready and prepared for any contingency. That said, as we talked about before, the challenger is moving fast, experimenting and delivering additional capabilities. And I think that the Department's budget as it applies and again I have given my 1254 report to articulate the capabilities
that I think I need. So the delivery of those and again at speed and as fast as possible I believe would continue that deterrence both today and into the future.

Mr. ROYAL. Mr. Congressman, I would add that we are deeply interested in seeing increasing responsiveness from the U.S. defense industrial base. This budget puts a lot of money into making sure that our defense industrial base is even more competitive, including $30 billion towards munitions, Tomahawk, LRASM [Long Range Anti-Ship Missile], SM–6, and others and $11 billion towards hyper- and subsonic weapon systems as well. So we are building, including through the multiyear procurement authority that Congress has now provided to the Department, a deeper stock of munitions within the defense industrial base to meet the challenge you described.

Mr. KHANNA. Thank you. I would just say that from my perspective, the more we can do to have effective deterrence that China understands, the better in terms of avoiding war. And so I would be interested in hearing how we can have the most effective deterrence possible. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. Gallagher, for 5 minutes.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, the fiscal year 2023 NDAA directs DOD to conduct war games, tabletop exercises, and most importantly, operational exercises with Taiwan’s armed forces. I sort of view this as the least expensive way to build operational expertise and create a force capable of deterring an adversary. When can we expect to see the first exercises between the U.S. Navy and Air Force and their Taiwanese counterparts?

Admiral AQUILINO. So Congressman, thanks. I would like to talk to you in a classified hearing about the schedule for our operations. I think that would be most beneficial.

Mr. GALLAGHER. I guess in an unclassified setting, when you wargame these scenarios, put aside the operational exercises, are you assuming some level of interoperability with Taiwanese forces?

Admiral AQUILINO. Absolutely, both. As you know how war games work, right, you can pick the time. We can wargame what does today look like, what does 2 years from now, what does 4 years from now look like. So we look at all those in order to ensure that we’ve got a broad view and we leave no holes in our understanding and analysis.

Mr. GALLAGHER. While we are on the subject of wargaming, tomorrow night, the Subcommittee on the Chinese Communist Party is going to be conducting a war game. And I think for a lot of our members, it will be an opportunity to participate in a war game that haven’t done that before. It is going to be Taiwan focused, Indo-Pacific focused.

Usually when we run these war games, one thing quickly becomes apparent. We go Winchester on critical weapon systems. We run out of long-range fires in particular.

I would be curious to get your view on that. What worries you about the stockpiles of long-range fires that we have west of the International Date Line? And what do you think is our best way to start replenishing our stockpiles to make sure that you have what you need in theater prior to the shooting starting?
Admiral Aquilino. So thanks, Congressman. First, let me just make sure—I want to make sure how you know I look at war games, right? Wargaming is a learning objective. So when people talk about, hey, who one, who lost, wargaming is not about that. It is about learning and understanding vulnerabilities, strengths, and helps you go forward and figure out how to adjust and what you might need.

So when you go into this event, I hope looking at it in the same way. With regard to the munitions piece, again, I would like to talk in a classified setting over the specific issues. That said, I am not too worried as it applies to our ability to deter and then deliver effective contingency operations if required.

Mr. Gallagher. You are not too worried?

Aquilino. I am not worried. What I would like is the acceleration of those things identified in the budget. And in my 1254 report, I have made those requirements be known.

Mr. Gallagher. Interesting. So even in a scenario that goes kinetic, you are not worried about the sufficiency of our stockpiles and our magazine capacity right now?

Aquilino. I am not worried about the United States ability to respond. Again, we can talk about specific munitions in a classified setting.

Mr. Gallagher. Okay. I mean, that surprises me. I guess it goes counter to what little I know from playing a few war games here or there. But I am not living it in the Indo-Pacific every day like you are.

Quickly, General, I believe this year at the end of July we will celebrate the 73rd anniversary of the Korean armistice agreement. This is referred to as America’s forgotten war. The irony is that in China they have not forgotten it.

In fact, they celebrate it. The highest grossing Chinese movie of all time is “The Battle [at] Lake Changjin,” which is sort of a creative retelling of the Battle of Chosen Reservoir. I have sort of an oddball historically focused question, but what lessons do you believe that this forgotten war offers for contemporary national security strategists and planners?

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Congressman. Be ready. I mean, that is “This Kind of War”; we weren’t prepared. So what this says for us is my main effort of being prepared, combat readiness, and evolving as the enemy evolves and looking at it through not just a land fight but making sure that we can fight in all the domains and we have the capabilities to be able to do that. So it would be the 73rd anniversary of the beginning of the war and the 70th anniversary of the armistice—which we are going to celebrate throughout—we have been celebrating throughout the year. But it will culminate in the fall time with the Koreans.

Mr. Gallagher. (Inaudible) that you mentioned “This Kind of War.” Can I assume that is on your reading list such as it exists? [Simultaneous speaking.]

General LACAMERA. When I was a captain, I read it, yes.

Mr. Gallagher. Fantastic. All right. I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Carbajal, for 5 minutes.
Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to all the witnesses for being here today. INDOPACOM hosts a broad range of challenges, most notably the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but also the increasing effects of climate change and building on relationships with several allies and partnerships.

The PRC is steadily building up their space and anti-space capabilities. In 2022, they executed 64 launches alone.

Admiral Aquilino, can you speak to the importance of maintaining space superiority in the INDOPACOM AOR [area of responsibility], especially as the PRC, our pacing threat, is making advancements in this domain? And can you speak to how maintaining fiscal year 2022 funding levels would impact our superiority?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. So as it applies to deterring and then should deterrence fail being able to fight and win in space is critical as we integrate all domains, under sea, on the sea, above the sea, in space and cyberspace. The synchronization of those effects happens every day in INDOPACOM. And the space layer is an enabler for the terrestrial force.

We absolutely need to maintain our superior advantage and continue to invest as we expand in space. If we were to reduce the investment, I have already identified in my 1254 report some shortfalls that we believe are beneficial. But if we were to fall back, that would also be impactful.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you. Admiral, the second item on your unfunded priority list from this year is to operationalize near-term space control. Can you expand on what factors contributed to this ending up on your UPL?

Admiral AQUILINO. I would rather do that in a classified setting, sir.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you. Admiral Aquilino, it seems that a majority of space programs in development in the INDOPACOM AOR are protected at the highest levels of classification. I think we all share the goal of wanting to prevent any escalation in the region and believe strategic deterrence is key. Strategic deterrence is only possible if the deterrent is known to our adversaries at some level. Is INDOPACOM thinking through what space programs we should declassify as a strategic deterrent to the PRC ambitions in the space domain?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir. We do that all the time. Certainly, there is the ability for the security challenger to understand what we do. In space, there are capabilities that can do that for him.

We treat all of our capabilities. We look at them in a way such that we protect what we need to protect. And for those that we don't believe we need to protect, we allow those to be seen. We do that with thoughtfulness to ensure we get it right. But we have to protect those things that are critical for the United States defense.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you. We know that the INDOPACOM area responsibility is on the front lines of climate change, experiencing increasingly frequent disruptive storms and sea level rise that is already encroaching on military installations and training ranges. While these weather events lead to demand for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, they also directly impact defense infrastructure in the region. The Army commissioned a study in 2018
that show that many Pacific islands, including Kwajalein Atoll, home of Ronald Reagan's ballistic missile defense test site, are at risk of experiencing significant climate impacts by mid-century. Secretary Royal, how is the Department planning for and seeking to mitigate these risks as we look at force posture in the region?

Mr. Royal, Congressman, thank you for that question. The climate change does fold into the National Defense Strategy. It is a growing challenge that we understand. It is certainly one that we spend a lot of time talking to our partners in the Indo-Pacific, particularly Pacific island nations, where we see the effects of climate change occurring rapidly.

Part of our strategy here is to not only recognize it but to make sure that we are thinking about areas to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including greater energy resilience, better infrastructure that protects against the erosion of rising sea waters, etc. So I believe that we have captured that well. And we certainly are funding against that in the President's budget submission.

Mr. Carbajal. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I yield back.

The Chairman. I thank the gentleman. Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Gaetz, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Gaetz. Days ago in The Washington Post, "in Washington, military planners are realizing that China has surpassed the United States in hypersonic military technology." Does anyone seated at the table disagree with that assessment?

Mr. Royal. Congressman, I think in terms of assessments, we should probably take that to a classified discussion.

Mr. Gaetz. Well, it has been sort of unclassified without our consent. We had this leak that showed that China could launch one of these hypersonic glide capabilities 2,100 kilometers, that it could get there in 12 minutes. And I actually don't think it is that—can't be too classified because it was a year ago, Admiral, that you were before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

And you seemed to be giving the warning at that time that we saw manifest in this leak. You said, quote, "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." I read in between the lines of that to say you require the capability in the near term because you didn't have the capability when you gave this testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, not in a classified setting but in open hearing. So I guess my question to you, because I sense you are the truth-teller on a lot of these things, have you acquired the capability since this testimony?

Admiral Aquilino. The Department is working on the ability to do hypersonic defense, Congressman. Again, I stand by what I said. I am concerned about it and we—

Mr. Gaetz. And it is still true today. That statement that you made to the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2021, you wouldn't revise that or change that? That is true as we sit here today?

Admiral Aquilino. It is.

Mr. Gaetz. And so what I observe about our posture in Indo-Pacific is that for the last 30 years the United States has been
building aircraft carriers that will never get into the fight. And we have spent years building littoral combat ships, Mr. Smith, that will never get into the fight. And while you have been giving us the accurate information, you gave it to us now, you gave it to the Senate a year ago, the truth is we have not made a sufficient investment in hypersonic defense in order to ensure that we have this credible deterrent threat. Isn’t that right, Admiral?

Admiral Aquilino. Sir, if you look at the report as it applies to our Guam defense system, we have identified the need for that capability.

Mr. Gaetz. Right. And so I guess how do our littoral combat ships ever get into the fight in a China/Taiwan scenario?

Admiral Aquilino. Well, again, I think that would be better in a classified setting.

Mr. Gaetz. I think it is not going to happen. I think whether it is classified or not classified, can we hit a moving target with our hypersonic offense?

Admiral Aquilino. Again, sir, I think we ought to take those capabilities discussion——

Mr. Gaetz. Well, okay. So if I——

Admiral Aquilino [continuing]. To a closed——

Mr. Gaetz [continuing]. Represent to you that China can hit a moving target and we can’t hit a moving target, do you have any basis in this setting that you can share with me to rebut that assertion?

Admiral Aquilino. I disagree that we can’t hit a moving target.

Mr. Gaetz. Oh, you think with our hypersonic capability?

Admiral Aquilino. I didn’t say with a hypersonic capability.

Mr. Gaetz. Okay. But that is what I am talking about because of course we can hit moving targets. But with a hypersonic capability, it changes the deterrence analysis because the time window shortens considerably, as this leak of classified information tells us kind of as you told us a year ago. And so I know that there will be great bloodlust to go after the leaker of this information.

It is never okay to leak classified information, especially when it could potentially put people at risk. What I wonder is, who is going to be punished more, the knucklehead who leaked this information or the generals and admirals and so-called experts who have sat before this committee and the Senate for decades saying that these capabilities that we were funding with gajillions of dollars were going to sufficiently deter China? And what you said last year, what you have confirmed now, is that we need a capability in the near term that we do not have.

What this leak shows is that China has it and we don’t. And yet we continue to build ships that will never get in the fight. We continue to support these endeavors that don’t enhance deterrence. But if the right Senator or Congressman or lobbyist is for them, we do them. And I think that is—while it is never okay to leak classified information, I think that is what animates the concern among some of our even youngest and most inexperienced service members that we are not really positioning to win this fight.

And we have got too many grifters who roll in and out of the Pentagon, to defense contractors. And some of them even become
Secretary of Defense thereafter. And I think it is disgraceful and is not worthy of a true Pacific power like the United States.

Mr. Smith. Thank you. I am not sure why the gentleman kept looking at me throughout that whole thing. I actually had the amendment on the floor last year to defund the littoral combat ship. I am not sure how the gentleman voted on that amendment.

Mr. Gaetz. I voted wrong.

Mr. Smith. Okay. Well, that is good to know. Interesting. I will say, and I know we can’t talk about it in detail, there are massive investments in the President’s budget in hypersonic missiles. There is no question that we were behind.

And by the way, we were behind under the last administration as well. And in the last couple years, we have made massive investments into hypersonics. We don’t want to get into details what works or not, but we recognize the threat.

And I would urge this time the gentleman to join me when we try to move money away from those platforms that aren’t going to be as useful and into those platforms that are useful. I just wanted to be clear. Thank you. I yield back.

The Chairman. Chair would advise members not to display classified information whether it has been leaked or not in open hearings. Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from New Jersey, Ms. Sherrill, for 5 minutes.

Ms. Sherrill. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Royal, Admiral Aquilino, did you want to say anything about our classified information, how important it is that we protect that in our military despite any arguments about where we need to move in this committee?

Mr. Royal. Congresswoman, I will offer that this appears to be a disgraceful criminal act that has occurred and it is very serious. The Department is taking it with the highest degree of seriousness. We, every single day, have the responsibility to protect information and make sure that our classified information remains ours.

We are supporting the Department of Justice. We have been very clear in offering every bit of support that we possibly can to help them in their investigation. We are conducting outreach with allies and partners to make sure that they are also understanding what the position of the Department is in this process.

I do want to be clear on this point. This will not knock us off of our strategy, off of our campaigning approach with integrated deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region. It is an exceptionally unfortunate situation that does come with national security consequence, but it will not knock us off of our approach.

Ms. Sherrill. Thank you. I think the gentleman from Florida raised some very good points. But I just wanted to highlight that people put themselves, their lives, their family’s lives in danger to bring us this information.

And it is really important to me that we understand how dangerous it is to people working very hard for the United States of America around the world when these things are leaked. Thank you very much. I would also like to thank you for your service and commitment to keeping our Nation and our troops safe, especially as our country and the world grapples with a variety of complex and nontraditional threats, including the increasing aggressiveness
and nuclear posturing of North Korea, aggressive and coercive transgressions from China in the region, cybersecurity threats and disinformation campaigns, climate change, and increases in natural disasters as well as supply chain shortages.

So INDO PACOM, the region is not an easy one. But thank you for your service. So Secretary Royal and Admiral Aquilino, we are currently conducting our largest ever joint exercise with the Philippines. With the new leadership in the Philippines, how does our renewed relationship impact our freedom of navigation operations for sea lanes in the South China Sea?

Mr. Royal. Congresswoman, we are enjoying strategic convergence with the government of the Philippines and operating in a manner that is stronger than ever. Training exercises, information sharing, and our ability to respond quickly to any kind of contingency that may arise right now. I was really proud when we were able to secure access to four new strategic locations through the EDCA [Enhanced Defense Cooperation Arrangement] sites with the government of the Philippines.

These will offer the opportunity for opening the aperture of our ability to respond with the Philippines in a timely fashion and responsive fashion to any contingency, particularly humanitarian affairs and disaster relief have already been identified there. We believe this relationship has a lot of wind in its sails. It is definitely moving forward in the right direction, and we are seeing the outcomes of that every single day.

Admiral Aquilino. Thanks, Congresswoman. So again, the mutual defense treaty with the Philippines is critical. They are a great partner.

General Santino is my counterpart and a good friend. Minister Galvez who just recently took over is a wonderful partner. And they are facing some challenges, right?

The PRC has claims that are inside the Philippine exclusive economic zone. Those claims went through an international tribunal. They were articulated as they were not legal in the international world order as defined.

Yet the PRC continues to pressurize our Philippine counterparts. So it is really important that we continue to maintain support. We operate with them. As you said, Balikatan is going on right now. We do combined patrols and we support our Philippine partners everywhere.

Ms. Sherrill. And I think traditionally, we have struggled a bit to get support from our allies in the region on our freedom of navigation [FON] exercises. Can you talk a little bit about the support we are receiving from our allies to date?

Admiral Aquilino. Thanks. Let me start by articulating. So the freedom of navigation events that we execute are designed to demonstrate what the interpreted international law and order looks like. We don’t FON countries. We challenge excessive claims, and it is supported by our partners in the nation—in the region.

Ms. Sherrill. Thank you, and I yield back.

The Chairman. Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska, General Bacon, for 5 minutes.
Mr. BACON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank all three of you for being here today. These are very important discussions, and your perspectives are vitally important.

We have been talking for about 8 years a pivot to Asia. We have talked about China being the pacing threat, near-peer competitor threat. But I don't know—I have seen the talk. I have seen the strategy documents.

I don't know that we have actually seen as much physical movement. So I would ask you, Admiral, if I may. How much has the Navy increased its size or presence in the Pacific the last couple years?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. So the Navy is postured; 60 percent of the maritime forces is in the Pacific. Forty percent is on the east coast.

Mr. BACON. Has that been an increase over the last 2 years?

Admiral AQUILINO. That has been in place now for at least 3 years.

Mr. BACON. Three years?

Admiral AQUILINO. And a little bit before that.

Mr. BACON. How about the Air Force? Because I have seen some units being withdrawn from the Pacific.

Admiral AQUILINO. As we align and execute the National Defense Strategy, the positioning of those forces certainly would be beneficial to be maintained inside of the first island chain where they are postured. Our forward stationed Air Forces, I have supported those forces to remain in place and/or be replaced by equivalent capability and numbers.

Mr. BACON. But would it be accurate to say we have seen an actual decline in air order of battle in Asia? I see the talk but I don't know if I see the actual physical presence.

Admiral AQUILINO. I would have to go back and take a look at that, Congressman. Overall, the force has gotten smaller, right?

Mr. BACON. Yes.

Admiral AQUILINO. There is no doubt about that. So whether it is distributed or where it has been pulled from, I'd have to go look at.

Mr. BACON. One of the concerns that we have is over the FYDP [Future Years Defense Program], the Air Force will shrink by about 400 fighters. What kind of concerns does this give you?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. I am concerned about any removal of combat power from the Indo-Pacific theater.

Mr. BACON. I would be too. Thank you for that. The B–21s and the Navy long-range precision weapons seem to be very significant for your theater.

There is a lot of talk from the Army about long-range surface-to-surface missiles and positioning them also in the Pacific. But one of the problem areas is where do we station those. Do we have good options where to put these weapon systems?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Congressman. So I believe we do, right? With the service concepts, the Army has delivered the multi-domain task force. The Marine Corps has shifted to the Marine littoral regiment.

And when the capabilities deliver for anti-air and anti-surface, both land and sea, those land forces will be capable and directly
aligned to what I need in this theater. From the air perspective, their agile combat employment approach to be able to be survivable and continue to deliver effect, those capabilities are needed. And the posture required to do that, we are working really hard on.

Mr. BACON. Thank you. General, if I may, I know North Korea just tested a solid-fuel ballistic missile. How does that change the threat in your perspective?

General LACAMERA. Our ability for indications and warning.

Mr. BACON. So in other words, it will shorten your indications and warning. So you may get more surprise?

General LACAMERA. Yes, sir.

Mr. BACON. Okay. One last thing for you if I may, sir. It was reported that some of the leaked information involved South Korea. Have you seen any pushback from our allies regarding this? Or has that impacted your rapport?

General LACAMERA. It has not. No, sir.

Mr. BACON. Okay. With that, I thank you for your time. And Mr. Chair, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. Chair now recognizes Ms. Jacobs for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACOBS. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here. I wanted to talk about Taiwan. Admiral Aquilino, in your testimony, you stated that Beijing significantly increased its military pressure against Taiwan in 2022 in response to, quote, “a perceived policy shift in the U.S.-Taiwan political and military ties,” end quote. I think it is important to recognize what kinds of U.S. actions are actually shoring up Taiwan’s defenses such as the training and weapons the U.S. has provided over the years versus the kinds of things that are symbolic but actually don’t help the Taiwanese in their fight, like calls to rename embassies, high-profile visits, et cetera. I was hoping you could talk, Admiral Aquilino or Mr. Royal, about the ways in which the Department is ensuring that we are not unnecessarily escalating tensions and how we are maintaining open lines of communication with the PRC.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congresswoman. So let me just start by articulating the U.S. policy as it applies to Taiwan has not changed despite what may be believed in Beijing. Second, we do not seek conflict.

Everything we do is designed to prevent conflict, to maintain the peace and stability in the region. So that is where we sit. I can’t tell you what they believe.

Now additionally, on your point of ability to have conversations and engagements with my counterparts, I have had a standing ask to meet with the Eastern Theater Commander and the Southern Theater Commander from the PLA for my entire time in this job. And they have yet to accept it. Second, we do—the chiefs of defense in the region do about a quarterly virtual meeting of which the PRC has been invited to. And of the, I think, five we have done so far, they have shown up at one. And they sent a very low-level individual.

Additionally, we meet annually in person once a year, and they have not shown up for the last 2 years. We will—working through the process to invite them again in August. So the theme here is
we continue to try to engage with our partner but there is a different opinion there.

Ms. Jacobs. Thank you. Mr. Royal, do you want to add?

Mr. Royal. Sure, Congresswoman. Consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, we continue to support Taiwan’s development of their own self-defense. We have talked with them consistently about their defense requirements. We have $54 billion in implemented foreign military sales with the government of Taiwan, including $27 billion in new contracts that have been put on order since 2017. And so we believe that consistent with the law of the United States, that this is important to maintain their defensive requirements.

At the same time, we certainly call on the PRC to maintain open lines of communication, particularly at moments of crisis. And we have made a handful of requests, including during the transit of the high-altitude balloon overflying our sovereign airspace. And we have not seen the responsiveness that we would like to see from Beijing in terms of answering our phone calls.

Ms. Jacobs. Thank you. And as we consider our military presence in the Indo-Pacific, I think it is incredibly important that we prioritize civilian harm mitigation, especially in our ability to convene our partners and build coalitions that we need to do. And as you guys well know, DOD Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan [CHMRAP] provided critical guidance on how to minimize harm. I think implementing the recommendations outlined in the plan such as enhanced training and better communication with local communities will be really important. Admiral Aquilino, could you talk about how implementing the CHMRAP will change how military operations are conducted in the Indo-Pacific region?

Admiral Aquilino. Thanks, Congresswoman. So we are certainly always operating in accordance with the new guidance that is out there. We have taken that on.

That said, we are currently not in a kinetic theater. But even in our peacetime operations, we are always focused on ensuring that the rule of law is followed to ensure we protect life of all participants in the region, and that we’ll always operate that way.

Ms. Jacobs. I appreciate that. I think as you know the CHMRAP requires combatant commanders to develop theater-specific training, especially that addresses cognitive biases and especially as we are working with partner forces in the Indo-Pacific to make sure that they too are addressing civilian harm concerns and human rights. Thank you. I yield back.

The Chairman. I thank the gentlelady. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Waltz, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Waltz. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have had some discussion on this committee, a lot of debate actually, on whether this conflict or conflict with the PRC is inevitable. And I would just comment to my colleagues that Chairman Xi has said that reunification with Taiwan one way or another, including the use of military force, just said it to the 20th party congress, is inevitable.

He said that he is not going to pass it on to the next generation. Basically said he is going to do it on his watch. So I think we got a lot of wishful thinking going on, just like we had wishful thinking going on in the run-up to Ukraine that force won’t be employed.
And with that context, Admiral Aquilino, thank you so much for your hosting of various congressional delegations. It has been incredibly informative. Thank you as well, General LaCamera.

And one of the key takeaways I continue to take is the ambiguity amongst our allies from these trips, key allies, allies that if we don’t have use of their airspace, of their ports, of their basing, that I don’t see how we effectively come to the aid of the defense of Taiwan. And so I guess my question for you is would greater clarity on our end, on the U.S.’s end, and our intentions, help drive clarity with our allies? And I will just tell you one quick anecdote.

In this last trip and in previous trips, we have been asking our allies, will you help us in the defense of Taiwan should it come to that. And the continual pushback is, well, when you tell us what you are going to do, we can make the tough political decisions what we are going to do. So again, do you think clarity on our end would help allied clarity much like it has in Europe?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. Again, I am not the policymaker. But what I can tell you is for the past 40 years that policy has been successful. That is just historically accurate. I think you would have to ask the allies and partners. What I hear when I talk to them frequently is that war is not desirable for anyone in the region.

Mr. WALTZ. Of course.

Admiral AQUILINO. So as that applies, what I read into it is they are supportive of our approach. They recognize that we are looking to prevent this conflict. And that is what is keeping us together.

Mr. WALTZ. In the event that deterrence fails—of course poverty is not desirable, war is not desirable. Got it. But in the event that deterrence fails as it has in Europe, you have to have those basing and overflight rights, right, whether it is Japan, Philippines. We can go down the list. You have to have those operationally, correct, as operational commander.

Admiral AQUILINO. The need for access and basing and overflight——

Mr. WALTZ. Can you assume today, tomorrow, in the near future that you have them?

Admiral AQUILINO. We don’t assume. Those are choices of sovereign nations whenever the time comes.

Mr. WALTZ. And I think it is reasonable then to say if the United States was clear, we are coming to the defense of democracy in Taiwan, then it would drive clarity in the region. Clarity in Europe, for example, has deterred Putin in many ways from going beyond Ukraine. So would clarity in the Pacific help you having that basing and access?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yeah, I think we would have to ask the allies and partners, Congressman. I don’t want to speak for them.

Mr. WALTZ. And I will just tell you another concern of mine which we have talked quite a bit about is clarity here amongst the American people. And one of the lessons that the PRC has learned from Ukraine is if they decide to do it, they have to do it quickly. We can’t decide here in Congress where the bathrooms are quickly.

And so I think we need to have that debate now, not when amphibious ships are being loaded.
Secretary Royal, why does Admiral Aquilino have a $3½ billion unfunded list? Things like the defense of Guam, the defense of Hawaii, secure communications. Why if this is the number one threat according to multiple administrations does the man sitting next to you may be responsible for the greatest conflict in American history have $3½ billion out of an $850 billion budget that you can’t find to support that warfighter?

Mr. Royal. Congressman, first thing I will say is there is no daylight between Indo-Pacific Command and the Department of Defense.

Mr. WALTZ. There should be no unfunded priorities for our number one threat.

Mr. Royal. When we think about the prioritization of the region, there is absolutely no daylight between us. We prioritize——

Mr. WALTZ. Just in the interest of time, why does it take 2½ years from congressional notification to contract award for Harpoons for Taiwan, 2½ years? Why?

Mr. Royal. Congressman, I am happy to follow up with you specifically on the Harpoon discussion if that is helpful to you. The contracting——

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 135.]

Mr. WALTZ. We have to move more quickly, if the theme of today is we are running out of time.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Chair now recognizes the gentleman, Mr. Kim, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KIM. Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to kind of pick up on where we left off. Admiral Aquilino, you just said that the policy we have been implementing has been successful over the last 40 years or so. What policy were you referencing there?

Admiral AQUILINO. Our One China policy and our alignment in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act, Six Assurances, Three Communiqués.

Mr. KIM. Is that a policy that is also being implemented right now through the strategic ambiguity approach?

Mr. Royal. Congressman, yes, this is the approach that we have taken with the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances.

Mr. KIM. And so if we are saying that this has been successful for the last 40 years, do either of you see a need to change that policy at this point?

Mr. Royal. Congressman, I would say that this policy has served us well, continues to serve us well. It allows us to be able to conduct all of the deterrence operations that we are currently conducting in the region. And it allows us to be able to maintain the cohesion with our alliances and partnerships throughout the region that serve us very well.

Mr. KIM. I understand the desire about clarity. And I understand sort of how that could very well prompt some conversations that we aren’t having right now. But I can also see how that could be sort of a double-edged sword. So I guess I wanted to ask the admiral and then Mr. Royal, would that strategic clarity—at this moment,
do you think that would help or hurt our ability to build coalitions with other partners?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, I will jump in first on that one. I believe that we need to maintain constant contact with allies and partners about how they see stability in the region. We need to listen to them.

We are doing that regularly. I would also just add one point on clarity. I think what is clarifying here is the results that we are seeing in terms of our engagements with allies and partners in the region, tremendous amount of progress in terms of our posture, our readiness, our ability to interoperate with allies and partners.

