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**STATEMENT OF  
ADMIRAL JOHN C. AQUILINO, U.S. NAVY  
COMMANDER, U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND**

**U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND POSTURE**



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## Introduction / Opening Statement

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Indo-Pacific Region. This will be the last time I testify as the Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM). I want to thank my wife, Laura, and the rest of our family for their support. After 40 years of service, I can say unequivocally that the sacrifice service members make for our nation is a family affair, and I could not have done it without mine. These last three years have been the honor of a lifetime. Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, Coast Guardsmen, and civilian warriors work tirelessly alongside our allies and partners daily to keep our nation safe while ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.

I also thank Congress for your support, especially in establishing the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI). The American people should know that your efforts to focus our country's resources on addressing the most pressing national security challenge our nation has ever faced are making a difference, but we have much more to do. The U.S. cannot spend its way to a position of preeminence as our economic and technological advantages over the PRC continue to narrow. While modernization of the force and the development of new concepts are essential to our ability to deter, we need to move at the speed and pace required to address the rapidly evolving security environment.

The complexity of the threats we face requires the U.S. to mobilize the whole of government and use all elements of national power to counter revisionist powers and their proxies committed to overturning the rules-based order for the benefit of themselves and at the expense of everyone else. However, we must recognize that the most dangerous national security challenges are evolving faster than our current government processes allow us to address them. Each of our three major state threats in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility (AOR) – the People's Republic of China (PRC), Russia, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) – are taking unprecedented actions that challenge international norms and advance authoritarianism. These adversarial regimes are increasingly interconnected, which is evident in Xi and Putin's declaration of a "no limits friendship" as well as Kim Jong Un's materiel deliveries to Putin in support of the illegal invasion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, *the PRC is the*

*only country that has the capability, capacity, and intent to upend the international order.*

Even amidst slowing economic growth, the PRC continues its aggressive military buildup, modernization, and coercive gray-zone operations. All indications point to the PLA meeting President Xi Jinping's directive to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027. Furthermore, the PLA's actions indicate their ability to meet Xi's preferred timeline to unify Taiwan with mainland China by force if directed.

When I became the Commander, I established *Seize the Initiative* as USINDOPACOM's approach to implement the National Defense Strategy (NDS) with a focus on deterring our adversaries by challenging the Joint Force to *think, act, and operate differently* and synchronizing four lines of effort in the near-, mid-, and long-term. While some progress has been made, the risk we assume is high and trending in the wrong direction, specifically due to delayed delivery of military construction, advanced capabilities, and resources to persistently project and maintain forces west of the International Date Line (IDL).

Pursuant to Section 1302 of the F.Y. 2024 NDAA, this Committee was provided USINDOPACOM's resourcing requirements needed to deter the PRC. The content of this posture statement and the 1302 Report has been provided to the Secretary and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *More than ever, USINDOPACOM needs your support to deliver the sustainable solution outlined in my Independent Assessment.*

Without a credible deterrent, China, Russia, and other revisionist powers will be emboldened to take action to counter U.S. interests. This testimony focuses on how *Seize the Initiative* enables the U.S. to deter conflict while reassuring our allies and partners.

This testimony describes the four focus areas and highlights the critical investments required to strengthen deterrence, which is within our reach. We must establish a forward-deployed, defense-in-depth posture to defend the U.S. homeland and interests abroad, deter aggression, assure allies, and provide the President and Secretary of Defense flexible response options should deterrence fail. The four areas that will enable our warfighters to rapidly operate within the first island chain with the capabilities to blind, see, and kill are as follows:

- 1) **Distributed Force Posture**. A distributed force posture that is persistently forward-based, west of the IDL, makes U.S. forces more effective, responsive, and survivable.

USINDOPACOM's Independent Assessment (1302 Report) provides a prioritized list of MILCON and access agreements and required capabilities for each desired force posture location. With the support of Congress and the Department of Defense, USINDOPACOM has worked diligently to accelerate construction and action of \$50M of advance planning. This includes Joint Area Development Plans, site surveys for the Guam Defense System (GDS), and employment of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Field Force Engineering Teams to the Philippines to rapidly develop projects at existing and new agreed Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites. *We have also worked with special authority via 2807 notifications to implement \$169M of design work to adequately program for \$2.75B in construction.* Once construction is appropriated, these projects will provide an operational airfield, port, and fuel storage projects needed to sustain the Joint Force west of the International Date Line.

- 2) **Campaign of Joint and Combined Operations.** A joint and combined campaign allows the combatant commander to conduct full spectrum military operations in combination with the exercise and experimentation program to enhance what is currently provided by the Services. Our campaign now includes persistent operations, synchronized across the Joint Force in all domains and with allies and partners, linked over space and time. Key highlights include ground forces operating in Northern Luzon of the Philippines and Japan's Southwest Islands and combined Taiwan Strait Transits with Canada. USINDOPACOM campaigning is combined with and built around an exercise program supported by experimentation and enhanced through scale, scope, timing, and location changes. We have brought high-end capabilities to exercises like BALIKITAN hosted by the Philippines and increased the number of multilateral exercises such as SUPER GARUDA SHIELD hosted by Indonesia, COBRA GOLD hosted by Thailand, KEEN EDGE hosted by Japan, and Talisman Sabre hosted by Australia. To better address campaigning requirements and improve our military positioning in the theater to respond to crisis and conflict, USINDOPACOM is evolving its command and control to be ready to fight tonight, thereby improving joint warfighting proficiency.
- 3) **Advanced Warfighting Capabilities.** Maintaining our joint warfighting advantage requires us to outpace our challengers and urgently deliver advanced capabilities. With homeland

defense as our number one priority, the Guam Defense System (GDS) is a critical capability USINDOPACOM seeks to accelerate by fusing our most advanced missile defense capabilities from Army, Navy, and Air Force systems. Maintaining decision superiority to blind, see, and kill any threat provides a strong deterrent effect and enables us to be prepared to fight and win if tasked. The Joint Fires Network (JFN) is USINDOPACOM's mechanism to integrate, command, control, synchronize, and deliver effects across the battlespace. JFN has evolved expeditiously via an experimentation campaign starting in 2019, yielding initial capability in 2024. The USINDOPACOM Mission Network (IMN), formerly the Mission Partner Environment, is a secure, zero-trust data-centric environment that allows USINDOPACOM to rapidly share information and a common operating picture with allies and partners. Additionally, the Pacific Multidomain Training and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC) enhances U.S., allied, and partner training by enabling realistic, joint, and combined training ranges to improve our future operations and exercises using STORMBREAKER, an AI-based gaming and simulation capability. To further accelerate capability development and fielding, USINDOPACOM established the Joint Mission Accelerator Directorate (JMAD) in 2023 to identify emerging Department technology and commercial content able to mitigate capability gaps with near-term technical solutions.

- 4) **Enhanced Network of Allies and Partners.** Our robust network of allies and partners is our most significant asymmetrical advantage in long-term competition. Our alliances, multilateral arrangements, partnerships, friendships, and Five Eyes relationships are essential to this network and play an important role in enhancing regional security. Over the past three years, our network of strong, resilient, and mutually reinforcing relationships have strengthened cooperation in unprecedented ways. AUKUS was established, and the trilateral partners have since announced the Optimal Pathway for Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines. A new phase in U.S.-Japan-Republic of Korea trilateral cooperation facilitated the activation of 24/7 real-time DPRK missile warning data sharing last year. The new Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites with the Philippines have reinvigorated the bilateral relationship with the Philippines, and provided the opportunity to make significant bilateral advancements, including in economic projects in the Philippines. We have also launched the India-U.S. Defense Acceleration

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Ecosystem (INDUS-X) and signed a defense cooperation agreement with Papua New Guinea.

