

**PROJECTING PRESENCE AND POWER IN THE
INDO-PACIFIC: AN EXAMINATION OF THE
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD'S CONTRI-
BUTIONS TO MARITIME SECURITY**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND MARITIME
SECURITY**

OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS**

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**PROJECTING PRESENCE AND POWER IN THE
INDO-PACIFIC: AN EXAMINATION OF THE
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD'S CON-
TRIBUTIONS TO MARITIME SECURITY**

Thursday, September 28, 2023

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
MARITIME SECURITY,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room 310, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Carlos Gimenez [Chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Gimenez, Higgins, LaLota, Thanedar, Payne, and Garcia.

Also present: Representatives Pfluger, Radewagen, and Moylan.

Chairman GIMENEZ. The Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Maritime Security will come to order.

Without objection, the Chair may declare the subcommittee in recess at any point.

Today's hearings will examine how the United States Coast Guard's mission set and unique capabilities advance our Nation's goal of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Without objection, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Pfluger, the gentlewoman from California, Ms. Kim, the gentleman from Guam, Mr. Moylan, and the gentlewoman from American Samoa, Ms. Radewagen, are permitted to sit with the subcommittee and ask questions of the witnesses. So ordered.

I now recognize Ranking Member Thanedar for the purposes of seeking unanimous consent.

Mr. THANEDAR. Yes.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Do you have anybody else that you would like to recognize to be able to sit and ask questions?

Mr. THANEDAR. Unanimous consent for Mr. Case to ask questions?

Chairman GIMENEZ. Without objection, so ordered.

Without objection, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. McCaul's, statements has been submitted for the record. So ordered.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

Today, our subcommittee is discussing the importance of the Indo-Pacific region to United States national security interests and opportunities for us to operate more effectively in the region. The Indo-Pacific region spans a huge portion of the globe and includes

more than half of the world's population. The waters of the Pacific and Indian Ocean have facilitated global trade for centuries and the shipping lanes through the Straits of Malacca and South China Sea remain critical to today's economy. Fish stocks in the region's oceans continue to provide nourishment to billions of people around the world. The maritime domain drives the region's economies, which together account for 60 percent of global GDP and two-thirds of global economic growth. The Indo-Pacific region is crucial not only to overall global economy, but also to the safety, security, and the well-being of American citizens. The United States is a Pacific nation.

Five States, 3 territories, and 8 dependencies enjoy direct access to the Pacific Ocean; 80 percent of the United States exclusive economic zone is in the Pacific Ocean. American businesses utilize access to the world's largest ocean to obtain and deliver goods and services to customers at home and across the globe. The region is critical to U.S. interests. This is why both the Trump and Biden administrations have promoted the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

To support this vision we must address the existing challenges facing the region. The People's Republic of China presents the most direct challenge to this vision. With its illegitimate claims over large swaths of the Western Pacific Ocean, the PRC is pursuing its own ambitions at the expense of sovereignty of its neighbors and international law. These claims, if accepted, would adversely impact U.S. trade in the region. In 2016 14 percent of U.S. shipping passed through international waters in the South China Sea. If access to the shipping lanes in the South China Sea was impeded, it would have a significant impact on our economy.

PRC is also continuously disrespecting the sovereignty of countries in the region as its distance water fishing fleet pillages fish stocks in other nations' exclusive economic zones. The United States is being adversely impacted by this trend. Illegal fishing by PRC vessels is depleting the tuna stocks off the coast of American Samoa, which is having a ruinous effect on the territory's fishing industry. These fishing fleets also have a wide reputation for human rights abuses on their fishing vessels, with many crew members reporting physical and verbal abuse and having to work grueling hours without access to sufficient food and water.

The PRC's malign actions in the region are also facilitating other illegal activities by large and sophisticated transnational criminal organizations. These trends will undermine the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific and we must address them to realize our vision.

The United States Coast Guard plays a critical role in U.S. activity in the Indo-Pacific region. Since its establishments in 1790, the U.S. Coast Guard has provided invaluable service to the American people by securing our territorial waters, enforcing our laws at sea, and performing life-saving missions in our maritime environment. In the region, Coast Guard vessels patrol the EEZs of the United States and partner nations, and Coast Guard personnel on land provide much-needed expertise to bolster the security and law enforcement capabilities of our allies and partners. Coast Guard's presence in the region strengthens the work also being done by the

wider U.S. military, the Department of State, and other Federal actors to advance the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

[The statement of Chairman Gimenez follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN CARLOS A. GIMENEZ

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

Today, our subcommittee is discussing the importance of the Indo-Pacific region to U.S. national security interests and opportunities for us to operate more effectively in the region.

The Indo-Pacific region spans a huge portion of the globe and includes more than half of the world's population.

The waters of the Pacific and Indian Ocean have facilitated global trade for centuries, and the shipping lanes through the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea remain critical to today's economy.

Fish stocks in the region's oceans continue to provide nourishment to billions around the world.

The maritime domain drives the economies within the region, which account for 60 percent of global GDP and two-thirds of global economic growth.

The Indo-Pacific region is crucial not only to the overall global economy but also to the safety, security, and well-being of American citizens.

The United States is a Pacific nation, with 5 States, 3 territories, and 8 dependencies enjoying direct access to the Pacific Ocean.

Eighty percent of the United States' Exclusive Economic Zone is in the Pacific Ocean.

American businesses utilize access to the world's largest ocean to obtain and deliver goods and services to customers at home and across the globe.

The region is critical to U.S. interests.

This is why both the Trump and Biden administrations have promoted the vision of a "free and open Indo-Pacific."

To support this vision, we must address the existing challenges facing the region.

The People's Republic of China presents the most direct challenge to this vision.

With its illegitimate claims over large swaths of the Western Pacific Ocean, the PRC is pursuing its own ambitions at the expense of the sovereignty of its neighbors and international law.

These claims, if accepted, would adversely impact U.S. trade in the region.

In 2016, 14 percent of U.S. shipping passed through international waters in the South China Sea.

If access to the shipping lanes in the South China Sea was impeded, it would have a significant impact on our economy.

The PRC is also continuously disrespecting the sovereignty of countries in the region as its Distance Water Fishing fleet pillages fish stocks.

The United States is being adversely impacted by this trend—illegal fishing by PRC vessels is depleting the tuna stocks off the coast of American Samoa, which is having a ruinous effect on the territory's fishing industry. These fishing fleets also have a wide reputation for human rights abuses on their fishing vessels with many crew reporting physical and verbal abuse and having to work grueling hours without access to sufficient food and water.

The PRC's malign actions in the region are also facilitating other illegal activity by large and sophisticated transnational criminal organizations.

These trends all undermine the vision of a "free and open Indo-Pacific," and we must address them to realize this vision.

The United States Coast Guard plays a critical role in U.S. activity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Since its establishment in 1790, the U.S. Coast Guard has provided invaluable service to the American people by securing our territorial waters, enforcing our laws at sea, and performing life-saving missions in our maritime environment.

In the region, Coast Guard vessels patrol the EEZs of the United States and partner nations, and Coast Guard personnel on land provide much-needed expertise to bolster the security and law enforcement capabilities of our allies and partners.

The Coast Guard's presence in the region strengthens the work also being done by the wider U.S. military, the Department of State, and other Federal actors to advance the vision of a "free and open Indo-Pacific."

I am grateful that we are joined by a distinguished panel of witnesses who are prepared to speak about this work.

Vice Admiral Tiongson, Brigadier General Richardson, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Dawson, thank you for testifying before the subcommittee this morning on this important topic.

I look forward to your insights.

Chairman GIMENEZ. I am grateful that we are joined by a distinguished panel of witnesses who are prepared to speak about this work.

Vice Admiral Tiongson—I am sorry, is that correct?

Admiral TIONGSON. Tiongson, sir. Tiongson.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Tiongson. Sorry. OK. Tiongson—Brigadier General Richardson—did I pronounce that right? OK, I am glad—and, Deputy Assistant Secretary Dawson, thank you for testifying before the subcommittee this morning on this important topic. I look forward to your insights. Now turn it over to the Ranking Member for his opening statements.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you, Chairman Gimenez, for calling today's hearing, and good morning. Thank you to our witnesses for sharing their expertise with us here today.

The United States Coast Guard faces tremendous challenges in the wide-open waters of the Indo-Pacific, from limited resources and expanding demands on their mission to aggression from malign state actors and a changing climate. But the Coast Guard is also well-positioned to partner with the State Department, the Department of Defense, and allied nations in the region to support diplomacy, disaster relief, search-and-rescue operations, and law enforcement to uphold the rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific.

I am eager to hear from our witnesses today on how the Coast Guard can best support diplomatic solutions to counteraggression and lawlessness from the People's Republic of China and other nations that violate international sovereignty and global law, including through partnership with other large nations, like the country I was born in, India. I am also interested to learn more about how the Coast Guard is best positioned to assist small island nations in the Indo-Pacific to invest in a climate-resilient future and safeguard their own maritime sovereignty.

The Chinese fishing fleet has shown alarming disregard for the law and threatens the fishing stock that is vital to many nations and families across the region. One thing is certain, with a Government shutdown only days away, Congress must act immediately to ensure operations in the Indo-Pacific and around the globe are fully funded for this fiscal year. Our national security and the livelihoods of millions of Americans depend on us this week, and we cannot fail them.

The uncertainty created by the right-wing Republicans hearkens back to the 2019 shutdown that left Coast Guard members working without pay for weeks. We must respect the sacrifice and service of our military families and provide them the paychecks they earn.

Thank you again to Chairman Gimenez and to all of our witnesses.

I yield back.

[The statement of Ranking Member Thanedar follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER SHRI THANEDAR

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

Good morning.

Thank you, Chairman Gimenez, for calling today's hearing, and thank you to our witnesses for sharing their expertise with us here today.

The United States Coast Guard faces tremendous challenges in the wide-open waters of the Indo-Pacific, from limited resources and expanding demands on their mission, to aggression from malign state actors and a changing climate.

But the Coast Guard is also well-positioned to partner with the State Department, the Department of Defense, and allied nations in the region to support diplomacy, disaster relief, search-and-rescue operations, and law enforcement to uphold the rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific.