To be very clear, that is the clarifying element of our strategy in the region right now. And we are investing in all of those areas. And our allies and partners are with us.

Mr. KIM. Admiral, anything you would like to add here?

Admiral AQUILINO. Sir, I am not a policymaker. So again, as it applies, I will execute in accordance with.

Mr. KIM. One thing that I do hear from a lot of allies and partners in the area is about their concern regarding cybersecurity. This is a place where I feel like we have a lot of opportunity potentially to be able to engage and build that up as we are thinking about what we have to offer other countries. I guess, Admiral, I wanted to just turn to you first and then I will turn to the general here. But is there more that we can be doing here to be able to help lift up the cybersecurity capabilities of different partners in the region and use that as a way to be able to further our relationships with them? I wonder if there is something here we can press on the gas.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yeah, Congressman. It is absolutely a field that is needed, we need to expand with our allies and partners. That said, that responsibility goes to General Nakasone at CYBERCOM [U.S. Cyber Command].

Now, he and I coordinate all the time. I have identified the areas, priorities, and needs. He has taken them on full bore. But protecting both the United States networks as well as our ally and partner networks is critical and it drives us together.

Mr. KIM. Thank you, Admiral. And that is something that I raised with General Nakasone and something that he pointed out as important as well. So I hope we can follow up with both you and he to try to figure out how we engage in that way.

General, I wanted to just kind of get your thoughts from that front. What else do we need to be thinking about on that front? And is there more that we can be doing with our partners in the ROK to be able to engage there, especially as we have a state visit coming up? I am trying to think about what are the priorities we should be trying to push the ROK on to be able to strengthen our relationship and partnership on cybersecurity and other issues there.

General LaCAMERA. Thanks, Congressman. Yeah, the focus is on that, protecting our information, not just cyber but the other domains. And working with General Nakasone and his folks but also working with the Koreans and the commands that they are standing up, make sure that we can protect this information.
Mr. KIM. We have seen some promising developments between a discussion between South Korea and Japan of recent. Mr. Royal, maybe I will just ask you. Is there an area there that we can try to again kind of push on the gas and try to see if we can help strengthen that kind of relationship there but also see it as part of the kind of security architecture that we are trying to build?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, just a couple of days ago, we were able to see Japan and Republic of Korea operate just off the waters of South Korea together. These are the kinds of instances and examples where we are watching a growing convergence in the strategic interest and a growing convergence in their willingness to——

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 135.]

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from the great State of Alabama, Mr. Dale Strong, for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before my questioning, I would like to say for the record any leak of classified documents related to the national security of America is unacceptable under any circumstance.

Admiral Aquilino, my first question, I want to echo the remarks that Chairman Rogers and saying thank you for being so candid. Your unfunded priorities list might as well be a highlight reel of what North Alabama does best. I know you have a close partnership with the Missile Defense Agency, SMDC [U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command], both call Redstone Arsenal home.

The number one INDOPACOM unfunded priority is for the Guam defense system. The fiscal year 2023 NDAA requires the Secretary of Defense to designate a senior DOD official to be responsible for the development and deployment of a missile defense system for Guam. Given your expertise, which DOD official do you believe would be best suited for this role to reach the objective?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. Again, that current debate is going on. I am not sure I know exactly who, but I think that might be better for Jed to take as it is working through the building.

Mr. STRONG. Okay. Let me rephrase it. What would you want to see their expertise be going into this role? What would be most beneficial to execute this?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yeah, I think it is somebody who could direct budgets, who could direct priorities, and then work towards both delivery and sustainment.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you. Your number five unfunded priority, all-domain missile warnings and tracking architecture would provide upgrades for the THAAD [Terminal High Altitude Area Defense] software to assist with integrated air and missile defense protections. Can you speak to the importance of this provision and the repercussions if Congress does not find a way to fund it?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. So foundational—again, as we built the requirement to defend Guam via 360-degree threats from all capabilities—cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and other capabilities. The end state is this hybrid architecture of integrated capabilities. And the shortfall identified in my list would slow down or delay the integration of those different sets of capa-
ility, whether it be the Aegis portion or the Army sets of portions that are linked together, THAAD, Patriot, IFPC [Indirect Fire Protection Capability], along with the Aegis piece. So it pushes that later.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you, Admiral. Both the Navy and INDO-PACOM both have the SM–6 missile on their unfunded priority list. The final assembly and testing of the SM–6 takes place at Redstone Arsenal, in my district. I am aware that there have been delays with production and the manufacturer is working to get back on track within the year. Can you give the committee a perspective of why the SM–6 is critical within the Indo-Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. Congressman, it is an extremely capable weapon, has both an anti-air capability; it has an anti-ship capability. So when you deliver it out into the fleet or whether it comes in some other form, it has certainly proven itself to be critically lethal and capable.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you. As you shared in your testimony, in the 2022, China completed 64 successful space launches. This is concerning at face value especially considering that we are only 87 launches in 2022 from American carriers. I am proud to say that the DOD’s top launch provider, which manufactures in my district, ULA [United Launch Alliance], has 100 percent mission success rate. Speaking to your number two unfunded priority, which specific resources does your command need to ensure a national defense space architecture is reliable and resilient?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yeah, Congressman. If we could do that in a classified setting, that would be helpful.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Chair now recognizes the gentleman, Mr. Ryan, for 5 minutes.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you all for being here. Thank you also for your in-depth written testimony. It was appreciated and comprehensive. So thank you.

In the last few weeks, growing concern certainly from me and many to see more and more cozy relationship between Xi and Putin. And even more willingness to be overt and blatant about what we know what has been obviously happening behind the scenes for a while. With that context in mind as we look at the lessons over the last near decade looking back to 2014 and Ukraine, what we did in terms of some of the actions in response there with training and embedding with Ukrainian forces.

Both Mr. Royal and Admiral Aquilino, could you talk about those lessons and how we are trying to apply those in Taiwan? To be more specific, can you speak to their readiness, both in terms of capability and intent and the urgency. Is the urgency there, and what can we do to bolster that?

Mr. ROYAL. I am happy to share a few initial thoughts with you and happy to follow up later on. First is I think it is a real lesson for us that the rules-based international order cannot be taken for granted, that there is naked ambition that continues to exist in the world. And we are watching that play out in Ukraine.

So that is, I think, the first thing we need to be vigilant about the fact that our international order is under duress. Secondly, we need to make sure that we are understanding what the real de-
fense and capability requirements are of those that might be put under pressure by revanchist powers. And so we maintain strong capability requirements relationship in discussion with the government of Taiwan.

And as I mentioned, we continue to service those defense requirements through the foreign military sales program and direct commercial sales. And finally, in terms of training, proficiency is absolutely necessary here. You pointed to a relationship that we had with the government of Ukraine that was very productive in terms of its training outcomes since 2014. I believe that we need to be able to think about how we can support Taiwan’s proficiencies with the weapon systems that they are ordering.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 135.]

Mr. RYAN. Admiral.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yeah, Congressman, so again, I will just leave it as this. We have done a lot of work understanding the lessons learned from Ukraine and what has occurred. And we are certainly integrating all those into our responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you both. Building on that, and ranking member addressed this in his opening statement, I have heard both from you all and others who have come before us the importance of our alliances as one of our, I believe, strategic differentiators and strengths vis-a-vis our PRC adversaries.

Admiral Aquilino, you also touched on this in your testimony. Can you speak a little bit more about where we are at with India in particular? And I know that is a broad question. But are there authorities or requirements that we can help you all on to advance and bolster that critical alliance?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. So again, India is a critical partner as we talked about. Aside from the cooperation that we are doing in the military, right? So the exercises like Malabar, Yudh Abhyas, the fact that we are providing assistance as it applies to cold weather gear and other capabilities that they might need as they defend their border on the northern side.

But additionally, we are expanding our cooperation in the form of production as India tries to work to develop its own industrial base. So C–130, critical components made in India. Helicopter critical frameworks made in India. That is expanding the partnership and moving them towards certainly self-sufficiency and increased partnership with the United States.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you. Oh, sorry. Did you have say, sir?

Mr. ROYAL. Let me just offer as well that recently we kicked off what we call an Initiative [on] Critical and Emerging Technologies [iCET] that was announced by the two national security advisors of the United States and India. We are already delivering offers under the context of the iCET arrangement. This is a real moment of convergence for the United States and India, and we are looking to take full advantage of it going forward.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you. Just very briefly, General LaCamera, how do you assess growing bellicosity from the PRC changing Mr. Kim’s calculus? Is it likely that they sort of feed off each other essentially?
General LACAMERA. Yeah, I mean, they are passing congratulatory notes back and forth. And I have stated in the past that I see nothing on the Korean peninsula that won't involve China and Russia both providing lethal and non-lethal support.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Banks, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, when did you first become aware of the spy balloon, before it entered our airspace over Alaska or after?

Admiral AQUILINO. Sir, I would like to that in a classified setting.

Mr. BANKS. A Washington Post story over the weekend said that there have been several Chinese balloons that have operated in the INDOPACOM AOR over previous years. What are we doing about it?

Admiral AQUILINO. So as we posture in the INDOPACOM AOR, sir, I am responsible for defense of Guam, defense of Hawaii. We have aircraft on alert. Our systems and our architectures are looking to ensure we can identify those, in a position and place where we could respond if required.

Mr. BANKS. So the story also notes that the spy balloons in your AOR often fly over U.S. carrier strike groups and over the South China Sea. So are we concerned about this, or is this something that we too easily dismiss as the President seemed to have done when the balloon flew over the entire continental United States?

Admiral AQUILINO. So sir, I am responsible and always concerned about force protection for our assets. So the network of sensors that exists, we understand where they are going and when and whether or not they are threatening. That said, if they fly over the South China Sea in accordance with the rules-based international order, if that is international airspace, then they should be allowed to fly there.

That is the way we would see it. That is what we do. That is what it means to adhere to the rules-based international order.

Mr. BANKS. Okay. Can you explain to the public or at least members of the committee why you can't answer the question of when you became aware of the Chinese spy balloon, before it entered our airspace in Alaska or after?

Admiral AQUILINO. That is certainly the——

Mr. BANKS. For the record, why would that have to be divulged in a classified setting?

Admiral AQUILINO. Certainly the way we identified it and how we knew where it was and when it was is something I would rather keep to ourselves.

Mr. BANKS. Okay. Let's see. Admiral, at a March hearing, I questioned NORTHCOM [U.S. Northern Command] commander General VanHerck who told me that President Biden, quote, “could ask under special authorities for the military to do more to prevent fentanyl trafficking at our southern border.” Could President Biden use such special authorities to help INDOPACOM block the export of Chinese fentanyl analogues coming into the North America from your knowledge?
Admiral AQUILINO. I would have to go back and see, sir. As I understand it, those precursor chemicals are actually legal to be shipped. So currently, I don't have any authorities to interdict or stop or prevent legal chemicals from being——

Mr. BANKS. Mr. Royal, what would those authorities be that President Trump—or President Biden could enact that he is not enacting that President Trump did use?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, I can't speak to the specific authorities that you are referencing right now. I will say that we believe that the fentanyl problem that we are facing is a serious one and a serious threat to our society. The administration does have a strategic implementation plan that is shared by members of the interagency, and DOD has provided enabling support to that strategic implementation plan, including for the provision of aircraft, radar, and intelligence to support arresting this threat as it continues to move forward to our country.

Mr. BANKS. So just to clear this up, those special authorities do exist?

Mr. ROYAL. Sir, I am not entirely sure which specific authorities you are referring to. Right now, we have the authority to be able to support our interagency partners. And we have done that under the rubric of the strategic implementation plan.

Mr. BANKS. Admiral, can you talk about the Joint Interagency Task Force West that is used to interdict the flow of fentanyl into the United States?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Congressman. So that is my organization assigned towards counter drug, counter transnational crime, and taking on that aspect of what the PRC might do. We track any of those shipments in accordance and in conjunction with NORTHCOM, SOUTHCOM [U.S. Southern Command], and the interagency to provide an understanding of where that may be going so that if it does end up turning into an illegal chemical, then it can be interdicted. So my organization is directly connected. We track those whenever we can.

Mr. BANKS. Okay. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Texas, Ms. Escobar, for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman and ranking member. Gentleman, thank you so much for your testimony and your service. I have the privilege of representing Fort Bliss, Texas, which is in Texas [District] 16, El Paso.

And my questions are going to focus on the importance of resilient infrastructure, logistics, and mobilization capacity. We have to make sure that we are increasing our logistics capacity and force adaptability in a theater where China not only maintains the advantage of proximity but owns a vast arsenal of capabilities unlike that of the insurgent forces the U.S. spent the last 20 years fighting. Admiral Aquilino, my first question is for you, sir.

I would like to highlight the critical importance of multi-domain operational training in a contested environment, especially as it pertains to the Army. Can you talk about how Pacific Pathways and other initiatives are integrating this element to prepare our Army for a potential conflict in the theater? What challenges, if any, do you foresee affecting our ability to conduct joint training
with partners and allies on a large scale while emulating a highly contested logistics environment?

Admiral ÁQUILINO. Thanks, Congresswoman. So from the Indo-Pacific position, right, this is going to take the whole joint force. And synchronizing and integrating that joint force to be able to deliver effects is a strength the United States has that no other nation can do, to include the sustaining of that force across half the globe.

So Pacific partnership is—or Pacific Pathways is critical because it is a mechanism to maneuver the land component to places where either we can exercise or operate with our allies and partners or to preset the force in places that we need to operate. That same capability is needed across all of the service components. So what I identified in my report was a need for increased campaigning dollars that does exactly that. It allows for the transportation, sustainment, and support for forces forward to deliver that deterrent effect.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you so much. Mr. Royal, any large-scale operations or increased deployments in the AOR would require development of key infrastructure. However, the need for this infrastructure to be resilient to climate disasters cannot be overstated. What are the biggest challenges impacting your ability to take environmental factors into consideration in making assessments required for MILCON [military construction] needs in the AOR?

Mr. ROYAL. Congresswoman, I would just add to what Admiral Aquilino has said by reinforcing that deterrence occurs in this region based on two things. One, it is having the right capabilities at the right level of readiness and in the right locations. And secondly, because our allies and partners are with us.

And there this question of posture brings those two together, the capabilities and the allies and partners. And we are seeing some really terrific progress being made with respect to how we are able to posture alongside our allies and partners. In terms of climate concerns, we do have an ongoing dialogue with partners throughout the region, allies throughout the region, on how climate change is affecting their ability to be able to withstand and support U.S. military movement through the region.

USARPAC [U.S. Army Pacific] has a terrific wargame series called Unified Pacific War Gaming Series. And they are testing out their ability to maneuver through a contested environment in the region, including with respect to the potential effects of climate change moving forward. So we have addressed that in the National Defense Strategy and we are addressing that in the budget submission as well.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady. Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Michigan, Mrs. McClain, for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for being here today. I appreciate it. Admiral Aquilino, I want to make it clear that I have some serious concerns with the priority of the White House when it comes to our national defense.

I also want to make sure that we understand that I have some serious concerns on how our taxpayers’ dollars are spent as it pertains to the military to make sure that we are ready. And I think
there are a lot of issues that we need to cover. I think prioritization of these issues are extremely important.

Like you, I am gravely concerned about the CCP and the PLA’s aggressive modernization timeline while you have almost $3.5 billion in unfunded priorities that you have deemed as vital to our defense against the PLA; $3.5 billion. The President’s budget over the past several years has been focused on a woke garbage in my opinion agenda that has nothing to do with deterring the CCP. So let me just give you some numbers as I see them.

In 2021, Chairman Milley admitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee that the DOD spent almost 6 million man-hours on woke training, 6—it is right here—6 million man-hours on woke training. May of 2022, the DOD spent $91,000 on diversity and inclusion for the Air Force band. Okay. Last year, we found out that Kelisa Wing of the former Chief DEI [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion] Officer at the Defense Department school was pushing her book on White privilege in those schools. Okay.

Last month, the Air Force launched an effort to hire a diversity, equity, and inclusion manager and pay them upwards of $180,000 a year. I am curious as to what their outcomes would be because when you hire a diversity, equity, and inclusion manager, I am curious what their outcome is because if they achieve their outcome, they would be put out of a job. But that is a different discussion for a different day.

Fiscal year 2023, the President requested $86.5 million for dedicated diversity and inclusion activities; $86.5 million. Now remember, you have $3.5 billion of unfunded priorities. This year, the President wants $114 million more, right?

These ridiculous instances of wokeness sends an embarrassing message I think to our friends but more importantly to our allies on what we prioritize. Now I am not here to say that diversity, equity, and inclusion is not important. But on the list of priorities, I got to tell you, I think we have some other funded projects that we can spend 6 million more man-hours on.

So, I know you don’t have an exact number. But I would like to hear your opinion on how much do you think the CCP spends on diversity, equity, and inclusion? Or do you think they might prioritize like their hypersonics a little bit ahead of diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Admiral AQUILINO. I don’t have that number, ma’am. I would have to look at it and get back to you.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. What is your gut feel? Think they spend like 6 million man-hours talking about diversity, equity, and inclusion? Or do you think they spend—maybe use those hours to develop some hypersonics to use against us?

Admiral AQUILINO. Well, what I would say is, it is certainly not a diverse culture by design.

Mrs. McCLAIN. I would agree with that. But I would like to know what you think of our prioritizations. You have billions of unfunded mandates, and we are spending taxpayer dollars and a lot of those taxpayer dollars, on stuff. Do you think that helps our readiness?

Admiral AQUILINO. So, ma’am, what I would say is, as you clearly identified and looked at the report I have submitted, it is clear
what I have identified as priorities. I think I would turn that over to Jed to take on.

Mr. ROYAL. Congresswoman, I think that the——

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Royal, you are very soft-spoken. Please pull the mic close. We really can’t hear you.

Mr. ROYAL. Sorry, Congressman. Congresswoman, I would say——

Mrs. MCCLAIN. I too am soft-spoken.

Mr. ROYAL. The health and the well-being of the Department’s workforce, both in uniform and civilian, is of the utmost importance. It is one of four key priorities of the National Defense Strategy. And we are looking comprehensively on how we are going to support our workforce going forward.

Mrs. McClain. I appreciate that. My time is up. I yield back. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Chair now recognizes Ms. McClellan for 5 minutes.

Ms. MCCLELLAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Smith, for convening the hearing today and to our witnesses for being here. I want to focus a little bit on our regional alliances. It has been heartening recently that our treaty allies, South Korea and Japan, have been working recently to resolve their diplomatic tensions and to cooperate more effectively. How is INDOPACOM working to encourage similar breakthroughs to strengthen ties between U.S. allies in the region so that we can present a stronger united front in the face of increasing Chinese aggression?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congresswoman. Again, 120 exercises a year with partners across the region. So through the military landscape, we spend a lot of time ensuring that we know how to operate together, how we can be interoperable as best as possible, how we can protect the rules-based international order. And that is on top of all of our operations outside of exercises.

Continuous coordination with my counterparts. My staff always directly involved and linked with both country teams as well as our partner nations. So that will continue, and we spend a lot of money there or we spend a lot of effort there.

Ms. McClellan. Thank you. And this is for Mr. Royal and also you, Admiral. Recently, the United States, the U.K., and Australia announced Pillar 1 of the AUKUS agreement that will allow Australia to obtain American-manufactured nuclear-power submarines and eventually make similar vessels indigenously. Is the U.S. military supplier base ready to expand its capacity to address increased demand? And if not, what steps can we take to ensure that we can meet our stated production goals for AUKUS and for the naval forces?

Mr. ROYAL. Congresswoman, I would just take one step back and offer a complementing comment to what Admiral Aquilino just stated. You referenced Japan and Korea in your question. I would also note that with Australia in particular, we have agreed to increase U.S. rotational presence including with bombers and fighters. And defense industrial base integration is occurring at this very moment.

Just looking at the level of exercises that we are conducting in the region, Talisman Saber, Balikatan, Cobra Gold, Garuda Shield.
Each of these are seeing the highest levels of engagement in their history. And so in terms of the overall picture of how healthy the alliance is and partnerships are in the region, we are really seeing some historic steps forward.

On AUKUS, we do believe that the industrial base can perform at the level that we have proposed in the agreement that we have with the U.K. and Australia. We know that it will take a lot of work. It will take a lot of constant conversation with industry partners as well. We are encouraged by the defense industrial base commitment that Australia has already made to our submarine defense industrial base. And so we think things are on the right track.

Admiral AQUILINO. And Congresswoman, from my role, it is to be able to accelerate this capability. And in order to do that, I have sent U.S. submarines to Stirling for familiarization, so the Australians can also look at it. We have done that in coordination with the United Kingdom. And then ultimately as soon as possible, we are going to look to get Australian sailors on U.S. submarines. So I get to work diligently to bridge the gap as the industrial base delivers what is needed.

Ms. McCLELLAN. Thank you. And we have touched a little bit on how war is not inevitable. And I want to focus a little bit on diplomacy. And our military strength can only go as far as in maintaining powerful alliance systems that concerted diplomacy has to be the cornerstone of those alliances. Are we doing enough to maintain a strong and concerted diplomatic presence that makes the job of our Armed Forces in the region easier?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, I am very pleased to say that our Indo-Pacific strategy for this administration is very much an interagency strategy. The role for the U.S. Department of Defense and for Indo-Pacific Command and our Armed Forces is discrete. It is tailored. It is focused.

It all fits within a broader context of diplomacy. And again, I think that we are seeing the impacts of that interagency diplomacy-led effort when we look at the progress that is being made in terms of U.S. posture access into the region and the multilateral arrangements that have been established, in many cases smaller trilateral progress that we are seeing right now between Republic of Korea, Japan, United States, other minilateral settings.

Ms. McCLELLAN. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Fallon, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it very much. And thanks for all the witnesses for joining us. Admiral, is it true that China has doubled their military spending in the last 10 years?

Admiral AQUILINO. Congressman, that is true based on the reports as articulated and presented by the PLA. My belief is that spending that actually goes on in support of their military is much higher than that.

Mr. FALLON. And their spending maybe increased year over year about 7½ percent. Does that sound about accurate, the military spending?

Admiral AQUILINO. Excuse me?
Mr. FALLON. Their military spending has increased 7½ percent roughly over the last year?

Admiral AQUILINO. Again, that is their advertised number. I am not sure it is accurate.

Mr. FALLON. So they are focused on improving clearly their hard power. Let’s talk about soft power. In your estimation, what kind of threats to our interest and influence in the region does their Belt and Road Initiative present?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. I am not sure it would be considered soft power. I think it is a coercive tool as utilized by the PRC to be able to influence and move nations in the region in directions that are beneficial for the PLA. When the PLA articulates Belt and Road or One Belt, One Road as a win-win strategy, that is true. It is a win for the Chinese and it is a win for the Chinese.

Mr. FALLON. Yeah.

Admiral AQUILINO. It is not a win for any nation.

Mr. FALLON. Secretary Royal, can you touch on India’s importance in the region and what we can do to wean them off their dependence on Russia for weapons and defense assistance and bring them more into the fold in the Western world?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, as Admiral Aquilino already stated, India faces the same challenger that we face in the region. And so what we are seeing right now is a moment of strategic convergence in our relationship with the government of India. There is a lot of momentum in that regard. With respect to your question on from whom do they buy their weapons, we believe that they are through generational process of looking to diversify off of traditional suppliers. We want to make sure that the U.S. defense industrial base is in the best position possible to be India’s partner of choice moving forward. I noted the Initiative on Critical and Emerging—

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Royal, please pull the microphone closer. Thank you, sir.

Mr. ROYAL. I noted earlier the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies that has been announced by the two national security advisors of the United States and India. And so it is in all of these areas where we are able to see the kind of progress and the kind of promise for this relationship moving forward.

Mr. FALLON. Okay. Thank you. And I guess for Mr. Royal and if the admiral and the general want to weigh in on this. How troubling did you find the comments of President Macron of France recently?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, as I mentioned earlier, we are having a really in-depth conversation with all of our European partners on the challenges that the PRC presents, both in the Indo-Pacific region and globally. As we look at the NATO strategic document that has been developed, it includes the PRC in a way that it hasn’t in the past. I would say the same thing for the latest European Union white paper.

So we are taking President Macron’s comments within the context of all of those trends that we are watching. I would certainly point to other voices out there. The Foreign Minister of Germany recently delivered a speech in which she talked a little bit differently than President Macron. And we have certainly Foreign Minis-
ter Wong of Australia who delivered a speech along those lines I would point to as well as—I would say fairly consistent with an understanding and approach the United States has to the PRC challenge.

Mr. FALLON. Admiral, General, do you have any comments?

Admiral AQUILINO. No.

Mr. FALLON. Go ahead, General. Sorry.

General LACAMERA. No, sir.

Mr. FALLON. The thing that makes it rather obvious to me is the PRC would love nothing more than to separate us from the EU. And if they do that, then that is a huge win for them. And I just want to make sure that we nip something like that in the bud because it was very—just really shocking that he said what he said. It didn’t really serve, I don’t think, Europe’s interest, France’s interest, or certainly ours. So I want to thank you all again. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Deluzio, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DELUZIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentleman, hello. I know it is a long day. Thanks for being with us. Admiral, I want to pick up on a question from Mr. Fallon here about PRC spending and in particular advertised or otherwise, where is their investment in their shipbuilding relative to ours?

Admiral AQUILINO. I don’t think I have the comparison, Congressman. But they are certainly putting out ships at a pace that exceeds ours right now.

Mr. DELUZIO. And that is warships, sealift, commercial, all of it?

Admiral AQUILINO. All of the above.

Mr. DELUZIO. I ask because one of the pieces I am worried about is they are very aggressively making territorial claims, asserting the power to regulate ships within what is international water that our fleet and otherwise patrols and protects to submit to Chinese command and supervision of those waters, again, flagrantly violating international law and norms. And certainly against the backdrop of raising their warships—or building more warships relative to what we are doing.

Our sealift capacity, I worry. I think last month in this committee the Maritime Administrator told us, talking about the sealift fleet, the average age of some of those ships is 44 years old, some more than 50 years old.

We are relying on foreign-built ships for our sealift capacity. And so I guess my question, Admiral, would be whether you think our sealift capacity is sufficient to meet our needs. And certainly if you could weigh in on where our sealift capacity is relative to PRC.

Admiral AQUILINO. As it applies to sealift, we certainly have a distinct advantage over the PRC, both numbers and capabilities. As it applies to what is needed in the future, so General Van Ovost, the TRANSCOM [U.S. Transportation Command] commander, and I speak often. She is aware of the needs required, and she has done some good work.

And I also thank the Congress for the support to the additional 10 tankers that we have been able to utilize. So as a combined effort, sealift and airlift is critical, especially when you have to do logistics sustainment over half the globe. And again, in partner with
TRANSCOM commander, we have identified that and asked the services to support it.

Mr. DE LUZIO. Mr. Royal, anything you want to add to or weigh in on that question?

Mr. ROYAL. Thanks, Congressman. I would offer that DOD has quite a broad range of modeling and analytical capabilities that we undertake. We are looking at this theater as an all-domain competitive space. Shipbuilding is certainly one of those domains, and we want to make sure that we remain competitive in that regard. But we are also making sure that we are thinking about the position and the presence of U.S. ships with respect to all of the other domains that are necessary to bring to bear the right kind of posture at the right time.

Mr. DE LUZIO. Gentleman, thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. And I want to pause for a minute. I was glad the way that Mr. Deluzio framed that and that is what are they doing compared to us because I have said repeatedly what they spend is—what they say they spend is a lie. But what they spend compared to what we spend is not apples to apples.

They don’t have an EPA [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency]. They don’t have OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration]. They don’t have NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act]. They don’t have a Congress. They don’t have any of the things that we have to deal with and interfere with or drive cost up on their expenditures. So it is always healthy to do what Mr. Deluzio did, talk in terms of what is our capability, what is their capability, not how much they spend versus how much we spend because it really is a silly argument. Mr. Moylan from Guam is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the panel today, the time that you put in, and the answers that you have been providing us. It’s very helpful. I also want you to know in the audience we have also guests from Guam, our Guam Chamber of Commerce here. We have six of them that are very supportive of our continued military buildup on Guam.