While there has been progress in all four areas, *we MUST move faster to reduce the risk of conflict in the near and mid-term. Each line of effort is integral to deterrence in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility.* USINDOPACOM requests increased support to make progress across these four lines of effort, allowing us to continue to *Seize the Initiative.*

## **Key Adversarial Challenges**

Since I took command in 2021, our potential adversaries have become increasingly aggressive in seeking to impose their will at the expense of all others. The PRC has coupled its massive military buildup with a campaign of coercive actions designed to force more vulnerable nations to bend to their will. Russia's illegal, illegitimate invasion of Ukraine exposed it as an irresponsible actor uninterested in upholding international commitments. DPRK continues to develop weapons it plainly articulates as threats to both the region and the U.S. homeland. Individually, each poses its challenges.

### **People's Republic of China (PRC)**

#### **Strategic Intent**

The PRC's strategic goals remain unchanged from those it held even before 2021. It remains the only competitor with the military strength, will, and intent to change the world order with authoritarian characteristics and displace the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. The PRC uses all elements of its "comprehensive national power" to attempt to elevate China to the world's "indispensable power" and to alter the international system to one that encourages repressive, authoritarian governance and protectionist economic practices that distort markets by avoiding openness and transparency.

The PRC's aggressive military buildup underpins its drive to supplant United States security leadership in the region, enabling the PRC to subjugate Taiwan, exert control over the South China Sea through its excessive maritime claims, and oppress those who believe in a free and open Indo-Pacific. While the PRC military focuses on regional issues, Beijing is setting the stage for a more significant global role through its global society, civilization, and development initiatives.

#### **Military Modernization**

The PRC continues to advance its comprehensive military modernization program to transform the PLA into an integrated, joint, high-tech, network-centric military force. Modernization has remained aggressive, and China remains committed to delivering the capabilities needed to achieve its objective by 2027.

On a scale not seen since WWII, the PLA's buildup is occurring across land, sea, air, space, cyber, and information domains. Despite challenges presented by COVID-19 and an economic downturn, the PRC's official defense budget has risen over 16% from 192 billion USD to 223.5 billion USD. In the three years since I took command, the PLA has added over 400 fighter aircraft (almost all 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation variants), more than 20 major warships (guided missile cruisers, destroyers, frigates), and has more than doubled its inventory of ballistic and cruise missiles. Likewise, China has increased the number of satellites launched by over 50% during this period, yielding a five-fold increase since 2020. Perhaps most concerning has been the rapid pace at which the PRC has bolstered its nuclear arsenal, increasing its warhead inventory by well over 100% since 2020.

During my tenure, we have observed the PRC's growing focus on developing the capability and capacity to project power and challenge adversaries beyond the First Island Chain (FIC). The rapid expansion of the PLA Navy's (PLAN) guided missile cruiser and destroyer inventories and advances in ballistic missiles will enable the PLAN to contest adversaries increasingly farther outside the FIC. The subsurface fleet has also grown in volume and capability, notably with the launch of nuclear-powered guided missile submarines (the PLAN's first SSGNs).

PLA aviation has also undergone a significant transformation since 2021. Combined, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and PLAN Aviation constitute the largest aviation force in the Indo-Pacific. Over half of the PLA's operational fighter force is 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation, enabling longer-range A2/AD and counter-air operations across the western Pacific Ocean. The PLA is also developing a stealth bomber that can cover the Second Island Chain and the Western Pacific.

The PLA's investment in modern, long-range weapons, almost certainly focused on countering third-party intervention, is underscored by the rapid expansion of its ballistic missile inventories and technologies. During my tenure, the PLA increased its inventory of intermediate and medium-range ballistic missiles by over 60% while continuing to develop new longer-range capabilities, such as the DF-27 ballistic missile that will be able to reach targets well beyond the Second Island Chain.



The continued development of supporting space and communications technologies is steadily increasing the lethality and precision of PLA systems. In addition to the sharp increase in space launches over the past three years, the PRC is steadily delivering capabilities that seek to deny the use of our space architecture. Despite statements opposing the weaponization of space, the PRC is developing a range of counter-space capabilities and related technologies, including kinetic-kill missiles, ground-based lasers, and orbiting space robots.

Like other domains, the PLA's nuclear force has proliferated in the last three years. Upon taking command, the number of nuclear warheads was in the low 200s, and its nuclear triad was nascent, with the air component operationally fielded only in 2020. Now we see a PLA nuclear force with 500+ warheads, missile systems employing multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV), three new ICBM silo fields, and a nuclear-capable, air-to-air refuelable bomber. Unfortunately, this is not the end of the PRC's nuclear buildup; the PLA has plans for 1,000 warheads by 2030, accompanied by new air and sea-launch platforms.

### **Destabilizing Actions**

#### **Taiwan**

Xi Jinping continues to view unification with Taiwan as a "historical inevitability" and "indispensable for the realization of China's great rejuvenation." As such, Beijing is employing all elements of national power to lead Taiwan and the international community to believe that unification is, in fact, inevitable. Although the PRC claims it prefers to achieve unification through peaceful means, Xi will not renounce the use of force.

China's pressure campaign, ongoing in earnest since 2016, spiked in 2022 when the PLA executed a large-scale military exercise following the U.S. House Speaker's visit to Taiwan. The well-documented, multidomain operation established a new, more dangerous status quo for PLA activity and posture around Taiwan, normalizing warship patrols around Taiwan and military flights crossing the Taiwan Strait centerline, routinely entering the PRC's self-declared Air Defense Identification Zone, and executing legal actions to validate their objectives.

Equally concerning, the PLA is systematically rehearsing critical tasks associated with military operations against Taiwan. In 2022 and 2023, the PLA rehearsed the encirclement of Taiwan, simulating a maritime and air blockade of the island while bracketing the island with

ballistic missile launches. Subsequent exercises in 2023 focused on rehearsing counter-intervention and amphibious assault operations, the latter featuring extensive use of civilian Roll-On Roll-Off (RORO) ferries and vehicle carriers. This operational strategy leverages civilian capabilities to prepare its forces for seizing Taiwan.

#### Coercive and Risky Operational Behavior

Since 2021, the PLA has increasingly employed coercive tactics in response to activity the PRC deems provocative, significantly raising the risk of an incident or accident that could lead to loss of life or spark a wider, unintended conflict. The Department of Defense's 2023 China Military Power Report stated, "The PLA appears to have been engaged in a centralized, concerted campaign to perform risky behaviors to coerce a change in lawful U.S. operational activity and that of U.S. Allies and partners." These activities include reckless and dangerous maneuvers in the air and at sea in response to our activities that are well within international law.

#### Excessive Maritime Claims in the Region

The PRC is challenging the regional status quo through increasingly coercive tactics to pressure Taiwan and to force acceptance of Beijing's excessive maritime claims. The PRC accompanies its direct and clear claims with pointed warnings, most clearly, but not exclusively, in its Taiwan-focused rhetoric. In the ongoing dispute with the Philippines in the South China Sea (SCS), the PRC has significantly increased its aggression against the Philippines claiming "indisputable sovereignty" over Philippine waters. These actions are inconsistent with the conclusions of the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal convened pursuant to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

During my tenure, the PRC has become increasingly assertive in enforcing its illegitimate sovereignty claims in the SCS. The PRC continues to militarize its South China Sea outposts, enabling Beijing to threaten all nations operating nearby. It is quietly undertaking land reclamation at unoccupied features – a strikingly provocative act that clearly violates the spirit of the DOC. Over the last two years, the PRC utilized SCS-based CCG and maritime militia to water cannon, laser, and ram Philippine vessels that were, attempting to lawfully resupply the Philippine outpost at Second Thomas Shoal. The PRC's lawfare strategy is underpinned by

increasingly assertive domestic laws, portrayed as being consistent with international law that they use to justify the enforcement of their excessive claims.

In the East China Sea, the PRC attempts to legitimize claims over the Japan-administered Senkaku Islands with a continuous presence of PRC fishing and Maritime Militia vessels, escorted by Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) ships, with PLAN ships nearby. CCG ships routinely enter territorial waters surrounding the Senkakus, frequently harassing Japanese fishing vessels. Other actions, such as its annual, unilateral summer fishing ban, threaten China's neighbors and clearly illustrate an attempt to change the existing international order in its favor. In 2021, amid its long-running border dispute with India, the PRC passed a land border law, asserting "which asserted that the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of the [PRC] are sacred and inviolable" sovereignty that and provided a legal framework for greater PLA involvement in border security.