I am eager to hear from our witnesses today on how the Coast Guard can best support diplomatic solutions to counter aggression and lawlessness from the People's Republic of China and other nations that violate international sovereignty and global law, including through partnerships with other large nations like my country of birth, India.

I am also interested to learn more about how the Coast Guard is best positioned to assist small island nations in the Indo-Pacific to invest in a climate-resilient future and safeguard their own maritime sovereignty.

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The uncertainty created by the right-wing Republicans harkens back to the 2019 shutdown that left Coast Guard members working without pay for weeks. We must respect the sacrifice and service of our military families and provide them the paychecks they earn.

Thank you again to Chairman Gimenez, and to all our witnesses.

I yield back.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Thank you to the Ranking Member.

Other Members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

[The statement of Chairman Green, Ranking Member Thompson, and Hon. McCaul follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MARK E. GREEN, M.D.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Gimenez and Ranking Member Thanedar for convening this hearing today.

The 17th Century English explorer Sir Walter Raleigh once wrote, "Whoever commands the sea commands the trade; whoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself."

Since the end of the Cold War, we have existed in a unipolar world in which control of the sea has largely been unchallenged.

On the high seas, the United States has helped create a world order that prioritizes respect for international law and norms.

Our instruments of national power—including the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. military, and the Department of State—have helped maintain this world order with presence, engagement, and, at times, execution of law enforcement or defense authorities established in domestic statute or by international agreements.

However, this world order is under threat from the People's Republic of China. In the South China Sea, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has undertaken a strategy of adopting territorial claims that are inconsistent with international law and norms governing the high seas.

As the steady flow of news stories demonstrates, the PRC employs nefarious methods to uphold its illegitimate claims.

Last month, the Chinese Coast Guard used a water cannon against a Philippine vessel within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone, and against a Vietnamese fishing vessel off the Vietnamese coast.

Additionally, in pursuing natural resources at sea, the PRC routinely disregards the sovereign rights of nations in the Indo-Pacific region and even as far away as West Africa.

As a nation dependent upon not only free and uninhibited access to the world's oceans but also the bedrock of international law and norms to maintain peace and order, the United States must stand strong in the face of the PRC's increasingly belligerent and aggressive actions.

This is no easy task, especially in our region of focus today, the Indo-Pacific.

Stretching from Southern California to South Africa and from Alaska to Antarctica, the Indo-Pacific region stretches our personnel and assets across a wide swath of the globe.

The tyranny of distance is real in this region.

Our military experienced this first-hand during World War II, when our forces in the Pacific often had to transit distances comparable to the size of the continental United States.

We would do well to keep that experience in mind today, for while technology has changed since World War II, geography has not.

We must also be mindful of the rising tensions between the United States and the PRC.

While we must maintain our sovereignty and uphold the norms that keep the peace abroad, I do not want to see us start a new Cold War.

The United States Coast Guard offers unique capabilities in addressing these issues with the appropriate level of strength and tact.

The Coast Guard has decades of experience operating in the Indo-Pacific and already has relationships with many countries in the region.

Furthermore, the Coast Guard's law enforcement capabilities offer the United States a less threatening alternative than conventional military force in bolstering the security presence in the region.

Our Sentinels can play the role of diplomat, technical expert, police officer, and, if necessary, surface combatant.

In doing so, they also reinforce the efforts of our military and our State Department in the region.

Thus, the Coast Guard is an invaluable tool in ensuring that the United States heeds Sir Walter Raleigh's words and ensures that neither the PRC nor other malign actors wrestles away our command of the high seas.

I am grateful that we have before us witnesses representing not only the U.S. Coast Guard, but also U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and the U.S. Department of State, which together represent three important components of national power in the Indo-Pacific region.

I thank our witnesses for appearing before the subcommittee today, and I look forward to their testimonies.

I yield back.

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

Good morning. Thank you to Chairman Gimenez and Ranking Member Thanedar for calling today's hearing on maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific, and thank you to our witnesses for testifying on this important topic.

The Indo-Pacific region is increasingly critical to the efforts of the U.S. Coast Guard and its partners to secure the maritime domain and enforce an international rules-based order.

The region faces a variety of challenges, from rising sea levels as a result of climate change, to aggressive territorial claims and fishing tactics from malign state actors, including the People's Republic of China.

Small island nations in the region have limited resources to respond to disasters and defend their territorial waters, and the Coast Guard's ability to provide support and partnership to those nations is key to advancing U.S. interests in the region.

The Coast Guard engages in valuable training, exercises, and personnel exchanges with partners in region to bolster maritime law enforcement, port security, search and rescue, disaster response capabilities, and enforcement of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

The Coast Guard has limited resources, however, and the vastness of the Pacific makes it impossible for the service to deploy everywhere it would like to.

Congress must invest in the Coast Guard's cutter programs and workforce to maximize its ability to deploy throughout the Indo-Pacific.

The Coast Guard's coordination and collaboration with the Departments of Defense and State is also critical to ensuring limited resources are deployed optimally.

I am eager to learn more about how the agencies represented by the witnesses here today work in concert to support both military readiness and diplomacy.

I must also note that the witnesses testifying today represent large workforces of civil servants who provide critical functions on behalf of the United States.

If the Republican Majority follows through on its threats to shut down the Government, these workers will be forced to work without pay, jeopardizing their ability to advance U.S. interests at home and abroad.

I hope the Majority will step back from the ledge and act quickly to avoid an unnecessary Government shutdown which would undermine all of the critical efforts that will be discussed today.

Thank you again to our witnesses.

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this important hearing.

The People's Republic of China is actively destabilizing the Indo-Pacific region through its nefarious activities on the high seas. Its distance water fishing fleet operates without regard to national borders established and respected by international law and norms, and its illegitimate sovereignty claims in the South China Sea undermine free and open access by all nations to important trade routes located in international waters.

The U.S. Coast Guard plays a vital role in not only deterring the PRC from operating in United States exclusive economic zone but also in building partnerships with nations across the Indo-Pacific. Coast Guard personnel provide needed training to other nations from everything to fisheries protection and EEZ enforcement to port security and search and rescue (SAR) capabilities. The Department of State is crucial in facilitating these bi- or multilateral agreements that allow the Coast Guard to utilize its assets and personnel to advance U.S. interests in the region at a level below the threshold of armed conflict. While the presence of U.S. Navy ships might appear threatening not only to the PRC but also to several other countries in the region, the presence of the U.S. Coast Guard communicates the United States' commitment to upholding international law and the sovereignty of individual States.

I regret that I was unable to attend the hearing today, but I am grateful for the work that my colleagues are doing on this critical topic.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Again, I am pleased to have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us today on this critical topic. I ask that our witnesses please rise and raise their right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman GIMENEZ. Let the record reflect that the witnesses have answered in the affirmative. Thank you, and please be seated.

Like to formally introduce our witnesses.

Vice Admiral Andrew Tiongson—sorry—serves as the operational commander for the United States Coast Guard Pacific area, Brigadier General Neil Richardson serves as the deputy director for strategic planning and policy for the United States Indo-Pacific Command, and Ms. Camille Dawson serves as the State Department's deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

I thank each of our distinguished guests for being here today.

I now recognize Vice Admiral Tiongson for 5 minutes to summarize his opening statements.

**STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL ANDREW J. TIONGSON, USCG
COMMANDER, PACIFIC AREA, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Admiral TIONGSON. Good morning, Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and Members of the committee. I am honored to appear here before you today to discuss the United States Coast Guard's work to advance the United States strategy for the Indo-Pacific region as a trusted partner.

First, I want to thank you for your strong support of the Coast Guard, a key component of the Department of Homeland Security. Continued Congressional support enables our service to protect the homeland, save lives, preserve the sustainability of our oceans, and strengthen regional and national stability to combat transnational maritime threats.

My written testimony has been provided to the committee, and I ask that it be entered into the record.

Chairman GIMENEZ. So ordered.

Admiral TIONGSON. Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, the Coast Guard operates on all 7 continents and throughout the homeland. Our work force embodies our distinct value proposition, maritime governance. We protect, defend, and save those who live and work on the sea, we protect the sea itself, and we support the rule of law. The Coast Guard serves a Nation whose economic prosperity and national security rely on free and open oceans.

The Coast Guard's Pacific area encompasses 74 million square miles of ocean, more than half of the world's population, and 77 countries. Within this area are 3 of the 5 largest global economies, through which nearly \$4 trillion in annual maritime commerce flow. This area includes 8 of the 10 largest U.S. trading partners, 7 of the world's 10 largest militaries, and 80 percent of the United States exclusive economic zone.

Regional partners are challenged by malign activities on the sea. Impacts to vital fish stocks from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing threaten world-wide protein security, an existential threat to many Pacific Island nations. Threats to global supply chains and infrastructure pose a risk to trillions of dollars in economic activity, while these same risks pose the potential to disrupt prosperity, stability, and freedom of navigation. Natural disasters exacerbated by a changing climate and rising sea levels also threaten fragile economies and ecosystems.

This complex maritime environment requires governance by, with, and through trusted partnerships that enable prioritization of limited resources and sustained multilateral efforts to counter the most critical threats and challenges. The Coast Guard supports partner nations in developing legal frameworks and capacity to protect their sovereign rights. We model good governance through our operational approach. We must always see threats and challenges through our partners' eyes and strive to meet them where they are with what they need. Our highly visible white ships with orange racing stripes allow us to demonstrate maritime governance wherever we go.

In the last year alone, the Coast Guard participated in exercises with our partners across the Indo-Pacific, deployed advisors during the motor vessel Princess Empress, large-scale oil spill response,

and regularly provided search and rescue, technical assistance, and security and law enforcement training to partner nations.

Our efforts to uphold and build sound maritime governance in the Indo-Pacific focuses on countering malign activities. These activities erode the customary balance between coastal State rights, freedom of navigation, and lawful use of the high seas. We aim to bolster the capacity of like-minded nations to do the same and reinforce our position as a trusted partner.