And identifying us as Guam as the most forward territory in the Pacific.

And identifying over 170,000 American citizens. You pointed out Guam and CNMI [Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands] that no time in history has such a military buildup and construction been happening. And specifically, you mentioned that Guam is the third highest construction workforce per capita nationally.

And the military construction demands require a workforce more than three times as large as what currently exists. So in order to do this, we need great relief regarding the H2–B workers. And right now, these H2–B workers are going to end in 2024.
And in your report, you said we need them until 2029. So I am completely behind you. I trust you. I know what you are doing. And I believe in what you can do.

But I need to support you even greater. Congress needs to support you even greater. We have introduced the standalone bill with the H2–B visas to extend till 2029.

And we are even attempting to include that in the NDAA language. It would be helpful for me if you can further explain if we don’t get this done. And what is the importance of this construction being done in the Guam cluster and how important it is for you to complete your mission, sir.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. So the development on Guam, I think we have invested between $11 and $13 billion to be able to execute the requirements that we believe we need for both sustainment as well as offensive and defensive warfighting capabilities. It is critical to be able to deliver those at speed and with the sense of urgency that I articulated.

So the criticality of extending the H2–B visas through 2029 would allow us to finalize the investments and the delivery of the posture needed on Guam. The people of Guam have been amazing partners throughout history, all the way back to World War II. So we need to finish our posture initiatives.

Without the ability to get workers, which are mostly from the Philippines—again, I will be clear, there is no Chinese workers coming to Guam to do the work that we have asked—it would delay the implementation and push us back years if we didn’t have that authority.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Admiral. Another question, of course, is where our budget was significantly short, you are talking about the Guam defense system, right? The priority mission to defend our homeland with the GDS [Guam defense system] 360-degree integrated air and missile defense for Guam to include an offensive capability as well.

So we understand. The President’s proposed budget was $147 million short. You identified that this was the purpose of the Guam defense system, the 360-degree integrated air and missile defense for the island.

I want to thank you for making that a top unfunded priority. And I am going to do my best to make sure that is a funded priority as well. But again, just to reiterate, that we are the forward-most deployed, right?

We keep this as far away as possible. Without this, we are putting in danger I believe all the troops we have on island and specifically the civilians on Guam. So please reiterate what you are explaining to us in your report. Thank you, sir.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. So again, the funding shortfall identified as my integration with the Missile Defense Agency and the Department is targeted at integrating the different sets of capabilities that are identified in the architecture. So Aegis capabilities tied with Army capabilities in the form of THAAD, Patriot, IFPC, LTAMDS [Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor], and the other required portions to deliver a 360-degree integrated defense. That 147 would delay the integration of some of those ca-
Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Admiral. We will fight strong to get your H2–B extended to 2029 and get you that $147 million in order for our Nation and for our island of Guam.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, sir.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. Chair now recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Davis, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS. Thanks so much, Mr. Chair, and to the witnesses here today. All the focus of the United States security policy of late has been on the People's Republic of China. North Korea continues to engage in saber-rattling tactics in the nuclear weapons domain. General LaCamera, at this moment in time, how do you assess the threat level from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and specifically which leg of the nuclear triad, air, land, sea capability, in your opinion poses the most immediate threat to the homeland?

General LaCamera. To answer your last question, his land capability is the greatest threat, what he has demonstrated with his ICBM testing. Our focus is on combat readiness and making sure that we can—we have not deterred him in developing this capability; we now need to focus on deterring him from employing this capability.

Mr. DAVIS. As we saw tragically in Hong Kong, the people at the top of the institutions matter as much if not more than the institutions of government themselves. In responding to the PRC's brazen violation of the "one country, two systems" regime that govern Hong Kong since its incorporation a generation ago, the U.S. offered little in the way of pushback. Mr. Royal, as we think about our military's posture in the South China Sea, especially as it relates to Taiwan, how can we be sure that history does not repeat itself?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, I agree with your assessment that we are watching a PRC increasingly repressive at home and increasingly assertive abroad. In the South China Sea, the PRC continues to make unlawful claims. And we call on the PRC to abide by the 2016 arbitration on the claims in the South China Sea.

We believe that our mutual defense commitments with allies and partners in the region represent a demonstrable advancement in terms of being able to resist those unlawful claims as we watch them unfold. And so we are going to continue to sail, fly, and operate wherever international law allows. We talked about freedom of navigation operations earlier in this hearing. And we will continue to share information transparently with allies and partners when we see violations by the PRC in illicit way along the lines of those unlawful claims.

Mr. DAVIS. And Mr. Royal and to the Admiral, are you confident that the South Korean allies and other Quad region partners continue to have full trust in our intelligence and military capabilities, especially what we have seen over the last few weeks with the leak of sensitive classification—classified information? Any assessment there?
Mr. Royal. Simply put, Congressman, yes, we believe that we continue to have the full faith and confidence in the partnership in the alliance with the Republic of Korea.

Admiral Aquilino. Absolutely, Congressman.

Mr. Davis. Thank you so much. We appreciate your presence today.

And, Mr. Chair, I will yield back.

The Chairman. I thank the gentleman. The chair will now recognize the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Alford, for 5 minutes.

Mr. Alford. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith, and our distinguished witnesses today. Appreciate you all being here today.

I think we are all concerned about what is going on with China and Taiwan, and maybe we are not moving fast enough to develop the capabilities to deter Communist China.

Our military has incredible capabilities, but as we modernize our forces, particularly our Air Force and Navy, we have to ensure that we are putting hard power in place to make China think twice before conducting a naval blockade or full-scale amphibious assault of Taiwan. We also need to do a better job of explaining to the American people why Taiwan matters and why the Indo-Pacific region is critical to our national security efforts.

More than 50 percent of the world’s GDP [gross domestic product] flows through this region. Taiwan alone produces more than 60 percent of the world’s semiconductors, more than 90 percent of the most advanced ones. We cannot allow China to seize control of these critical supply chains which impact goods that we use each and every day.

This leads to our questions today. Mr.—Admiral Aquilino, after China’s recent military drills around Taiwan, China’s military declared it is ready to fight. Can you talk more about what INDO-PACOM is doing to deter the Chinese Communist Party from launching military drills and threatening our allies in the region?

Admiral Aquilino. Thanks, Congressman. So Indo-Pacific Command is postured with forces west of the International Date Line that are prepared to respond, executing daily operations for deterrence, operating with our allies and partners. And we’re able to respond quickly to any aggressive action.

Mr. Alford. Do we have the seapower that we need to combat China at this point?

Admiral Aquilino. We do at this point. As we’ve talked about before, China’s moving at a very rapid pace. They’re increasing both capability and capacity. And we certainly have to make sure that we always have overmatch against the Chinese.

Mr. Alford. What do you see as the biggest challenge right now [inaudible]?

Admiral Aquilino. Right now I think it’s the speed of urgency at which we’re working as we’ve come out of 20 years in the Middle East and understanding what this security challenger is posing as a threat. We need to understand how fast it’s coming and we need to go faster.

Mr. Alford. What are the top priorities for munitions and can the American sector meet these demands that we are going to be facing?
Admiral AQUILINO. For INDOPACOM, as a part of my 1254 report I’ve articulated the numbers and types of weapons that we believe we need to invest in and to deliver quickly. As it applies to the industrial base, I’ll ask Jed to take that.

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, on your last point there were 17 munition systems identified for multiyear procurement in the latest NDAA. Those are the 17 systems that I would say are most critical right now in terms of our ability to stockpile, to have magazine depth in the Indo-Pacific region.

Mr. ALFORD. We have heard you three talk about the importance of our allies and the critical role that they will play in helping us counter China. Can you talk about some of the capabilities that we need to improve on with our allies such as cyber and where there might be gaps in that?

General LaCAMERA. We're working with the Koreans. They're standing up a strategic command that has cyber embedded in it. Working with our CYBERCOM and National Security Agency to be able to not just look at it from a defensive, but an offensive capability going forward. And I'd rather talk about the rest of it——

Mr. ALFORD. Right.

General LaCAMERA [continuing]. In a classified setting.

Mr. ALFORD. Admiral.

Admiral AQUILINO. What I would say is that certainly the shorting up and defense of all of our networks and our partner networks is step one and most critical because as we continue to operate with them, the sharing of information and all of that. And in INDOPACOM one of my unfunded requirements is identified—is referred to as a Mission Partner Environment. So right now I got 13 networks to talk to my partners. Maintaining 13 networks and keeping them all cyber safe is a chore. The Mission Partner Environment brings all of our partners into one network, think single pane of glass, that has zero trust capability for cybersecurity for us to be able to operate together.

Mr. ALFORD. Thank you again to our witnesses.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Jimmy Panetta, for 5 minutes.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that.

Gentlemen, thanks to all of you for being here and of course your service.

Obviously, a Ukrainian victory is important. And no matter what your definition is of that, America’s commitment and leadership is absolutely necessary for that, quote/unquote, “win.” In order for there to be peace in the Indo-Pacific region obviously when it comes to Korea, when it comes to Taiwan, America’s commitment is essential, as a deterrent and if—as an ally if that deterrence fails, as you said, Admiral.

Now what we have seen though is obviously build-up on both sides. For the past 20 years, as the U.S. has been focused on other areas, China has built up the world’s largest stockpile of precision-guided missiles, which we have heard a lot about today. And obviously you are seeing the United States have to counter with its
own stockpiles and its own long-range of precision-guided missiles. In fact, I guess certain war games have determined that the U.S. will run out in less than a week if there is a military engagement.

And there is obviously other areas as well. One of those is—distributed lethality is where the United States has to enter into. And part of that is this strategy called Marines 2030 where we are basically giving up tanks and getting up on littoral forces by putting more on islands, kind of a ship-to-shore or shore-to-shore, as they say.

Admiral, if you could expound on Marines 2030 and then also go into the fact that as we work to deter China and a China attack, how do we not provoke one?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. First, the Marine littoral regiment. Again, General Berger, who came out of MARFORPAC [U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific], as you know, I think was pretty understanding of the threat, the scenario, and what was needed. So I appreciate his effort to focus on the Indo-Pacific problem set.

That said, we need to deliver that organization with the capabilities to deliver effect. Surface-to-air, air-to—or surface-to-surface, surface-to-ship. When that force is armed and prepared in that set of capability that’s exactly what we need in the Indo-Pacific to support the fight.

To your second question on what do we do to not provoke the PRC. Well, number one, we’ve got to make sure that they understand, we’re not seeking conflict. Number two, we haven’t changed our policy. Number three, we don’t support independence for Taiwan. And then we need to make sure that they can operate inside this international world order in a way that all nations want to interoperate with them, economically, diplomatically. And that’s the challenge. So first we need to make sure they understand we are not trying to provoke.

Mr. PANETTA. Great. Thank you.

Mr. Royal, Taiwan’s intelligence community faces constant infiltrations by the CCP including taking advantage of weak espionage laws that can challenge our own ability to coordinate with the Taiwanese. What do you make of our ability to work with Taiwan’s intelligence community and what strategies might we consider to create a more reliable intelligence sharing with the Taiwanese?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, this is a topic of our bilateral discussions with the government of Taiwan. I will say they’re making improvements in their ability to hold and maintain security over information. We also are able to have some pretty discreet conversations about what we’re seeing in terms of developments in the region. So I would say that this is an area for—that we are improving in and needs further improvement going forward.

Mr. PANETTA. Great. Thank you.

Last question. Admiral, can you discuss what USINDOPACOM is doing to ensure our current stockpiles and military assets remain intact amid a conflict under extreme weather conditions such as a hurricane, such as other types of extreme weather events that we are dealing with?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, thanks, Congressman. So certainly I have an organization that’s the Center for Disaster—for Excellence
for Disaster Management. They are doing a lot of work for me to make sure I understand where those places are that we need that might be at risk based on impacts, whether it be drought, sea level rise, severity of storms. And we ensure that those are structured correctly and positioned to be able to sustain and survive any harsh impact. But the ability to predict and then the ability to take action in advance of the problem is the approach we’ve taken.

Mr. PANETTA. Great. Thank you, gentlemen.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman from California.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. LaLota, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LaLOTA. Thank you, Chairman.

Admiral, General, Mr. Royal, I want to start by thanking you for your service and for being here with our committee today.

Admiral, I have to say I am a bit excited to speak with you on the record today. It is not every day I get to dialogue with a combatant commander who is not only from Long Island, but from my congressional district. And in fact I understand that—as you told me earlier, that you lived five houses away from St. Anthony’s High School where my wife and I both attended. So awesome that you are here, Admiral.

I was a few classes after you at Annapolis. And after commissioning I was deployed to the Western Pacific three times and spent 11 months in 2005 attached to a Joint Special Operations Task Force in the Southern Philippines. And with that experience I have great respect and appreciation for the role the Indo-Pacific Command plays to our national security. And our Nation’s most dangerous adversaries—China, Russia, and North Korea—have a significant presence in your area of operations and I am honored to have you and your staff here today to discuss and work with our committee to address national security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. And a significant ally in the region is the Republic of the Philippines and the United States and the Philippines have maintained a deep multigeneration relationship that includes bilateral security alliance, extensive military cooperation, close people-to-people ties, and many shared strategic and economic interests.

And as you are all aware, the Philippines, China, and other countries have long-standing disputes over waters and land features in the South China Sea. And as a result tensions have risen sharply over the last decade as China has enlarged and placed military assets on several disputed features in the South China Sea.

Just recently our DOD has announced the location of four new naval bases in the Philippines to include three on the northeastern part of the island chain. And I applaud those efforts to keep in check the growing threats of China and I am optimistic about our efforts to achieve deterrence through strength in the region. And it is crucial that we continue to position ourselves and have regional readiness in the region.

And, Admiral, my first question is for you. In your testimony you discussed how important—excuse me, how our competitors seek to challenge U.S. dominance in all domains including space and cyber.

Admiral AQUILINO. Sure.
Mr. LA LOTTA. And to maintain our warfighting advantage U.S. INDOPACOM requires resilient and flexible space and cyber capabilities and we need to continue to integrate these capabilities into activities and exercises with our allies and partners in the region.

And so given these new bases and recent joint training exercises in the Philippines do you envision any additional resources or manpower that will be needed that are currently unplanned for? And the question is for everybody.

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. I appreciate the question. It's good to meet with you as well.

I just want to—one point of clarification. So the sites that we have coordinated with the Philippines will certainly not be U.S. bases, right? So those are Philippine sovereign territory that we will work with them to be able to invest in and build out so that the Philippines and the United States can operate together whenever needed to both exercise and rehearse.

That said, those agreements are just going through. So as a part of INDOPACOM's plan for developing those four places, we have not even done the assessment, nor have we identified any planning and design or ultimately coordination with our Philippine partners on what things are best invested in. So we have way more work to do. None of those requirements are in my 1254 report. Those will be for future years. But having the ability to work with our critical ally, the Philippines, we need to build those out as quick as possible.

And thanks for your service. The team is still supporting the Philippines down south where you operated from.

Mr. LA LOTTA. Great. Just to follow up on that, Admiral, I am familiar—I am sure we are using that through, by, and with method still with Philippines and some other neighbors and partners in the area. When do you expect to more specifically drill down to this committee to what resources you need to help advance a presence through, by, and with our Filipino counterparts?

Admiral AQUILINO. So in my current report, Congressman, there are identified projects that we would like to build out in the current sites that they've agreed with that we have started work on. For the four additional sites, those will show up next year in that report.

Mr. LA LOTTA. Thanks, Admiral. I appreciate your time and your efforts.

Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Horsford for 5 minutes.

Mr. HORFORD. Thank you very much, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for holding this important hearing.

As the 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy stated, the Indo-Pacific is the epicenter of the 21st century geopolitics. The Indo-Pacific theater encompasses over 35 countries, 15 time zones, and is home to over half of the world's population. It is evident to me that success in the region will be a result of multilateral approaches.

Secretary Austin has stated that we must use every tool at the Department of Defense’s disposal in close collaboration with our counterparts across the U.S. Government and with allies and part-
ners to ensure that potential foes understand the folly of aggression.

The work that we do with our allies and partners plays a crucial part of our ability to deter conflict. As you know, my district includes Nellis Air Force Base who, aligned with the National Defense Strategy, have focused their red flag exercises on the Indo-Pacific theater and the pacing challenges alongside our allied partners.

So how are we collaborating with our allies and our partners to build an advantage and deter any challenges that we may face in the region? And how are you working with our counterparts and the U.S. Government to address issues in the Indo-Pacific? And what can Congress do to further assist in those efforts?

Mr. ROYAL. Congressman, I'll jump in first here on this one. As you alluded to in your comments, deterrence holds in this region for two reasons: One is because we have the right capabilities postured at the right level of readiness; and secondly, because our allies and partners are standing with us. And in that regard I would say that we're doing more than ever with respect to advancing our relationships with our allies and partners.

In Japan, we're watching their—the Japanese Diet increase the defense budget by over 25 percent just in the next year. They've supported a counterstrike capability and they are now offering to host a U.S. Marine littoral regiment in Japan for the very first time.

The AUKUS arrangement is a historic opportunity for us to be able to put increasing capability in the undersea domain and to increase interoperability with two of our most capable allies.

This is the sort of story that we're seeing repeated throughout the region right now among all of our defense treaty allies, but beyond that as well with all of our partners. And so when we're talking about having the right capabilities and watching defense budgets support that in—postured in the way that actually does create the right kind of deterrent effects to our adversaries, all of that is underway right now and we are breathing oxygen into that work every single day.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Congressman, as it applies from the training lens, right, so we do a—like I said, 120 exercises, operations. The training aspect of our allies and partners is critical. Some of them come to your State and go to the gold standard, right, of Nellis for the Air Force, Fallon for the Navy. And the intent that we're trying to push in the approach is to take that level of training and connect it from Nellis to Australia to Alaska to Guam to Japan. And if you were to think about a training range that spanned that size and scope, and allies and partners from anywhere in the region could jump in and get high-end training like you're used to and the Air Force is used to at Nellis, that's a pretty good path forward. That's our approach.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you for the recognition of the great work that our service members are doing at Nellis and beyond.

Finally, we know in States like Nevada many of our constituents are feeling the effects of the climate crisis every day. And the Indo-Pacific theater also experiences some of the world's most damaging events. Often they are fast-occurring and unpredictable. So what
are some of the actions that are being taken towards work around climate resiliency?

Mr. Royal, Congressman, the first thing that we're doing right now is spending a lot of time with our allies and partners in the region talking about what they’re seeing in terms of impacts of climate change, in particular for defense and security requirements where our department is most focused.

And to that regard we are looking at ways to mitigate those impacts, whether it's related to infrastructure or energy security. And I do think over time investments that we need to be making into green technologies that support our defense requirements and those of our allies and partners will be absolutely critical in the coming years.

Mr. Horsford. Okay. Thank you.

Admiral Aquilino. Congressman, I've provided—my organization has done a 30-year prediction on what each of those nations might be seeing coming their way and they can use that for understanding preparedness. And as we've worked projects and other things we make sure we're supporting anything through the concerns of climate impacts.

Mr. Horsford. Thank you very much.

The Chairman. The gentleman's time has expired.

We are going to do—we have been called for votes. We are going to do one more witness on each side. It will be Mr. Mills and Ms. Tokuda and then we are going to call it a day.

So, Mr. Mills, you are recognized for 5 minutes at most.

Mr. Mills. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will make this pretty brief.

On multiple occasions we have dealt with people from the Biden administration within the Department of Defense and the Department of State. And as I have tried to offer up many times, the recognition of how we view China is very different from my perspective of where we are from an economic, resource, cyber, and other types of aspects of warfare that is being launched against us. And unfortunately for often far too long we look at everything from kinetic ability.

So this question is for you, Mr. Royal. When we are doing all this preparedness to try and identify how we can thwart the efforts of warfare from China's aggression, do we recognize them as anything greater than just a competitor, but as an actual adversary?

Mr. Royal. Congressman, the term that we use in the National Defense Strategy is the pacing challenge for the Department.

Mr. Mills. Do we recognize them as anything other than a competitor?

Mr. Royal. Congressman, we can all get into different definitions of what is competitor, what is challenger, what is adversary. Pacing challenge is a term that we believe sets our sights on a trajectory that allows us to do what we need to do to be able to make sure that we are defending and deterring every single day.

Mr. Mills. Okay. Why don't we frame it this way? How does the CCP view America?

Mr. Royal. I'd be happy to talk with you in a classified session about our assessments of the CCP's—
Mr. MILLS. Well, it is pretty simple. I think that when they are actually trying to go after us from an economic and resource perspective or trying to eliminate the U.S. dollar from being a global currency to ensure they throw us into hyperinflation; they are trying to encircle us by utilizing the Road and Belt Initiative as well as economic coercion in Panama and Honduras to control the tariffs and taxation of the Panama Canal; when they are actually releasing out of the Darién Gap the fentanyl that is killing tens of thousands of Americans every single year in America; when they are utilizing the marriage of convenience with Russia to try and advance themselves with the SHAWAs [Streamlined Health and WASH Activities] of Venezuela, Petro Colombia, and the Cubans, which are 90 miles off our—I am fairly confident they don’t view us as a competitor or to outpace us, but as an adversary that they intend to utilize things like even the WHO [World Health Organization] and WEF [World Economic Forum] to try and create this hegemony, which is what Chairman Xi is actually looking to do from the very beginning.

In saying all that, let’s talk about economic resource capability and capacity. Admiral, you have been very forthright with us even in our closed-door session on where we need to be at. In the event of a CCP invasion of Taiwan, what role would the Indian Ocean play in shipping critical supplies and resources to our partners and allies and could the Indian Ocean supply chains constrain the PRC aggression?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Congressman. So again no matter what would happen in the world, a free flow of product commerce to our allies and partners and from the United States, right—it’s not only the allies and partners and friends in the region, but it’s the EU, it’s the U.K. We would come together to ensure that free flow of commerce could happen for all those nations. And it’s also a vulnerability for the other side.

Mr. MILLS. And that is exactly what I was getting to, which is that in identifying and trying to prevent, yes, we can continue to try and be a porcupine so that China looks at it and says that it is not a viable option right now. But also I think exposing their vulnerabilities to track them away from the invasion, to allow them to try and strengthen up their vulnerabilities, which could buy us the precious time that we need to get our industrial base where it has to be to support a war of this magnitude.

And so have we looked at how we strengthen the quadrilateral agreements, or the Quad as it is referred to, with India to ensure that we have that capability to try and expose these vulnerabilities?

Admiral AQUILINO. We’re certainly working with our Indian partners both to advance our warfighting capabilities together, to ensure that we’re sharing information that’s needed. Again, we do have the same strategic competitor, or whatever definition we want to put on it. And in my time over the—in the theater now for 5 years straight it has increased exponentially. And again, it’s trending in the right direction. They’re really good partners.

Mr. MILLS. I agree. And I think that our strengthening, as we saw under the Trump administration with Modi, it is to their economic advantage to weaken China’s aggression from an economic
coercive stance, but also it is to our advantage to find reliable resource and economic partners that we can conduct not only just trade, but security cooperations in the area to ensure that we have stability in operations that are sustainable for decades to come.

Thank you so much, gentlemen. With that I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from— the gentlelady from Hawaii—

Ms. TOKUDA. Thank you so much.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Ms. Tokuda, for 5 minutes.

Ms. TOKUDA. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For decades our country has enjoyed a close relationship with the Freely Associated States under the Compact of Free Association, especially in my home State of Hawaii where thousands of FAS citizens live and work contributing to our diverse communities.

Ambassador Joseph Yun alongside the Department of State and the Department of the Interior has been leading the efforts to renegotiate these compacts and send them to Congress for approval before they expire. But to me, the Department of Defense, especially U.S. INDOPACOM, remains the primary beneficiary of these compacts.

Admiral Aquilino, I think we both agree on the strategic importance of these compacts. Briefly, how important is it for Congress to act quickly to renew these agreements when they are sent to Congress for review and approval?

Admiral AQUILINO. Aloha, Congresswoman. Thank you. It is critically important. Ambassador Yun and I have spent time together. I've offered my support wherever and whenever needed. I've hosted him in the headquarters. Again, when we say it's beneficial, it's beneficial to the United States.

The largest number of military service per capita comes out of the Freely Associated States. We defend them as if they were the U.S. homeland. And it's critical that we get these agreements across the goal line.

Ms. TOKUDA. Thank you. I also want to add that the PRC is working aggressively as you know to undermine our relationships with our FAS allies. Last month President David Panuelo of the Federated States of Micronesia [FSM] wrote a shocking letter detailing the extensive influence campaigns and political warfare that the PRC is conducting in his country. His letter is a bold move to assert that FSM sovereignty through transparency. And I hope this committee will join me in applauding his courage and his service to his country.

Now INDOPACOM's independent assessment for fiscal year 2024 included several military contract—construction projects for harbor and port infrastructure in the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau. These projects are possible in part because of the compacts and the access they provide.

Admiral, what is the importance of these types of projects in the Freely Associated States? What value are these projects delivering for our FAS allies?

Admiral AQUILINO. And, Congresswoman, for the United States to have the—we talked a little bit before about access, basing, and overflight. You know, those places are critical. They're much need-
ed. To have them in the Freely Associated States provides a level of defense that’s beneficial.

And I would once—say one thing about the President Panuelo letter. I’d sat with him just a couple of weeks ago. His letter was far from shocking for me. And it’s a good read for everybody because it’s the model being utilized all across the region by the PRC that he shined some light on. It was well done.

Ms. TOKUDA. Thank you, Admiral.

With the remaining time I have, I would like to expound on our military presence in Okinawa. As a fourth-generation Okinawan-American and Hawaii resident I feel more acutely than most the impacts of our presence there and the similarities that exist between my homeland and my home.

Like Hawaii, Okinawa is strategically important to our defense posture in the Indo-Pacific and it too is home to a significant U.S. military presence with all the benefits and the challenges that come with it.

The planned relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to Henoko Bay has been delayed into the next decade. Significant environmental and ecological challenges to this plan in addition to local political opposition beg the question of when this relocation will ever be completed and if so, at what cost?

In the past 7 years it has been revealed that there is PFAS [per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances] contamination of waterways, soil, and drinking water around the Kadena and Futenma bases. Blood tests conducted by Kyoto University in 2019 found elevated PFAS concentration in residents’ blood, strongly suggesting potential exposure to not just Okinawan residents, but our own U.S. service members to PFAS compounds.

There is no denying Okinawa’s strategic importance to our posture in the Indo-Pacific. My two island homes are destined to play a role in the story of this era and I am very proud of that. I only ask that our witnesses here today consider a whole-of-government approach as we define and strengthen our relationship with both Okinawa and Hawaii. More than just a location for our fleets and our bases, these islands and her people are our allies that should be included in future decision making as we work to secure and defend the region.

Mahalo for your time, and I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. What I would like to do, since nobody else has scooted in is—okay. I was going to give them time.

But, listen, I want to thank you all for your patience and your service and being here today.

And, with that, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:40 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]
APPENDIX

April 18, 2023
STATEMENT BY
JEDIDIAH P. ROYAL
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR
INDO-PACIFIC SECURITY AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

BEFORE THE 118th CONGRESS
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
APRIL 18, 2023
Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify today on what the Department of Defense is doing to safeguard the interests of the American people, our allies, and our partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

I am pleased to testify today alongside Admiral John Aquilino of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) and General Paul LaCamera of the United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and U.S. Forces Korea (USFK). And before I continue, I would like to highlight the tireless work of those who serve the United States in uniform across the Indo-Pacific region, as well as those who serve in the civilian workforce across the Department. In his Message to the Force last month, Secretary Austin said that “our people are the bedrock of a strong national defense,” and that is something that I am reminded of every day when I see our entire team hard at work together.

A Vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region

The very first words of the Biden-Harris Administration’s Indo-Pacific Strategy plainly state that “the United States is an Indo-Pacific power.” And Secretary Austin has been clear about our commitment to seeking transparency; openness and accountability; freedom of the seas, skies, and space; and the peaceful resolution of disputes in the region.