### PRC-Russia Cooperation

Since declaring a "no-limits" partnership in 2022, combined Russia-China military activities and PRC support for Russia's defense industrial base have become more concerning. Last summer's combined naval exercise in the Sea of Japan and follow-up on distant naval patrol highlight this growing military cooperation. The PRC has helped Russia rebuild and reconstitute its defense industrial base, with real world battlefield impacts in Ukraine. Beijing has become the largest consumer of Russian oil and natural gas, essentially keeping the Russian economy afloat as it suffers from the economic consequences of its illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The relationship is strengthened by the personal relationships between Xi and President Putin and their shared antipathy for the United States and our allies. While Xi has voiced support for Russia's justifications for its Ukraine war, the PRC has sought to avoid the appearance of direct support for Russia's military operations.

## **The Russian Federation**

### Strategic Intent

Russian President Vladimir Putin's blind ambition to reclaim the clout and influence of the Soviet Union has been fully displayed in my three years at USINDOPACOM. With

disastrous results for all involved, Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine exposed weakness in the Russian economy and further damaged its international standing. The Russian economy has been exposed as one-dimensional and increasingly dependent on oil and natural gas exports. Internationally, Russia has become further isolated, only explicitly supported by authoritarian regimes like the PRC, the DPRK, and Iran.

Russia's inability to achieve its war aims continues to have disastrous consequences for its military, decimating large swaths of its ground forces and seriously depleting stores of ammunition and armaments. Even so, Russia remains a formidable potential adversary in the Indo-Pacific, intent on improving its ability to defend Russian territory in the Northern Pacific, strike U.S. and Allied targets, and sustain military engagement as a significant component of regional influence.

#### Military Modernization

Even with its immediate attention fixed on Ukraine, the Russian Naval Doctrine published in 2022 prioritizes the Pacific and Arctic regions above all others. Its main goal of "strategic stability" (a euphemism for mutual nuclear deterrence) delineates the Sea of Okhotsk and much of the Arctic as "areas of existential importance" alongside Russian territorial seas and its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). It is within this context that Russia has pursued the modernization of its strategic assets in the region, even as its conventional forces are engaged in Ukraine.

Since 2021, Russia's Pacific Fleet has added several modern surface ships and submarines to increase Moscow's combat capability. Russia fielded new nuclear-powered ballistic and cruise missile submarines and upgraded Kilo-class diesel submarines. Armed with dual nuclear and conventional capable Kalibr cruise missiles and the Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile (still in testing), the Russian Pacific Fleet is increasing its ability to threaten U.S. and allied land and maritime targets.

Russia also continues to invest in modernizing its nuclear triad's land and air legs. This past January, Moscow identified the completion of the deployment of the Sarmat strategic missile system, which replaces legacy ICBMs with the new system capable of carrying multiple warheads. Russia also continues to upgrade its strategic bomber force in pursuit of Russia's aim

to be able to effectively strike every U.S. installation in the Pacific, Alaska, and the U.S. West Coast.

### **Destabilizing Actions**

#### **Power Projection**

Russia uses its Pacific-facing forces as a power projection tool, signaling that it has retained the capability and capacity to use military force in the region if it so chooses despite significant losses in Ukraine. In addition to strategic air patrols that skirt the coasts of Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam, the Russian military also uses exercises near U.S. and allied territory to reinforce perceptions of military might. The Russian exercise FINVAL 2023 reportedly involved 10,000 Russian Navy Pacific Fleet personnel, and numerous ships, submarines, aircraft, helicopters, and coastal missile systems. It deliberately messaged Moscow's intent to control its declared Northern Sea Route, including areas near Alaska.

#### **Combined Exercises and Naval Diplomacy**

The increasing frequency of combined activity is cause for concern. In addition to naval drills, Russia continues to partner with the PLA in strategic bomber patrols in the western Pacific near Guam. Russia is also increasingly collaborating with the PLA to execute combined air patrols that regularly cross into Japan and the Republic of Korea's Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ), further threatening our allies.

#### **Arms Transfers from the DPRK**

One of the many unfortunate outcomes of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine is a growing relationship between Moscow and Pyongyang. In addition to the ammunition the DPRK supplied last year, DPRK provided short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) that Russia is presently using in Ukraine. In return, Kim Jong Un probably seeks technical support for his growing strategic weapons program and Moscow's political support through its veto power at the United Nations Security Council.

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

### Strategic Intent

The DPRK's primary strategic priority – regime security – has remained fixed for decades. What has become increasingly evident over the past three years is that Kim Jong Un is unwilling to slow the development of strategic weapons, even in the face of blistering sanctions, to possess a credible strategic deterrent. The DPRK's laser focus on developing technology and weapons that enable its strategic strike capability is evidenced both by the statements coming from Pyongyang and the well-publicized tests of systems intended to deliver nuclear strikes against the U.S. homeland and its regional neighbors.

### Military Modernization

Over the past three years, the DPRK has primarily focused its military modernization efforts on strategic capabilities. At the DPRK's 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2021, Kim Jong Un articulated his intent to further develop strategic weapons and supporting technologies. Kim specifically highlighted preemptive and retaliatory precision nuclear strike capabilities, developing tactical nuclear weapons, solid-fuel ballistic missiles, and fielding a military reconnaissance satellite as priorities.

The DPRK has made significant progress toward its 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress goals. In 2023, the DPRK unveiled what appear to be miniaturized warheads that can be employed on shorter-range missiles and conducted drills simulating tactical nuclear strikes and a nuclear counterattack. Since 2021, Pyongyang has also publicized multiple advancements in delivery platforms, now claiming the ability to launch weapons from subsurface, rail, and silo-based launchers.

Modernization of the DPRK's vast conventional force has been slower in comparison but progressing nonetheless. Ballistic missile submarines, associated SLBMs, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) closely resembling U.S. systems highlight recent developments.

## **Destabilizing Actions**

### **Missile Launches**

Since 2021, the DPRK has launched over 100 ballistic and cruise missiles, including an IRBM that overflew Japan. In 2022, the DPRK restarted ICBM testing—paused since 2017—and tested a new solid-propellant ICBM in 2023. In 2024, DPRK launched a solid-propellant ballistic missile loaded with a hypersonic mobile control warhead. The advancements in solid-propellant rocket motors potentially enable DPRK to launch missiles with much less warning than their liquid-propellant counterparts.

### **Escalatory Behavior**

The DPRK increasingly messages its aggressive behavior as a response to the actions of its adversaries. In an address to the U.N., the DPRK accused the U.S. of a "sinister intention to provoke a nuclear war" and attempting to create an "Asian NATO." These comments come in a year that saw Pyongyang's actions compel the Republic of Korea to suspend the 2018 Comprehensive Military Agreement, designed to lower military tensions and accidental military clashes between the two countries. Among other provocations, Pyongyang threatened to shoot down any U.S. reconnaissance aircraft breaching its claimed airspace, fired more than 200 artillery rounds near a disputed maritime border with the ROK, launched an intercontinental ballistic missile into waters near Japan, and simulated a missile strike on the ROK in protest of military drills conducted by ROK with the United States.

### **Satellite Launch**

The DPRK also took significant steps to advance its space and satellite reconnaissance capabilities to meet the goals identified in the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. In 2023, DPRK successfully used its ballistic missile technology to launch its first reconnaissance satellite following two high-profile failures. The successful launch occurred only months after a Kim-Putin summit in Russia. Putin reportedly promised to help DPRK build satellites, almost certainly in return for support for Russia's war effort.

### **Support to Russia**

In addition to ballistic missiles, the DPRK has probably provided over one million artillery shells and scores of missiles to Russia. Pyongyang almost certainly hopes to leverage Russian technological expertise to bolster its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. These benefits are in addition to the diplomatic cover Moscow provides DPRK, using its U.N. Security Council vote to frustrate efforts to increase sanctions against Pyongyang.