Again, thank you for Congress' continued support and for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tiongson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANDREW J. TIONGSON

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, Chairman Gimenez and distinguished Members of the subcommittee. It is my pleasure today to discuss the Coast Guard's efforts to promote a free, open, and resilient Indo-Pacific in support of the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States. At all times a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, a Federal law enforcement agency, a regulatory body, a first responder, and a member of the U.S. intelligence community, the Coast Guard operates on all 7 continents and throughout the homeland, serving a Nation whose national security and economic prosperity are inextricably linked to the sea.

The United States has direct strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific comprising 1.3 million square miles, which is 28 percent of the 4.5 million square miles of ocean that is the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Coast Guard safeguards this EEZ, protects and defends more than 100,000 miles of U.S. coastline and inland waterways, and saves thousands of lives per year. The Coast Guard is working to answer an increased demand for Indo-Pacific engagement within available resources, balancing numerous dynamic maritime risks facing our Nation.

Around the globe, the Coast Guard is in high demand as an instrument of international diplomacy, recognized as the U.S. maritime service with the most relatable mission profile to many nations' maritime forces. Partner nations often structure and model their actions after the U.S. Coast Guard to help address the universal challenges posed by transnational crime, human smuggling, maritime safety and security, environmental stewardship, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and provocations in their waters under their jurisdiction from fleets flying foreign flags.

The Coast Guard's strategic vision for the Indo-Pacific is to build a more free, open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient Indo-Pacific with unrestricted, lawful access to the maritime domain for all nations, advancing the existing rules-based international order and solidifying the United States as a trusted partner for maritime safety, security, and prosperity in the region. To effectively achieve this vision, the Coast Guard works closely with U.S. interagency partners to provide capacity building and we also work to ensure our deployments are planned strategically.

The U.S. Coast Guard supports national strategic guidance with our operations, activities, and investments by synchronizing efforts across the interagency, and with allies and partners. We prioritize operations through three Lines of Effort (LOE): Prepare a Ready Force; Generate Combined Effects; and Uphold Governance. This vision, and all of the Coast Guard's actions in the region, directly align with the administration's five objectives in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy:

1. Advance A Free and Open Indo-Pacific;
2. Build Connections Within and Beyond the Region;
3. Drive Regional Prosperity;
4. Bolster Indo-Pacific Security; and
5. Build Regional Resilience to Transnational Threats.

The Coast Guard has operated in the Indo-Pacific for more than 150 years, and the Service is increasing efforts through targeted patrols with our National Security and Fast Response Cutters in support of Coast Guard missions and to enhance our partnerships. With a modest regional Coast Guard footprint, the Service partners

with the Department of State (DOS) and the Department of Defense (DoD) to engage partners. Across Oceania, we actively leverage our 12 bilateral law enforcement agreements with Pacific Island countries to assist our partners in enforcing their respective domestic sovereign rights, building strong maritime governance regimes, and forming a unified front against malign activity.

COAST GUARD INDO-PACIFIC ENGAGEMENT

The Coast Guard maintains a permanent and expeditionary global footprint to execute its 11 statutory missions. U.S. Coast Guard operations with partners and allies protect national interests by expanding operations beyond the U.S. EEZ, enhancing partner nation capability, and disrupting and deterring threats further from our shores.

In the Indo-Pacific, Coast Guard operations focus on issues that directly confront local populations. This includes strengthening maritime governance and solving problems that protect people's livelihoods through protection of fish stocks, ensuring the safety of life at sea, preparing for climate-induced natural disasters, marine environmental protection, and protecting routine transportation and commerce against mishap and malicious activity.

Operations At Sea.—In fiscal year 2022, multiple Coast Guard National Security Cutters participated in multi-national initiatives, including Operations BLUE PACIFIC and NORTH PACIFIC GUARD. The deployments supported the U.S. SEVENTH Fleet during U.S. Navy-led Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, Rim of the Pacific, and Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training exercises. National Security Cutters supported the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) targeting IUU fishing in Oceania. Finally, Coast Guard deployable specialized forces embarked on U.S. Navy vessels operating in the Western and Central Pacific in support of IUU fishing enforcement under the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative.

Defense Readiness.—The Coast Guard has served in every major armed conflict involving the United States since 1790. Around the world, on any given day, Coast Guard members are deployed in direct support of geographic Combatant Commander priorities. In the Indo-Pacific theater, Coast Guard capabilities and authorities are leveraged to advance important strategic national security objectives.

National Security Cutter deployments support the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) and provide opportunities to engage partner nations. The Coast Guard also supports USINDOPACOM with small adaptive force packages and professional engagements in Oceania. The Service remains committed to interoperability with our DoD partners and is always ready to fulfill a complementary role during conflict or contingency operations as a part of the Joint Force. Whether we are supporting military mobility through our management of the marine transportation system or operating jointly with other services and combatant commanders, the Coast Guard remains *Semper Paratus* (Always Ready) to protect and serve whenever our Nation calls.

Cooperation.—The Coast Guard's network of more than 60 multi- and bi-lateral agreements and participation in international fora are unique among government agencies and military forces. The bilateral agreements authorize personnel with enforcement authority from the partner nation to embark Coast Guard cutters and conduct combined law enforcement operations inside the partner nation's EEZ.

Operations pursuant to these agreements, combined with activities within the U.S. EEZ surrounding American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Marianas, expand opportunities that bolster a rules-based order to address challenges ranging from fisheries enforcement and counter narcotics, and support joint contingency plans for disaster and pollution response. These partnerships are vital to America's ability to secure our EEZ and our success in the broader context of geostrategic competition.

The Coast Guard's law enforcement, regulatory, and humanitarian missions promote professional service-to-service relationships and enhanced cooperation on maritime, economic, and national security challenges. In this context, the Coast Guard works through the security cooperation, Security Assistance, and capacity-building programs in DoD and DOS to provide bilateral and multilateral training to partners, including hosting resident training, deploying Mobile Training Teams (MTTs), and exchanging subject-matter experts (SMEs). Since 2009, the Coast Guard has hosted more than 900 students from the Indo-Pacific region and conducted more than 200 MTT deployments and SME exchanges with 78 course offerings ranging from maritime law enforcement to international leadership and management.

The Coast Guard works with the Pacific Island countries to assess their needs and develop strategies to improve their capabilities; for one nation this may mean advanced law enforcement training, and for another this may include disaster response training to build climate change resiliency. Beyond building capacity through

a consistent training presence, these efforts demonstrate commitment to the region and promote the United States as a trusted partner. Additionally, these engagements enable long-term relationships as foreign military students continue interacting with Coast Guard personnel as they advance in their respective organizations.

Advancing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.—Building and reinforcing partnerships, the Coast Guard provides specialized operational capabilities in support of national security objectives in the Indo-Pacific. The Coast Guard employs a unique blend of diplomatic, military, economic, and law enforcement tools. By setting and enforcing standards of behavior in the maritime domain, the Coast Guard represents rules-based order and provides options for like-minded nations to counter malign actors.

As part of a whole-of-Government approach to addressing challenges in Oceania and the broader Indo-Pacific region, the Coast Guard offers transparent, persistent engagement and partnership at both professional and personal levels. The Coast Guard is expanding our engagement in the Indo-Pacific by establishing additional long-term presence as attaches, liaisons, and advisors to strengthen regional and partner engagement, working to build the capacity of the coast guards and maritime law enforcement agencies in the region in coordination with DoD and DOS, creating a multi- and mini-lateral friendly and encouraging environment. We are also working closely with like-minded partners to coordinate capacity-building efforts and expand information sharing in the region.

Beyond regular multi-mission patrols across the Indo-Pacific by our National Security Cutters, the Coast Guard is demonstrating our enduring commitment to the region by homeporting 3 of our newest Fast Response Cutters (FRC) in Guam and is relocating a major cutter to the region in fiscal year 2024 with the specific missions of promoting maritime governance, establishing persistent U.S. presence, and conducting meaningful engagements. These cutters increase Coast Guard operational presence throughout the vast Indo-Pacific region and help to protect our EEZ from threats of IUU fishing and transnational crime.

In the fiscal year 2024 Unfunded Priority List, the Coast Guard also requested \$400 million for 4 FRCs to further the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States through expanded presence and engagement to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific. Additional FRCs would begin to transform the Coast Guard from an organization which currently provides episodic presence, to be persistent and visible, strengthening coordination with Allied and partner nations to bolster regional security.

CONCLUSION

The Coast Guard has operated in the Indo-Pacific with our key partners for more than 150 years and is proud to be considered a trusted partner in maritime security, safety, and stewardship. Partnership with relevant U.S. Government agencies and like-minded partners is critical to the Coast Guard's continued capacity-building efforts and regional presence. Through international engagement, partnership, and presence, the Coast Guard can bridge gaps between the DOS diplomacy and DoD force. The Service is well-positioned to operate in this region, while continuing its other critical missions.

The Coast Guard recognizes this consequential new period of American foreign policy requires additional Coast Guard presence in the Indo-Pacific. U.S. interests in the region have become ever clearer, just as they have become more difficult to protect. The Coast Guard has a valuable role to conduct persistent and effective operations to uphold rules-based maritime governance. The Coast Guard anticipates an increasingly dynamic future and stands ready to increase cooperation, promote order, and deter conflict.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Thank you, Vice Admiral Tiongson.

I now recognize Brigadier General Richardson for 5 minutes to summarize his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL NEIL R. RICHARDSON, USAF DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING AND POLICY, UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

General RICHARDSON. Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the U.S.

Coast Guard's critical role in support of the INDOPACOM mission. on behalf of Admiral Aqualino, I'd like to thank you for your continuous support to the men and women of U.S. INDOPACOM and their families. Your support is instrumental to our ability to accomplish our missions every day.

The Indo-Pacific is the most consequential region in the world, encompassing more than half the world's population, the busiest maritime trade routes, and key allies and partners. It is also the epicenter for great power competition with the People's Republic of China. Ensuring stability and security in the Indo-Pacific is not only vital for maintaining a regional peace, but also for global commerce and safeguarding American interest.