That vision – and that commitment – continues today. Alongside our partners across the U.S. government, the Department seeks to uphold a rules-based order where commerce and ideas flow and flourish without the threat of coercion, aggression, or contempt for human dignity. I look forward to speaking with you today about many of those efforts and the results we are seeing as part of the Administration’s “invest, align, compete” strategy.

Challenges to the Vision

The Department of Defense does not take this vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific order for granted. In particular, we have seen the People’s Republic of China (PRC) increasingly look to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) as a tool for coercion in support of its global aims, and we have in turn seen the PLA conduct more dangerous and aggressive activities in the region.

In just the past twelve months, PLA aircraft and maritime vessels have continued to conduct inherently risky intercepts against U.S., ally, and partner assets in the air and at sea, increasing the unacceptable danger of an accident. The PLA continues to conduct coercive military activities in the Taiwan Strait, the South and East China Seas, and beyond. With our allies and partners across the region, the United States has called out such behavior; in recent examples, we have condemned the PRC’s use of military-grade lasers in separate incidents against an Australian aircraft and a Philippine vessel, both operating lawfully in their respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Additionally, we have seen continued coercive PLA behavior along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India. For the sake of preserving peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific, we must never accept military activities intended to undermine the rules-based international order through coercion and aggression.
The PRC high-altitude balloon (HAB) that violated U.S. airspace earlier this year – itself part of a PRC fleet of surveillance balloons that have crossed over many other countries – committed the PRC’s disregard for the basic principle of sovereignty at the heart of peace, order, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. And the PRC’s public comments about this program, which include no plausible explanation for violating the sovereignty of the United States and dozens of other countries, underscore the ongoing challenges posed by PRC dis- and misinformation.

As this Committee is aware, the PRC is engaged in a significant and fast-paced expansion, modernization, and diversification of its nuclear forces. While the end state of the PRC’s nuclear force expansion remains uncertain, the trajectory of these efforts points to a large, diverse nuclear arsenal with a high degree of survivability, reliability, and effectiveness, eneased in an opaque posture. This could provide the PRC with new options before and during a crisis or conflict to leverage nuclear weapons for coercive purposes, including military provocations against U.S. allies and partners in the region.

The PRC is also embracing rapid technological change to accomplish military goals. Of particular concern is PRC interest in biotechnology and other areas that may have peaceful purposes but that also enable weapons development, including advanced biological and chemical weapons.

On a related note, we have also seen the PRC demonstrate a concerning lack of interest in the important lines of communication that underpin a stable defense relationship between our countries. The Department of Defense believes strongly in maintaining open lines of communication between Washington and Beijing to ensure competition does not veer into conflict. Immediately after downing the PRC high-altitude balloon in February, the department submitted a request for a call between Secretary Austin and the PRC Minister of National Defense because we wanted to ensure there was no misunderstanding or miscalculation in Beijing about our actions. Unfortunately, the PRC declined our request. This was not far from the first time that the PRC has declined invitations to communicate from the Secretary, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or other Department officials. But this will not diminish the Department’s commitment to seeking open lines of communication with the PRC military at multiple levels, and to responsibly managing the relationship.

It is for reasons like these that the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) identifies the PRC as the Department’s “pacing challenge” while the Administration’s Indo-Pacific Strategy warns that the PRC is “combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological might as it pursues a sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific and seeks to become the world’s most influential power.” And while the PLA plays a central role in these aims, as other leaders from the Department have said before, I must note that the PRC’s coercive behavior also extends to the realms of trade, technology, diplomacy and multilateral institutions, and more.

Importantly, while the Administration’s 2022 National Security Strategy warns that the PRC “harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order,” we also know that the PRC is not the only driver of challenges to a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. North Korea continues to engage in provocative and destabilizing behavior,
including an unprecedented pace of ballistic missile testing in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. The effects of climate change will continue to place downward pressure on peace, stability, and prosperity across the region. Finally, violent extremism will continue to require cooperation between the United States and our partners on counterterrorism efforts.

**Setting the Pace**

Faced with these challenges to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly the challenges posed by the PRC, the Department of Defense is doing more – more than ever – to strengthen deterrence, and to, if necessary, ensure we can prevail in conflict. We are doing so by, in the words of Secretary Austin, “using every tool at the Department’s disposal, in close collaboration with our counterparts across the U.S. Government and with Allies and partners, to ensure that potential foes understand the folly of aggression.” This is integrated deterrence in action. And simply put, our approach is delivering a military that is growing in capability, deploying in more-forward locations, and connecting more deeply with our allies and partners – reflecting the Department’s imperative to deliver the credible capabilities that underpin deterrence against the pacing challenge in the near-, mid-, and long-term.

**Strengthening U.S., Ally, and Partner Capability**

When it comes to strengthening U.S. capabilities in the region, the Department is deploying cutting-edge capabilities right now. We are making major investments in the capabilities we will need in the future, and our budget request shows it.

The President’s Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024) requests more than $60 billion for air power, including next-generation aircraft; nearly $50 billion for sea power, including undersea capabilities; more than $33 billion for resilient space capabilities; more than $37 billion for modernization of the nuclear triad and nuclear command and control; and more. The Department’s budget also includes an unprecedented level of funding for research and development – $145 billion, and for procurement – $170 billion. In fact, these investments would constitute the Department’s largest commitment ever in these areas.

Efforts like the Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve (RDER) underscore how we are working to quickly deliver promising prototypes to warfighters. And the B-21 Raider, which Secretary Austin unveiled last December, is yet another example of a cutting-edge capability – with groundbreaking advances in range, survivability, and stealth – coming online in the immediate term.

The NDS also makes clear that, even as we continue to address terrorist threats against the homeland, “the PRC and Russia now pose more dangerous challenges to safety and security at home.” The Department’s budget request for FY 2024 prioritizes defending the homeland as called for by the NDS, and my colleague Assistant Secretary Melissa Dalton testified about these crucial efforts before this Committee just last month.
Here is the bottom line: Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region is real and strong today for two reasons. First, the U.S. military remains the most capable and credible fighting force in the world. The major investments in the President’s Budget Request will help keep it that way.

Second, the United States is not the only Indo-Pacific power seeking to uphold peace and stability in the region by investing in greater capability and connection. The Alliance and partner network both in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond is our greatest asymmetric advantage, and it is gaining even greater strength.

There are numerous examples of important initiatives underway.

For example, we have strongly supported Japan’s decision to increase substantially its defense budget over the next five years and to introduce new capabilities, including counterstrike, that will strengthen regional deterrence at a time of important strategic alignment between our two countries. We will continue to deepen cooperation on space capabilities and to bolster technology cooperation and joint investments in emerging technologies, such as autonomous systems and counter-hypersonics.

With the Republic of Korea (ROK), we are taking clear, meaningful steps to modernize and strengthen our alliance, including by expanding the scope and scale of our combined exercises and deploying some of our most capable platforms to the Korean Peninsula at a faster tempo. We are also reinvigorating our dialogues on extended deterrence, ensuring strategic alignment through a whole-of-government approach. Additionally, we are working with the ROK to facilitate greater security cooperation outside of the Korean Peninsula and throughout the broader region.

We have made increased investments to support the Philippines’ their modernization goals, and we are working together to accelerate allied capabilities in the air and maritime domain.

With India, we are making major investments in our defense ties to uphold the regional balance of power. In yet another example of these increasingly promising efforts, the United States and India launched our initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) that includes in-depth conversations about opportunities for co-producing important defense platforms.

The AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) security pact exemplifies our collaboration with highly capable allies and partners to strengthen our combined capabilities and capacity in support of deterrence. The recently announced AUKUS Optimal Pathway, also known as Pillar I, will see Australia acquire conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines, further enhancing their force projection capability.

Finally, we continue to fulfill our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). The TRA has formed the bedrock of peace, stability, and deterrence in the Taiwan Strait over the last four decades, and it is sustained by strong bipartisan support for providing Taiwan with self-defense capabilities, as well as for maintaining the U.S. capacity to resist any use of force that jeopardizes the security of the people on Taiwan.
Delivering a More Mobile, Distributed, Lethal, and Resilient Regional Force Posture

When it comes to modernizing our force posture in the Indo-Pacific to be even more mobile, distributed, lethal, and resilient, the Department of Defense is delivering historic achievements.

I will highlight several examples from just the past six months.

In December, Secretary Austin, Secretary Blinken, and their Australian counterparts held the 2022 Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations and announced a series of new force posture initiatives, including increased rotations of U.S. bombers and fighters at Australian bases, alongside expanded maritime and ground forces cooperation. These rotations, in addition to helping make our forces more ready, will bring our most capable U.S. forces to the Indo-Pacific region. We are also deepening our logistics cooperation with Australia to improve our shared ability to effectively move and sustain our forces. This will, in turn, strengthen our ability to project combat power from the U.S. homeland into the region. Finally, we are increasingly inviting Japan to integrate into our force posture work in Australia, leveraging Australian geography to increase training opportunities to exercise our forces.

Then in January, the United States and Japan announced a series of historic force posture improvements, including the first forward deployment of a U.S. Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) to Japan. The MLR is the Marine Corps’ most advanced formation, with cutting-edge anti-ship capabilities, and will significantly enhance combat-credible deterrence. We also announced that our military and the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) are increasing the complexity of our joint and combined training and exercises, including in Japan’s Southwest Islands.

Later that month, Secretary Austin visited the Philippines, and the U.S. and Philippine governments announced that U.S. forces will have access to Philippine military bases in four new strategic locations under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). This expanded access will help our forces respond more effectively to natural disasters and other crises, including in the South China Sea. EDCA has proven a key pillar of defense cooperation in the U.S.-Philippine alliance, and these improvements will ensure even greater combined training, exercises, and interoperability between our forces.

Each of these announcements represents a major achievement. And together, they are a historic improvement of our regional force posture – the result of relentless defense diplomacy.

Deepening and Connecting Our Alliances and Partnerships

As the Department bolsters our network of U.S. alliances and partnerships across the region, we are also supporting efforts by our allies and partners to deepen their own ties with each other.

We are operating together like never before, with our bilateral and multilateral exercises in the region growing in scale, scope, and complexity. This summer’s Exercise TALISMAN SABRE in Australia will be the biggest bilaterally planned U.S.-Australia exercise to date, bringing
together likeminded partners from across the region and around the world, including Japan, the Republic of Korea, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This year’s Exercise BALIKITAN with the Philippines included participation from Australia and also saw the inaugural deployment of the Third Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR). Additionally, this year’s Exercise COBRA GOLD, co-sponsored with our treaty ally Thailand, featured not only a return to pre-pandemic levels of participation by dozens of countries – but also the largest U.S. contingent in a decade. And Exercise GARUDA SHIELD, once a bilateral training event with Indonesia, has now become one of the largest multilateral exercises in the region, featuring thousands of forces from over a dozen participating nations. These combined operations enhance interoperability and boost deterrence through demonstrations of our mutual resolve against regional coercive behavior.

We are also bringing together our closest regional allies and partners in ways that strengthen peace, stability, and deterrence across the region. Over the past twelve months, we have deepened our trilateral security efforts with Japan and Australia, with Japan and the Republic of Korea, with Japan and the Philippines, and beyond. And of course, we have made groundbreaking progress in the AUKUS partnership, which I mentioned earlier.

Additionally, we have broadened our engagement and initiatives with multilateral partners in the Indo-Pacific region to deliver real results for peace and security, especially with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Quad. Last year, we launched the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) to provide space-based maritime domain awareness to states across the region. This will support greater transparency in the region and enhance neighbors’ abilities to monitor and police their waters.

We are also listening to the needs of allies and partners who say that the effects of a changing climate pose a serious threat to their security, and we are furthering our efforts together on this important issue. In December, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command’s Center for Excellence in Disaster Management held a wargame on this topic to identify risks to infrastructure and how to build the climate resilience of allies and partners in the region. The resilience of not only our own installations but also those of regional allies and partners is particularly important in an increasingly complicated logistics environment.

Faced with a changing security landscape, states across the Indo-Pacific region are investing in their own capabilities, connections with regional partners, and their relationships with the United States. For example, over the past decade, our five regional treaty allies have increased their military expenditures by double-digit rates. We look forward to supporting our regional allies and partners as they conduct vital operations, activities, and investments in support of our shared vision of a free and secure Indo-Pacific region in a rules-based international order.

Conclusion

In the past several years, we have witnessed the growth of a strong bipartisan consensus around the scale and scope of the China challenge.
We are working toward the transformation of that consensus into a coalition built around solutions.

The Department of Defense is taking action to deploy the capabilities, drive forward the force posture, and deepen the alliances and partnerships we need to meet our pacing challenge.

Thank you for your time and attention today. I look forward to answering your questions.
Jedidiah P. Royal  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs

Jedidiah P. Royal, a career member of the Senior Executive Service, is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs. He oversees IPSA’s extensive portfolio—spanning China, Taiwan and Mongolia; East Asia; South and South East Asia; and Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia—and works across the national security enterprise to synchronize IPSA activities with foreign policy objectives.

Before joining IPSA, Mr. Royal served as Deputy Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, where he coordinated implementation of a diverse array of Security Cooperation programs. Prior to joining DSCA, Mr. Royal served as the Director of Defense Policy and Plans at the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In this capacity, Mr. Royal represented the United States to the NATO alliance on defense policy, capability, planning, deterrence, burden sharing and partnership matters. Prior to his position at NATO, Mr. Royal served in a variety of positions in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, most recently as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia affairs. He was also detailed to the National Security Council at the White House as Director for Afghanistan and Pakistan from 2013-2015; served as the Director for Cooperative Threat Reduction Policy in the office of Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction from 2010-2013; and served on exchange in Canberra, Australia as the Director of Strategic Advice in the Australian Department of Defense from 2007-2010. Mr. Royal was also assigned to the Counter Proliferation Policy office and the Office of Negotiations Policy. Mr. Royal started his career in the United States Senate as Legislative Assistant for Near East and South Asia Policy at the Foreign Relations Committee.

Mr. Royal holds the degree of M. PHIL from the University of New South Wales where his research and writing focused on the economic-security nexus, in particular the consequences of economic volatility on security relationships. He completed his undergraduate studies in International Affairs at The George Washington University.
STATEMENT OF
ADMIRAL JOHN C. AQUILINO, U.S. NAVY
COMMANDER, U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND POSTURE

18 APRIL 2023
Introduction / Opening Statement

Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Indo-Pacific region. I also want to extend my thanks for your continuous support to the men and women of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) and their families. It is my distinct honor and privilege to serve alongside the dedicated Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, Special Operators, Guardsmen, and Civilian warriors that execute our deterrence and defense missions selflessly every day. Your support is instrumental in our ability to accomplish these missions. But there is much more to do, and we must act with a greater sense of urgency.

The men and women of USINDOPACOM work tirelessly every day to prevent conflict in this region, not to provoke it. War is not inevitable. However, this decade presents a period of increased risk as illustrated by Russia's illegitimate, unprovoked war in Ukraine; the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s nuclear and conventional buildup; the PRC's malign behavior, including its "No Limits" expanding partnership with Russia; the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s continued missile provocations and nuclear rhetoric; and the risk of violent extremism. Our National Defense Strategy (NDS) identifies the PRC as the most consequential strategic competitor to the United States and the only competitor capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological capabilities to mount a sustained challenge to the rules-based international order.

Seize the Initiative is USINDOPACOM's approach to implement the NDS and accomplish our defense priorities - defend the homeland, deter strategic attacks, deter aggression, and build a resilient joint force. By design, this approach prevents conflict through integrated deterrence, ensures we can fight and win should deterrence fail, and provides the Secretary of Defense and President with options for any contingency. It aims to deliver a robust theater posture; campaign with lethal, persistent forces forward; technologically superior capabilities to maintain our warfighting advantages in the near, mid, and long-term; and stronger relationships with our allies, partners, and friends.
1) **A Distributed Force Posture** supports all elements of the joint force, enables our ability to seamlessly operate with our allies and partners, and demonstrates U.S. commitment to a stable and peaceful security environment. The access agreements and military construction (MILCON) requests outlined in our Independent Assessment (1254 Report) prioritize the locations and the required capacity at each. Given the time needed to complete the planning, design, and construction of each project, we must look for ways to accelerate our actions today to be prepared for future contingencies.

2) **A Joint and Combined Operations Campaign** synchronizes full spectrum military operations in all domains to build warfighting advantage and accelerate our ability to respond immediately. Persistent forces positioned west of the International Date Line (IDL), combined with our exercise and experimentation program, and synchronized with our allies and partners is an effective means to deter potential adversary aggression. Our globally coordinated efforts allow us to compete with our security challengers and positions the joint force to be able to rapidly transition from competition, to crisis, to conflict if required. This persistent, forward force operates throughout the region with our partners every day to demonstrate our commitment to the rules based international order and to provide options for our civilian leadership.

3) **Delivering Advanced Warfighting Capabilities** that outpace our challengers immediately improves our lethality and enhances our deterrence mission. The Guam Defense System (GDS) is our top homeland defense priority and our vision for the future includes offensive fires as well as robust theater logistics. Capabilities that enhance our command and control decision superiority in the near term are of equal importance. We must maintain the ability to safely operate in contested space, sustain our target quality, real-time battlespace awareness, and deliver advanced multi-domain joint fires munitions utilizing a Joint Fires Network (JFN) while integrating our allies and partners. The 1254
Report provides specificity on the capabilities and munitions to enhance combat credible deterrence in the near and mid-term.

4) **A Robust Network of Allies and Partners**, built on the strength of our shared interests, is our greatest advantage. USINDOPACOM is strengthening all layers of our security network: allies, multilateral arrangements, partners, friends, and the Five Eyes nations. We execute security cooperation activities, training, and exercises to strengthen those relationships, build partner capacity, and enhance interoperability. Security arrangements such as AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States) and other mini and multilateral opportunities allow us to pull together like-minded nations to improve our training. While not a military alliance, the Quad diplomatic partnership between Japan, Australia, India, and the United States enhances regional security and stability. We continue to develop our Mission Partner Environment (MPE) to facilitate information sharing, coordinate our operations, and enable high-end weapon system integration.

Advancing these four, critical areas are mutually reinforcing and each is foundational to USINDOPACOM’s ability to deter and defend. Defense of the homeland and deterrence of threats in the Indo-Pacific requires significant, sustained investments, supported by a strong industrial base, reliable supply chains, and predictable budgets. We respectfully request your continued support to deliver the end states of our four focus areas, recognizing that any delay in one area directly affects the others and puts at risk the overall success of our deterrence efforts.

USINDOPACOM thanks the Congress, the American people, and our partners for their continued support. We must act together and with urgency to maintain the rules-based international order that delivers the peace, stability, and prosperity of a free and open Indo-Pacific.
Key Adversarial Challenges

As stated in the 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy, the Indo-Pacific is the epicenter of 21st century geopolitics. The region features authoritarian regimes using military threats to subvert the existing rules-based international order while seeking to undermine confidence in U.S. commitment to the region. The PRC is taking increasingly coercive actions to reshape the Indo-Pacific region in its favor, supported by a rapidly modernizing People's Liberation Army (PLA) that is executing the largest military buildup since WWII. Russia's irresponsible behavior, exemplified by its illegal, illegitimate invasion of Ukraine, continues to pose an acute threat. The DPRK is increasing its belligerent behavior through development of ballistic missile and nuclear technology threatening the U.S. homeland and placing regional partners at increased risk. Violent extremism also remains a threat in this theater.

People's Republic of China (PRC)

Strategic Intent

The PRC aspires to become the world's leading power in its drive toward "national rejuvenation," to replace the existing international order with a system that benefits authoritarian regimes at the expense of all other nations. Militarily, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has directed the PLA to develop the capability to seize Taiwan by force and surpass the United States as the dominant power in the Pacific. The PRC further seeks a network of overseas military installations and expeditionary capabilities to expand the PLA's ability to project power globally.

The CCP uses all elements of national power to create an international environment favorable to authoritarian regimes that furthers their totalitarian reach. The PRC is implementing a triad of global initiatives to reshape international norms for development, trade, and security under the Global Security Initiative (GSI), Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), and the Global Development Initiative (GDI). While each includes deceptively attractive language and concepts, they suffer from a lack of specificity, vague implementation plans, and unclear goals allowing for PRC interpretation and enforcement. These initiatives seek to undermine the existing fair and respected
international architecture and replace it with a system that encourages repressive, authoritarian governance and protectionist economies that distort markets by avoiding openness and transparency.

CCP representatives exploit, distort, and misrepresent international law for their own benefit and at the expense of all other nations. The CCP is attempting to portray troubling aspects of its own domestic legal framework as globally accepted international law to assert regional dominance. Domestic laws such as the Anti-Secession Law, China Coast Guard Law, Maritime Traffic Safety Law, Civil-Military fusion legislation including the National Defense Transportation Law, and so-called emergency fast-track laws provide the CCP with the domestic legal architecture to advance its ambitions and streamline political decisions under a veneer of international legal legitimacy. The CCP is also engaging in a large-scale campaign to influence media outlets around the world in an effort to advance their narratives while mischaracterizing or obfuscating facts.

**Military Modernization**

The PLA continues the largest, fastest, most comprehensive military buildup since World War II in both the conventional and strategic nuclear domains. In spite of economic and manufacturing challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the accelerated pace at which the PLA has added advanced capabilities is concerning. In 2022 alone, the PLA added to its operational inventory 17 major warships, including four guided missile cruisers, three destroyers, five frigates, two attack submarines, and a large amphibious assault ship, plus scores of support and specialty ships. The air forces have doubled the production capability for its 5th Generation J-20 fighter with an estimated 150 of these aircraft now operational, many of them fielded last year. In 2022, the PRC completed 64 successful space launches that placed at least 160 satellites into orbit. And perhaps most stunning of all, the PLA Rocket Force continues to massively expand its arsenal of conventional and nuclear missiles, building hundreds of silos for nuclear missiles and fielding several hundred ballistic and cruise missiles. This almost certainly includes a large number of hypersonic missiles, some of which may be nuclear-capable.
The PRC may also be developing nuclear-armed hypersonic glide vehicles for use in a fractional orbital bombardment system (FOBS).

The CCP has now directed 2027 as the target for the PLA to deliver the capabilities needed to counter the U.S. military in the Indo-Pacific and project power across the globe. In October 2022, the 20th National Congress of the CCP set objectives focused on accelerating the PLA’s modernization goals over the next five years, including strengthening its “system of strategic deterrence.” With the 14th Five-Year Plan, the Chinese government has doubled-down on multiple national strategies already being implemented to ensure China achieves a globally dominant position in the emerging technologies that it believes are necessary for enabling complex modern military operations. The PRC continues to target technology and talent around the world to secure these technologies in pursuit of advanced military capabilities.

The PLA Navy (PLAN) consists of ~350 battle force ships and an additional ~85 patrol combatants and craft. The PLAN is on track to deliver 440 battle force ships by 2030 including significant increases in aircraft carriers and major surface combatants. The PLAN continues to expand their area of maritime operations emphasizing the development of expeditionary capabilities enabling their global aspirations. While much of the world expects the PLA to build out a large dedicated amphibious fleet for a potential Taiwan invasion, in the near-term, we see use of modified civilian roll-on/roll-off (RORO) ferries as a means of troop transport and logistics support.

The PLA’s aviation force is rapidly fielding technologically advanced, domestically built aircraft and a wide range of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). More than half of its fighter force is 4th generation or better, a ratio quickly growing with the rapid fielding of its 5th generation J-20 stealth fighter. The PLA is also developing jet-powered and supersonic UAS systems, as well as stealth, Unmanned, Combat-Aerial Vehicles (UCAV).

PLA ground forces have received equipment upgrades and project a new 4th generation main battle tank in the near future. The PLA increasingly incorporates amphibious military and civilian vessels in its ground forces’ training for potential
amphibious operations and has significantly increased the number and roles of a variety of helicopters.

The PLA is developing a host of nuclear and conventionally-armed long-range missiles and advanced weapons at a pace faster than expected. PLA Medium and Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM/IRBM), as well as Chinese cruise missiles can range U.S. bases, forces, and the homeland. The PRC continues developing longer range capabilities such as the DF-27 ballistic missile that will be able to reach targets well beyond the second-island chain. Additionally, China is developing hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs) and a new generation of nuclear-armed mobile missiles that employ multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) with the intent to evade U.S., ally, and partner missile defenses.

The PLA is rapidly advancing its space and counter-space programs. In 2022, the PRC executed 64 space launches, probably meant to expand intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), telecommunications, and navigation capabilities. For counter-space, the PRC is delivering capabilities that seek to deny use of our own space architecture despite their statements opposing the weaponization of space.

The PRC's cyber capabilities deliver both gray zone coercion and an enabling function to achieve decisive military advantage. PLA cyber efforts remain focused on developing capabilities to enable warfare activities targeting US and partner critical civilian electric, energy, and water infrastructure to generate chaos and disrupt military operations. The PLA also actively pursues espionage operations and intellectual property theft through targeted cyber operations.

The PLA has embarked on a rapid and opaque expansion, modernization, and diversification of its nuclear forces. Construction of silo fields across northern China, coupled with modern ballistic-missile submarines and the H-6N nuclear-capable, air-to-air refuelable bomber, underscore China's focus on developing a survivable, nuclear triad. The PRC has not declared an end goal nor acknowledged the scale of this nuclear force expansion. The PRC likely will possess at least 1,000 deliverable nuclear warheads by 2030. This larger arsenal could provide the PRC with new options before and during a
crisis or conflict to leverage nuclear weapons for coercive purposes, including military provocations against U.S. allies and partners in the region.

Destabilizing Actions

Taiwan

The PRC sees unification with Taiwan as “indispensable for the realization of China's great rejuvenation” and a top priority. To this end, the PRC uses all elements of national power, most notably a mix of military, economic, legal, information, and diplomatic tools, in pursuit of this goal. Beijing publicly claims a preference for peaceful unification over conflict; however, its consistent pressure tactics and coercive behavior demonstrates a significant disconnect between their words and their deeds.

During the CCP's 20th Party Congress, Xi Jinping unequivocally stated China will never renounce the right to use force as a means to achieve unification with Taiwan. Such rhetoric accompanies a concerted effort to develop military capabilities the PRC sees as necessary to seize Taiwan by force.

Beijing significantly increased its military pressure against Taiwan in 2022, in response to a perceived policy shift in U.S.-Taiwan political and military ties. Following the U.S. Speaker of the House's visit in August 2022, the PLA deployed its most capable assets around Taiwan and conducted ballistic missiles launches in a show of force. Since August, the PLA has normalized warship patrols around Taiwan and increased the number of military flights crossing into Taiwan's self-declared Air Defense Identification Zone. They have in effect erased the unofficial Taiwan Strait centerline, a mutually observed boundary designed to avoid unintended friction, to pressurize the people on the island.

Unsafe Intercepts of U.S. and Allied Aircraft

As Secretary Austin has noted, “we've seen an alarming increase in the number of unsafe aerial intercepts” of U.S. and allied aircraft throughout 2022. These included a February incident where a PLA Navy vessel directed a military-grade laser at an Australian P-8A patrol aircraft that could have permanently impaired the vision of the P-8A's crew. In May of 2022, another Australian P-8A was intercepted by a PLA aircraft that maneuvered in front of the P-8A and ejected chaff into the Australian aircraft's
engine. Days later, the Canadian armed forces issued a statement that PLA aircraft attempted to divert the flight path of one of their CP-140 long-range patrol craft, conducting a UN sanction enforcement mission, forcing the Canadian pilots to modify their flight path to avoid collision. Canada has noted such interactions are occurring with increased frequency. On December 21st, a US RC-135 surveillance aircraft, operating in international airspace was intercepted by a PLA fighter that unsafely maneuvered to within 20 feet of the cockpit of the RC-135, forcing our aircraft to take evasive action to avoid a collision.

All of these aircraft were operating in international airspace in accordance with international law when these dangerous intercepts occurred. In just over a year, the number of increasingly close intercepts against U.S. aircraft increased by 600%. Conducting destabilizing and coercive intercepts increases the potential for an accident, loss of life, or miscalculation.