### Sanctions Evasion

DPRK's efforts to evade U.N. imposed sanctions intended to curtail funding for its nuclear and other WMD programs are nothing new. In 2023, a U.N. Panel of Experts found that the DPRK continues to employ various evasion measures to import refined petroleum products. The report states that, after a record-breaking level of cyber thefts in 2022, estimated at \$1.7 billion, the DPRK continued to successfully target cyber cryptocurrency and other financial exchanges globally to support its sanctioned development programs. Even as DPRK takes more aggressive steps in these programs and tests more weapons in contravention of Security Council resolutions, Russia and China continue to resist efforts to strengthen sanctions.

### **Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs)**

Transnational and ethno-nationalist violent extremist organizations remain active across the Indo-Pacific region. The December 2023 bombing of a Catholic Mass in the southern Philippines that killed four is only the most recent reminder. While VEO strength as a whole in the region is far from its pinnacle, and security forces throughout the region have thinned VEO ranks, we must remain vigilant in our efforts to prevent violent extremists from planning and executing attacks.



### **Implementing *Seize the Initiative***

USINDOPACOM developed the *Seize the Initiative* approach to transform the needed force posture, operational campaign, advanced capabilities, and partnerships to defend the nation and deter our adversaries. Essential to this approach is the imperative to *think, act, and operate differently*. With the support of Congress, USINDOPACOM has made progress in the last three years in preparing and planning for a distributed force posture, implementing an integrated, operational campaign of joint operations, activities, and investments (OAs) with advanced capabilities specifically designed to enhance deterrence, and strengthening relationships with our allies and partners.

### **Distributed Force Posture**

Deterrence depends on the ability of the Joint Force to act quickly and decisively, which requires an increasingly flexible and distributed force posture and logistics network. Central to *Seizing the Initiative* is shifting from the “As Is” posture of 2021 to a near future “To Be” force posture of forward-based and rotational joint forces. By creating a distributed force posture west of the IDL, U.S. forces are more responsive, survivable, and interoperable with our allies and partners. This effort also provides the Secretary and the President with increased options to respond to a crisis.

A distributed force posture also requires new approaches to sustainment and logistics, as well as definitive access, basing, and overflight (ABO) agreements with allies and partners. USINDOPACOM’s Joint Posture Management Office (JPMO), established in 2023, synchronized theater posture planning, design, and construction to streamline and coordinate priorities. Across the Indo-Pacific, USINDOPACOM has been pursuing distributed force posture aligned across four posture “clusters.” Specific site information and planning efforts are described in detail in the classified 1302 Report.

Congressional funding and support have allowed USINDOPACOM to progress with design and planning. However, many of these projects still need to be prioritized by the Services. We have only completed 12 of over 200 required infrastructure projects in my three years in command. Forty-seven (47) high-priority MILCON projects still need to be funded. However,

we can now create gains with the support from the additional authorities and funding provided by Congress. We seek the programming and budgeting necessary to implement significant construction efforts as early as FY25.

### The Guam Cluster

The Guam cluster – comprised of the forward-most U.S. territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) – as well as the Freely Associated States (FAS), which include the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) – is the cornerstone of the U.S. security architecture west of the International Date Line. In a crisis, bases and infrastructure in these territories and states will be crucial to sustain the Joint Force. USINDOPACOM has worked diligently to build local political support across the region over the last three years. The national and territorial governments have welcomed the increased transparent communications and our willingness to incorporate local concerns into our plans.

USINDOPACOM continues to work towards rapid implementation of priority posture projects in the region, an enabling component of the “To Be” posture. The Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) is on plan. It continues to develop infrastructure on Guam and CNMI, including Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, where Marines will begin movement from Okinawa by the end of the year. USINDOPACOM and Congress have successfully identified ways to accelerate posture processes to meet the Guam cluster's emerging operational infrastructure development requirements. The funding Congress enacted for USINDOPACOM in FY22 and FY23 funded the necessary planning and development for critical Joint Force-enabling projects not prioritized by the Services. Leveraging these targeted investments and authorities, USINDOPACOM was able to advance infrastructure needs in FSM, Palau, and CNMI on a faster timeline than traditional MILCON and better position projects for funding within the budget cycle. USINDOPACOM and the FAS continue discuss potential ways to negotiate on additional defense sites for use by all Services. These sites will significantly enhance our logistical lines of communication and add to our aviation dispersal and other combat capabilities, while providing attendant economic benefits to the local governments.

Our increasing military capabilities strain local infrastructure and sustainment networks in the U.S. territories and the FAS. The remote nature of many of the posture project locations in

this region results in a massive demand for limited materials, contracting, and housing resources. In Guam and CNMI, the totality of military construction projects is too large to be supported solely by local labor. Congress has provided much-needed relief from the H-2B temporary work requirement extending through 2029 for projects directly connected to military realignment. Additional relief is necessary to enable prolonged extensions of H-2B visas and direct relief for typhoon recovery and resilience projects in Guam and the CNMI. Absent additional relief before FY27, the loss of an assured workforce will result in cost and schedule impacts to both military relocation and typhoon resilience projects; impacts will increase until the workforce collapses in FY30.

Under the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) agreements with the Freely Associated States (FAS), the U.S. has full authority and responsibility for security and defense matters in and related to the FAS, including extensive access to operations in their territories. In May 2023, the U.S. signed agreements with FSM and Palau to extend economic assistance for twenty years, and in October 2023, the U.S. signed a similar agreement with the RMI. I want to thank Congress for recently approving legislation to implement and bring agreements under COFA into force. The President signed these 20-year assistance agreements into law this month, reaffirming the perception of the United States as a reliable partner for all Pacific Island nations.

#### The Japan Cluster

USINDOPACOM has worked closely with the Government of Japan to optimize Alliance force posture based on improved operational concepts and enhanced capabilities to address increasing security challenges in the region, including for the defense of Japan's Southwest Islands. In October 2022, the United States completed a deployment of MQ-9s to Japan's Kanoya Air Base, followed by movement to Kadena Air Base in November 2023. In April 2023, USINDOPACOM established the Composite Watercraft Company at Yokohama North Dock to strengthen Alliance maritime mobility. In addition, as part of our commitment to strengthening Japan's defense, the U.S. began the first deployment of a TPS-80 radar system to the Sakishima Islands in October 2023.

We continue to work with the Government of Japan to position more resilient and mobile forces with increased intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), anti-ship, and

transportation capabilities. To strengthen deterrence and response capabilities, we are optimizing the posture of U.S. forces in Japan, alongside enhanced Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) capabilities and posture in areas including the Southwest Islands. Further, we are continuing close consultation with Japan to expand joint use of U.S. and Japanese facilities and enhance bilateral exercises and training focusing on Japan's Sakishima Islands.

### The Philippines Cluster

In 2023, to allow both countries to address shared challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, the United States and the Philippines designated four additional EDCA in addition to the five existing EDCA sites. The four new announced EDCA sites will expand U.S. rotational access across the Philippines, strategically strengthening the interoperability of U.S. and Philippine armed forces and facilitating the rapid provision of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the Philippines.

The U.S. has allocated over \$109 million towards infrastructure improvements at the five existing EDCA locations and two new EDCA locations. This investment, and forthcoming additional allotment, will complete twenty-three projects, enabling the U.S. and the Philippines to continue to build lasting security infrastructure to fill short-term capability gaps, promote long-term modernization, establish a credible mutual defense posture, maintain humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capabilities, and enhance the strength of the alliance. We anticipate making significant progress in the Philippines this year. Once appropriations are received, we have several projects ready for rapid execution. We will streamline construction at the EDCA locations using a design-build acquisition approach that employs new and recently provided authorities for smaller projects (up to \$9M) using Unspecified Minor Military Construction.