The U.S. Coast Guard and INDOPACOM work together every day to prevent conflict in this region. INDOPACOM is dedicated to preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific where nations can thrive economically and maintain their sovereignty without external coercion. Foundational to our approach is a campaign of integrated deterrence in which we use our military tools in concert with all instruments of national power to convince potential aggressors that they cannot achieve their objectives through force. U.S. forces must be postured and operating in the right places with the right capabilities at the right time and executing the right missions alongside the like-minded allies and partners to deliver integrated deterrence and, if deterrence fails, prevail in conflict.

The Indo-Pacific region has many nations with military that performs Coast Guard duties or law enforcement agencies in place of militaries. The U.S. Coast Guard's dual role as both a law enforcement agency and a military service makes it an ideal tool for capacity building and outreach to these nations. The Coast Guard's collaboration with these allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific fosters regional cooperation and strengthens the U.S. network of like-minded nations.

The U.S. Coast Guard's versatility, as well as unique capabilities and authorities, make it well-suited to address a wide range of challenges in the region, many of which are high priorities to our allies and partners, including maritime security, law enforcement, and environmental protection in support of the INDOPACOM mission. Simply put, the Coast Guard is frequently the right force in the right place at the right time with the right capabilities. I have seen first-hand the utility of the Coast Guard during a recent visit to Oceania, where our partners expressed an insatiable appetite for increased presence, activities, and training with the U.S. Coast Guard.

As you know, presence matters, and the Coast Guard's presence in the Indo-Pacific sends a strong message that the United States is committed to upholding the rules-based international order. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated, or IUU fishing, is a major threat to marine sources and the economies of many of our partners in the Indo-Pacific. The Coast Guard works closely with our allies and partners to combat IUU fishing through surveillance, enforcement, and building partner capacity. This allows the Coast Guard to help enforce and maintain international law and support partner nation sovereignty. This is especially critical in the Indo-Pacific, where many distant water fishing fleets are common and the Pacific Is-

land countries often lack the capacity to detect and interdict these vessels on their own.

Similarly, bilateral law enforcement agreements allow for the exchange of shipriders between the United States and partner nations, permitting partner law enforcement personnel to embark on Coast Guard vessels and aircraft to enforce their laws, and vice versa. These agreements allow the Coast Guard to work more effectively with partners in the region to enforce applicable national laws, combat illegal activity on the high seas and in the waters under the jurisdiction of our partners, and build maritime law enforcement capacity in those partner nations.

Additionally, the Coast Guard's capabilities and responsibility for environmental protection and disaster response aligns with ally and partner priorities. Many allies and partners in the region consider climate change to be the single greatest threat to their livelihoods, security, and well-being. By enforcing environmental regulations and responding to pollution incidences and natural disasters, the Coast Guard helps to preserve the delicate marine ecosystem of many Indo-Pacific nations and contributes to the sustainable development of the region, which is essential to long-term stability.

A whole-of-Government approach is essential to succeed in the Indo-Pacific strategy and in our competition with the PRC. The Coast Guard's contributions to INDOPACOM are an integral part of this effort. Its versatility, cooperative relationship with allies and partners, and ability to promote maritime security and the rules-based order make it an invaluable asset in the region. INDOPACOM supports strong and robust funding and resourcing for the Coast Guard to ensure it can continue and, where possible, grow its valuable contributions to peace and security throughout the region.

Finally, as we navigate the complex challenges of the Indo-Pacific, let us not forget the steadfast service of the Coast Guard personnel who work to ensure that the seas remain safe, secure, and open for all. Their dedication is a testament to the United States' enduring commitment to a prosperous and peaceful Indo-Pacific for generations to come.

Sir, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Richardson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NEIL R. RICHARDSON

28 SEPTEMBER 2023

Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the U.S. Coast Guard's critical role in support of the INDOPACOM mission. On behalf of Admiral Aquilino, I would like to thank you for your continuous support to the men and women of INDOPACOM and their families. Your support is instrumental to our ability to accomplish our missions every day.

The Indo-Pacific is the most consequential region of the world, encompassing more than half the world's population, the busiest maritime trade routes, and key allies and partners. It is also the epicenter for great power competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Ensuring stability and security in the Indo-Pacific is not only vital for maintaining regional peace but also for global commerce and safeguarding American interests. The U.S. Coast Guard and INDOPACOM work together every day to prevent conflict in this region.

INDOPACOM is dedicated to preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific, where nations can thrive economically and maintain their sovereignty without external coercion. Foundational to our approach is a campaign of integrated deterrence, in which we use our military tools in concert with all instruments of national power to convince potential aggressors that they cannot achieve their objectives through force. U.S. forces must be postured and operating in the right places, with the right capabilities, at the right times, and executing the right missions alongside like-minded allies and partners to deliver integrated deterrence, and, if deterrence fails, prevail in conflict.

The Indo-Pacific region has many nations with a military that performs Coast Guard duties or law enforcement agencies in place of militaries. The U.S. Coast Guard's dual role as both a law enforcement agency and a military service makes it an ideal tool for capacity building and outreach to these nations. The Coast Guard's collaboration with these allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific fosters regional cooperation and strengthens the U.S. network of like-minded nations.

The U.S. Coast Guard's versatility, as well as unique capabilities and authorities, make it well-suited to address a wide range of challenges in the region, many of which are high priorities to our allies and partners—including maritime security, law enforcement, and environmental protection—in support of the INDOPACOM mission. Simply put, the Coast Guard is frequently the right force, in the right place, at the right time, with the right capabilities. I have seen first-hand the utility of the Coast Guard during a recent visit to Oceania where our partners expressed an insatiable appetite for increased presence, activities, and training with the U.S. Coast Guard.

As you know, presence matters and the Coast Guard's presence in the Indo-Pacific sends a strong message that the United States is committed to upholding the rules-based international order. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated or IUU fishing is a major threat to marine resources and the economies of many of our partners in the Indo-Pacific. The Coast Guard works closely with our allies and partners to combat IUU fishing through surveillance, enforcement, and building partner capacity. This allows the Coast Guard to help enforce and maintain international law and support partner nation sovereignty. This is especially critical in the Indo-Pacific, where many distant water fishing fleets are common and the Pacific Island Countries often lack the capacity to detect and interdict these vessels on their own.

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Additionally, the Coast Guard's capabilities and responsibility for environmental protection and disaster response aligns with ally and partner priorities. Many allies and partners in the region consider climate change to be the single greatest threat to their livelihoods, security, and well-being. By enforcing environmental regulations and responding to pollution incidents and natural disasters, the Coast Guard helps to preserve the delicate marine ecosystems of many Indo-Pacific nations and contributes to the sustainable development of the region, which is essential for long-term stability.

A whole-of-Government strategy is essential to succeed in our Indo-Pacific Strategy, and in our competition with the PRC. The Coast Guard's contributions to the INDOPACOM are an integral part of this effort. Its versatility, cooperative relationship with allies and partners, and ability to promote maritime security and the rules-based order make it an invaluable asset in the region. Indo-Pacific Command supports strong and robust funding and resourcing for the Coast Guard to ensure it can continue, and where possible grow, its valuable contributions to peace and security throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Finally, as we navigate the complex challenges of the Indo-Pacific, let us not forget the steadfast service of the Coast Guard personnel who work to ensure that the seas remain safe, secure, and open for all. Their dedication is a testament to the United States' enduring commitment to a prosperous and peaceful Indo-Pacific for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Thank you, General Richardson.

I now recognize Ms. Dawson for 5 minutes to summarize her opening statements.

STATEMENT OF CAMILLE DAWSON, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ms. DAWSON. Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify on Department of State efforts to advance U.S. maritime security interest in the Indo-Pacific.

As we are all aware, the Indo-Pacific faces mounting challenges, particularly from the People's Republic of China. The PRC's coercion and provocations span the globe, but they are most acute in the Indo-Pacific, including in the maritime domain. We have seen a clear and upward trend of PRC provocations, most notably in the South China Sea, to include an assertive expansion of unlawful maritime claims and interference with freedoms of navigation and overflight. We are taking a range of measures to address these challenges.

At the same time, our approach to the region is about much more than just one country. Our approach is driven by the Indo-Pacific strategy, our shared affirmative vision for a region that is free and open and ever more connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient. We work through a whole-of-society and whole-of-Government approach in close coordination with our colleagues across the inter-agency, including the Coast Guard, INDOPACOM, and others in the Department of Defense, to advance that vision.

The origin of the free and open Indo-Pacific as a concept is rooted in connecting two oceans and promoting a free and open maritime space. Protecting this critical maritime domain falls into three key lines of effort. No. 1, diplomacy to promote respect for international law and the rules-based order; No. 2, capacity-building programs for the region's maritime law enforcement agencies and militaries, and, No. 3, our operations to demonstrate that all countries can fly, sail, and operate anywhere that international law allows. Close cooperation with like-minded partners lies at the heart of our approach to the Indo-Pacific region because we recognize that no one country can meet the challenges alone. We work through multilateral architecture, such as ASEAN, the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association, as well as newer flexible arrangements, such as the Quad, AUKUS, Partners in the Blue Pacific, trilateral cooperation with the Republic of Korea and Japan, and with the Philippines and Japan and the U.S.-E.U. Indo-Pacific Consultations.

We have taken steps to advance our maritime security objectives through activities such as implementing the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness, conducting the first-ever joint U.S.-E.U. naval exercise in March this year, and strengthening our diplomatic presence by opening additional embassies and expanding our staffing in the Pacific Islands. We have also used public diplomacy and legal diplomacy to advance maritime security goals. One example of this is State Department attorneys briefing governments, scholars, and thought leaders around the world using the Department of State's *Limits in the Seas* publication to counter the PRC's unlawful maritime claims in the South China Seas. Capacity building is also central to our efforts, both as a development

tool and a way to build and maintain relationships, and we appreciate our strong collaboration with Congress on this priority.

In fiscal year 2022, State's Bureau of Political Military Affairs provided \$286 million in security assistance to the Indo-Pacific region, much of which had a maritime security focus. State and the Coast Guard also pursued bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements to counter illicit transnational maritime activities, including IUU fishing and the trafficking of humans, wildlife, arms, and drugs, including fentanyl. The most recent maritime law enforcement agreement in the region was with Papua New Guinea, which entered into force in August. These examples, though not exhaustive, highlight our approach to leverage our expertise, resources, and networks to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific region, promote U.S. maritime security interest, and deter PRC efforts to undermine the regional order for its own gain.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to answering questions and those of Members of the subcommittee.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Dawson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CAMILLE DAWSON

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and Members of the subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify on Department of State efforts to advance U.S. maritime security interests in the Indo-Pacific. We deeply appreciate this committee's leadership and support for policies that advance our maritime objectives.