Line of Actual Control (LAC)
Tensions between the PRC and India along the LAC, the de facto border between India and PRC, have remained high since a significant clash in June 2020, and an additional incident in December 2022. A 2021 PRC land borders law that allows for greater PLA involvement in border security represents a continuation of PRC’s "lawfare" strategy to justify military action in territorial disputes. China’s consistent attempts to expand its border has resulted in two physical confrontations between PLA and Indian soldiers. The PLA has also significantly expanded its military infrastructure along the LAC to maintain pressure on India and better posture forces for future contingencies. These actions are designed to expand their borders and consolidate their gains. The PRC’s provocative behavior creates instability and increases the risk of unintended incidents.

Excessive Maritime Claims
The PRC’s expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea are inconsistent with international law as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Yet the PRC continues its coercive activities to reinforce these legally baseless claims and undermine the rules-based international order. The PRC has militarized its South China Sea outposts to
expand its military reach, arming these features with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment, and fighter jets that threaten all nations operating nearby. The PRC continues to explore and exploit the region’s vast natural resources, including hydrocarbons, fish stocks, and minerals, including those inside other nations’ Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).

The PRC uses domestic laws as justification to enforce its expansive maritime claims. In 2021, the PRC passed both a China Coast Guard (CCG) Law and a Maritime Traffic Safety Law (MTSL). The first authorizes its coast guard to fire upon or tow foreign ships it sees as violating China’s domestic laws. The MTSL requires all specified vessels entering territorial sea areas “under the jurisdiction of China” to notify maritime authorities, carry required permits, and submit to Chinese command and supervision.

The enforcement of these domestic measures intimidates South China Sea nations from enjoying their rights to natural resources in the exclusive economic zones and continental shelf while infringing upon rights and freedoms guaranteed under international law as reflected by the United Nations (U.N.) Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a treaty to which the PRC is a party. These laws could provide the pretext for the use of force that could spark a wider conflict. More broadly, these laws and other unilateral actions, such as its annual, unilateral summer fishing ban, threaten China’s neighbors and clearly illustrate an attempt to change the existing international order in its favor.

High Altitude Balloons

The February high altitude balloon incursion into U.S. territorial airspace, and similar incidents across the globe, demonstrated the CCP’s intent to develop and deploy additional intelligence collection platforms. Such actions are in direct violation of the sovereignty of the nations overflown and further highlight the CCP’s irresponsible behavior. This is a clear example of the disconnect between CCP words and actions.
PRC-Russia Cooperation

In February 2022, Chairman Xi and President Putin announced a "no limits" strategic partnership rooted in a common opposition for democratic systems and an international order both believe constrain their authoritarian governments. Just last month, Chairman Xi stood alongside President Putin in Moscow and jointly reiterated their mutual goal of a new world order. Xi once again failed to condemn Russia's unprovoked, illegal, and illegitimate invasion of Ukraine. CCP leaders and media continue to amplify Russian propaganda, and we diligently monitor the situation for any evidence of the PRC providing material aid. Additionally, Russia is transferring highly enriched uranium to the PRC, which will be used in fast-breeder reactors and could support the PRC's nuclear force expansion through the production of weapons-grade plutonium. Militarily, the relationship has incrementally grown over the past decade. In 2022, the PLA participated in VOSTOK 22, a multinational Russian exercise, and the two countries conducted multiple combined naval and strategic bomber patrols. Some of those highly symbolic events occurred in the air and sea spaces around Japan and near Alaska and Guam. These developments are especially troubling given the PRC's ongoing nuclear and conventional military build-up. By the 2030s, for the first time in its history, the United States will face two major nuclear powers as strategic competitors and potential adversaries, creating new stresses on stability and new challenges for deterrence, assurance, and risk reduction.

Russia

Strategic Intent

Russia represents an acute threat that desires to maintain its status as a global power and influence by using all elements of national power. Russia seeks to upend the international order's status quo in favor of a multipolar system that advantages its authoritarian regime. Russia's illegal, illegitimate war against Ukraine is the most blatant example of its contravention of international law and norms. Moscow's ongoing support of Burma's military regime and its continued assistance to the DPRK, are less publicized
but nonetheless concerning. Russia's actions are an attempt to demonstrate a global position of strength even in the midst of diplomatic, economic, and military struggles.

**Military Modernization**

Despite Russia’s brutal war in Ukraine, Russia's updated 2022 Naval Doctrine prioritizes the Pacific region, establishes a primary goal of “strategic stability,” and describes the Sea of Okhotsk as an “area of existential importance,” alongside Russian territorial seas and its EEZ. As such, Russia is upgrading strategic assets in the Eastern Military District. Such improvements are designed to bolster Russia's ability to threaten the United States and our allies, including Japan.

In 2022, Russia transferred multiple naval assets to the Pacific including a Dolgorukiy II-class nuclear-armed, nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, a Severodvinsk-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine, and upgraded Kilo -class cruise missile-capable diesel submarines. Another eight advanced cruise missile capable vessels will likely arrive before 2026. Armed with dual nuclear and conventional capable Kalibr cruise missiles and the Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile (still in testing), the Russian Pacific Fleet is increasing its ability to threaten U.S. and allied land and maritime targets.

Russia executed its quadrennial VOSTOK capstone exercise in early September 2022 with the naval component conducting simulated cruise missile and bomber strikes to message they are still capable of defending their far-eastern region.

President Putin vowed to modernize Russia's nuclear forces, which he described as "the main guarantee of our sovereignty and territorial integrity, strategic parity and the global balance of forces," and indicated the Sarmat Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) will enter service shortly.

**Destabilizing Actions**

**Power Projection**

In the Pacific, Russia increasingly relies on its Pacific Fleet, particularly its submarine force, to shoulder the burden of defense for Russia's eastern regions. The
Pacific Fleet, long-range aviation forces, and strategic capabilities remain mostly unaffected by Russia’s illegal war in Ukraine. We expect Moscow to use these forces to demonstrate Russian power and presence through expeditionary air and maritime operations that threaten the homelands of the United States and several of our allies.

**Bomber Patrols**

Russia continues to send strategic bomber patrols near U.S. airspace, having executed patrols near Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam in recent years. These patrols are meant to message Russia’s ability to threaten the U.S. homeland. Russian forces, which also routinely patrol airspace off the coast of Japan, are increasingly collaborating with the PLA to execute combined air patrols that regularly cross into Japan and the Republic of Korea’s Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ), further threatening our allies.

**Naval Exercises**

Russia also employs its Navy to demonstrate reach and showcase some of its newest capabilities. In 2021, a large naval deployment operated in the vicinity of Hawaii for this very purpose, an event that could be repeated this year with some of the new capabilities recently fielded in the Pacific Fleet.

**Combined Exercises with the PRC**

The PRC participated in VOSTOK 2022 sending more than 2,000 troops, 300 vehicles, 21 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, and 3 ships. Additionally, the two countries also conducted multiple combined air patrols, and naval exercises. While the increase of combined military maneuvers does not translate to an integrated force, deepening cooperation poses an increased risk to the United States and our partners in the region.

**Arms Transfers from DPRK**

Russia is procuring ammunition and other military equipment from the DPRK, which has significant experience obfuscating shipments in the face of international sanctions. Russia, through its private military company the Wagner Group, has reportedly
purchased infantry rockets and missiles from North Korea to restock its diminished reserves.

**Territorial Dispute with Japan**

The territorial dispute over the southern Kuril Islands / Northern Territories dominates Russia-Japan relations. In December 2021, Russia positioned Bastion coastal defense missile systems on Matua Island to underline Moscow's firm stance on disputed territory with Japan. These missiles are part of a newly formed permanent missile brigade, which demonstrated live-fire events as part of VOSTOK 22.

**Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)**

**Strategic Intent**

The DPRK prioritizes regime security above all else and views its strategic weapons programs and vast conventional military force as keys to deterring external aggression and invasion. Pyongyang's forces pose a threat to United States and Republic of Korea (ROK) forces on the peninsula, to Japan, and across the Indo-Pacific. Its investment in ballistic missiles, nuclear technologies, and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), are in direct violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, and consistent with the regime's goal of achieving strategic deterrence. Underscoring this point is DPRK leader Kim Jong Un's December 2022 call for an exponential increase in the country's nuclear arsenal and mass production of tactical nuclear weapons. In September 2022, the DPRK passed a law reaffirming its self-proclaimed status as a nuclear power and establishing conditions for nuclear use and rejecting de-nuclearization.

**Military Modernization**

The DPRK is prioritizing upgrades to its nuclear and other WMD programs as well as its conventional military capabilities. The majority of Pyongyang's modernization efforts focuses on its WMD forces, underscored by an unprecedented number of missile tests in 2022. The DPRK is increasing its missile inventory and is testing new, more advanced ballistic and cruise missile systems capable of launching from diverse platforms, including sea-based and rail-launched systems. In 2022, the regime conducted
a test flight of the Hwasong-17 ICBM, which it claimed demonstrated the capability to strike the entire continental United States with nuclear weapons. The DPRK is also testing a series of increasingly capable short range missiles that Pyongyang claims are capable of delivering tactical nuclear warheads. Kim Jong Un appears ready to conduct the first nuclear test since 2017.

The DPRK’s modernization of its conventional forces is muted in comparison to its WMD force developments. The naval modernization program is pursuing submarine-launched ballistic missile technology. The DPRK is upgrading some air defense systems and is pursuing unmanned aerial vehicles for military missions. Modest upgrades to DPRK ground forces include tanks and artillery pieces that made appearances in parades since 2020.

The DPRK continues to advance aggressive cyber programs as a low risk, cost effective tool to influence and intimidate adversaries. Pyongyang also uses cyber programs to steal intellectual property and generate revenue, which includes the theft of crypto assets that helps finance weapons research and development.

**Destabilizing Actions**

**Missile Launches**

The DPRK conducted over 70 ballistic and cruise missile launches in 2022, more than tripling the amount in any previous year, including an IRBM that overflew Japan. 2022 marked the DPRK’s first ICBM launch since 2017. The DPRK launched a Hwasong-17 ICBM at a deliberately steep angle making it difficult to analyze its true capability. Finally, the DPRK tested a solid-fuel-powered rocket engine that, if effective, would allow the DPRK to transport and launch missiles faster than current liquid fuel-powered variants.

**Nuclear Program**

Over the last year, the DPRK increased its threatening rhetoric and took steps to expand and improve its nuclear capabilities. In September, Pyongyang codified its nuclear use policy stating its nuclear forces have a deterrence and a wartime-use mission. Pyongyang also carried out what it termed "tactical nuclear warhead" training and
"ballistic missile launching drills" in support of the regime's goals to operationalize its nuclear weapons program.

In 2022, the regime reconstituted its nuclear test site at Punggye for potential future use. Additionally, an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report highlighted indications of ongoing operations at the DPRK's plutonium enrichment facility, which produces fissile material that could be used in nuclear weapons.

Support to Russia
North Korea is using Russia's war against Ukraine to strengthen its relations with Russia. In addition to its vote against the UN General Assembly's resolution demanding Russia's withdrawal and its recognition of Russian's illegal referendum of Ukrainian provinces in the Donbas region, the DPRK has supplied Russia with a significant amount of ammunition.

Sanctions Evasion
The DPRK continues to evade U.N. imposed sanctions intended to curtail funding for its nuclear and other WMD and ballistic missile programs. A U.N. Panel of Experts found continued sanctions evasion by entities, networks, and vessels that persistently fund these programs in defiance of UN Security Council Resolutions.

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs)
Transnational and ethno-nationalist violent extremist organizations continue to pose a threat to safety and stability across the Indo-Pacific region. We continue to defend the United States and our many regional allies and partners from this destabilizing threat. Additionally, we monitor the potential return of foreign fighters from distant conflicts, and seek ways to prevent violent extremists from planning and executing violent attacks.

Implementing *Seize the Initiative*
"Seize the Initiative" is USINDOPACOM's approach to defend the nation and deter conflict. If deterrence fails, this approach ensures our forces are prepared to fight and win. *Seize the Initiative* consists of a distributed force posture that facilitates a
campaign of joint and combined operations utilizing advanced warfighting capabilities with an enhanced network of allies and partners.

**Distributed Force Posture**

Forward-based and rotational joint forces armed with lethal capabilities demonstrate resolve, support the security of our allies and partners, and provide the Secretary and President with multiple options if required. Definitive access, basing, and overflight (ABO) arrangements enable the joint force, improve interoperability with host-nations, and position capabilities forward in the event of a crisis. A widespread and distributed force posture west of the IDL gives us the ability to more easily exercise and operate with our partners, increases survivability, reduces risk, and sustains the force with a network of stores, munitions, and fuel to support operations in a contested environment.

USINDOPACOM is pursuing operating locations, both permanent and rotational, across "clusters" throughout the Indo-Pacific. Funding provided by the Congress in 2023 and the requests in the President's Budget Request (PBR) for 2024 will allow USINDOPACOM to continue the necessary planning and implementation efforts to disperse the joint force, enhance interoperability, and build capacity with allies and partners. The classified 1254 Report describes and prioritizes the specific locations and capabilities at each location.

**The Guam Cluster**

As the most-forward U.S. territories in the Pacific, Guam and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) are critical to U.S. regional security in the theater. The Department, along with the Government of Japan, has committed more than $7Bn for military construction and family housing projects on Guam in FY22-FY28 to meet our commitment with Japan under the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI). This investment in Guam, which is home to 170,000 American citizens, highlights the importance of the island for sustaining the joint force as a main operating base.

Several upcoming key posture projects in Guam and the CNMI will require historic levels of military construction. While Guam has the third highest construction workforce
per capita nationally, current military construction demands require a workforce more than three times as large as what currently exists in Guam. Anticipated levels of future military construction will further exacerbate consistent labor shortages that have already left private construction projects unable to meet their baseline needs. The Department requires relief from the H-2B visa restrictions through at least 2029 to be able to provide the workforce required for our construction needs. A longer-term extension, beyond the current date of December 31, 2024, helps meet the Department’s requirements and deliver critical military construction projects on time.

To execute our command and control responsibilities, USINDOPACOM has requested support for Joint Task Force (JTF) Micronesia forward stationed in Guam. The JTF’s area of responsibility will be the Guam cluster, which includes U.S. Territories (Guam, CNMI, Wake Island, and Midway Island) and the Freely Associated States (FAS), which consist of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).

The Japan Cluster

The United States is working to strengthen our alliance and optimize our force posture with Japan through the forward-deployment of more versatile, resilient, and mobile capabilities. An optimized U.S. posture in Japan, alongside enhanced Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in areas including Japan’s Southwest Islands, will substantially strengthen deterrence and response capabilities. The United States deployed MQ-9 remotely piloted aircraft to the Konya Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Base, and we will establish the Composite Watercraft Company at Yokohama North Dock this year. We are also working closely with Japan to expand joint/shared use of U.S. and Japanese facilities and are increasing bilateral exercises and training.

The Philippines Cluster

We have made significant progress to improve interoperability of U.S. and Philippines forces through utilization and expansion of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). EDCA permits the United States to build infrastructure and preposition equipment at agreed upon locations. Under EDCA, U.S. infrastructure
investments help meet our alliance requirements, fill short-term Armed Forces Philippines (AFP) capability gaps, support long-term AFP modernization, and better position the Department of Defense to respond to Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HA/DR) events. In February 2023, our governments announced the addition of four future AFP sites as EDCA agreed locations, bringing the total to nine sites and $82 million in US investments to date.

The Australia Cluster

The United States and Australia have agreed to continue the U.S. rotational presence across air, land, and maritime domains, including U.S. Bomber Task Force rotations. Leaders identified priority locations in Australia to support enhanced U.S. force posture to enable our combined exercises and presence. Assessments are underway for the potential use of various Australian locations for logistics, increasing the prepositioning of munitions and fuel. The 1254 Independent Assessment identifies several significant posture initiatives in Papua New Guinea (PNG), where negotiations on a bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreement are underway.

Campaign of Joint and Combined Operations

Campaigning involves persistent and synchronized joint operations in tandem with our allies and partners, linked over time and space, to build warfighting advantage and deter our security challengers. Persistent day to day joint operations aligned with our combined exercises are critical to our ability to deter conflict. Campaigning normalizes our operations throughout the AOR, delivers interoperable and confident warfighting partners and gives us the ability to rehearse warfighting concepts together. In 2022, key highlights included ground forces operating in Northern Luzon and Japan's Southwest Island, the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), and a new 14 nation combined exercise initiated by Indonesia titled Super Garuda Shield.
Exercise, Experimentation, and Training

Joint, all-domain exercises demonstrate combat credibility by bolstering the joint force's interoperability with our allies and partners and deliver warfighting proficiency. USINDOPACOM’s robust exercise program demonstrates our commitment to defending the rules-based international order, facilitates capability development, and builds relationships across the region with our partners. USINDOPACOM seeks to further expand multilateral participation in our exercise program, and train in contested, all-domain environments. These desired effects require continued investment in the Joint Training Exercise and Evaluation Program (JTEEP).

USINDOPACOM is facilitating experimentation with advanced concepts and technologies to deliver warfighting outcomes at speed. This requires the ability to conduct high-end, multi-domain experimentation events in a continuous campaign. A real-world environment enables proper evaluation of promising technologies for potential implementation in the near term.

High-end training is an advantage for U.S. forces and our allies and partners. To maximize our training effectiveness, we are linking our ranges across all domains via a federation of interconnected live, virtual, and constructive effects, simulation centers, and mobile training support systems with the Pacific Multi-Domain Test and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC). PMTEC provides the combatant commander the capability to train joint and combined forces forward in theater at the highest levels. This initiative creates the largest coalition range complex in the world with the most advanced capabilities to support operational rehearsals and deliver integrated deterrence.

Advanced Warfighting Capabilities

The joint force currently enjoys the ability to deliver effects throughout the AOR, but we must continue to maintain and expand this advantage with new technologies across all domains. Maintaining our joint warfighting advantages will deter conflict and fulfill a decisive role should we need to fight and win. Advanced capabilities delivered by our maritime, air, expeditionary, land, cyber, space, and special operation components enabled by advanced concepts with our allies and partners deliver peace and stability
throughout the AOR. To effectively counter competitor's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy, USINDOPACOM requires joint capabilities that provide overmatch in the near, mid, and long-term.

**Guam Defense System (GDS)**

USINDOPACOM's priority mission is to defend the homeland. Establishing the GDS, a 360-degree, integrated air and missile defense on Guam, remains the highest priority. Funding for a single integrated weapon capability must be uninterrupted to provide an advanced, integrated, persistent, and enduring, layered defense against ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles. This system must also be prepared to incorporate offensive capabilities as needed, and synchronize our logistics requirements from the island.

**Decision Superiority**

Decision superiority means the joint force can see, think, and fight faster than its adversaries. This requires an ability to operate in contested spaces, maintain persistent, all-domain battlespace awareness, and close kill chains with advanced munitions enabled by a Joint Fires Network.

To achieve decision superiority, the joint force must possess an ability to operate in contested spaces and deliver effects across multiple domains to deny, degrade, or defeat any threat. Our adversaries are developing and fielding A2/AD capabilities to constrain the U.S. military's ability to dominate all domains. To effectively deter our adversaries and counter any A2/AD strategy, USINDOPACOM requires joint warfighting capabilities in the near, mid, and long-term to ensure we can continue to operate our force anywhere we desire at the time and place of our choosing.

The joint force requires persistent, all-domain battlespace awareness through a suite of all domain sensors, distributed via a Persistent Targeting-Quality Common Operating Picture (PT-COP) to multiple nodes. An effective PT-COP requires exquisite intelligence to achieve its full potential. FISA Section 702 is a vital authority to keep our nation safe and will lapse on 31 December 2023 if not reauthorized. Section 702 allows
targeted collection on the communications of our most critical foreign intelligence targets outside of the United States who use U.S. infrastructure and services to communicate. A lapse of Section 702 authority will have a significant detrimental effect on foreign intelligence collection specific to USINDOPACOM’s mission and result in a decrease of battlespace awareness.

A final, critical component of decision superiority is an upgraded network of all-domain sensors linked to an integrated fires network with advanced weapons capable of engaging all threats in the battlespace. JFN provides decision superiority by fusing land, maritime, air, and space-based sensors with nationally derived information to provide target guidance over a resilient and adaptable information technology-based architecture. JFN allows geographically dispersed commanders to simultaneously share a common understanding of the battlespace, fed by sensors from any platform which can provide targeting guidance to any weapons system. JFN, coupled with the lethality of current and future munitions, underpins conventional deterrence and provides the joint force with the necessary lethality to maintain combat credibility.

Mission Partner Environment (MPE)

Combined warfighting interoperability requires rapid, widespread sharing of information with like-minded nations to operate with our joint force. The MPE modernizes 13 separate coalition command, control, communication, computer, and information technology (C4IT) network systems into a single cyber safe system to deliver combined command and control (C2) capability throughout the theater. USINDOPACOM’s MPE provides a resilient, secure, interoperable digital architecture that supports all-domain operations, provides real-time intelligence, and allows all participants to share a common operational picture.

Integration of Space and Cyber Domains

Our competitors seek to challenge U.S. dominance in all domains, including space and cyber. To maintain our warfighting advantages, USINDOPACOM requires resilient
and flexible space and cyber capabilities, and we continue to integrate these capabilities into activities and exercises with our allies and partners.

**Enhanced Network of Allies and Partners**

The U.S. network of allies and partners is our greatest asymmetric advantage, built upon shared values, mutual trust, and respect. Our alliances, multilateral arrangements, partnerships, friendships, and Five Eyes relationships are all essential components of this network and play an important role in regional security. USINDOPACOM continues to strengthen all layers through increased security cooperation, advanced training, and more complex, multilateral campaigning. These activities in turn increase interoperability, build capacity, and enhance our shared security while reinforcing the rules-based international order. We are deliberately building theater-wide capabilities through information sharing that strengthen our alliances and partnerships.

**Five Treaty Alliances**

**Australia**

The U.S.-Australia alliance has never been stronger or more vital to regional security. Australia is a critical ally and an important leader in international efforts to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific. Similar to the United States, Australia communicates the importance of transparency and the maintenance of rules-based behavior and international law in its interactions with the PLA. Australia helps maintain regional and global security through U.N. sanctions enforcement against DPRK, and the hosting of U.S. forces.

Australia is increasing its collaboration across the region, building stronger relationships with India, Japan, and Indonesia. Australia’s recently signed Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation with Japan, as well as its leadership in supporting the security and stability of Blue Pacific nations, exemplifies the country’s priorities on collaboration.

Australia and the United States enjoy a robust relationship, and actively seek to deepen our partnership through military engagements, defense acquisitions, and force
posture initiatives. The U.S. and Australia are working to enhance all-domain cooperation, integrate ranges, improve posture, and expand multilateral exercises across the theater. Australia and the United States have increased our cooperation throughout the Indo-Pacific, greatly improving our interoperability. Australia hosts the Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D), and recently commenced deployment for its eleventh rotation through Northern Australia, demonstrating combined operational capability, to include two Bomber Task Forces.

Japan

The U.S.-Japan alliance remains the cornerstone of peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific Region. Japan’s decision to significantly increase its defense budget will enhance the alliance’s ability to deter conflict and set the example for other like-minded nations to defend the rules-based international order. Our nations are well aligned in our views of security challenges in the region, and in our efforts to deter conflict. To preserve our strategic alignment with Japan, we are working to complete the realignment of U.S. forces outlined in the DPRI.

At the January 2023 U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee meeting, our nations bilaterally announced the revision of the 2012 Roadmap for Realignment Implementation, which will transition the 12th Marine Regiment to the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment in Okinawa by 2025, optimizing alliance force posture.

The JSDF is highly capable and employs a large percentage of U.S. defense equipment, which is completely interoperable with U.S. forces. Additionally, Japan formally announced its decision to acquire defensive counterstrike capabilities and is currently looking at delivery platforms and munition options.

Japan is also a key security contributor in bilateral and multilateral efforts with partners across the region that support a free and open Indo-Pacific. In 2022, Japan signed a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation with Australia, and a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) with the U.K. to help facilitate military-to-military activities.
Republic of Korea (ROK)

The U.S-ROK alliance has been the linchpin for maintaining a stable, security environment since 1953 and we remain ready to deter and respond to the DPRK regime's threats. A multinational, whole-of-government approach is required to effectively deter DPRK provocation and enforce U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) sanctions. The military-to-military relationship between the United States and the ROK remains steadfast, and the alliance continues to focus on maintaining military readiness and a combined defense posture suited to address the dynamic challenges on the Peninsula. The return of the Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group (EDSCG), return of major exercises on the Korean Peninsula, the first U.S. deployment of 5th generation fighter aircraft to the Korean Peninsula, and first U.S. aircraft carrier port visit to Korea in four years were positive demonstrations of U.S. commitment. USINDOPACOM is resolute in executing routine deployments of strategic assets to demonstrate the United States' unwavering extended deterrence commitment to the ROK.

At nearly $46.3 billion USD, the ROK’s 2022 Ministry of National Defense budget is the ROK’s largest defense budget ever, and reflects plans to restructure and modernize the ROK military and acquire the capabilities needed for wartime operational control (OPCON) transition. Progress continues to be made in meeting the bilaterally agreed upon conditions for OPCON transition and, once achieved, will yield a historic restructuring of the alliance and our combined defenses.

Republic of the Philippines

The Philippines is a strategic treaty ally, and our strong bilateral defense relationship is critical to our network of allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. The United States is committed to continuing our persistent counter-terrorism efforts with the Philippines and is also increasing support for maritime security, a national security priority for the Philippines.

A U.S. firm, Cerberus, signed an asset purchase agreement in 2022 for the Hanjin Shipyard, now called Agila Subic, and finalized several lease agreements for the shipyard
facilities. One of the agreements enables the Philippine Navy to use the shipyard and host U.S. ships for maintenance and voyage repair in this key strategic location.

We have made significant progress to improve interoperability of U.S. and Philippines forces through utilization and expansion of the EDCA. In April 2023, our governments announced four new EDCA sites. The EDCA expansion makes our alliance more resilient, and accelerates the modernization of our combined military capabilities.

This month, Balikatan 23 begins a three-week, annual, joint command and control exercise (C2X) and field training exercise (FTX) with humanitarian civic assistance events conducted in the Philippines. It features Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and U.S. forces exercising a mutual defense scenario with a focus on tactical interoperability. Its purpose is to demonstrate U.S. commitment to the 1951 U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty.

Kingdom of Thailand

The U.S.-Thailand alliance, built upon a mutual interest in maintaining stability in Southeast Asia and throughout the region, continues to progress. The U.S. is working to build partner capacity in Thailand and support modernization of the Royal Thai Army, Navy, Air Force, and Special Operations Forces. USINDOPACOM supports Thailand’s military modernization efforts to enhance Thai capacity and U.S.-Thai interoperability. Most notably, the United States is currently reviewing Thailand’s request to purchase our most advanced fighter, the F-35.

Thailand is a critical partner for regional security and provides logistical nodes essential to U.S. military operations throughout the Indo-Pacific region. Efforts are underway to expand access to Utapao Air Base and additional new sites to support airfield dispersal, including Hat Yai and Nam Phong airfields.

Exercise COBRA GOLD (CG) has returned to full scale participation after reductions in previous years due to COVID-19. CG23 allowed us to improve the training and readiness of our forces by participating in a large multilateral exercise in Thailand. We expect CG to continue to expand in complexity and scale, as over 20 nations joined the
exercise in an observer status this year. CG is the largest exercise in Southeast Asia, and highlights the multinational security architecture standing ready to meet future challenges.

**Multilateral Cooperation**

**AUKUS**

The 2021 establishment of AUKUS (Australia, UK, and U.S.) intends to build upon longstanding bilateral ties through the establishment of a trilateral, security partnership based on defense capabilities that support our mutual national defense objectives. The first initiative under AUKUS Pillar I was to determine the Optimal Pathway to deliver a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability to the Royal Australian Navy, which concluded and findings were formally announced on March 13, 2023. AUKUS Pillar II efforts focus on building trilateral capabilities in areas of shared interest including undersea warfare, cyber, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing to provide pivotal, future high-end warfighting and enhance our combined force posture.