### The Australia Cluster

To ensure an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, stable, peaceful, prosperous, and respectful of sovereignty, the United States has completed twelve construction projects in the Indo-Pacific region worth \$146M; three of these projects support our bilateral alliance with Australia. These efforts have been carried out in close partnership with the Australian Department of Defense's U.S. Force Posture Initiatives (USFPI) program, which focuses on

Marine Rotational Force – Darwin, enhanced air cooperation, enhanced land cooperation, enhanced maritime cooperation, combined logistics sustainment, and maintenance enterprise, and enhanced space cooperation. There are three large MILCON projects in Australia to improve the early phases of Darwin/Tindal airfield improvements and ammunition and fuel storage. USINDOPACOM is working to identify alternatives which might enable accelerated execution of other posture initiatives.

Over the past few years, the United States and Australia have expanded posture coordination beyond Australia. The United States has recently added several initiatives to our posture planning efforts to support AUKUS and mutual operational requirements. Australia has been a valuable partner in coordinating posture initiatives and other cooperation activities across the Pacific Island region, including with the government of Papua New Guinea. In May 2023, the United States and Papua New Guinea signed a bilateral defense cooperation agreement (DCA) enabling the modernization and strengthening of this important security partnership in the region. The DC will enhance security cooperation, further strengthen our bilateral relationship, improve the capability of the PNG Defence Force, and increase stability and security in the region.

## **Deterrence Campaign of Joint and Combined Operations**

Through a persistent campaign in the Indo-Pacific, USINDOPACOM deters adversaries by demonstrating U.S. capabilities, responsiveness, and commitment to the region. USINDOPACOM's deterrence campaign normalizes U.S. operations in the AOR, builds warfighting advantage through rehearsal of concepts, and strengthens interoperability with allies and partners. Since 2021, USINDOPACOM has actively worked to expand its campaign of joint and combined operations, including phased surges that increase our positions of relative advantage by concentrating OAI in time and tempo to maximize effects. Improvements to OAI include expansion of operational complexity across all domains and enhanced coordination of global activities with other combatant commands. Additionally, to strengthen OAI with allies and partners, USINDOPACOM is conducting new flexible response options and multilateral operations to increase the complexity of our activities, create new dilemmas for adversaries, and reassure like-minded countries within the theater.

The key to our deterrence campaign is maintaining our forward stationed and rotational forces to maintain our military strength to respond quickly to any contingency. The removal of capability or capacity of the Joint Force sends the wrong message to our potential adversaries, allies, and partners. Additionally, the Navy, Army, and Marine Corps still need to procure the types and quantities of the munitions required to defeat threats in the Indo-Pacific region. These Service decisions continue to increase the risk to USINDOPACOM and its men and women while reducing our forces' overall deterrent effect in theater.

To meld Service capabilities into an integrated Joint Force, USINDOPACOM is evolving its operational command and control to be prepared to "fight tonight," thereby improving joint warfighting proficiency and effectiveness. As the updated command structure executes operations, activities, and investments throughout the region, we will capture lessons learned and identify known shortfalls in personnel, facilities, and equipment. These lessons and shortfalls will inform future USINDOPACOM resource requirements.

The first step in this process was forming a joint force headquarters on Guam, Joint Task Force-Micronesia (JTF-M). JTF-M integrates joint, all-domain command and control effects and mission command and control in Guam. As of January 2024, an initial staff for the JTF is on

Guam and setting the conditions to establish an enduring headquarters. USINDOPACOM will identify additional resources and staffing requirements as planning efforts and joint exercises refine operational concepts.

### Exercise, Experimentation, and Training

USINDOPACOM's Joint Exercise Program has been integrated into our deterrence campaign plan and is critical to a trained and ready joint force. Major joint exercises put aggregated combat formations with advanced capabilities in a position to conduct all-domain operations and activities. With allies and partners, these exercises demonstrate interoperability and warfighting proficiency, contributing to combat credibility and bolstering deterrence.

Since 2021, USINDOPACOM has evolved the exercise program to increase multilateral participation, facilitate experimentation with advanced concepts and technologies, and demonstrate the ability to execute high-end all-domain warfighting in the theater. In 2023, USINDOPACOM oversaw an annual exercise program consisting of nineteen joint and more than ninety Service exercises involving participants from the United States and allies and partners across the globe.

Bilateral exercises such as KEEN EDGE with Japan and BALIKATAN with the Philippines have expanded to multilateral events and have increased in complexity, interoperability, and scope. Additionally, USINDOPACOM expanded previously unilateral exercises such as NORTHERN EDGE and VALIANT SHIELD to integrate other combatant commands and allies such as Australia and the United Kingdom. Continued and additional investment in USINDOPACOM's Joint Training Exercise and Evaluation Program (JTEEP) will further advance the Command's ability to exercise large-scale, all-domain joint and combined exercises in contested environments, improving joint force training, readiness, and interoperability.

USINDOPACOM developed the Pacific Multidomain Training and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC) to enhance U.S., allied, and partner training. PMTEC enables realistic joint, combined all-domain training across a live-virtual-constructive environment via networked ranges, simulation centers, and mobile training support systems. PMTEC resourcing in FY23 delivered substantial contributions to transition the Joint Exercise Program into operationalized

training, experimentation, and rehearsal events through the BALIKATAN, NORTHERN EDGE, and TALISMAN SABRE exercises, among others. Through PMTEC, these previously geographically focused exercises enjoyed greater theater-wide participation due to linking capabilities across the theater and adding more Combined Joint All Domain Operations (CJADO) in the events. CJADO activities were supported by CONUS-based constructive and virtual support to provide more realistic common operational pictures, including increased emulation of space, cyber, and electronic warfare effects. PMTEC reached Initial Operational Capability for exercise enhancement through these initiatives in September 2023.



## **Advanced Warfighting Capabilities**

Over the past three years, the PRC has continued the most extensive and rapid buildup since World War II. With the Department focused on the PRC as the pacing threat, delivering capabilities enables us to sustain credible deterrence. *This budget cycle is a critical opportunity to focus concerted on providing the right capabilities in the suitable capacity on the proper timelines to strengthen deterrence.*

### **Guam Defense System (GDS)**

As the most forward U.S. territory in the Western Pacific, Guam is a strategic outpost critical to projecting power, maintaining deterrence and stability, and responding to regional crises or conflicts. Establishing the GDS – a 360-degree, persistent, layered, and integrated air and missile defense on Guam – remains the top homeland defense priority for USINDOPACOM to protect more than 170,000 U.S. citizens on the island. The U.S. has programmed billions of dollars in defense capability on Guam to advance these capabilities, including offensive capabilities, command and control, and sustainment.

In June 2023, the Deputy Secretary of Defense designated the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD A&S) as the senior DoD official responsible for the Integrated Air and Missile Defense of Guam, the Army as the Service Acquisition Executive (SAE), and GDS as an Acquisition Category (ACAT) 1D program. USINDOPACOM joined multiple war games and exercises in the past three years that have refined and optimized the GDS defensive capabilities. Although field-testing of the initial elements of GDS will begin in 2024, USINDOPACOM continues to advocate for and work with the larger defense enterprise to accelerate the fielding of the entire GDS ahead of the current delivery timelines. *As of today, USINDOPACOM believes the completion and integration of the GDS will be late to need* and continues to advocate for prioritizing and accelerating the necessary operations, activities, and investments (OAIs) to complete the initiative this decade.

DECISION SUPERIORITY

Decision superiority requires us to operate in contested space safely, sustain target quality, real-time battlespace awareness, and deliver multidomain joint fires. A Persistent Targeting-Quality Common Operating Picture (PT-COP) – the visualization of fires command and control drawing from a common data layer and pairing the best weapons against adversary targets – is necessary to enable *BLIND – SEE – KILL* effects. JFN provides decision superiority by fusing sensors across all domains and platforms with intelligence and other information to provide target guidance simultaneously to commanders across the battlefield.

Combined warfighting also requires rapidly sharing information and a common operating picture with allies and partners in a secure and resilient data-centric environment. IMN is an agile environment that modernizes command, control, communication, computer, and information technology (C4IT) systems by shifting USINDOPACOM from thirteen separate coalition systems into one system to deliver combined C2 in a contested environment. IMN increases coalition access to data, improves mission assurance west of the IDL, and enables campaigning and coalition operations by getting the correct information to the right partner at the right time. Without full resourcing, the modernization and fielding of this more resilient and effective mission partner communication in the theater will be delayed.