As you are all aware, the Indo-Pacific faces mounting challenges, particularly from the PRC. The PRC's coercion and aggression spans the globe, but it is most acute in the Indo-Pacific, including in the maritime domain. We have seen a clear and upward trend of PRC provocations, most notably in the South China Sea, to include an assertive expansion of unlawful maritime claims and interference with freedoms of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea.

However, our approach to the region is about much more than just one country—it is a whole-of-society approach, driven by the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), our shared, affirmative vision for a region that is free and open and ever more connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient. We work in close coordination with our colleagues across the interagency, including with the Coast Guard and Department of Defense, to advance that vision.

The origin of the free and open Indo-Pacific as a concept is rooted in connecting two oceans and promoting a free and open maritime space. Protecting this critical maritime domain falls into three key lines of effort: (1) Our diplomacy together with likeminded partners to promote respect for international law and the rules-based order, and the need for peaceful settlement of disputes; (2) maritime capacity-building programs for the region's maritime law enforcement agencies and militaries; and (3) our own operations, including Freedom of Navigation Operations and routine presence operations, to demonstrate that all countries have the right to fly, sail, and operate anywhere that international law allows.

To advance the maritime security priorities of the IPS, the Department of State works closely with like-minded partners to keep the region open and accessible and ensure the region's seas and skies are governed and used according to international law. This close cooperation with allies and partners lies at the heart of our approach to the Indo-Pacific region because we recognize that no one country can meet the challenges alone. In particular, we build support for rules-based approaches to the maritime domain, including in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait. Prominent examples of this approach include our work through existing regional multilateral architecture, such as ASEAN, the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association, as well as newer, more flexible arrangements such as the Quad, AUKUS, Partners in the Blue Pacific, trilateral cooperation with the Republic of Korea and Japan, and the U.S.-EU Indo-Pacific Consultations.

The Quad works to ensure the Indo-Pacific remains free and open. Through the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA), the Quad is

committed to supporting regional partners' efforts to improve their maritime domain awareness. This year, the Department of State also hosted the first-ever Quad Maritime Conference in Washington, DC.

Our enhanced trilateral security partnership with Australia and the United Kingdom—AUKUS—supports Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines at the earliest possible date. AUKUS also enhances our joint capabilities and interoperability through a concrete program of work on advanced capabilities, including cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities.

Launched by the United States and like-minded partners in June 2022, Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP) is rooted in our shared determination to support a prosperous, secure, resilient, free, and open region that benefits people in the Pacific. We advance a range of maritime initiatives under the PBP framework, which is forging ever-closer partnerships with Pacific Island nations through activities such as the PBP workshop on illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and maritime domain awareness that we hosted in Hawaii in January.

At the Camp David Summit last month, U.S., ROK, and Japan leaders also agreed to establish a trilateral maritime mechanism to synchronize partner capacity building in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands.

Additional actions that advance U.S. maritime security interests include the first-ever joint U.S.-E.U. naval exercise, conducted this year through the U.S.-E.U. Indo-Pacific consultations; progress opening embassies in the Pacific that will strengthen our presence and partnerships; and public diplomacy programs to advance maritime security goals. In partnership with DOD, we launched a public engagement program in the Philippines to provide cameras to fisher folk to record IUU fishing. We also offered legal exchange programs and consultations around the region related to maritime law, where attorneys at the Department of State explain their publication "Limits in the Seas No. 150" and advise officials from the region how to counter the PRC's baseless claims in the South China Sea through appropriate legal fora. The Department of State also sponsored a maritime boundary workshop for ASEAN nations to enhance their legal capabilities and solve their disputes peacefully.

Capacity building is central to our maritime security efforts in the Indo-Pacific, both as a development tool and a way to build and maintain relationships, and we appreciate our strong collaboration with Congress on this priority. We maintain robust security assistance intended to build maritime capacity and maritime domain awareness, and we see the need to expand this effort. Through our Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the Department of State funds nearly \$20 million of Coast Guard capacity-building efforts to strengthen maritime governance while protecting the security of the American people. Similar programs extend to combating cyber threats in the maritime domain to help partner countries defend against cyber attacks on critical maritime infrastructure, such as ports and navigation systems. The Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Security Assistance Office provided \$286 million in fiscal year 2022 security assistance to the Indo-Pacific region. Security assistance efforts in the region include building partner nation maritime security, maritime domain awareness, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and military professionalization. This security assistance develops and enhances partner nation capabilities and advances a range of U.S. interests.

Additionally, the Department of State and Coast Guard continue to pursue new bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements which cover a spectrum of illicit transnational maritime activities, including IUU fishing, drug and migrant smuggling, and illicit transport of weapons of mass destruction. These agreements enable the U.S. Government to engage with and support partners who are still building or expanding their capacity for maritime domain awareness or at-sea enforcement, and provides them the tools to do so. The most recent agreement with Papua New Guinea entered into force in August and was successfully utilized earlier this month during an historic joint operation with Papua New Guinea Defense Force shipriders and the Coast Guard Cutter *Myrtle Hazard*.

Collaboration across the U.S. Government to advance maritime security in the Indo-Pacific enables us to demonstrate physical presence and commitment to meeting the needs of the region. This is powerful evidence that directly disproves the false narrative—propounded by the PRC and others—that the United States is retreating from the region. Our presence and responsiveness to needs identified by countries in the region is particularly relevant in the Pacific Islands, where many of the countries lack sufficient law enforcement capabilities and do not have standing militaries. In such locations, our Coast Guard partners are indispensable, building trust and providing resources and training in a manner that cannot be replicated by any other U.S. agency.

These examples, though not exhaustive, highlight our approach—in collaboration with the Coast Guard, DOD, others in the interagency, and counterparts throughout the region—to leverage our expertise, resources, and networks to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific region, promote U.S. maritime security interests, and deter PRC efforts to undermine the regional order for its own gain.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to answering your questions and those of other Members of the subcommittee.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Thank you, Ms. Dawson.

Members will be recognized in order of seniority for their 5 minutes of questioning.

I will go a little bit out of order and ask for consent to allow the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Higgins, to go first. He needs to go to another hearing.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the indulgence.

Gentlemen, ma'am, we will be moving quickly during my 5 minutes of questioning here.

Admiral Tiongson, General Richardson, and Secretary Dawson, some of my inquiries are directed at all of you, and I thank you for being here.

Today we are focused on United States Coast Guard engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. Overall, I would like to address America's need for enhanced presence in the region in order to maintain the growing potentials for economic stability and growth and to hedge against the threat of military conflict and China's influence in the region.

So as it relates to our discussion today, China is a key factor, and I think we all acknowledge that. This is the balance that we seek to invest American treasure effectively, efficiently, appropriately, in order to counter the growing threat of China, both militarily and through economic oppression or interference in the area. The United States Coast Guard has a very important role to play there, as does the Air Force and the United States Navy. So I would like to ask you all to give me your considered response regarding shipbuilding as it relates to your plan moving forward in the larger strategic considerations and planning for what the next decade looks like in the Indo-Pacific region.

I have done a tremendous amount of work with your counterparts and colleagues in the United States Navy, both in uniform and in the civilian realm, ma'am, regarding shipbuilding and what the larger mission is in the Pacific. There is a growing concern about the U.S. Government stepping away from the long-established historical success of using smaller shipyards across the country, who have proven to be very responsive and efficient and flexible with regards to providing vessels for the United States Navy, United States Coast Guard in order to accomplish changing mission parameters, as opposed to doing business increasingly with large internationally-owned shipyards that sometimes even have direct ties to China, including partnerships with China. This is a concern for the U.S. Government to step away from a long, proven, and successful relationship with many smaller shipyards across the country to provide the vessels that we need and slide toward coordinating the construction of those vessels and funding the construction of those vessels with huge, massive international corporation shipyards that sometimes have heavy ties with China. This is

a concern. We believe that American vessels should be built in American owned shipyards with American technology, American engineering, and American work force. I have shipyards in South Louisiana. Bollinger Shipyards has delivered its 180th vessel to the United States Coast Guard over 35-year period. That is another fast response cutter, I have a shipyard named Metal Shark. They have an international footprint, do a lot of business with the Government. They are building vessels for Bangladesh and Vietnam through the U.S. Government protocols and parameters and laws.

So I would like all of you to please respond briefly to my concern and know that my office and my other colleagues stand with you to move forward with this vision.

Admiral.

Admiral TIONGSON. We are very grateful for the administration and Congress support in our recapitalization efforts. As you know, we are in the middle of recapitalizing our fleets of vessels. We have national security cutters that have been supported throughout the administration and Congress. We have our two highest-priority acquisitions right now being supported, the Offshore Patrol Cutter and the Polar Security Cutter as well.

Sir, as you mentioned, our fast response cutters are being built and coming out right now out of Louisiana. That's excellent support for our recapitalization efforts to put those ships throughout the world where our demand is, where there's demand for the Coast Guard.

Mr. HIGGINS. I thank the Admiral for your answer.

My time has expired. Mr. Chairman, perhaps the General and Ms. Dawson will be able to provide answers to my questions in writing after the hearing.

Chairman GIMENEZ. The gentleman's time has expired.

I now recognize the Ranking Member from Michigan, Mr. Thanedar.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you, Chairman Gimenez.

Without immediate action, Government funding will run out on Saturday at 11:59 p.m. In recent years, Coast Guard members and other Government employees have suffered because of dysfunctional Republican spending fights.

Admiral, how would a lapse in appropriations affect the Coast Guard's readiness in the Pacific area?

Admiral TIONGSON. Sir, first, our top priorities during a lapse in appropriation would be those missions that support national security and the safety of people, as well as property. What that means is accepted missions would include things like search and rescue, counter-drug mission, illegal migration operations, defense readiness. The operations that we are conducting within the Indo-Pacific fall under the defense readiness heading. So we will continue to do that.