**U.S.-Japan-ROK**

The United States has strengthened our trilateral exercises and operations with Japan and the ROK to enhance interoperability, advance our intelligence sharing, and bolster efficient communication as we work to deter and respond to increasing DPRK provocations. Our ballistic missile defense exercises included detecting, tracking, and intercepting simulated targets. The U.S., Japan, and the ROK also participated in an integrated air and missile defense exercise with Canada and Australia off the coast of Hawaii, which included a live fire intercept of a short-range ballistic missile. Additionally, we increased our anti-submarine warfare exercises to improve interoperability against undersea threats.

The United States remains dedicated to the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and USINDOPACOM will continue to focus on strong trilateral cooperation to this end.
The Quad

The Quad, comprised of Japan, Australia, India, and the United States, is an important diplomatic partnership in the Indo-Pacific region. While not a military alliance, the Quad nations cooperate on advanced technologies, developing better infrastructure, and improving cybersecurity as a demonstration of how four mature democracies can favorably shape the security environment for the region. All four nations participate in exercise MALABAR to advance the collective planning, integration, and employment of advanced warfare tactics between nations.

Strategic Partnerships

India

The United States and India continue to strengthen our strategic and unique Major Defense Partner relationship based upon our shared vision for maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific and sustaining the rules-based international order. We are building an increasingly robust level of defense cooperation through exercises, information sharing, and efforts to establish greater co-development and co-production of military technology. With respect to the Line of Actual Control, we continue to support direct dialogue and the peaceful resolution of border disputes amid provocative Chinese behavior.

USINDOPACOM is cooperating with the Indian Navy on increasing maritime domain awareness, specifically in the underwater domain, in order to address the growing threats in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, we are supporting the India Navy’s Information Fusion Center- Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) with a Liaison officer to increase our information sharing. Our air domain cooperation is developing as B-1B Bombers participated in this year’s AERO India and we look forward to participating in exercise COPE India as the bomber’s presence sends a strong signal regarding the growth of our bilateral relationship.

Exercises like TIGER TRIUMPH, COPE India, YUDH ABHYAS and MALABAR facilitate progress toward interoperability and enhance our information sharing as we increase the complexity and scope of our training.

USINDOPACOM also seeks to deepen cooperation under the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement to enable more regular and flexible reciprocal
access in the Indian Ocean Region, to include U.S. ship repair in Indian yards. In August 2022, the USNS Charles Drew became the first U.S. Navy ship to conduct a mid-voyage repair in an Indian shipyard.

India is currently considering purchases of the F-21 (formerly F-16), F/A-18 Super Hornet, F-15EX Eagle, MQ-9B Guardian, and P-8I aircraft. In support of India's efforts to grow its defense industrial base, the Department has offered to explore proposals for co-production and co-development projects. These potential projects would support India's defense modernization and improve its capacity as a net security provider in the Indo-Pacific.

Singapore

Singapore is a highly capable partner, providing critical support for our air and naval forces in the vicinity of the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea, anchoring our presence in Southeast Asia. Demonstrating incredible flexibility, Singapore supported a short-notice U.S. aircraft carrier port visit in July enabling required ship maintenance and crew rest. The Singapore Armed Forces use four continental U.S. locations for training and in 2019, we signed a non-binding MOU for Singapore to establish a permanent fighter detachment on Guam.

Singapore also supports regional and global security initiatives, including hosting a multinational maritime Information Fusion Center, as well as a regional Counterterrorism Information Facility (CTIF). The CTIF represents USINDOPACOM’s first collaborative, operational partnership with regional states to use network analysis and multilayer analytics to identify terrorist threats.

USINDOPACOM looks forward to identifying opportunities to collaborate with Singapore's fourth uniformed service, the Digital and Intelligence Service, inaugurated in October 2022.
Developing Regional Partnerships

Northeast Asia

Mongolia

Mongolia engages with the United States and other like-minded nations as part of its "Third Neighbor Policy," to balance Russian and PRC influence by developing relationships with democratic nations. Mongolia is a dedicated partner in global Peacekeeping Operations (PKO). Through their extensive UN PKO contributions and deployments, the Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) have gained significant operational experience and increased interoperability with the United States.

Our active defense relationship with Mongolia is a key component of the Strategic Partnership, and contributes to shaping the regional security environment. USINDOPACOM continues to assist MAF with their defense reform: enhancing UN PKO capabilities, improving HA/DR response, developing a professional military education program for officials and Noncommissioned Officers, and expanding their Special Operations Forces capability growth. USINDOPACOM also co-sponsors Mongolia’s KHAAN QUEST, an annual, multinational exercise designed to promote regional peace and security.

Taiwan

U.S. policy on Taiwan remains unchanged. We will continue to uphold our support for Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act. Our support for Taiwan remains strong, principled, and in line with our one China policy, which is guided by commitments enumerated in the Taiwan Relations Act, the three U.S.-PRC Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances. The United States will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues, consistent with the interests and best wishes of the people on Taiwan. Our defense engagement with Taiwan helps ensure that Taiwan remains secure, confident, free from coercion, and able to engage in a peaceful and productive dialogue.
Southeast Asia

The United States' engagement with Southeast Asia and with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) strengthens relationships and conveys the United States' commitment to the region and building multilateral partnerships. ASEAN currently consists of ten member states and in November 2022, they agreed in-principle to admit Timor-Leste as the 11th member.

ASEAN is the most influential multilateral institution in the Indo-Pacific. We support the principle of ASEAN centrality and understand its importance to building trust, avoiding conflict, and reinforcing the rules-based international order.

We continue to express our concern over the PRC's pressure on ASEAN members to conclude negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea in a way that would impede lawful activities and undermine ASEAN parties' ability to engage in governmental or economic activities with foreign partners of their choosing. At the 2022 U.S.-ASEAN Summit, President Biden announced the launch of the U.S.-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. USINDOPACOM is integral to ASEAN's multilateral capacity building efforts and will continue to invest time and resources to enhance the U.S.-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Brunei

The U.S.-Brunei defense relationship is very strong with an expanding level of military cooperation. Brunei seeks increased cooperation with USINDOPACOM, and 2022 saw the establishment of the first U.S.-Brunei Land Forces Talks.

In September 2022, Brunei approved the first multilateral training event to occur on Brunei soil. The U.K. Special Boat Service joined U.S. Navy SEALs and the Brunei Special Forces Regiment during Exercise NEPTUNE WARRIOR.

USINDOPACOM is collaborating with Brunei and deepening cooperation in mutually beneficial areas, to include enhancing maritime domain awareness. Brunei's Integrator UAS, a Direct Commercial Sales purchase, is now operationally capable. The system will bolster maritime domain awareness and border security. Brunei has received six Integrator UAS platforms, and will receive a final three early in 2023. Bilaterally, we
incorporated UAS into our exercises for the first time in 2022 via PALAWAN WARRIOR and the Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) Exercise.

Burma (Myanmar)

The Department of Defense condemns the Burmese military's 2021 coup deposing the democratically elected government in Burma, and the detention of government officials, journalists, human rights activists, and members of civil society. The military uses brutal and excessive violence while continuing to restrict basic freedoms. USINDOPACOM does not engage with the Burmese military.

Russia has taken advantage of the coup to increase its long-standing engagement with the Burmese military, through high-level visits, military-to-military exchanges, and sustained weapons and equipment sales.

The fallout from the coup has stalled efforts by ASEAN to resolve the resulting political and humanitarian crises and has led ASEAN to downgrade Burma's attendance at high-level ASEAN events.

Cambodia

In early 2017, Cambodia suspended all military-to-military exercises with the United States. USINDOPACOM continues to cooperate with Cambodia on humanitarian mine clearance and Missing-in-Action (MIA) personnel accounting.

USINDOPACOM holds serious concerns about the PRC's military presence and construction of facilities at Ream Naval Base in the Gulf of Thailand. While USINDOPACOM desires to engage military-to-military with Cambodia when and where policy allows, Cambodia's actions to limit democracy and its lack of transparency with regard to Ream Naval Base provide a weak foundation for rebuilding trust.

Indonesia

Indonesia occupies a key strategic position as regional leader and the third largest democracy in the world. Defense ties with Indonesia are strong. Indonesia is advancing
its status as a regional maritime leader, increasing enforcement against illegal fishing and investing in defense articles to update and replace equipment.

Our exercise program continues to grow as demonstrated during GARUDA SHIELD 2023, the largest multilateral event to date designed to deliver joint and combined training. Future iterations will support Indonesia’s newly developed Joint Transformation Initiative and is likely to include more like-minded allies and partners. We have expanded the Joint Exercise Program to include GARUDA SHIELD and will continue to build partner capacity with the Indonesian military.

**Laos**

Laos is one of the least developed countries in the region, with the PRC owning about 50 percent of its external debt. Laos seeks balance between its traditional relationships with Vietnam, the PRC, and Russia, and is seeking stronger ties with other ASEAN members and regional partners.

Reconciling legacy of war issues remains a focal point in our relationship with Laos as we aim to resolve Unexploded Ordnance and Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) recovery issues by 2030. Laos repatriated two sets of remains in 2022.

**Malaysia**

The U.S.-Malaysia military-to-military relationship has steadily grown over the last decade. In recent years, Malaysia has transitioned the focus of its military towards external security, developing a viable coast guard, and improving maritime domain awareness through intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. We support Malaysia’s maritime domain awareness by providing capabilities that can be dual-purposed for use in Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Maritime Security (MARSEC) contexts. Since 2017, the United States has invested approximately $220 million in Maritime Security Initiative/Building Partner Capacity (MSI/BPC) programs in support of MARSEC objectives. During the 2022 CARAT exercise, Malaysia hosted 7th Fleet Sailors and Marines, and the Malaysian Armed Forces operated their newly acquired Link-16 ground stations with U.S. forces.
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Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste is a geographically strategic country within the Second Island Chain and an emerging partner that welcomes expanded U.S. security cooperation. The 5-year, $23 million Baucau airfield joint rehabilitation effort will provide expanded access to the airfield in support of military exercises. Additionally, the MARSEC program opens doors for expanded access and presence.

Timor-Leste was granted ASEAN special observer status in November 2022 and ASEAN has agreed in-principle to admit Timor-Leste as the 11th member of ASEAN.

Vietnam

Vietnam is a vocal supporter of adherence to international laws, freedom of navigation for all, and adherence to the rules-based international order in the South China Sea. The United States and Vietnam signed a Three Year Defense Cooperation Plan of Action for 2022-2024 as well as an updated Defense Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Annex codifying new cooperation areas including defense trade, pilot training, cyber, and personnel accounting (POW/MIA).

South Asia

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is an important security partner to enhance regional stability. We are seeking to conclude a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) that will facilitate cooperation between the United States and Bangladesh on defense matters. Conclusion of the GSOMIA will advance opportunities for Bangladesh to access high-end U.S. military equipment and we are investigating other ways to strengthen security cooperation. This creates an opportunity to increase bilateral engagement in areas such as information sharing, military hardware, maritime security training, doctrine development, communications training, and joint planning and operations. Bangladesh has prioritized the development of maritime domain awareness capabilities and is seeking to modernize and diversify its military equipment.
Maldive

Maldives is a valuable partner for the United States and an integral part of a free and open Indo-Pacific. In 2022, the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) sought increased engagement with the U.S. military and like-minded partners. Maldives co-hosted the 2022 USINDOPACOM Intel-Chiefs Conference, the USINDOPACOM Environmental Security Forum, and the Special Operations Command Tempest Wind exercise. Countering terrorism is an enduring area of mutual cooperation. In 2022, the MNDF affirmed they would participate in a trilateral CT exercise with the United States and the United Kingdom. Maldives also signed an arrangement with the Montana National Guard to join the State Partnership Program. The addition of a Deputy Security Cooperation Chief at U.S. Embassy Colombo dedicated for U.S. Mission Maldives will enhance this partnership even more.

Nepal

The U.S. has a strong partnership with the Nepali Army and conducts a range of security cooperation activities focused on HA/DR, PKO, military professionalization, and border security. Nepal is a regional and global leader in U.N. PKO. USINDOPACOM supports the development of Nepal's PKO cadre through Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) funds provided by the Department of State.

Sri Lanka

USINDOPACOM seeks to ensure Sri Lanka is a capable regional partner with a professional military force supportive of the rules based international order. The Department of Defense continues to seek opportunities to expand exercises with Sri Lanka and encourages them to work with other like-minded nations to build partner capacity. Sri Lanka will host the FY23 USINDOPACOM Environmental Security Forum to identify areas of cooperation and security impacts of climate change. Sri Lanka’s recent announcement to reduce and restructure their Armed Forces suggests excellent opportunities for future security cooperation activities that focus on defense professionalization and building capacity in maritime security, HA/DR, and UN PKO.
Blue Pacific

In 2022, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States established the Partners in the Blue Pacific, an inclusive, informal coordination initiative that effectively supports the Pacific region. Our efforts are informed by the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, the Pacific Islands Forum’s long-term strategy to achieve a free, safe, and prosperous region.

Blue Pacific cooperation is critical to a free and open Indo-Pacific, enabling coordination with allies and partners in the AOR through strategic sea lines of communication. Blue Pacific nations highlight the security impacts of climate change as the single greatest threat to their livelihoods, security, and well-being. Other security priorities for the Blue Pacific nations are countering illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, transnational crime, cybersecurity, maritime domain awareness, and drug trafficking.

The Freely Associated States (FAS)

The Freely Associated States of RMI, FSM, and Palau, are the cornerstone of the U.S. security architecture in Oceania, linking the United States with the Blue Pacific and Southeast Asia. RMI, FSM, and Palau have the highest military service per capita in the U.S. military, and make significant contributions to our operations. Our Compacts of Free Association (COFAs) agreements with the FAS, establish U.S. economic assistance for the FAS, and provide defense posture opportunities in the Indo-Pacific. Under the COFAs, the United States has full authority and responsibility for security and defense matters related to each of these three countries, including special and extensive access to operate in these territories and the ability to deny access to these three countries by any third country militaries. MOUs supporting the COFAs were signed with RMI, FSM, and Palau in early 2023. USINDOPACOM engages in military construction projects throughout the FAS to improve air and maritime infrastructure, enhance domain awareness, and support FAS efforts to protect their economic interests.
Fiji

As a regional economic and defense leader, Fiji is integral to the security of the Southwest Pacific. We work with the Fijian forces through exercises, security cooperation, and activities with the Nevada National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP). Fiji’s new training center, Blackrock, supports their U.N. PKO deployments across the globe. The Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) sent security forces in support of the Solomon Islands after riots in early 2022 and to the Sinai as members of the Multinational Force as well as other U.N. missions. Additionally, the RFMF hosts USARPAC’s multilateral exercise CARTWHEEL and will co-host the 2023 Chiefs of Defense Conference in Fiji.

New Zealand

New Zealand remains a steadfast partner and important leader in the Blue Pacific. The U.S.-New Zealand bilateral defense relationship is strong and continues to grow. In 2022, in coordination with our campaign plan, the RNZN HMNZS AOTEAROA participated in the RIMPAC exercise, conducted regional maritime patrols and Pacific Island engagements, and provided logistical support to U.S., U.K., Australian, and JMSDF vessels sailing throughout the region. New Zealand also augments the DPRK U.N. Security Council Resolution enforcement efforts by providing maritime patrol aircraft and personnel to staff the Enforcement Coordination Cell.

Papua New Guinea (PNG)

PNG is an important emerging partner for the United States, with a shared history dating back to World War II. USINDOPACOM is in discussions with PNG leadership regarding several significant posture initiatives that are contingent on the signing of a bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA). Negotiations with PNG on a DCA and a ship rider agreement are currently underway.

Security cooperation initiatives in PNG, though limited in scope, are important to grow the capability of the PNG Defense Forces (PNGDF), strengthen security ties with its institutions, and assist in military development. USINDOPACOM is supporting State Department implementation of the strategy under the Global Fragility Act by providing
disaster response and gender equity training to PNGDF. We also support the burgeoning relationship between the Wisconsin National Guard and PNGDF.

**Tonga**

Tonga is a partner with a history of coalition participation and ties to the Nevada National Guard through the SPP. Defense engagement has returned to pre-COVID levels to build partner capacity. A leader in the region, Tonga hosted the 2022 Southwest Pacific Defense Minister's Meeting in November with senior defense delegations from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and France including observers from the U.S. and Japan.

**Other Indo-Pacific Nations**

**Canada**

Canada is a key Indo-Pacific ally and staunch supporter of the rules-based international order who deploys highly capable forces to the Pacific to support UNSCR enforcement efforts. To support the principle of sovereignty and uphold freedom of navigation rights, Canada executed combined Taiwan Strait Transits with the United States. Canada recently released its new Indo-Pacific Strategy aligned to the principles of like-minded nations to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

**France**

The U.S. maintains defense cooperation activities in the Indo-Pacific with France, America's oldest ally. France has the largest EEZ in the region, including commands located in French Polynesia (FAPF), New Caledonia (FANC), and South Indian Ocean Zone (FAZOI). France is a pivotal contributor to regional security efforts such as protecting fisheries, building community resilience, countering transnational crimes including trans-Pacific narcotic trafficking, and HADR. With key leader engagements and multiple deployments to the theater, France is increasing interoperability with the United States and other key allies throughout the theater. Additionally, the French-led multilateral exercise MARARA included participation by Australia, France, Japan and the United States in Bora Bora in 2022. Last month, France held the third LA PEROUSE exercise in
the Indian Ocean Region to enhance naval planning and operations, with participation from Australia, India, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. France also supports UNSCR sanction enforcement activities against North Korea. In 2022, France updated their Indo-Pacific Strategy to focus on increased cooperation with like-minded regional partners throughout the region.

**United Kingdom (U.K.)**

The U.K. remains committed to the region as a champion of the free and open Indo-Pacific. They continue to sustain a healthy defense posture in the region, having renewed the Brunei Garrison Agreement to maintain around 700 troops in the Sultanate since September 2019. In 2022, the U.K. continued its deployment of two Royal Navy offshore patrol vessels to the region through exercises in support of the Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA) with Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore, as well as a multitude of other bilateral and multilateral Operations, Activities, and Investments (OAs). The U.K. also signed a Reciprocal Access Agreement with Japan in 2022. USINDOPACOM continues to benefit from basing and access to the British Indian Ocean Territory at Diego Garcia.

**Other Areas of Cooperation**

**Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Program**

WPS is codified in law as a national security imperative, and USINDOPACOM is focused on WPS implementation. USINDOPACOM appreciates Congress’ continued support of our WPS efforts. The command’s WPS program is a unique and unmatched competitive advantage that promotes a free and open Indo-Pacific by upholding international human rights and the rules-based international order.

In 2022, we continued to expand our work to meet the growing appetite for WPS training, engagements, and integration of WPS concepts into existing activities. To support an upcoming PKO deployment, USINDOPACOM conducted two WPS seminars with the Mongolian Armed Forces as part of exercise KHAAN QUEST. USINDOPACOM supported several ASEAN events, engaging with diverse stakeholders.
focused on a human security approach. We have also increasingly focused on supporting WPS work with Blue Pacific partners including the development of a WPS National Action Plan in Fiji and are similarly looking to assist the Solomon Islands this year.

In August 2023, USINDOPACOM will deliver a 10-day regional Gender Advisor training in coordination with Australia, New Zealand, and Japan and will continue tailored WPS initiatives with the Pacific Islands countries, including a multi-year program for Papua New Guinea, as well as Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and others.

Red Hill

In the last year, Secretary Austin tasked USINDOPACOM to establish Joint Task Force Red Hill in recognition of the imperative to safely and efficiently defuel the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility on Oahu. Through cooperation, openness, and transparency with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Hawaii Department of Health, we have made steady progress throughout the year. Our actions will continue to be guided by uncompromising commitments to the health and safety of the people of Hawaii, including our military families, protecting the natural environment, and accomplishing our assigned missions.

Security Impacts of Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness

The security impacts of climate change present a significant challenge to allies and partners in the USINDOPACOM AOR. Pacific nations frequently cite climate change as their top concern. Nations in Oceania, South, and Southeast Asia are particularly vulnerable to food security, water security, and agricultural productivity challenges exacerbated by extreme weather impacts.

Addressing these issues can strengthen relationships as we recognize their greatest concerns. The military’s role in disaster preparedness and response builds trust and resilience throughout the region. The annual Pacific Partnership mission delivers medical, engineering, and HA/DR projects to address these critical challenges. During the Pacific Partnership 2022 mission, the USNS MERCY brought the Pacific Partnership team to see over 15,000 patients and complete 10 major construction projects in Vietnam, Palau, the Philippines, and Solomon Islands.
Understanding security impacts from sea level rise, temperature changes, and extreme storms is essential to long-term planning for U.S. operating locations in the Indo-Pacific region. USINDOPACOM is committed to reinforcing infrastructure, increasing resilience of its facilities, and assisting allies and partners to do the same.

**Conclusion**

In the last year, the global security environment dramatically changed. The PRC accelerated their whole-of-government assault against the rules-based international order and partnered with Russia to advance their goals. Strategic competition with the United States now encompasses all forms of national power across all domains. We see increasing efforts to drive wedges between the US and like-minded nations in an attempt to dominate the region.

Implementing the NDS in the near, mid, and long-term requires the United States to present a persistent, lethal, and integrated joint force west of the IDL that can deny adversary objectives while simultaneously demonstrating U.S. commitment and resolve to our allies and partners. *Seize the Initiative* is our approach, in support of the NDS, to deliver combat credible integrated deterrence by building a distributed force posture, improving our joint and combined operational campaign, advancing our warfighting capabilities and enhancing our network of allies and partners. To be successful, we all must execute with a sense of urgency.

I will continue to advocate for the most pressing and pertinent requirements in the near and mid-term, but I cannot emphasize enough the importance of passing timely appropriations. The Department cannot move faster in the current year or adequately plan or execute programming in the FYDP without the resources to initiate new starts or properly sustain required programs. Continuing resolutions (CRs) result in cumulative and detrimental effects on our buying power, which are exacerbated by inflation, and add to the increased levels of operational risk.

Conflict in the INDOPACOM AOR is neither imminent, nor inevitable. Nevertheless, we do not have the luxury of time, we must act now to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.
Admiral John C. Aquilino, U.S. Navy
Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

Admiral John Aquilino is the 26th Commander of the United States Indo-Pacific Command, the nation’s oldest and largest combatant command. USINDOPACOM includes 380,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Guardians, Coast Guardsmen and Department of Defense civilians and is responsible for all U.S. military activities in the Indo-Pacific, covering 36 nations, 14 time zones, and more than 50 percent of the world’s population.

A native of Huntington, NY, he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1984, earning a Bachelor of Science in physics. He subsequently entered flight training and earned his wings in August 1986.

Operationally, he served in numerous fighter squadrons flying the F-14 A/B Tomcat and the F-18 C/E/F Hornet. His fleet assignments included the Ghost Riders (VF-142) and Black Aces (VF-41). He commanded the famous Red Rippers (VF-11) and Carrier Air Wing 2. His extended deployments were in support of Operations Deny Flight, Deliberate Force, Southern Watch, Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom.

Ashore, Aquilino’s assignments included duties as an adversary instructor pilot flying the A-4, F-5, and F-16N aircraft for the Challengers (VF-43); operations officer for the Strike Weapons and Tactics School, Atlantic; flag aide to the vice chief of naval operations; special assistant for weapons systems and advanced development in the office of legislative affairs for the U.S. secretary of defense; director of air wing readiness and training for the commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Atlantic Fleet; and executive assistant to the commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

His flag assignments included director of strategy and policy, U.S. Joint Forces Command; deputy director, joint force coordinator, the Joint Staff; commander, Carrier Strike Group 2 aboard USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN-77); director of maritime operations, U.S. Pacific Fleet; deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans and strategy; and commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. Fifth Fleet/Combined Maritime Forces. Prior to his assignment to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Aquilino served as the 36th commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Aquilino graduated from Navy Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN) and the Joint Forces Staff College. He completed Harvard Kennedy School’s executive education program in national and international security.

He is entitled to wear the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal as well as several other personal unit and campaign awards. He accumulated more than 5,100 mishap free flight hours and over 1,150 carrier-arrested landings.
STATEMENT OF

GENERAL PAUL J. LaCAMERA
COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND;
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES-REPUBLIC OF KOREA COMBINED FORCES
COMMAND; AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

BEFORE THE 118th CONGRESS

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

18 APRIL 2023
Introduction

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide a written statement on the security environment in Northeast Asia, an update on the ironclad commitment of the United States to the Republic of Korea (ROK); an overview of the combined and joint readiness of the U.S.-ROK Alliance deterring the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK); an update on United Nations Command (UNC), Combined Forces Command (CFC), and U.S. Forces Korea (USFK); and resourcing needs of the Joint Force and our families living on the Korean Peninsula.

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, civilian employees, and contractors of UNC, CFC, and USFK have the extraordinary responsibility of providing peace and security throughout the Republic of Korea and stability throughout Northeast Asia. My foremost responsibility is to ensure our personnel are taken care of and prepared to execute our mission on the Korean Peninsula. My specific priorities for the U.S. Joint Force forward stationed in Korea are: Defend our Homeland(s), Strengthen the Alliance, Prepare for Combat, Grow Coalitions, and Take Care of our People.

Almost seventy years ago, Congress ratified the mutual defense treaty between the U.S. and the ROK. The American people’s commitment to the U.S.-ROK Alliance has never wavered in the years since. As stewards of this treaty, I appreciate your leadership and dedication as we work alongside our Korean allies, as well as our allies and partners represented by the United Nations (UN) Sending States. The support we have received from this committee is instrumental in maintaining our ironclad commitment to the U.S.-ROK Alliance.

The U.S.-ROK Alliance was forged in the crucible of combat—the first test of the post-World War II international system. When North Korean communist forces invaded South Korea, the U.S. along with 22 members of the United Nations, stood together with the South Korean people to expel the
aggressors. While the U.S.-ROK Alliance began out of military necessity, our Alliance has evolved beyond security issues to become the linchpin of stability and prosperity in Northeast Asia.

Our competitors and enemies seek to unmake this prosperity. It is imperative to remember that the Korean War has not ended—the Korean Peninsula is only in armistice—and that DPRK has capabilities which threaten not only the region but nations around the world. In confronting DPRK’s aggression, the U.S. and the ROK will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder to maintain peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and stability throughout Northeast Asia.

The Security Environment in Northeast Asia

The U.S.’s commitment to the ROK reflects the importance of Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula to global peace and stability. Northeast Asia was, is, and will remain decisive terrain for allied primacy within the wider Indo-Pacific. History demonstrates the region is a nexus of strategic competition, with the Korean Peninsula repeatedly used as an invasion route from the Asian continent into the first island chain. As a result, four out of the top five major military powers have fought multiple wars in Northeast Asia over the last 125 years. This history has carried forward into the present, with four of the world’s most powerful economies— the U.S., ROK, Japan, and China—competing in the same region.

The ROK is an advanced, vibrant democracy critical to the resiliency of the regional and global economic engine. The ROK is, by GDP, the 10th largest economy in the world and a leading producer of semiconductors, cars, digital displays, smart phones, and other high-end electronics. It is also the 6th largest defense exporter in the world, and the President of the Republic of Korea, President Yoon Suk-Yeol, has set a goal for the ROK to become the 4th largest during his tenure. Furthermore, while the ROK was once a recipient of foreign aid, it has become a net contributor of foreign assistance.
The ROK’s success is due to the hard work of the Korean people and our shared values, democratic ideals, and market-based economies within the rules-based international order. President Yoon articulated his vision for the ROK to become a “global pivotal state” and the ROK government has released an Indo-Pacific strategy of its own. The strategy is a comprehensive vision for the entire region—one not limited to just Northeast Asia or only to economics. It is reflective of a rules-based international order founded in cooperation rather than coercion. As the ROK aims to be the “hub for cooperation networks in the Indo-Pacific,” protected under the security umbrella of U.S. military deterrence capabilities—including nuclear, conventional, and missile defense—as well as the capabilities of the U.S.-ROK Alliance, I expect Northeast Asia will remain vital to global stability and security.