BLIND: Operate in Contested Space and Domains

Deterring conflict requires the U.S. to demonstrate the ability to operate in all contested spaces and dominate all domains, especially in space and cyberspace. Our competitors recognize the importance of space and cyberspace and have invested heavily to advance their capabilities in these domains. Over the last three years, the U.S. has made the investments necessary to maintain its advantage in space and cyberspace, and we must continue to focus resources and talent in these domains to stay ahead. USINDOPACOM's mission depends on U.S. dominance in space and cyberspace through resilient and flexible capabilities integrated and exercised with our allies and partners.

SEE: Battlespace Awareness Across the Joint Force

Since 2021, USINDOPACOM has advocated for resources to fund critical future space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems explicitly designed to support warfighting requirements and improvements in signals intelligence collection capability. These capabilities combine to enable a complete understanding of the battlespace throughout the Joint Force and share that understanding with key allies and partners.

KILL: Synchronizing Joint Fires

USINDOPACOM's Joint Fires Network (JFN) initiative seeks to integrate Joint Force capabilities into a coherent architecture to provide a Persistent Targeting Common Operating Picture (PT-COP), a Common Data Layer (CDL), a standard set of integrated Battle Management and Command and Control Applications (BMC2), and a resilient, secure transport-agnostic communications infrastructure. JFN is USINDOPACOM's mechanism to integrate, synchronize, and deliver effects across the battlespace.

Since USINDOPACOM established the JFN initiative in 2022, we have made tremendous strides thanks to our close partnership with OSD Acquisition and Sustainment (OSD A&S); Research and Engineering (OSD R&E); the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO); the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU); the Services; the Intelligence Community; and industry. We developed and deployed fifteen JFN experimentation kits in 2023 in eight months. With these kits, we conducted experimentation in three joint exercise and experimentation venues in CY23, successfully scaling up from eight nodes in NORTHERN EDGE 23-1 to twenty nodes in NORTHERN EDGE 23-2. To further accelerate our progress, we successfully integrated with the OSD-led Global Information Dominance Exercise in December 2023(GIDE 8). Further integration in exercises, including a JFN live fire demonstration during VALIANT SHIELD 2024, will deliver an initial JFN combat credible capability to the Joint Force in CY24.

Joint Mission Accelerator Directorate (JMAD)

To identify and accelerate solutions that enhance the interdependencies between required strategic capabilities, USINDOPACOM established the JMAD in October 2023. JMAD is driving the acceleration, integration, and interoperability of the most critical and strategic needs across the Department and the Joint Force. JMAD has already initiated the integration of JFN and IMN architectures. JMAD also oversees STORMBREAKER, USINDOPACOM's program to develop a Joint Operational Planning Toolkit (JOPT) enabled by advanced technology that will include advanced data optimization capabilities, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to support planning, war gaming, mission analysis, and execution of all-domain, operational-level course of action development. STORMBREAKER is optimizing alignment with operational and wartime planning requirements and objectives.

## **Enhanced Network of Allies and Partners**

Over the last three years, USINDOPACOM has trained, operated, exercised, experimented with, and engaged allies and partners from across the region and the globe to enhance the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific. The relationships we have developed are built upon respect, trust, and shared values that are not just enduring but transformative. Our network of allies and partners is an unmatched asymmetric advantage, and our work together is critical to delivering integrated deterrence.

### **Multilateral Cooperation, Coordination, and Integration**

Strengthening our bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral defense relations is one of USINDOPACOM's highest priorities, whether through capacity building, security cooperation, increasingly complex exercises, or advanced capability development. Developing stronger multilateral relationships in the region has been one of our greatest successes in the last three years, resulting in increased multilateral deterrence effects and the creation of relationships and activities among U.S. allies and partners to pursue a more stable order in the region.

### **AUKUS**

AUKUS embodies a generational opportunity to modernize the longstanding relationships among the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom (U.K.), guided by a shared commitment to global security. The trilateral AUKUS partnership consists of two pillars: Submarine Consultation (Pillar I) and Advanced Capabilities (Pillar II).

On Pillar I, we are working to deliver a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability to Australia as soon as possible, upholding while setting the highest nuclear non-proliferation standards. We have already made significant progress in operator and industry training for Australia, and we look forward to having Australian sailors commence duty in Guam this year to build their maintenance skills. We are also increasing the number of visits of nuclear-powered attack submarines to Australia, including the visit by the USS North Carolina in 2023 and the visit going on right now by the USS Annapolis.

We are working to accelerate and deepen cooperation on advanced defense capabilities through Pillar II. The Chiefs of Defense from Australia, the U.K., and I have made specific recommendations to the respective ministers and the Secretary of Defense on the priority areas that can deliver advanced capability in the near term while we also pursue maritime autonomous systems, anti-submarine warfare: undersea vehicles; positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT); artificial intelligence (A.I.); space capabilities; and integrated air and missile defense (IAMD). *We appreciate the NDAA's establishment of national exemptions for Australia and the United Kingdom from U.S. defense export control licensing and adding these two allies to the U.S. Defense Production Act. These provisions are crucial to enable accelerated delivery of advanced capabilities.*

### **U.S.-Japan-ROK**

Trilateral cooperation between the United States, Japan, and the ROK is a priority for the United States and crucial for security in northeast Asia. The relationship between our three nations is the strongest it has ever been. As the DPRK continues its provocations, we are committed to enhancing our deterrence by responding in concert with our allies through improved intelligence and missile defense information sharing, combined operations in response to DPRK actions, and strengthening our interoperability across all three nations. In the last three years, we advanced a new era of trilateral cooperation by activating a 24/7 real-time DPRK missile warning data-sharing mechanism. The efforts improve our shared ability to ensure the safety of our people by trilaterally detecting and assessing DPRK missiles. We expanded our trilateral exercise program's scope and scale in recent years through successful trilateral ballistic missile defense, anti-submarine warfare, air exercises, and exercises with our Canadian and Australian partners. In 2023, we negotiated a multi-year trilateral exercise program, which formalized our trilateral cooperation in exercises for the next two years.

### **The Quad**

The Quad nations, represented by Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S., is a diplomatic network supporting a prosperous, Free, and Open Indo-Pacific. The Quad is not a military alliance, but rather a diplomatic network committed to a peaceful, secure region, free from

intimidation and committed to the rule of law. The Quad nations collaborate on matters such as maritime awareness, disaster response, and counterterrorism to enhance stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Including all Quad nations in India's Exercise MALABAR demonstrates commitment of Quad nations to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. The chiefs of defense of Australia, India, Japan and I now meet annually for the Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue to discuss common security challenges.

### **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

ASEAN advances critical works to uphold the rules-based order, advance respect for international law, and peacefully resolve disputes through consultation, diplomacy, and consensus-based decision-making. At the 2022 U.S.-ASEAN Summit, President Biden announced the launch of the U.S.-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. USINDOPACOM is committed to supporting maritime security cooperation with ASEAN, including significant support via the U.S. Pacific Fleet to a second ASEAN Maritime Exercise in 2025. USINDOPACOM is also co-chairing a Medical Expert Working Group with Indonesia and is developing concepts to support Laos' initiatives in environmental resilience; women, peace, and security; and cyber efforts.

### **Blue Pacific Cooperative**

The Blue Pacific Cooperative (BPC) is a USINDOPACOM-led initiative to support the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and, the Pacific regional framework laid out by the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and ultimately address critical issues for Blue Pacific nations, such as combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and building climate resilience. The BPC provides the 17 partner nations with enhanced maritime domain awareness and seamless information sharing and supports the Forum Fisheries Agency based in the Solomon Islands and the Fiji Maritime Surveillance Rescue Coordination Center. Additionally, as a member of the Pacific Quad with Australia, France, and New Zealand, we work to build the capacity of Blue Pacific nations' maritime security forces, assist in the protection of central and western Pacific fisheries, and provide access to maritime domain awareness technology and best practices to counter IUU fishing assets. U.S. cooperation with Blue Pacific nations without

militaries focuses on improving relations through engineering projects, combating transnational crime, and enhancing coordination and collaboration. In July 2023, Samoa joined the State Partnership Program with the Nevada National Guard.