As you recalled, in 2019, the Coast Guard was not funded, we were not funded for 35 days. What that means in Indo-Pacific is if ships will be deployed and Coast Guard members will not be receiving paychecks, that will clearly have a morale issue on them, as well as impacts to their families and longer impacts in terms of recruiting and retention.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you.

Ms. Dawson, what kind of effect does regular uncertainty about Government funding have on diplomatic relationships in the Pacific and across the globe?

Ms. DAWSON. Thank you for the question.

So what I would say is that it directly impacts our ability to engage in critical, face-to-face diplomacy. Additionally, we know what the PRC narrative is about the United States, what they are trying to push in their public messaging, and that is that the United States is unstable and unreliable. A Government shutdown, unfortunately, reinforces the PRC's narrative in that regard.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you.

As an Indian immigrant, given today's topic, I am also interested in the relationship the United States has with India when it comes to maritime security efforts.

For all of the witnesses, what efforts do your agencies make to work with India to advance partnership and security in the maritime environment?

Admiral TIONGSON. I would describe the U.S. Coast Guard's relationship with India as a budding relationship. We work on international forward together. I would say the Quad. I would also reflect to the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery, ReCAAP. We work with them there as well. We work with India in shipboard exchanges, we work with India in training and exercises for maritime law enforcement. In addition to that, I personally am going to be going to India here to strengthen our relationship within the next few months.

Mr. THANEDAR. Finally, the climate change. How does that—climate change represents an existential threat across the Indo-Pacific, particularly for low-lying and small island nations.

Admiral, what effect has the USCG seen from the changing climate in the region already? How are you prepared for worsening climate conditions in the future?

Admiral TIONGSON. We are definitely seeing types of catastrophic events caused by either climate change or sea-level rise. So, for example, just recently, there was a drought in one of the Pacific Island nations of which we worked very closely with our State Department personnel or partners, as well as the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance and provided aid to that country. Additionally, what we do is we provide training and subject-matter expertise on how to deal with those types of disasters in humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you so much.

My time is up, so I yield back, Chairman.

Chairman GIMENEZ. The gentleman's time is up.

I would hope that my colleagues from across the aisle on the Democrat side will join the 98 percent of the Republicans who will vote for a continuing resolution at the end of this week so that we don't have a Government shutdown. We are in agreement. We don't need to have a Government shutdown. Let's see how many of the Democrats will vote for our continuing resolution.

My questions are about the area of the Second Thomas Shoal. Admiral, do we patrol there? Do we have a presence there? I personally was there about a month ago and I saw the activity that is happening. I believe the ship that is called the Sierra Madre,

that is on the Second Thomas shoal. Much to my chagrin, I saw a Chinese Coast Guard cutter there, and I saw a Chinese frigate. I think it was a frigate there. Do we have any presence in that area? Does the United States Coast Guard have a presence there? Then what are your activities there and what do you do there?

Admiral TIONGSON. We have an outstanding relationship with the Philippine Coast Guard. We do patrol in areas in and around the Philippines. All of that run and coordinated with our DoD friends from the Seventh Fleet.

What we do with the Philippines is we prepare their force to go ahead and put forth their sovereignty and enforce their sovereignty. We do that through maritime law enforcement and security training. In fact, in the Philippines, that is our largest security assistance program that we have. Just a couple of weeks ago, or within the last couple of weeks, we opened up an entire training center for those types of efforts, as well as how to maintain their equipment and things of that nature.

Our relationship is extremely strong, and I personally engage with the commandant of the Philippine Coast Guard to always ask, what else can we do for you to help you prepare to go out there and enforce your sovereignty?

Chairman GIMENEZ. The Chinese have also built some man-made islands out there that, from what we saw, had radar sites, it looked like maybe even anti-aircraft sites, and they act as if somehow they own the place. Do we recognize that? Do we patrol those areas or do we make sure that shipping is allowed to progress through that area without being challenged by the PRC?

Admiral TIONGSON. Sir, we work with several nations in and about that region, all like-minded partners that are interested in maritime governance. Frankly, maritime governance is the key to what's going on here. We want to bolster our partners' capacity and capability to push forth their sovereign rights in all different facets. So if it's transiting their waters or if it's fisheries, the illegal, unreported, unregulated fisheries, we want to help them to do that to the best of our ability.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Have you seen a rise in the intimidation by the PRC, by the CCP toward other nations in the area?

Admiral TIONGSON. We have certainly seen a rise in that type of aggression from actors like the China Coast Guard. We have worked again with our partners to how do you go about and push your sovereignty forward and defend yourself while that is happening?

Chairman GIMENEZ. OK, very good.

But again, do we have a presence there? I know you say you work with our partners, but does the United States Coast Guard actually have a presence there to show that we are undeterred by Chinese aggression, by Chinese intimidation, their claims, their illegal claims of sovereignty over some of these islands and the areas around them, their illegal claim to sovereignty over the Second Thomas Shoal? Do we have a presence there to say that, no, we do not recognize your claims to this, and we are here, and we are here to stay? Do we do that?

Admiral TIONGSON. Over the last year, we've actually had three of our national security cutters deploy into the region to work very

closely through INDOPACOM and Seventh Fleet. Right now, we have a national security cutter in the region as we speak.

The other way we get about in our regions is through fast response cutters, smaller vessels that work in the Oceania part of the Indo-Pacific. There are four additional fast response cutters that are on our unfunded—

Chairman GIMENEZ. I have only got 25 seconds, I need to get this answered. What is the greatest existential threat in the area, is it climate change or is it the PRC?

Admiral TIONGSON. Talking to many of our partners, our partners' top things are climate change followed by fisheries.

Chairman GIMENEZ. By fisheries, not the PRC?

Admiral TIONGSON. Followed fisheries and those malign actors that go ahead and steal their sovereign food and rights and those types of things. A lot caused by China.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Is that your personal opinion too or is that your partners' personal opinion?

Admiral TIONGSON. That is what I have heard through talking to partners, so it's not personal.

Chairman GIMENEZ. I am asking your personal opinion. I am asking your personal opinion. What is your personal opinion?

Admiral TIONGSON. Sir, my personal opinion is that it is about maritime governance and how that breaks down sovereignty of the various nations. What we're trying to do is help bolster that maritime governance.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Fair enough.

My time is up.

I now recognize the gentlewoman from American Samoa, Ms. Radewagen. Radewagen.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Radewagen.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Yes, there we go.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. [Speaking Native language] and good morning. I want to thank Chairman Gimenez, Chairman Green Ranking Member Thanedar for inviting me to participate in today's hearing on the Coast Guard's role in the Pacific, my home district.

The Coast Guard is one of the most important and effective tools in that the United States has encountering the PRC's malign influence in Pacific waters. In noting what General Richardson just said, I can say that everywhere I go in the Indo-Pacific their leaders tell me the two things they want most are Coast Guard and Peace Corps.

But in fact, many Pacific Island leaders have asked me also about the shiprider program. But here we are, we arrive at the crux of the problem—resourcing. American Samoa is the only U.S. jurisdiction south of the equator and we are a gateway to the South Pacific with the best deepwater port within 2,500 miles.

Admiral Tiongson, thank you for all you do in the Pacific. Can you tell me how many cutters—you mentioned part of it earlier—how many cutters you have patrolling the South Pacific, including U.S. territorial waters and the compact EEZs?

Admiral TIONGSON. We have three fast response cutters that are stationed in Guam, a buoy tender that is stationed in Guam. These patrol routinely in the region, but it is episodic at best in the presence that they provide.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you. So it sounds like that is the only territorial waters where the Coast Guard has these vessels, Guam?

Admiral TIONGSON. They patrol throughout that entire region of Oceania. I am grateful for the support of Congress and the administration on what is called an Indo-Pacific support cutter that we will have this fall, this winter time frame. It will be stationed out of Hawaii. It will also patrol that area, providing subject-matter expert exchanges with the various nations as well as sometimes conducting illegal, unreported, unregulated fisheries enforcement.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you.

As a follow-up, at present, do you have the ability to effectively counter IUU fishing in the South Pacific? I mean, I will be honest, Admiral, American Samoa needs a permanent Coast Guard presence to counter PRC IUU fishing. They have been in American Samoa's EEZ. OK. So what additional resources does the Coast Guard need to meet current operational requirements in District 14?

Admiral TIONGSON. I just mentioned that it's episodic type of presence. What we need to do to continue to be a trusted partner is improve our presence there. The fiscal year 2024 budget has four fast response cutters on our unfunded priorities list. Those four FRCs will increase that presence and provide more of the IUU fishery enforcement that you were talking about.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman GIMENEZ. The gentlewoman yields your time back.

I recognize the gentleman from Guam, Mr. Moylan.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the panel members for allowing me to waive in for this hearing.

I appreciate the chance to hear from this distinguished witness panel have a chance to get to record the importance of the presence of the U.S. Coast Guard in the South Pacific, whether it be for patrolling our waters, training allied Coast Guard detachments, or performing search-and-rescue operations, the Coast Guard's ability to act like a Swiss Army knife is essential to carrying out a wide variety of necessary mission across the blue continent.

First question. General Richardson, Guam is 4,000 miles from Hawaii, 6,000 miles from California, and 8,000 miles from Washington, DC. One thing we discuss a lot on the islands is the tyranny of distance. I wonder, very briefly, you can elaborate on how that affects planning and logistics for all INDOPACOM operations.

General RICHARDSON. Thank you, sir, for the question.

As you know, Guam and its 170,000 American citizens is essential to U.S. security, and we take that seriously. Guam is also critical for the staging and deploying of forces west of the international dateline and throughout the region to deliver combat credible and integrated deterrence. In Admiral Aquilino's seize-the-initiative approach, the idea is to pull assets and people, forces west of the international dateline to cut the transit time, to cut the response time to be able to support and defend in that area. With that, the logistics and the planning would also follow. So we do expect to see some decrease in that. But as you mentioned earlier, distance there, it's all water. So it's either naval or air assets that have to support that.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, General.