These factors increase the potential for third party actor intervention and influence on the Korean Peninsula, specifically from China and Russia. While we remain in armistice with DPRK, we are also in competition with these two traditional Asian land powers. Both are mindful that there is a premier Joint Force of nearly 30,000 American Servicemembers forward deployed to the Asian continent, 700 miles from Beijing. These geographic realities, combined with powerful economic interests, make the ROK the linchpin of security in Northeast Asia. In the current strategic environment, relative to the U.S., the “Far East” has become the “Near West.”

**The DPRK Threat**

In the years since the Armistice was signed in 1953, DPRK has repeatedly and deliberately violated this agreement as the Kim Regime seeks concessions from the international community. Under Kim Jong Un (KJU), DPRK prioritizes regime survival over necessary reforms that could repair its economy and feed the North Korean people. Kim Jong Un uses perceived external and internal threats to eliminate competing sources of power and influence. Kim Jong Un’s response to COVID-19 included measures unrelated to the pandemic, such as a rededication of communist education efforts which only serve to further consolidate his control over the population. Despite the suffering of the North Korean
people, he pursues new military capabilities he believes will solidify his rule. Over the last ten years, DPRK has increased its capabilities and capacities, and is no longer a regional nuisance or problem for only U.S. and ROK forces on the Korean Peninsula. In January 2021, DPRK codified a new “memo of weapons development,” which it unveiled at the Eighth Congress of the Worker’s Party of Korea and began to steadily work through to achieve KJU’s stated goals.

As much as KJU and DPRK state their weapons development programs are in line with the right of any nation to develop self-defense capabilities, they have shown that they are unwilling to abide by international norms and abandoned any pretext for diplomacy. For example, when DPRK launches its missiles over Japan and into the surrounding waters, they do not issue notices to air missions (NOTAMs) or notices to mariners (NOTMARs), placing civilian populations at risk. Recently, their missile overflights of Japan caused Japanese civilians to seek cover. Furthermore, the December 2022 DPRK drone incursions into South Korean Airspace did constitute an Armistice Agreement violation. Since January 2022, DPRK has launched an unprecedented number of missiles with increasing capabilities, even testing long range systems that have no purpose other than to increase the credibility of its threat to the U.S. homeland, the ROK, and other nations around the world.

Most concerning is DPRK’s renewed threats of nuclear destruction against the U.S. and the ROK. Recently announced DPRK policies indicate a renewed intent to pursue nuclear delivery capabilities. In September 2022, DPRK announced a new Nuclear Forces Policy Law which states that the DPRK will use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states if it deems the non-nuclear state is “colluding with nuclear states.” This has been reinforced by statements made by Kim Jong Un’s sister, Kim Yo Jong, and other authoritative sources affirming DPRK’s first-use nuclear policy. Additionally, in remarks delivered at the beginning of 2023, KJU said North Korea needed to mass-produce tactical nuclear weapons and develop new Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) that would enable a “quick nuclear counterstrike.” KJU believes a nuclear deterrent is the best means to preserve his regime and coerce the international
community to lift sanctions. He is determined to operationalize his nuclear arsenal and is developing a credible second-strike capability. Right now, KJU is poised to conduct a 7th nuclear test; without outside influence, it is not a matter of “if” DPRK will detonate another nuclear device but “when.”

I am concerned about DPRK leadership miscalculating or mistakenly believing they can control escalation. Contrary to DPRK’s rhetoric blaming the U.S. and the U.S.-ROK Alliance for tensions on the Korean Peninsula, DPRK’s actions demonstrate that if conflict were to resume it would be due to DPRK aggression. Such a conflict could immediately become a regional conflict and have a global impact, just as Russia’s war against Ukraine has. We must remember that DPRK and China have a mutual defense treaty, which is the only defense treaty DPRK and China have with any nation. Finally, DPRK has shipment and transport lines of communication into Russia and China, allowing KJU to export his illegal weapons directly into Europe, as well as receive goods and services bypassing sanctions.

The best way to deter DPRK is to maintain our ironclad commitment to the U.S.-ROK Alliance which has endured for almost 70 years—and to never take it for granted. This requires us to shape the strategic environment during armistice through continuous validation of our extended deterrence capabilities and combat readiness, which remain our current focus. Our policy remains the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and deterring the use of nuclear weapons by the Kim Regime. Achieving this requires the proactive, coordinated, and concerted efforts of all three Commands in Korea: UNC, CFC, and USFK, along with our interagency colleagues, and international allies and partners.

**Three Commands, One Goal: Peace and Security in Northeast Asia**

Since the Armistice was signed, the ROK and the U.S. have stood together to maintain peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. While we remain focused on a diplomatic resolution, the missions of UNC, CFC, and USFK are to be prepared to defend the ROK so our diplomats can negotiate from a position of strength. As President Biden has said, leading with diplomacy means standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies and partners. Our network of allies and partners with
common interests that exists on the Korean Peninsula represents our greatest asymmetric advantage in maintaining regional stability. Additionally, effective collective action discourages the need for unilateral action by other states impacted by DPRK aggression.

Our collective action ensures we are strategically predictable to our allies and partners, while being tactically and operationally unpredictable to adversaries and competitors. Managing and responding to crisis is the most consequential thing we do as an Alliance. Each of the three commands has separate sets of authorities, separate chains of command, and each continues to adapt to meet emerging security challenges. Our goal is to prevent a resumption of hostilities and we remain prepared to respond to any form of aggression across all domains, using our extended deterrence and kill web capabilities.

Enforcing the Armistice: United Nations Command (UNC)

The evolving security environment reinforces the inherent utility and importance of UNC. Since 1950, UN Sending States have collectively supported the ROK’s security and sovereignty alongside U.S. forward deterrence. While UNC transferred its warfighting mission to CFC in 1978, it continues to represent the mechanism for collective security on the Peninsula through its three enduring functions. First, UNC enforces the Armistice Agreement. After the signing of the Armistice in 1953, UNC has executed the functions necessary to maintain and enforce the terms of the Armistice through close coordination between the U.S., the ROK, and relevant UN member states. This also requires coordination with the Korean People’s Army (KPA). Since 1953, UNC has had over 1,200 formal meetings with the KPA, adapting the terms of implementation of the Armistice Agreement to match the requirements of the security paradigm on the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, UNC informs DPRK prior to the start of U.S.-ROK Alliance large-scale training exercises, such as the defensive FREEDOM SHIELD, WARRIOR SHIELD, and ULCI FREEDOM SHIELD exercises, to ensure training events are not misinterpreted as aggressive actions.
Second, UNC coordinates the multinational contributions for securing the Korean Peninsula. The multilateral cooperation represented by UNC is essential to security on the Korean Peninsula, as the threats posed by DPRK will not be resolved by the ROK alone. Today, 18 countries contribute to UNC’s mission. These UN Sending States come from every corner of the globe, offering a visible reminder of the international community’s resolve to defend the Republic of Korea and the global nature of the DPRK threat. I am thankful for their countries’ contributions, and it is an honor to serve with their countrymen and women.

Finally, UNC executes functions as assigned by U.S. National Authorities through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. United Nations Command is not a UN peacekeeping organization, but a multinational military command under U.S. leadership. While resolving all the sources of conflict on the Korean Peninsula remains elusive, progress has been made due to the efforts of UNC in implementing the terms of the Armistice Agreement while maintaining a combat credible deterrent in CFC.

**The Heart of the U.S.-ROK Alliance: Combined Forces Command**

Combined Forces Command has been the heart of the U.S.-ROK Alliance for over 44 years and is a unique, bilateral warfighting command charged with the dual missions of deterrence and defense. Previously located in the capital of Seoul, CFC recently completed its relocation to U.S. Army Garrison Humphreys. The bilaterally agreed upon Land Partnership Plan and associated Yongsan Relocation Plan provided the foundation for streamlining USFK’s footprint while returning valuable land to the ROK for future development. These strategically analyzed and negotiated returns allow for continued economic growth on the Korean Peninsula, while the new headquarters on Camp Humphreys improves operational effectiveness and our combined defense posture. Co-locating USFK and CFC ensures we remain integrated and synchronized across all staff levels and domains.
Combined Forces Command receives its direction and guidance from U.S. and ROK national leaders, through ministerial and general officer level forums. During Armistice, I, as the Commander of CFC, have Combined Delegated Authority of designated ROK forces to maintain deterrence and to prepare forces to execute combined missions and plans. This starts and ends with tough, realistic training—executed in combined and joint environments alongside our interagency partners across all domains using live, virtual, and constructive environments.

Combined readiness is a no-fail mission. In just the last year, the U.S.-ROK Alliance completed numerous combined training events that demonstrated our ability to operate in multiple domains simultaneously. Off the shores of the Korean Peninsula, the ROK Navy and Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group executed multilateral exercises throughout the summer of 2022. These exercises included the participation of Japan, another important ally in Northeast Asia. Exercises such as PACIFIC DRAGON 2022 and PACIFIC VANGUARD 2022 saw the U.S., ROK, and Japan train together on combined antisubmarine warfare and mine warfare exercises. I am greatly encouraged by these trilateral exercises and look forward to additional high-end complex maritime and air exercises in the future.

In the air domain, the deployment of U.S. Air Force fifth generation fighters and combined bomber escorts throughout Korean airspace demonstrated our ability to provide air superiority anywhere we choose. Again, I highlight our ability to coordinate with the Japan Self Defense Force, which provided fighter escort to our bombers before they transitioned into ROK airspace.

On land, our combined ground forces were enhanced with the arrival of a Stryker Brigade Combat Team and establishment of a permanent AH-64 Apache helicopter gunship squadron. The Stryker platform brings enhanced maneuverability and mobility to our land forces and increases our interoperability with ROK mechanized formations. Working alongside the ROK’s Apache units, our
Alliance demonstrated its lethality through multiple combined live fire exercises on the Korean Peninsula.

United States and ROK forces have increased our capabilities and capacities to operate in the space domain. Our U.S. Space Force Guardians operating on the Korean Peninsula became a service component command in 2022. We now have the ability to synchronize with our other components to maximize space effects and to coordinate with the ROK’s Space Program. Within CFC, our Space Integration Team works to ensure our interoperability with the ROK in this critical domain. The ROK Space Program, led by the ROK Air Force, plans to become a major space power by the end of the decade. We are encouraged by the ROK’s requests to participate in U.S. Space Force and U.S. Space Command exercises and war games to bolster interoperability.

Finally, in the cyber domain, U.S. Cyber Command and ROK Cyber Command signed a memorandum of understanding this year, increasing our ability to conduct operations and counter third party intervention and influence on the Korean Peninsula.

Our demonstrated lethality in every domain of strategic competition supports our combined progress towards Operational Control (OPCON) Transition. When complete, OPCON Transition will ensure any response to DPRK aggression that leads to military operations is led by a ROK general officer, with a U.S. general officer acting as the Deputy Commander of CFC. This process has always been governed by, and subject to, bi-national decision-making. We appreciate the ROK government’s support in progressing through the mutually agreed upon conditions required to complete this transition. The previous major defensive exercise on the Korean Peninsula, ULCHI FREEDOM SHIELD, demonstrated the progress being made toward Future CFC. ULCHI FREEDOM SHIELD included a Full Operational Capability evaluation of OPCON Transition, with ROK General Ahn Byung Seok acting as the Future CFC Commander.
Exercises such as ULCHI FREEDOM SHIELD and FREEDOM SHIELD are routine, defensive training events critical to our ability to provide extended deterrence in Northeast Asia. Combined Forces Command was precluded from conducting large scale exercises in recent years due to COVID-19 and the political environment. Going forward we are making a concerted effort to reintroduce live training into our combined exercise program with our ROK Allies. As we increase our combined training, however, a large portion of the training remains unfunded. Despite an increased demand, there have been no additions to FY23 theater exercise programs. Training is perishable and must be continuously conducted to maintain an appropriate level of combat readiness.

**Resourcing the U.S. Commitment: U.S. Forces Korea**

United States Forces Korea remains the premier Joint Force, capable of operating in all domains with our allies and partners, committed to defending the security of the ROK. It is a critical part of the U.S.’s approach to providing extended deterrence in Northeast Asia. As U.S. Indo-Pacific Command’s (USINDOPACOM) sub-unified joint force on the Korean Peninsula, USFK is primarily responsible for the Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration of reinforcing U.S. forces to the CFC, as well as the sustainment of those forces. As the USFK Commander, I support UNC and CFC by coordinating and planning among U.S. component commands in the ROK, exercising operational control of U.S. forces as directed by USINDOPACOM, and coordinating U.S. military assistance to the ROK.

Our ability to provide forward deterrence is dependent upon conducting regular, robust, and challenging training. Due to space constraints, collective live-fire training opportunities are limited. Any reduction in funding levels will degrade 7th Air Force and Eighth Army’s ability to execute these types of training events on- and off-peninsula. Current funding levels, therefore, should be viewed as a “floor” rather than a “ceiling.”
United States Forces Korea continues to demonstrate new and innovative capabilities that provide our forces advantages across all domains. Everything the Department of Defense (DOD) is doing to modernize is occurring on the Korean Peninsula—in a combined, joint, interagency environment in multiple domains. We are pursuing opportunities in artificial intelligence and machine learning. The DOD’s Chief Data and Artificial Intelligence office prioritized USFK near the top of commands to invest in to enhance Sensor-to-Shooter and Combined Kill Web analytics. Our Digital Operational Plan (Digital OPLAN) will incorporate machine learning and artificial intelligence to move USFK forward in data analytics. Additionally, we are working with all U.S. military services on improving our aging network and cybersecurity posture for our Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Targeting (C5ISR&T). Improving C5ISR&T will enhance our situational awareness, decision making, and communication readiness from our national command authorities to our forces in the field. To avert network isolation of our C5ISR&T capability, we are pursuing replication of our coalition network off peninsula. Furthermore, USFK is collaborating with the DOD Joint Program Office for counter Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and established a counter small-UAS experimentation lab last summer. Our first experiments began in August 2022.

United States Forces Korea continues to enhance our existing capabilities, such as the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) ballistic missile defense system. This defensive capability provides protection for U.S. forces and the ROK against DPRK’s ballistic missile program. President Yoon’s administration has supported improved access to the THAAD site over the last year. The normalization of THAAD operations and unfettered access to this site are critical to maintaining the overall readiness of the system, as well as the health and safety of the Servicemembers at this location.

While we can operate across all domains, I am concerned about our ability to compete in the
information environment in Northeast Asia. China, Russia, and DPRK’s aggressive investments in
information warfare technology and operational practices outpace DOD investments and challenge
U.S. influence in Northeast Asia. As the largest U.S. force on the Asian continent, USFK is uniquely
positioned to counter many of the disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information efforts of our
competitors and adversaries, and defeat enemies during conflict. The price of operations during
armistice to deter, degrade, and disrupt adversaries is orders of magnitude less than the cost of combat
operations designed to challenge revisionist states and authoritarian regimes.

Serving Together; Taking Care of our People

Servicemembers, civilians, families, and contractors who support the Joint Force are our most
precious resource and taking care of our people is a no-fail task. Those who bring their families to the
Korean Peninsula will spend at least two years here, defending the ROK and deterring DPRK. The
families who live alongside their Servicemembers in the ROK do so without many of the conveniences
of living in the continental United States. Ensuring those personnel and their families are afforded the
best quality of life while they are away from the U.S. homeland is of paramount importance and is
something I stress with leaders at every echelon. We continue to look for ways to build our community to
ensure the ROK remains an assignment of choice for our personnel and their families.

Our people live and work across the entire ROK, from Panmunjom near the Demilitarized Zone
to the port of Busan. Being a responsible ally means being good stewards of the Korean land and
environment. United States Forces Korea continues to conduct bilateral engagements with the ROK to
appropriately posture our presence while also returning valuable land for use by the Korean people. We
could not do this without military construction support from Congress.

Thanks to Congressional support, we have transferred the center of gravity for the U.S.-ROK
Alliance out of Seoul and are actively improving our facilities across the Korean Peninsula. To help
combat climate change, USFK is using the most current unified facility mechanisms to reduce
downstream maintenance, improve quality of life, and maintain force protection. We are nearing the completion of Camp Humphreys’ $10.6 billion transformation to the new center of gravity for the U.S.-ROK Alliance and the headquarters of UNC, CFC, and USFK. As we begin the third year (CY23) of a five-year Special Measures Agreement with the ROK, we appreciate the Committee’s continued support to ensure we can synchronize ROK funding and U.S.-appropriated funding to improve our facilities as quickly as possible. This support will ensure new facilities such as the U.S. Space Force Complex on Osan Air Force Base remain projected to break ground earlier than traditional military construction projects with the help of cost-sharing with our ROK Allies. It is also critical in improving our existing facilities, such as the ongoing repairs to the piers at the port of Busan.

Providing support and medical care to our Servicemembers, civilians, and families at our installations across the ROK remains a challenge. For example, the Brian D. Allgood Community Hospital on Camp Humphreys is not sufficiently staffed to provide care for the installation’s population. Very few of the staff are assigned solely to the hospital; most of the staff are borrowed from operational units which have frequent field training requirements. These shortfalls are exacerbated at smaller outposts and locations. To provide the highest quality and most reliable care for our Servicemembers, civilians, and their families, additional permanent staff should be recruited, retained, and assigned to all our deployed locations in the ROK. Particular attention should be given to the fields of behavioral health, nursing, and primary care.

Finally, my focus remains on the wellbeing of our Servicemembers. Our families include the dependents of UN Sending States who live on our installations. We are working with the DOD Education Agency to draft language into the future National Defense Authorization Act to allow these UN Sending State dependents status commensurate with U.S. Servicemember dependents. The wellbeing of our Servicemembers is also dependent on addressing systemic issues such as sexual assault and harassment in our ranks. I have a zero-tolerance policy for any action that harms unit cohesion. Our senior leaders
continue to impress the importance of these initiatives upon their subordinates. This is not just about combat readiness—it is simply doing right by our people.

**Moving Forward**

While DPRK prepares for a 7th nuclear test, our resolve remains unmoved: we will deter and, if necessary, defeat our adversary; and we are committed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Our collective actions will advance a free and open Indo-Pacific that is more connected, prosperous, and secure. The men and women working towards that goal are motivated, capable, and postured to do so while forward deployed to the Asian mainland alongside our ROK Allies.

Cooperatively, we are focused on maintaining a robust combined readiness cycle, strengthening deterrence through strategic asset deployments, and conducting multi-domain operations while DPRK continues its provocative weapons development activities.

I am grateful for this Committee’s continued support. I am honored to serve this dedicated multinational, combined, and Joint Force deployed to the Asian mainland.
Gen. Paul J. LaCamera
Commander UNC/CFC/USFK


A native of Westwood, MA, General LaCamera commissioned as an Infantry Officer from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1985. His education includes a Bachelor of Science from the U.S. Military Academy and a Master of Arts degree from the U.S. Naval War College.

General LaCamera most recently served as the Commanding General of the United States Army’s largest Service Component Command, U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), headquartered at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, with portions of the command forward-deployed and based throughout the Indo-Pacific.

During his 36 years of service, General LaCamera had the honor to lead and serve with members of all military branches, inter-agency colleagues, and coalition partners from platoon through corps, and a combined joint task force.

General LaCamera’s past assignments include: the 82d Airborne Division, XVIII Airborne Corps, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, and Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia; 4th Ranger Training Battalion. 3d Ranger Battalion and the 75th Ranger Regiment at Fort Benning, Georgia; 2d Ranger Battalion, Fort Lewis, Washington; 2d Infantry Division, Eighth United States Army, Republic of Korea; 10th Mountain Division (Light), Fort Drum, New York; 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colorado; Office of Security Cooperation, Baghdad, Iraq; 25th Infantry Division, and U.S. Army Pacific, Hawaii.

General LaCamera participated in numerous contingency operations including: Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama; Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in Haiti; Operation ANACONDA in Afghanistan; and multiple deployments in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, Operation NEW DAWN, and Operation INHERENT Resolve in Iraq and Syria.
WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE HEARING

APRIL 18, 2023
RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. KIM

Mr. Royal. The Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan are two of our most important allies in the Indo-Pacific region. We continue to encourage both countries to seek ways to cooperate further through bilateral and multilateral activities on security matters. We are encouraged by the summit that was held between Japanese Prime Minister Kishida and ROK President Yoon in Seoul on May 7–8 to discuss the bolstering of bilateral ties. For U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral cooperation, it is critical that we maintain strong and close relationships between our three countries to meet the shared challenges posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Department of Defense is currently working to further security cooperation through the regularization of trilateral exercises and the implementation of a presidential-level commitment to share DPRK missile warning data in near-real time between the United States, the ROK, and Japan. These efforts are building greater interoperability and preparedness among our forces to help maintain peace and security in the region and uphold the rules-based international order. As outlined in the National Defense Strategy, cooperation with allies such as the ROK and Japan provide the United States with an advantage in dealing with regional threats and is critical to building enduring advantages for the future force. [See page 36.]

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. WALTZ

Mr. Royal. The Department supports using all available authorities and corresponding appropriations, in coordination with interagency partners, to bolster Taiwan's self-defense. I will emphasize that the Department is accelerating the provision of both materiel and non-materiel support to Taiwan to enhance cross-Strait deterrence. Department staff are engaged in regular discussions with Members of the Committee and their staff members about this specific matter, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further in a classified setting. [See page 34.]

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. RYAN

Mr. Royal. The differences between Ukraine and Taiwan are just as important as their similarities. We can draw some important lessons from Ukraine that can apply to Taiwan, including the importance of building a civilian defense capacity as a critical component of an overall self-defense strategy. Ukraine's rapid mobilization orders, activation of conscripts and reservists, and efforts to equip citizens in supporting the country's defense against Russian aggression were, and remain, critical. Taiwan has indeed taken recent steps along these lines, including by enhancing the readiness of its Armed Forces through increased training and resources, as well as elevating the role of reserve forces in crisis and contingency planning. We applaud these important steps by Taiwan, and the Department continues to support these efforts through our comprehensive security cooperation efforts. Our ongoing security cooperation will continue to prioritize efforts that build Taiwan's preparedness—including fundamental capability and capacity building, modernization, and sustainment to ensure Taiwan is organized, trained, and equipped for a range of potential contingencies. [See page 38.]
QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

April 18, 2023
QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SCOTT

Mr. SCOTT. What message would it send to the PRC if European Navies routinely patrolled the Taiwan Strait?

Admiral AQUILINO. Congressman, I would respectfully suggest a different characterization—neither we nor our allies “patrol” the Taiwan Strait. Our air and maritime transits of the Taiwan Strait are conducted within a corridor that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal state, where high-seas freedoms of navigation and overflight apply. Such transits demonstrate U.S. commitment to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific by flying, sailing, and operating wherever international law allows. When our allies and partners fly or sail through the Taiwan Strait, they demonstrate their commitment to the rules-based international order.

Mr. SCOTT. Is there a role for the E–11A BACN in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility?

Admiral AQUILINO. There is a role for Battlefield Airborne Communications Node (BACN) capability in the Indo-Pacific to support Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2). Peer competition necessitates resilient communications and data links for our joint forces. USINDOPACOM is agnostic of the platform but requires any solution to be persistent and operationally effective in all contested domains.

Mr. SCOTT. How can the U.S. Coast Guard be better utilized in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility?

Admiral AQUILINO. The U.S. Coast Guard’s (USCG) mix of maritime law enforcement authorities and capabilities make it ideal to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region. Their presence in this region strengthens regional maritime governance, enhances Allied and partner nation maritime capabilities, and deepens those maritime relationships. The USCG is a vital instrument of national security, humanitarian assistance, regulatory authority, and law enforcement that supports USINDOPACOM’s Theater Campaign Plan and U.S. national interests. The USCG provides enormous impact in the region with these unique authorities and is fully integrated with USINDOPACOM and JIATF–W. The USCG’s actions reinforces that the U.S. is a dedicated and present partner, which counters the PRC’s increased presence in the Indo-Pacific. We welcome USCG expansion and enduring presence in the region, to include recapitalized surface and air fleets, new infrastructure, and increased workforce strength.

Mr. SCOTT. Does the U.S. Navy’s command ships provide greater survivability and more flexibility than land-based counterparts?

Admiral AQUILINO. Command ships provide additional survivability and flexibility for the joint force commander and complements the capability of command nodes ashore. The immense size of the Indo-Pacific, as well as peer competitors’ access to improved targeting systems, means that the joint force requires a variety of capable options for operational command and control of forces.

Mr. SCOTT. How can we expect to engage with merchant mariners from Allied/Partner nations if U.S. merchant mariners are not allowed to participate in planning exercises and wargames?

Admiral AQUILINO. USINDOPACOM does not plan or execute exercises or “wargames” with merchant marines. The U.S. Merchant Marine (USMM) is managed by the Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration (MARAD) and consists of privately-owned, U.S.-registered merchant ships and vessels that provide waterborne transportation for passengers and cargo moving in domestic and international commerce. There are no training requirements for merchant mariners outside of what the U.S. Coast Guard has designated to maintain their certificates/licenses. Any U.S. or allied/partner merchant mariner participation inside of USINDOPACOM exercises is as a “service provider”, specifically they are operating a vessel inside of an exercise to facilitate support but do not have any training objectives to be satisfied by exercise participation.

Mr. SCOTT. What additional assistance can the United States Coast Guard provide to the Philippine Coast Guard?

Admiral AQUILINO. USINDOPACOM and USCG are synchronized across the spectrum of activities, with USCG’s unique capabilities and authorities supporting the USINDOPACOM Theater Campaign Plan. USCG additional efforts with Philippines
Coast Guard (PCG) include greater training with a new Southeast Asia Training Team coming online, and intentions to double USCG operations and footprint in the region over the next few years. USCG and USINDOPACOM have a shared effort to advance information sharing and cooperation across maritime law enforcement, fisheries, Search and Rescue, and other core coast guard missions. Areas of potential cooperation include bilateral "ship rider" agreements for enforcing maritime law within the Philippines EEZ as well as joint patrol opportunities with USCG. The USCG's Indo-Pacific Support Cutter, the USCGC HARRIET LANE, is purpose-built for bi- and multi-lateral engagements. The USCG is looking at ways to further bolster the PCG's fleet readiness with additional subject matter expert (SME) exchanges and industrial/materiel support alongside existing U.S. facility and capability building efforts already underway. The USCG is the executive agent for the six-member Southeast Asia Maritime Law Enforcement Initiative (SEAMLEI) Commanders' Forum, which seeks to enhance multi-lateral cooperation between the PCG and other member coast guards, and created a first-ever Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for combined coast guard operations.

Mr. SCOTT. How unprepared is the U.S. Transportation Command to meet your requirements?

Admiral AQUILINO. USINDOPACOM advocates for the air and sealift required to meet our operational and strategic mobility requirements. Doing so enables continual improvement in USTRANSCOM's ability to satisfy USINDOPACOM's strategic lift and fuel requirements. USINDOPACOM and USTRANSCOM will continue to coordinate to achieve operational requirements.

Mr. SCOTT. How unprepared is the Military Sealift Command to meet your requirements?

Admiral AQUILINO. USINDOPACOM advocates for the sealift capabilities required to meet our requirements in the AOR. The implementation of a Jones Act waiver during periods of crisis will substantially increase our sealift capabilities. Simultaneously, this waiver would increase the flexibility to balance the employment of military and civilian strategic lift across the AOR.

Mr. SCOTT. How unprepared is the Maritime Administration (MARAD) to meet your requirements?

Admiral AQUILINO. USINDOPACOM relies on the combined efforts of MARAD, USTRANSCOM, and U.S. commercial industry to meet our sealift requirements. Achieving sufficient inventory of tanker and cargo sealift to meet our operational requirements is an area that MARAD continues to assess and work solutions. USINDOPACOM advocates for the air and sealift required to meet operational and strategic needs.

Mr. SCOTT. During World War II, many nations operated seaplanes. Is there a need for seaplanes today in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility?

Admiral AQUILINO. The Indo-Pacific operational environment has evolved significantly since World War II. The employment of seaplanes today would not meet the operational demands and current threat scenario. However, we support the continuous development of new and innovative solutions that may provide solutions to logistical challenges. As an example, DARPA's Liberty Lifter X-Plane seeks to leverage emerging technologies that may demonstrate seaborne strategic and tactical lift capabilities.

Mr. SCOTT. Are there any nations in your AOR you would like added to the National Guard's State Partnership Program on an accelerated basis?