### **Northeast Asia**

Our relationships with allies and partners in Northeast Asia are crucial to deterring aggressive action by the DPRK, Russia, and the PRC, as well as securing the support needed to transition to conflict if necessary. Increasing bilateral interoperability and growing multilateral relationships and operations have significantly improved our strategic position and deterrence within the First Island Chain.

Alliances with Japan and the ROK are the cornerstone of regional peace and security. Beyond trilateral cooperation, bilateral relations with each country are consistently being modernized to prevail in the new era of strategic competition and underpin a shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The U.S. and Japan made significant progress in modernizing the alliance in the last three years, including expanding bilateral planning efforts for contingencies and exploring more effective alliance command and control relationships to enhance interoperability. We are rapidly expanding our multilateral cooperation efforts by including partners such as Canada, the Philippines, the ROK, and the U.K. in Exercise KEEN SWORD 23 and Australia in KEEN EDGE 24. The U.S. and Japan continue to optimize force posture, including for the defense of the Southwest Islands, by forward-deploying more resilient and mobile capabilities. Japan continues demonstrating its resolve to take a more active role in maintaining regional peace and stability. Japan has committed to doubling its defense budget from 1% to 2% by 2027, resulting in unprecedented defense spending. This spending includes counter-strike, integrated air and missile defense, multidomain, sustainment, and other capabilities.

The U.S.-ROK military-to-military relationship is one of the world's most robust and interoperable alliances. Exercise ULCHI FREEDOM SHIELD continues to significantly improve our bilateral crisis management and war execution capabilities. As part of our commitment to extended deterrence, USINDOPACOM facilitated the first U.S. SSBN port



visit to ROK in 40 years, the port visit of the USS Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group; the first 5th Gen aircraft deployment to Korea, and the first B-52 landing in Korea in decades. The U.S. and the ROK are committed to modernizing our capabilities to strengthen our combined defense; at nearly \$43 billion, the 2023 ROK Defense budget is its most significant defense budget ever – a 4.4% increase over 2022, which was previously a record-high year. USINDOPACOM continues to work towards transitioning wartime Operational Control (OPCON) to the ROK through the Conditions-based OPCON Transition Plan (COTP).

The U.S. is proud to be Mongolia’s strategic “Third Neighbor” and partner. Continued military-to-military relationship with Mongolia is one of the most active aspects of our Strategic Partnership and a contributor to regional security. USINDOPACOM and Mongolia cooperate on improving HA/DR response, defense modernization, developing professional military education (PME) programs, expanding Special Operations Forces capability, and enhancing air operations. We also continue to support Mongolian participation and leadership in U.N. Peacekeeping operation (UN PKO) missions, including expanding the scope and depth of Exercise KHAAN QUEST to include participation by Japan and the Republic of Korea.

U.S. policy on Taiwan is consistent and unchanged. We will continue to support Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act. This aligns with our one China policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances. The United States is committed to cross-strait peace and stability and the peaceful resolution of differences, free from coercion and pressure.

### **Southeast Asia**

Southeast Asia continues to be a region that sees significant coercive action from the PRC. These actions include the increasing militarization of their South China Sea outposts and further coercive gray zone actions against the Philippines in their Exclusive Economic Zone, including around Second Thomas Shoal, and other attempts to enforce domestic laws in international spaces, including using Chinese law enforcement entities to harass nations operating legally within their exclusive economic zones. Increased aggressive behavior by the PRC has led nations in this area to rethink and adjust their relationships with China, the U.S., and

each other.

The Philippines and Thailand, as allies of the U.S., continue to grow closer bilaterally, as well as increase multilateral activity to ensure the defense of their nations against external armed attack in the Pacific. For the Philippines, the four new sites were announced for proposed inclusion under Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites, with the U.S. allocating over \$109M in infrastructure projects to improve bilateral military modernization and expand training opportunities, as well as position for response to HA/DR events. Exercise BALIKATAN increased in scope to include plan-based command posts and combined joint field training exercise events, including live fire maritime strikes, integrated air-missile defense activities, and the Australian Defence Force as a part of the exercise. In support of the Philippines' sovereign rights and its maritime security, USINDOPACOM conducted a bilateral sail and air patrol campaign in the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone and Northern Luzon Strait, with five bilateral sails executed as of March 2024 and nearly 500 bilateral activities planned for the rest of the calendar year.

In Thailand, USINDOPACOM is committed to building an interoperable ally and supporting its military modernization efforts, including welcoming the first permanent Thai Liaison Officer in April 2024. Exercise COBRA GOLD continues to grow in scope and scale, featuring a staff exercise, a field training exercise, humanitarian civic assistance programs, and cyber operations, and includes forces from Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the ROK, and Singapore.

Other nations in Southeast Asia remain essential to ensure regional stability. Singapore provides substantial support to the U.S. military, including offering U.S. forces the use of facilities near the Strait of Malacca. The U.S.-Singapore defense relationship has advanced over the last three years, with the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) USINDOPACOM and USCYBERCOM signing an MOU in August 2021 to advance cybersecurity information sharing, exchange of threat indicators, combined cyber training and exercises, and other cyber cooperation. In February 2023, Singapore hosted a rotational deployment of U.S. unmanned aerial systems, and we are exploring options to deploy U.S. maritime vessels based out of Singapore. SAF uses four CONUS locations, including three flying training programs and an annual live fire training with High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers. By 2026, Singapore's F-16 training facility at Luke AFB will relocate before their F-35B deliveries

in October 2026. Singapore hosts the multinational maritime Information Fusion Center (IFC), which coordinates efforts to support regional maritime security, and the Counterterrorism Information Facility (CTIF), which uses network analysis and multilayer analytics to identify trends, aberrations, and terrorist threats.

The U.S. and Brunei made significant strides in strengthening our military relationship, signing a new Acquisition Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) in April 2023 to enable greater military interoperability and a 505 Agreement in December 2023 that provides a conduit for defense articles and training grants. Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) is the largest U.S.-Brunei annual exercise, marking its 30th iteration in 2024. Brunei also participates in Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) and the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise. In September 2022, in the first multilateral training in Brunei, the U.K. Special Boat Service (SBS) joined U.S. Navy SEALs and the Brunei Special Forces Regiment in Exercise NEPTUNE WARRIOR. In March 2023, His Royal Highness Prince Mateen visited the United States and engaged with Naval Special Warfare and others, strengthening military-to-military ties.

Indonesia's location stretching between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the southern edge of the South China Sea means it occupies a critical strategic position regionally and globally. The U.S. has worked closely with Indonesia over the last three years to advance our strong defense cooperation. In November 2023, Presidents Biden and Widodo elevated our relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership. This effort resulted in a mutual commitment to advance space cooperation, cyber capacity building, maritime security, exercises, and other areas. SUPER GARUDA SHIELD grew from an Army service exercise to one of the most extensive joint and multinational exercises in the Indo-Pacific, featuring a joint bilateral CPX and FTX conducted with the Indonesian military and multinational participants from Australia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and France.

The U.S.-Laos military relationship continues to advance as lingering mistrust from the legacy of war issues subsides. Laos and the United States resumed a Bilateral Defense Dialogue (BDD) in 2023 to advance cooperation efforts, resulting in the delivery, supported by the U.S. Department of Defense, of 619 various-sized cold-chain freezers capable of storing Pfizer COVID vaccines, distributed throughout the provinces in January 2024. USINDOPACOM has

supported Laos via the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) in their traditional advisory role, as well as through the provision of computer equipment. INDOPACOM continues to support ASEAN's central role in the region and Laos' ascension to the chairmanship of ASEAN for 2024.