Vice Admiral, if you were informed that the Coast Guard was going to receive increase in your budget, what additional resources do you feel would help you most specifically in the Pacific region then and in general, across your areas of responsibility? Briefly please.

Admiral TIONGSON. To briefly answer the questions, I mentioned, the unfunded priorities list that we have with four FRCs that are on that list. There is also one Maritime Patrol aircraft that's on that list. Those types of things, coupled with the potential of a second of these Indo-Pacific support cutters, would help increase our presence toward being a trusted partner.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you.

So basically, the six cutters are not enough to cover the nautical area equivalent to the size of the continental United States. All right, thank you.

As a follow-up, as I said earlier in my question, Guam is 4,000 miles away from Hawaii and I am an advocate for having decision makers as close to the ground as possible because only there can they get the holistic view necessary to do the job to the best of their ability.

So, Vice Admiral, do you think that the Coast Guard's District 14 headquarters in Hawaii is close enough to Guam and the South Pacific Islands to ensure adequate distribution of resources?

Admiral TIONGSON. As you know, the D14 headquarters is there, but there is also a sector Guam and Patrol Forces Micronesia right there in Guam. With all of those things, I do believe it is enough to provide that support that's necessary. What we need is more assets like those FRCs to provide more persistent presence.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you.

Next question, Ms. Dawson. In recent years the State has neglected the Pacific Islands to the detriment of our relationship in the region. Currently there is no bureau for the Pacific Islands at State. Instead, they are under the East Asia Bureau which also handles China, Japan, as well as North and South Korea. The East Asian Bureau is clearly in dire need of restructuring.

Why hasn't the Department of State organized a Bureau for the Pacific Islands and shown the region the focus necessary to ensure our relationships are properly maintained?

Ms. DAWSON. Thank you for the question.

So the Bureau is actually the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and we do have an office specifically focused on Oceania. Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands is the name of the office. We have a deputy assistant secretary with oversight of our work in the Pacific Islands.

I would note that in just the past 2 years we have seen a huge increase in the attention and focus of the administration to the Pacific Islands. Just this week, the White House hosted a summit with the Pacific Islands Forum and we have, as I am sure you are all tracking, opened new embassies in the Pacific Islands, opened two new embassies this year—

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Ms. Dawson. I am sorry for our shortness of time. But basically let's not group the Pacific Islands along with China, Japan, North and South Korea. Let's have our own is-

land, these groups together as one as we continue to do the work of the administration.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman GIMENEZ. The gentleman yields back.

We have time for a second round.

I now recognize the Ranking Member from Michigan, Mr. Thanedar.

Mr. THANEDAR. Thank you, Chairman.

The climate change represents the greatest existential threat to small Pacific Island nations facing rising sea levels and depleting fishing stock. The Coast Guard and its partners must be prepared for the security ramifications of a changing climate in the Indo-Pacific.

My question to Ms. Dawson is how does climate change factor into the diplomatic work the United States is doing in the region? How will climate change continue to affect strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific in the future?

Ms. DAWSON. Thank you.

So we start with conversations with partners and allies. That is really the heart of our diplomatic work. In those conversations, we ask countries, what are your greatest needs, how can we partner with you most effectively? Very frequently, it is about climate change. They are asking for solutions to address the challenges presented by climate change. So we are working through not only our bilateral relationships to provide assistance where feasible, but also through multilateral engagements, including the Quad and other arrangements.

So we ask countries to identify their most pressing needs and then collectively, with like-minded countries, we are seeking to find the ways that we can most effectively address those needs and bring the required resources to bear.

Mr. THANEDAR. All right, thank you, Ms. Dawson.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Chairman GIMENEZ. The gentleman yields back.

I now recognize myself for another 5 minutes.

Now, I don't know who will answer this. The fishing stocks there in the Pacific, not only there in the South Pacific, but also in the Eastern Pacific. I know that is maybe outside of your realm, but tell me about the problem of fishing and illegal fishing and who is conducting it and how much of the fish stock is being depleted because of the activity of illegal fishing and the fishing fleets around the Pacific. If you have any estimation, and I don't know who can answer that. Probably you, Vice Admiral. If you could do that for me, I appreciate it.

Admiral TIONGSON. Sir, you mentioned the Eastern Pacific and fishery stocks. As we speak, I have two cutters that are in the Eastern Pacific right now conducting IUU fisheries, high seas boardings, and inspections. We do it underneath the auspices of the Regional Fisheries Management Organization. This particular one is a South Pacific one. We are conducting those operations. That fleet is usually around anywhere from 350 to 600 fishing vessels. They are vessels that are Chinese vessels, and they bring all kinds of problem sets into that region.

First, they're fishing in the waters—Ecuador's and taking away and displacing Ecuador's fishermen from that. Those fishermen have to find other types of livelihoods. They usually are associated with things like forced labor and human smuggling. They could also be associated with environmental causes. A lot of their trash and wear that's on those ships just gets tossed right into the oceans, wrecking our pristine areas throughout the world. There's a lot with IUU fishing. We are enforcing those as we speak in the EastPac, as you mentioned. That is within my AOR.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Would you characterize the Chinese fishing fleets in the Eastern Pacific, and probably all around the Pacific, as having a devastating effect on fish stocks in the Pacific?

Admiral TIONGSON. Throughout the Pacific, I would say throughout the world.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Throughout the world. Because what do they do? They don't care about quotas, they don't care about the numbers, they just fish. I guess, look, the problem with the CCP and the PRC is that they are food-dependent. They need 30 percent, they are 30 percent short on food independence. So they go around the world—and fish is one of the staple foods, so they go around the world and they fish. But the way they do it, do you think that it is reckless? Do you think that it poses a threat to world fisheries around the world?

Admiral TIONGSON. Absolutely. It is depleting fishery stocks. It is robbing sovereign nations of their economies as well as their protein source. This is a problem of which the United States Coast Guard, through our illegal unreported, unregulated fishery strategy, I say we're going to try to take the lead of this and work our way with many other interagency players and partner nations to get after this.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Now, somebody said something about climate change and fisheries. What is causing a more devastating effect, climate change or human activity?

Admiral TIONGSON. I'm certainly not an expert on all of those sciences. What I can mention is that some places, even in and around the United States, say up in the Alaska region, what we see is fishery stocks moving further north for colder water.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Interesting. OK.

That is all I have for now.

I now recognize the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Pfluger, for 5 minutes.

Mr. PFLUGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the ability to waive on a very important topic. Thank the witnesses for being here for your service.

This hearing, it really couldn't be more timely. The Indo-Pacific region, obviously valuable to our national security. In a time of increased aggression from adversaries like the Chinese Communist Party, as well as the Putin's regime, the United States must be patient in our advances and maintain our ability to project all different types of instruments of power. Additionally, the U.S. Coast Guard recently announced that they will increase the number of maritime patrols and training operations in the Indo-Pacific, which I believe is good.

Since the shift from countering violent extremism in our national security and national defense strategies to more of a great power competition, Russia has used private military companies to illegally seize territories, the PRC is employing coercive economic practices through their Belt and Road initiative. We see this playing out all throughout the world, not just in the Indo-Pacific, but I think the epicenter of it is in the Indo-Pacific.

I just happened to spend a large amount of time in my career in the Indo-Pacific at Kadena Air Base and had a front row seat early in the stages of this desire to not just be a regional hegemon, but also to have a more global impact, which I think that they are rightly doing.

General Richardson, I want to start with you. In your testimony you say it is going to take a whole-of-Government approach and in addition to what the maritime strategy is, in addition to what air power is doing. Talk to me about what that whole-of-Government approach looks like. Notably, where are we falling short on that whole-of-Government approach?

General RICHARDSON. Thank you, sir, and appreciate the question.

The whole-of-Government approach, as has been mentioned in this forum so far, really, it starts with diplomacy. As we work through the diplomacy, then we can use the other instruments of national power as well, which is where the Coast Guard, as a valuable partner, comes into that discussion. This is mostly in the Micronesia Oceania area that I'll refer to here initially because of those small nations and their inability to create a navy, an army, an air force. In many cases, most of those don't have air forces. Their navies more represent the Coast Guard. So they're a key player in that. From the DoD perspective, we need to have a persistent presence in the area at all times. So, again, going back to Admiral Aquilino's seize the initiative approach, pulling assets and personnel west of the international dateline to create that persistent presence through exercises and operations is key to what we do to counter the malignant influence of the PRC.

Mr. PFLUGER. We recently sent a letter from a caucus that we have called the Mach 1 Caucus, about the concerns of having a lack of air power at Kadena Air Base in particular, a place that I am familiar with. Can you update me on the permanent presence of a fighter presence there at Kadena to have what you just mentioned, which is presence?

General RICHARDSON. Yes, sir. It is my understanding that we still have probably the same that you saw when you were there. I believe it's about 48 of the F15s and a number of KC135s in the area.

Mr. PFLUGER. So is there a plan to pull those F15s out, as was mentioned in the fiscal 2022 budget request from DoD?

General RICHARDSON. Sir, I believe that the Air Force does have some plans to rebuild the force from those terms, but I can't speak specifically to what the number will be into the future.

Mr. PFLUGER. I am sorry to keep on with you here. In your testimony you mentioned that many of our partners and allies see climate change as the No. 1 existential threat. Is that a view that is shared by the DoD?

General RICHARDSON. Sir, just exactly what I said. When we speak to the nations themselves, they share that as one of their No. 1 security threats. From the DoD perspective, we are focused on all of the threats, but primarily we're still focused on the PRC as our pacing threat, and we'll continue to go after that.

Mr. PFLUGER. I hope that we will stay focused on the PRC. If you are Xi Jinping and you are looking at the vulnerabilities that we have right now, and I appreciate the presence that you guys bring to this region, you are looking for signs of weakness. I think that we don't have to get into the discussion of my own personal views of the weakness that we have displayed over the last couple of years, but you guys are standing in the gap. The Coast Guard, the Blue Water Navy, the Air Force, the Air power, the triad that we have to hold these threats accountable and to deter, we are in a very tough time right now. I don't have to tell you that, this is your profession. I am very worried about this region and I hope that any discussion of climate change or things that would distract us away from what the PRC intends to do, which is to reunify Taiwan with China, and that is a stated goal of Xi Jinping, I hope that we will focus on that and focus on the threat and keep our heads down to deter so that we don't get into a bad situation.