Admiral AQUILINO. For FY24, USINDOPACOM is nominating Palau for partnership with the Guam National Guard. For future years (FY25–FY33), USINDOPACOM prioritizes developing State partnerships with Brunei, Laos, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. These countries have not formally or informally asked for a partnership, but Laos and Vanuatu have been introduced to the program and its benefits.

Mr. SCOTT. Is there a mission for an expanded number of hospital ships in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility should the U.S. Navy expand the size of their hospital ship fleet in the future?

Admiral AQUILINO. Currently, the joint force does not have sufficient at-sea capacity to meet the medical and surgical needs of the joint force. In particular, USINDOPACOM requires additional hospital ship capacity to meet the force’s current tertiary care needs. In addition to hospital ships, USINDOPACOM needs expeditionary at-sea hospital capability. This is because the two hospital ships, due to their size and ship draft, only provide partial coverage of the AOR while at the same time requiring a large medical staff. In addition to hospital ships, options to improve at-sea medical capability and capacity in maritime and littoral operations include:

- Expeditionary Fast Transport (T–EPF) Flight II—Increase medical capacity by providing high-speed sealift mobility and agility.
• Amphibious assault ships—Provide robust medical and surgical capability when augmented by medical teams.
• Platform agnostic expeditionary surgical teams can also augment almost any afloat platform and provide medical/surgical capability with limited requirement for patient holding.

Mr. SCOTT. Is there a role for the E–11A BACN on the Korean peninsula?

General LA CAMERA. We continue to consider the concept of operation for the E–11A Battlefield Airborne Communication Node (BACN) platform for the Korea Theater of Operations. The E–11A was a tremendous asset to military operations during Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. The platform provided the ability to relay communications signals, including air and ground tracks, with high bandwidth communication capabilities, fusing the battlefield into one network. While Korea’s mountainous terrain has similarities to the Afghanistan theater, the Korean peninsula is a much smaller landmass with densely packed communication infrastructure. Unlike in the Middle East, we are not intrinsically challenged by extended distances, lack of ground-based repeaters, or more geographically distributed fighter/bomber caps. The operational requirement for the E–11A could be considered later in conflict after air superiority has been established, to help address pockets of communication gaps once we have entered stability operations. We will work with our US Components to continue exploring the concept of operations for the E–11A BACN to enhance operations on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. SCOTT. How can the U.S. Coast Guard be better integrated with United States Forces Korea?

General LA CAMERA. The United States is an active participant in multiple Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) exercises to include the Republic of Korea (RoK)-hosted Eastern Endeavor Exercise 2023, which took place on 31 May and included forces from the RoK, Japan, and the United States, in addition to other partners. The exercise demonstrated interoperability and encouraged follow-on dialogue for exercises with other partners. We continue to explore training opportunities with the RoK and the U.S. Coast Guard to further develop capabilities in Multi Domain Operations.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. STEFANIK

Ms. STEFANIK. Does INDOPACOM and other combatant commands have the ability, through commercial means or otherwise, to measure “Will To Resist” or and other measures of on-the-ground civilian sentiment in the Pacific theater, specifically in Taiwan? If your command does not, do you have plans to acquire those means?

Admiral AQUILINO. Every day, we execute our responsibilities on the Taiwan Relations Act. USINDOPACOM leverages interagency and non government organization methodologies, assessments and surveys to assist in measuring Taiwan’s will to prepare, fight, and resist. The current methods and means available are sufficient in informing our decision-making and assessments in how to best assist Taiwan and its self-defense. Ultimately, USINDOPACOM is primarily focused on enhancing Taiwan’s ability to fight, an indispensable complement to their will to fight.

Ms. STEFANIK. Can you discuss how you utilize HUMINT to augment efforts to identify secure basing and personnel and equipment movement? Are there other means with which you are able to identify logistical challenges, commercial or otherwise? How are you measuring the effectiveness of the Pacific Pathways exercises among our partners and allies in the region. Can you discuss how you measure that?

Admiral AQUILINO. We utilize all available sources of data to assess risk and identify mitigation strategies when seeking to validate suitable basing locations and logistics routes that prioritize the security of our personnel and resources. Pacific Pathways, now termed OPERATION PATHWAYS, is U.S. Army Pacific’s number one operational shaping activity in the Indo-Pacific. Exercises such as YAMA SAKURA, KEEN SWORD, COBRA GOLD, and BALIKATAN support both partnership and posture goals within and beyond the First Island Chain. Each PATHWAYS-supported exercise is deliberately assessed against the Theater Army Campaign Plan’s lines of effort, with key assessment metrics focused on deterring potential adversaries and reassuring our allies and partners.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. GALLAGHER

Mr. GALLAGHER. Admiral Aquilino, I would like to give you the opportunity to clarify the remarks that you made in response to my question about current muni-
tions stockpiles within the Indo-Pacific theater. At an unclassified level, how do you assess the risk that we assume within the Indo-Pacific theater if we fail to prioritize and increase the size of missile stockpiles from what we currently possess west of the international date line? Please elaborate on the importance of the investments in a Joint Fires Network and in Integrated Maritime Fires that you lay out in your Section 1254 report.

Admiral Aquilino. As we learned from the conflict in Ukraine, munitions stockpiles are critically important both for deterrence and while in conflict. If we fail to prioritize increasing the size of missile stockpiles west of the international dateline, we incur severe risk to our overall deterrence strategy for peer competitors in the Indo-Pacific Theater. In the event of conflict, insufficient missile stockpiles present a high level of risk to mission and to our platforms and personnel who would lack sufficient standoff munitions needed to confront an adversary. The Integrated Maritime Fires requirements outlined in the Section 1254 report outline my highest priority munitions (Maritime Strike Tomahawk, Long Range Anti-Ship Missile, Standard Missile 6 1B, Joint Strike Missile, Precision Strike Missile Increment 2, and others listed in my unfunded priority list) which would be critical to a conflict in the Western Pacific. I would like to accelerate the development and acquisition of these weapons systems identified in the budget, and it is essential that we increase the inventories of these munitions, or others providing similar capability. The Joint Fires Network is equally critical because it will enable joint, all-domain fires at the speed and scale necessary for a high-end warfighting conflict in the Indo-Pacific theater, through improving the pace, synchronization, and efficiency of our munitions and non-kinetic effects employment.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. GOLDEN

Mr. Golden. Admiral Aquilino, as you noted in your prepared testimony the PLA’s rapid military buildup includes the addition of 17 major warships in 2022, increasing the PLA Navy battle force ships to around 350. China currently has the world’s largest Navy, and by 2025, the PLA Navy is expected to grow to 400 ships, then to 440 ships by 2030.

In contrast, our Navy currently has 298 ships and our fleet size is expected to decrease in the coming years, contrary to the current national policy for a 355 ship fleet and to the reported 373-ship force-level goal from the Navy’s Battle Force Ship Assessment and Requirement Report. Although no one would deny that the U.S. Navy’s ships are of superior quality to their Chinese counterparts, as the saying goes quantity can be a quality of its own. Moreover, I am concerned that China, aided by consistently increasing shipbuilding industrial base capacity, appears to be fielding increasingly capable surface combatants, including the new Type 055 Cruiser/Large Destroyer, which reportedly may be able to field directed energy weapon systems.

Others and I on this committee continue to be concerned with the lack of necessary investment in our shipbuilding defense industrial base, and given China’s consistently expanding naval fleet and capability, this is becoming an issue of the utmost urgency.

Can you please describe how China’s expanding naval capability impacts the INDOPACOM area of operations? Can you describe what concerns you may have regarding how China’s ability to grow its fleet so consistently may impact our force structure and presence in the area?

Admiral Aquilino. The growth of the PLA Navy allows China to conduct more operations and to sustain a higher operational tempo than we’ve seen previously. Even so, the PLA Navy remains a regional force, with an overwhelming percentage of their operations and exercises conducted within the First or Second Island Chains. The PLAN does execute a small number of extra-regional deployments for area familiarization, naval diplomacy, occasional humanitarian assistance, or in support of counter-piracy efforts. This has at least three specific impacts within the Indo-Pacific. First, it allows the PRC to project a more engaged and committed image, though I would note the PRC’s humanitarian efforts, for example, continue to lag other nations and organizations both in time and scale. Second, it has allowed the CCP to increase pressure against Taiwan and rival South and East China Sea claimant states. And third, it has thickened the PLA presence in the western Pacific in the event of a crisis. This changing reality in the Indo-Pacific demands a U.S. military posture with both the right capabilities and capacity that can deter a crisis, and, if required, fight and win.
QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MRS. MCCLAIN

Mrs. McCLAIN. Admiral Aquilino, your unfunded priorities list this year again includes funding—almost $100M this year—for the Quickstrike-Powered JDAM standoff naval mine system. Can you please explain the importance of this capability—and its related Maritime Strike Weapons—to your plans? Why are standoff munitions like this so important to the defense of Taiwan?

Admiral AQUILINO. Naval mines are a cost-effective means to exercise strategic influence over naval and amphibious operations in our plans and specifically to the defense of Taiwan. Mines provide improved deterrence and defeat options at the onset of an adversary military campaign. Additionally, advanced maritime mining significantly delays and disrupts adversary operational timelines, which allows greater time for the joint force to flow into the theater and provide an extended opportunity for joint force fires to attrite adversary maritime vessels.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY DR. JACKSON

Dr. JACKSON. For the first time since 1987, the Marine Corps does not own any tactical UAS; the RQ–21 Blackjack flew its last flight in March 2023 as part of the Force Design 2030 “divest to invest” strategy. However, the Marine Corps still has a validated requirement for a shipboard-capable vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) UAS per the Marine Corps Unmanned Expeditionary UAS (MUX) program. This would have particular utility in the USINDOPACOM AOR, especially if it has long range, endurance, and the ability to operate from austere locations. Admiral Aquilino, do you see a capability gap in your AOR for a tactical (Group 3 sized) VTOL UAS that is capable for all ship classes and of supporting forces ashore? What UAS are currently supporting deployed Marine Expeditionary Units in your AOR? Is the Marine Corps or the Science and Technology community actively developing a shipboard-capable UAS? If so, what attributes would you prioritize highest?

Admiral AQUILINO. In 2022, the Department of the Navy awarded a $135.8M contract to supply eight MQ–9A Extended Range drones for the U.S. Marine Corps. The unmanned aerial systems are scheduled for delivery by late 2023 as part of the Marine Air Ground Task Force Unmanned Expeditionary (MUC) Program of Record. USINDOPACOM continues to prioritize capabilities that increase the Marine Littoral Regiment’s domain awareness to enable Joint Fires. Marine Corps Unmanned Expeditionary UAS (MUX) is a family of systems with MQ–9A providing the Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) capability to the MEUs from ashore, while Small UAS (Group 1–2) are employed at the battalion and below level. V–BAT (Group 3 UAS) is currently supporting VTOL UAS requirements for MEUs under a Contractor Owned/Contractor Operated contract, the capabilities and flexible employment models being executed with MQ–9A provide a more capable product to the supported forces. HQMC Marine Corps Warfighting Lab is researching and investing in additional MUX-Medium Altitude Long Endurance payloads and the MQ–9B as a future replacement to the MQ–9A (although the MQ–9 is not a shipboard capability).

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. MACE

Ms. MACE. Admiral Aquilino and Mr. Royal, you have both stated the importance of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) as one of the cornerstones of the US Security architecture in Oceania, along with other Freely Associated States (FAS). The Compact of Free Association (COFA) agreements with the FAS provide them economic assistance along with defense posture opportunities in the Indo-Pacific. I also agree these allies are extremely important to maintain geographically. However, the outgoing President David Panuelo recently disclosed the initiatives he has taken to push ahead with a diplomatic realignment in favor of Taiwan, saying the nation “will be much better off without China. Yet the 22nd FSM Congress recently adopted a Congressional Resolution states their “One-China” policy remains the official policy of the islands, and they instruct their outgoing President not to make any changes to their diplomatic relations with China. In fact it was also quoted in their official press release “the nation’s diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China is an example of its consistent policy which over time has only strengthened and become significantly beneficial to both sides”. Mr. Royal, as the COFA agreement is currently under renegotiation before it expires in 2023, is this concerning in regard to the nation’s defense? Where does the US stand on our allies’ relations with the PRC?
Mr. ROYAL. The Pacific Islands' geography connects the United States with the broader Indo-Pacific region; U.S. prosperity and security depend on the future of the Indo-Pacific region remaining free and open. The Department of Defense continues to enjoy exclusive military access to the Freely Associated States under the provisions of the Compacts of Free Association (COFA). We strive to be a trusted defense partner and welcome the conclusion of the negotiations with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) for the extension of Compact-related economic assistance. We believe that renewed funding for the COFA through congressional appropriation is in our national security interest. President Panuelo’s letter highlighting the political interference from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) that many Indo-Pacific countries face serves to underscore the importance of the COFA agreement in preserving regional peace and security. Countries around the world, including Pacific Island countries, have a vital interest in a free and open international system. We do not ask countries to choose between the United States and the PRC. Rather, our efforts are aimed at preserving an international order where all countries, regardless of size or strength, have freedom to choose policies that serve their interests. The Department will continue to seek opportunities for further engagement and collaboration, including through the COFA agreements, with the FSM to strengthen and safeguard security in the Indo-Pacific region.

Ms. MACE. If Congress were to fully fund the JTF–M does INDOPACOM currently have the workforce to execute all of the construction projects across Guam? Is there anything Congress and the Department of Defense can do to increase the available workforce to complete these military construction projects? Is there a risk to national security by extending the H2–B visas to increase the workforce in Guam?

Admiral AQUILINO. Joint Task Force Micronesia (JTF–M) provides an operational headquarters to oversee DoD operations in its area of responsibility, which will be the Guam cluster and include Guam and U.S. Territories (CNMI, Wake Island, and Midway Island) and also include the Freely Associated States (FAS), which consist of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Island. Fully funding JTF–M will provide the resources necessary to meet the FY23 NDAA requirement of establishing a JTF in the INDOPACOM Area of Responsibility. This mission is separate from execution and oversight of Military Construction (MILCON) which falls under the purview of Joint Region Marianas and the military components. The Department requires relief from the H–2B visa restrictions through at least 2029 to be able to field the workforce required for our construction needs. A longer-term extension, beyond the current date of December 31, 2024, helps meet the Department’s requirements and deliver critical military construction projects on time. There is minimal risk to national security in extending the H2–B visas for Guam and the CNMI. Workers go through a thorough vetting process prior to receiving a visa.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. TOKUDA

Ms. TOKUDA. Multiple significant aspects of the environment in the Korean theater of operations—like weapons capabilities and force employment strategies—have recently changed and continue to evolve at a relatively rapid pace. Some of these changes may alter the basic assumptions on which operational plans utilized by the U.S. and our allies are built. Given that ROK and Japan appear to be more closely aligned on security issues than at any previous time, is there a good technical solution for agile collaborative planning between the U.S. and our allies, and particularly between allies, like the ROK and Japan? How can current planning capabilities be improved?

General LACAMERA. Deepening U.S.-Republic of Korea-Japan trilateral cooperation, collaboration, and partnership is vital for addressing the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. In November 2022, President Biden, President Yoon, and Prime Minister Kishida released a joint statement reaffirming our trilateral partnership guided by shared values, driven by innovation, and committed to shared prosperity and security. This statement commits each country to share Democratic People’s Republic of Korea missile warning data in real time. USFK along with US Forces Japan, INDOPACOM, and the Department of Defense, are working with the ROK and Japan to implement this commitment. Additionally, as noted in the April 2023 U.S.-ROK-Japan Defense Trilateral Talks joint statement, each country committed to an annual trilateral exercise calendar, resumption of missile defense exercises, and anti-submarine exercises. We are also reviewing opportunities to undertake exercises in trilateral naval air operations, search and rescue, disaster relief, unconventional operations, and multi-domain operations. These commitments will
be vital to routinizing military-to-military ties and more importantly, enhancing our extended deterrence and commitment to counter and deter the growing DPRK missile and nuclear threat. In terms of planning, we must be more integrated and interoperable with our allies than ever before. There are both technical and pragmatic solutions that can assist in the planning and execution of contingency operations within the region. USFK and the ROK–U.S. Combined Forces Command are addressing this capability with our Korean allies this year, using a commercial program that helps expedite planning, while increasing collaboration. If successful, expanding planning automation to our Japanese allies would be a superb next step. Additionally, as we develop new Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning tools, we would ensure that USFK's Digital Operational Plan is scalable for allies and partners. We are also working with our Korean allies to harness their expertise in coding for innovating our planning processes. We will partner with INDOPACOM to maximize resources and capabilities to enable the acceleration of our efforts moving forward.

Ms. Torkuda. What is the Command doing to enable rapid updates to existing plans and to build new plans that are suited and adaptable to the frequently shifting conditions in theater? How is the Command harnessing both existing and emerging technologies to ensure that it can make decisions better and faster than our adversaries? What resources are required for the Command to advance its digital OPLAN initiative?

General Lacamera. USFK worked diligently the past 10 months to bring the Joint Planning Process into the 21st Century. USFK's current approach is to implement human/machine teaming into the Joint Planning Process. We created a Digital Planning branch to accomplish this mission need with four distinct efforts: Data Governance, Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning enhancements, Automation, and Partnering. Our overall methodology is to produce quick wins as we march towards decision dominance that is made possible when we leverage Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning in our planning. One example of planning innovation is being addressed by partnering with a software company that enables collaborative planning at the Top-Secret level. Additionally, by bringing this software onto the CENTRIXS-K network, we will improve the speed and quality of planning with service components and alliance partners. Lastly, our team partnered with the Office of Secretary Defense’s Chief Digital & Artificial Intelligence Office on their Global Information Dominance Experiments-6 experimental work using the Korean Theater of Operations’ Time Phased Force Deployment Data to provide the type of conditioned data that Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning tools thrive from.

We are partnered with the Department of Defense Missile Defense Agency as we work together on an Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning enabled ballistic missile shot optimization planning tool. The pace of work is rapid, and MDA is helping the warfighter make better informed decisions in an ever-increasingly dangerous theater. This entails an adversary equipped with missile delivery systems capable of holding not just Northeast Asia at risk but pose a persistent threat and growing danger to the U.S. homeland. Our team has harnessed the technological advances in deep neural networks, combined with probabilistic outcome results to help our planners develop courses of action faster than the enemy. This provides commanders more decision space in which to plan and operate.

While initiated on a very small budget, the costs for innovative changes to planning using next-gen tech are significant. We have been able to keep our costs to a minimum. However, as we continue to build irreversible momentum, this initiative will require us to procure capabilities in the form of trained personnel and hardware/software solutions. We are currently investigating the steps behind the creation of a Digital Planning and Capabilities Branch, which will require an overall net increase of personnel within the command. We will partner with INDOPACOM to maximize resources and capabilities to enable the acceleration of our efforts moving forward. The combination of threat and theater makes USFK’s efforts an efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MOYLAN

Mr. Moylan. Admiral Aquilino, your Statement notes the importance of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) as one of the cornerstones of the US Security architecture in Oceania, along with other Freely Associated States (FAS). The Compact of Free Association (COFA) agreements with the FAS provide them economic assistance along with defense posture opportunities in the Indo-Pacific. The FSM Congress recently adopted a Congressional Resolution that states that their “One-China” policy remains the official policy of the islands, and they instruct their
President not to make any changes to their diplomatic relations with China. In fact it was also quoted in their official press release that “the nation’s diplomatic relations with the people’s Republic of China is an example of its consistent policy which over time has only strengthened and become significantly beneficial to both sides”. Is this not concerning in regards to the nation’s defense.

Admiral Aquilino. FSM’s diplomatic recognition of the PRC does not detract from FSM’s importance to U.S. defense. The Compacts of Free Association with Palau, FSM, and RMI guarantee access for DOD forces in a strategically important area of the Pacific. The Compacts also provide provisions to designate U.S. defense sites in these countries, allowing me to develop important posture initiatives that are crucial to deterring PRC aggression and ensuring we are postured to fight and win, above all China. The Compacts provide the U.S. with “veto” power over any foreign military activity in these countries. While countries across the Pacific negotiate economic and diplomatic relationships keeping with their national interests, we respect their sovereignty and welcome competition with PRC in ways that are consistent with the rules-based international order.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY DR. McCormick

Dr. McCormick. Mr. Royal, I’m consistently encouraged by the level of partnership between the United States and the Kingdom of Thailand, and I’m very pleased that our respective militaries were able to complete a full-strength Cobra Gold exercise just before the 190th anniversary of the establishment of US-Thai relations. Can you briefly summarize the value that the US-Thailand alliance adds to our deterrence regime in your AOR and give us your assessment on how the recent Cobra Gold exercise went?

Mr. Royal. The U.S.-Thailand alliance is vital to regional security. Thailand provides access to critical air and sea hubs, such as Utapao Navy Airfield, which were instrumental to our combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and remain available for humanitarian response operations in the Indo-Pacific region. This type of support, combined with Thailand’s consistent defense cooperation with DoD—facilitating presence of U.S. servicemembers on the Southeast Asian mainland—contributes to regional integrated deterrence. Cobra Gold 2023 was very successful; the exercise returned to pre-pandemic scale, with participation by more than 6,000 U.S. servicemembers—the largest in a decade—and included personnel from 30 countries. Notably, this year DoD and the Royal Thai Armed Forces expanded on the scope of the Cobra Gold exercise by inclusion of a bilateral U.S.-Thai Strategic Airborne Operation into Thailand from Diego Garcia. Additionally, the enhanced exercise integrated cyber and space capabilities, marking a notable step forward in the interoperability of U.S.-Thai forces.

Dr. McCormick. I’m very troubled by the PRC’s growing military footprint and assertiveness across the Indo-Pacific. I’m particularly troubled by the recent PRC buildup at Ream Naval Base in Cambodia. This base would be the PRC’s first overseas installation in the Indo-Pacific and would allow them to service their aircraft carriers and project power from the South China Sea’s western flank. Can you describe the strategic value this base would give the PLA Navy and what steps your command and the administration have taken regarding these developments?

Mr. Royal. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is engaged in a significant, ongoing construction project at Ream Naval Base. The military facility at Ream Naval Base will be the PRC’s first overseas base in the Indo-Pacific region. PRC use of Ream Naval Base would increase the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) operational capability and would provide further opportunity for the PLA to coerce its neighbors. Use of the base would also enhance the PLA’s ability to control critical sea lines of communication, including the Malacca Strait. The United States and countries in the region have expressed concern about the intent, nature, and scope of the project, as well as the role the PRC military is playing in its construction and in post-construction use of the facility. The U.S. Government continues to press the Cambodian government to closely examine the agreements its defense officials have made with China to ensure the PRC will not be allowed exclusive military presence or sensitive technology at the base that risks undermining Cambodia’s sovereignty and affecting regional stability.

Dr. McCormick. Admiral Aquilino, I’m very excited by the prospect of increased security cooperation with what I argue will be the most dynamic and consequential friendly nation in the region: India. The UN projects that India’s population will overtake China’s this year, and economists project that India could leapfrog Germany and Japan to become the world’s third largest economy by 2030. Given that, I’m profoundly grateful that frameworks like the Quad exist by which our two great
nations can deepen our security ties. With China looking to achieve its major strategic objectives by 2049, how do you foresee US-India relations evolving over the next quarter century?

a. [Follow-up] I’m aware that India has displayed real interest in purchasing American-made weapons systems, particularly fighter aircraft, which will improve their capabilities and our interoperability. What are the biggest challenges you see in transferring these systems and in improving US-India co-production and co-development?

i. [Follow-up] What authorities or resources could Congress provide you with to streamline these processes?

Admiral Aquilino. The largest hurdle preventing greater defense co-production and co-development are restrictive U.S. government tech transfer policies: for example, our ongoing efforts to clear AUKUS Pillar 1 challenges. The second hurdle is the case-by-case nature of the export control system. If a defense industry company were to build fighters in India under the current ruleset, it would need to request, one country at a time, release authority of those fighters to a third party. Almost all the co-production and co-development ideas that are currently floating around the U.S.-India partnership are at least partially aimed at export from India to third parties. In addition to tech transfer, a lack of financing is a major impediment to the foreign military sales (FMS) system. INDOPACOM would generally favor efforts made to offer more favorable foreign military financing to allies & partners to purchase weapons systems through FMS.

Dr. McCormick. Admiral Aquilino, I’m consistently encouraged by the level of partnership between the United States and the Kingdom of Thailand, and I’m very pleased that our respective militaries were able to complete a full-strength Cobra Gold exercise just before the 190th anniversary of the establishment of US-Thailand relations. Can you briefly summarize the value that the US-Thailand alliance adds to our deterrence regime in your AOR and give us your assessment on how the recent Cobra Gold exercise went?

Admiral Aquilino. The U.S.-Thailand alliance enhances a regional security architecture to contest growing challenges. It demonstrates U.S. commitment to South-East Asia and increases military capability, interoperability, and readiness of both our militaries. The alliance fosters regional security promoting a stable, prosperous, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. USINDOPACOM supports Thailand’s military modernization efforts to enhance Thai capacity and U.S.-Thai interoperability. Most notably, the United States is currently reviewing Thailand’s request to purchase our most advanced fighter, the F–35. Thailand is a critical partner for regional security and provides logistical nodes essential to U.S. military operations throughout the Indo-Pacific region. Efforts are underway to expand access to Utapao Air Base and additional new sites to support airfield dispersal, including Hat Yai and Nam Phong airfields Cobra Gold 23 was executed 27FEB—10MAR 2023 in Thailand this year, and the exercise was back to pre-COVID levels of participation. Over 8,000 U.S. service members from across the joint force, operating west of the international dateline and side-by-side with 26 other nations, demonstrated our mutual commitment to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific. The exercise reinforced the U.S.-Thai alliance and relationship with the Royal Thai Armed Forces and participating regional militaries, improved U.S. readiness, and enhanced joint and combined multinational military interoperability. Additionally, the exercise advanced integration of all-domain operations, to include space effects and defensive cyber training.

Dr. McCormick. I’m very troubled by the PRC’s growing military footprint and assertiveness across the Indo-Pacific. I’m particularly troubled by the PLA’s growing military footprint and assertiveness across the Indo-Pacific. I’m particularly troubled by the recent PRC buildup at Ream Naval Base in Cambodia. This base would be the PRC’s first overseas installation in the Indo-Pacific and would allow them to service their aircraft carriers and project power from the South China Sea’s western flank. Can you describe the strategic value this base would give the PLA Navy and what steps your command and the administration have taken regarding these developments?

Admiral Aquilino. Once completed, the PLA’s first overseas base in the Indo-Pacific will grant them access to the Strait of Malacca where they can potentially hold at risk the 3.5 trillion dollars worth of goods that pass through the Strait each year. It is an additive capability to what the PRC has built on the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. Together, these facilities support the operation of ships and aircraft to greater distances from the PRC for longer periods of time. But I would also note that unlike us, the PLA has very little experience in expeditionary operations and extending themselves could make them increasingly vulnerable. USINDOPACOM has supported efforts to publicize the PRC’s actions, to ensure the Government of Cambodia understands the risk they are taking in allowing PLA access to Ream, and to share information with the many like-minded nations similarly concerned about developments.
Dr. McCormick. I understand that with Singapore’s newly established Digital and Intelligence Service, they are seeking partnerships with other allied nations’ militaries, notable those with dedicated cyber services. CYBERCOM is obviously our focal point, however they are persistently stretch beyond their resources. Like our Singaporean counterparts, do you support a dedicated cyber service which can offer bandwidth beyond what you are afforded from CYBERCOM today? If yes, why so? If not, why not?

Admiral Aquilino. Specific to cyber cooperation with Singapore, the commanders of USINDOPACOM and USCYBERCOM (USCC), and the Singapore Chief of Defense signed a memorandum of understanding in August 2021 to focus on greater strategic cooperation in cyberspace. This MOU shows good coordination leveraging the current cyber force alignment. INDOPACOM and USCC have a good working relationship which aligns Cyber forces to the department’s strategic priorities. The creation of a U.S. cyber service is a policy matter and I defer to the Office of the Secretary of Defense.