With that, Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me to go a little bit over time.

I yield back.

Chairman GIMENEZ. The gentleman yields back.

Ms. Radewagen, do you want another round of questions?

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman GIMENEZ. OK. I recognize the gentlelady from the American Samoa.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. So, Admiral Tiongson, what types and numbers of cutters would be needed to prevent a large fishing fleet of like the 300 fishing ships seen in the waters around the Galapagos Islands back in 2020?

Admiral TIONGSON. That is the same exact fishing fleet that I was just speaking about. So, as I mentioned—

Ms. RADEWAGEN. That will do the job?

Admiral TIONGSON. I'm sorry, ma'am?

Ms. RADEWAGEN. You think that will do the job?

Admiral TIONGSON. What you meant I think what we have done over time is we have become very good at working with our inter-agency partners and collecting the intelligence that enables us to go ahead and target vessels within those packs.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. So that is a yes. Thank you.

So, as a follow-up, what existing information and coordination mechanisms do you have in place to mitigate your force shortfalls and other regional allies like Australia, France, and New Zealand? What is needed to better utilize these partnerships in safeguarding our own waters in the Pacific? Yes, Admiral.

If the other two want to jump in, feel free.

Admiral TIONGSON. We work very closely with the Australians and the other countries that you mentioned. We share information back and forth. For example, in Australia, we have an attaché that's there. Within their joint forces, we have a liaison officer that keeps us abreast of all of their types of operations and all of the

operations that we're running. We share that information back and forth.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you.

Admiral, following up on the Chairman's earlier question, what is the estimated value of fish stocks in ours and other compact waters? What do our island and waterfront communities tell you that is needed to safeguard their livelihoods?

Admiral TIONGSON. What they need is presence and they need help from the Coast Guard. Through the bilaterals that you spoke of earlier, our bilateral shiprider agreements, we're able to do that because they may not have the capacity and/or the resources to do their own sovereignty. We do that for them and we have blossomed a great deal in our relationships to a point where two of those nations are enabling us to enforce their sovereignty without having a shiprider, just calling into them. We call that the enhanced shiprider program.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Last, why has there not been a permanent Coast Guard presence in American Samoa? American Samoa relies on fishing for its livelihood. As you know, we are a one industry economy, and it is all about fishing for its livelihood. As competition for fish stocks heats up, it has a deleterious impact on these Americans' lives. What is the Coast Guard doing now to safeguard these Americans' livelihoods and safety in our own waters?

I understand from somebody in the Coast Guard that you will be ratcheting up your activity over the course of the next year out in our area. I don't know exactly what that means, but sounds hopeful.

Admiral TIONGSON. With the addition of the Indo-Pacific support cutter, we will be ratcheting up more because that will provide more presence, assets for more presence. But what we have there are essentially fast response cutters and a buoy tender that enables us to go ahead and have episodic presence in and around places like America Samoa. We need to increase that. That's why on our unfunded priorities list, there are four FRCs, fast response cutters.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you.

Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman GIMENEZ. The gentlelady yields back.

I have had some follow-up questions.

American Samoa is American territory and I am concerned that we have episodic presence in American territory. So whatever the Coast Guard can do to have a permanent presence in American Samoa, especially in light of the fact that we see much more aggressive action by the CCP, the PRC, the fishing fleets that are ravaging fish stocks around the world, we don't want that to happen around American Samoa or any American territory.

Got a question. OK, so I am ignorant about this. So you found a 350 fleet fishing fleet off of in the Eastern Pacific, illegally fishing. What does international law allow you to do?

Admiral TIONGSON. What we work through is the auspices of a regional fisheries management organization. Those organizations are comprised of several nations that come together and they sign CMMs, or Conservation Management Measures. That tells them how much to catch, what types of catches, rules on defining, and those types of things.

Chairman GIMENEZ. That is not really what I am going after. What I am going after, you find fishing vessels that are violating those restrictions, laws, et cetera, what can you do about it? What do you do about it?

Admiral TIONGSON. I'll give you a great example from last year, that same fishing fleet run by China in the Eastern Pacific. We conducted boardings on some of them, we saw that there were violations, we reported those to the Fisheries Management Organization, who reported them to the flagged states of those vessels. Those vessels, actually 30-plus of them were deflagged. They had no home at that point. But we were able to seize the catch, take those catches away. But in addition to that, there was a willing partner, and the partner was the country of Panama. They went ahead and talked with other willing partners in Ecuador, and they took action against the actual companies and the fish production companies as well.

Chairman GIMENEZ. What about the vessels themselves? What happened to them?

Admiral TIONGSON. Stateless vessels have no rights and those types of things, and they are subject to any type of boardings and inspections throughout the world. What happened to those particular ones is a few of them have been reflagged in different places, but they are on our watch list.

Chairman GIMENEZ. So but you don't seize the vessels themselves?

Admiral TIONGSON. No, sir, we do not.

Chairman GIMENEZ. So as soon as you leave the area, they can go ahead and start doing whatever they were doing before?

Admiral TIONGSON. We watch them extremely closely and provide that enforcement that's necessary to prevent and deter that type of activity.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Have you ever seen or boarded vessels on numerous occasions doing the same thing? Repeat offenders.

Admiral TIONGSON. Once we have them and we watch them very closely. Have there been repeat offenders? I'm almost positive that there have been.

Chairman GIMENEZ. OK. Interesting. You said they were Chinese-flagged vessels? They were home ported in China? Or where are they from? They are Chinese vessels, right?

Admiral TIONGSON. They were Chinese vessels flagged in another nation.

Chairman GIMENEZ. OK. That is interesting, too. So they are Chinese vessels. I mean I know we—you know, I used to be the mayor of Miami Dade, so I know we have a bunch of cruise ships that are flagged somewhere else, but they are really American cruise ships. So they just look for another home, another flag, and then fly that flag until they get caught again and then just—is that what they do, too? Do they go flag hunting once you catch them?

Admiral TIONGSON. There are some of these vessels that are on that particular watch list that have looked for flags of convenience, just as you mentioned.

Chairman GIMENEZ. But do they then take their catch and do they go back to China? Is that what they are doing? Or are they selling their catch everywhere around the world?

Admiral TIONGSON. In many ways, they have production vessels that are with them in that fleet. When they process the fish those fish can go anywhere around the world. Majority does go to China.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Interesting. OK.

Well, look, we talk a lot about climate change and fish stocks and all that, but the facts are that the PRC, the CCP, is the world's greatest polluter by a factor of two. Every week, they are opening up a new coal-fired power plant in China, they are increasing their carbon dioxide output. As we decrease ours, they are increasing theirs. So everything that we are doing here, they are more than outdoing on the other side through their efforts. So they are the greatest polluter in the world, they are the greatest carbon dioxide producer in the world, they are also now, according to testimony, they are also the leading cause of the reduction in fish stocks from around the world.

Am I exaggerating something, or do you think that that is an accurate statement that the CCP, the PRC, is raiding and destroying fish stocks around the world? Is that an overstatement? Am I being too dramatic or is it pretty accurate?

Admiral TIONGSON. I would have to look at the numbers, sir, and get back to you. I can state that the Chinese distance water fleet, distant water fishing fleet, is the largest throughout the world.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Do you find them to be law-abiding or do you find them to do whatever the heck they want to do just as long as you don't catch them?

Admiral TIONGSON. They are clearly involved with illegal, unreported, unregulated fisheries throughout the world.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Fair enough.

So I guess—so you still think that climate change is the greatest existential threat here in this area or is it the PRC and the CCP?

Admiral TIONGSON. If you're asking me what the partner nations tell me, they list—

Chairman GIMENEZ. I didn't ask you to tell me what the partner nations feel, I say you, what do you feel? What is the greatest existential threat to this area?

Admiral TIONGSON. Sir, I feel it's maritime governance. It's the ability to bolster partner nations so that they can take care of their own sovereign rights in trade and things of that nature, as well as the pollution within the oceans and to be prepared for humanitarian assistance disaster response.

Chairman GIMENEZ. OK.

Since nobody else wants to ask any questions, I am just going to continue to ask questions, I guess, until I am done.

In order for you to provide the patrol and the resources that you need to adequately protect American Samoa, what do you need from the Coast Guard? What do you need from us? What do we need to do?

Admiral TIONGSON. We have had excellent support, but again, I will refer to the 4 fast response cutters that are on our unfunded priorities list for fiscal year 2024. Those will enable us to have more persistent presence throughout—at American Samoa and throughout that region.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Why don't we have a permanent presence in American Samoa?

Admiral TIONGSON. Sir, I do not know the answer to that question. I know that we have that permanent presence in Guam, which enables us to do expeditionary deployments and we are able to patrol in and around the waters of American Samoa.

Chairman GIMENEZ. How far away is American Samoa from Guam?

Admiral TIONGSON. It's a few hundred miles, to the best of my knowledge. I'd have to look that up on a chart.

Chairman GIMENEZ. I can have a colloquy. How far away is that?

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Several thousand.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Several thousand miles? So it is like from here to Wyoming?

Admiral TIONGSON. If you're asking me, sir, I'd have to look at a chart—

Chairman GIMENEZ. A pretty good distance, OK.

Admiral TIONGSON. It is a distance.

Chairman GIMENEZ. It is not like you are not in the hood. OK, 2,000 miles is 2,000 miles. So again, you know, I asked—it is American territory, they are American citizens, they deserve American protection. So why aren't we there?

Admiral TIONGSON. We are there through—

Chairman GIMENEZ. Something, OK.

Admiral TIONGSON [continuing]. Fast response. Episodically we are there.

Chairman GIMENEZ. Yes, yes. An inflatable boat, anything, OK. Why aren't we there? We should have a presence there. Is there any military presence there, General?

General RICHARDSON. Sir, not to my knowledge. I don't think we have anything there on a permanent basis.

Chairman GIMENEZ. OK.

All right. Anybody else have any other questions?

All right, since nobody else has any other questions, this hearing is hereby adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:23 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