Bilateral security cooperation tripled in scope and scale after the U.S.-Malaysia relationship was elevated to a Comprehensive Partnership in 2014 and revalidated in 2017. USINDOPACOM and the Malaysian Armed Forces will hold the first-ever execution of KERIS STRIKE in Sabah (East Malaysia) in FY24 and are developing BERSAMA WARRIOR (BW) into a multilateral exercise through a Five-Year Plan. To augment Malaysia's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability, the U.S. delivered 18 UAS ScanEagles by November 2022 for maritime domain awareness and counterterrorism (C.T.) missions. Since 2017, the U.S. has invested approximately \$220M in Maritime Security Initiative/Building Partner Capacity (MSI/BPC) programs.

In February 2023, Timor-Leste, the Rhode Island National Guard (RING), and Timor-Leste Defense Force signed a State Partnership Program agreement, resulting in RING's participation in several exercises and exchanges with Timor-Leste in 2023. The Baucau MOU signed in June 2021 was a milestone in U.S.-Timor-Leste bilateral relations, paving the way for more significant security cooperation and expanded access. The \$23M airfield rehabilitation and maritime security program will allow Timor-Leste to monitor its EEZ and conduct maritime security operations.

Vietnam is a leading regional voice supporting freedom of navigation and adherence to international law and the rules-based international order. The U.S. and Vietnam upgraded our relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during President Biden's visit in September 2023, resulting in progress in maritime security and opportunities to expand cooperation in HA/DR, PKO, aviation, cyber, and personnel accounting (POW/MIA). This year, we will host a Vietnam delegation to conduct the US-VNM bilateral defense dialogue.

Cambodia's new government, appointed in August 2023, has expressed a desire for an improved bilateral relationship with the United States, to include the possible restoration of security cooperation. In January 2017, Cambodia imposed a moratorium on all military exercises with the U.S., followed by the State Partnership Program (SPP) termination in 2020. Currently,

the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) mission continues, allowing for the continued search and recovery of 48 U.S. personnel still declared missing in Cambodia. We are seriously concerned about the PRC's military presence and construction of facilities at Ream Naval Base.

Relations with Burma remain strained. We condemn the military coup in 2021 against the democratically elected government in Burma and the subsequent widespread violence perpetrated by the Burma military regime against the people of Burma. USINDOPACOM does not engage with Burma's military but monitors the information space to support and assist the State Department in the protection of U.S. facilities and American personnel in Burma.

In January 2017, Cambodia imposed a moratorium on all military exercises with the U.S., followed by the State Partnership Program (SPP) termination in 2020. Currently, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) mission continues, allowing for the continued search and recovery of 48 U.S. personnel still declared missing in Cambodia. While USINDOPACOM desires military engagement with Cambodia where policy allows, we remain seriously concerned about the PRC's military presence and construction of facilities at Ream Naval Base.

## **Oceania**

The many nations of the Oceania region include staunch allies and strong partners but are continuously under threat from diplomatic, economic, and security coercion by the PRC. Consequently, many of our relationships in this area have expanded and strengthened to address pernicious Chinese behavior and coercive pressure.

The U.S. and Australia have worked to enhance all-domain cooperation, integrate ranges, improve posture, and expand multilateral exercises across the theater, including hosting Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D). The alliance continues to demonstrate combined operational capability executed in two Bomber Task Forces, submarine and U.S. Army watercraft rotations to Australia, and the deployment of U.S. Navy Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA) from Australia to strengthen maritime domain awareness. Australia and the U.S. continue to expand the scope and scale of our robust exercise program, including PACIFIC SENTRY 23, featuring combined U.S.-Australia planning and combat operations against an all-domain, near-peer adversary, and TALISMAN SABRE 23 emphasizing interoperability and

expeditionary logistics from eleven additional partners from across the globe. Increased trilateral opportunities with Australia and Japan allowed for increased complexity of our operations while improving partner interoperability throughout the region at the joint level. Australia's importance as an anchor of U.S. security in the Indo-Pacific remains unequivocal.

The Freely Associated States (FAS)—the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and Palau—occupy a strategic location linking the U.S. to the rest of the Indo-Pacific region, and they have the highest military service per capita in the U.S. military. We greatly appreciate that Congress recently passed the legislation that will allow the new COFA-related assistance agreements to be brought into force.

In addition to the COFA-related agreements, the United States must fully fund the Economic Assistance Agreement associated with the South Pacific Tuna Treaty. The treaty provides the United States access to tuna fisheries across Oceania and provides a mechanism for the United States to support economic development in the region. Failure to fund the Economic Assistance Agreement undermines U.S. credibility and opens the door for other countries to gain influence over these strategically important partners.

New Zealand is an essential leader in Oceania, with a mature network of mentors, instructors, and technical advisors supporting a pan-regional security cooperation program. New Zealand is part of DPRK U.N. Security Council Resolution enforcement efforts, part of the Headquarters Integrated Area Defense System under the Five Powers Defense Arrangements, and contributes to the Counter Terrorism Information Facility in Singapore. Exercise TEMPEST EXPRESS 23 featured a joint multilateral exercise conducted in New Zealand with 20 participating nations where planners examined New Zealand's earthquake response plan and HA/DR operations planning. In addition, New Zealand routinely engages in a broad range of U.S.-led exercises across the Indo-Pacific, including Rim of the Pacific, PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP, MOBILITY GUARDIAN, and CARTWHEEL.

Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and Tonga are essential partners in the region to ensure continued defense relationships, access, and lines of communication into the First Island Chain. Through Fiji's Blackrock training center, the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) regularly deploys personnel supporting U.N. peacekeeping operations across the globe. Nevada National Guard's State Partnership Program and Exercise CARTWHEEL, Exercise TAQOMACA, the

U.S.-Fiji Bilateral Defense Dialogue (BDD), the U.S. Shiprider Program, and the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative improve bilateral coordination of maritime domain awareness in support of Fijian sovereignty.

In May 2023, the U.S. and PNG entered into a bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA). This foundational agreement enhances access and security cooperation and further strengthens our bilateral relationship, improves the capacity of the PNG Defence Force, and increases stability and security in the region. Capacity building and training are advancing through the SPP's Wisconsin National Guard, and a ship rider program is set to expand U.S. Coast Guard elements into a maritime security line of effort.

The U.S. opened a new U.S. Embassy in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, in May 2023. It conducted a U.S.-Tonga Bilateral Defense Dialogue (BDD) that examined non-commissioned officer (NCO) developmental training opportunities and improvements to State Partnership Program initiatives between Tongan forces and the Nevada National Guard.

### South Asia

South Asia is at the nexus of global trade and commerce, with nearly half of the world's 90,000 commercial vessels and two-thirds of global oil trade traveling through the Indian Ocean. The region boasts some of the fastest-growing economies on Earth and is home to a quarter of the world's population. While the region offers unprecedented opportunity, it also confronts many security challenges, including a growing Chinese presence, static or declining defense budgets, terrorism, and climate change effects. To combat these challenges, the U.S. seeks opportunities to broaden and strengthen partnerships with India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

A strong U.S.-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership is essential to a free and open Indo-Pacific. In 2023, the U.S. and India launched INDUS-X and completed a Roadmap for U.S.-India Defense Industrial Cooperation to enhance bilateral defense industrial cooperation and innovation. The proposed deal between G.E. Aerospace and Hindustan Aeronautics for domestic Indian production of F-414 jet engines exemplifies this approach. The U.S. and India are seeking unprecedented levels of interoperability by expanding cooperation in the air domain through the participation of U.S. B-1B Bombers in India's biennial air show AERO INDIA and bilateral air

exercise COPE INDIA. Additionally, in the land domain, we conducted the largest-ever bilateral joint amphibious exercise with India, TIGER TRIUMPH, improving our cooperation on maritime domain awareness and strengthening service-to-service ties. USINDOPACOM seeks to deepen cooperation under the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) to enable more regular and flexible engagements in the Indian Ocean Region, including U.S. ship repair in Indian shipyards. Two new Master Ship Repair Agreements were signed in 2023, and three U.S. Navy vessels have recently received maintenance and repair in Indian shipyards.

USINDOPACOM conducted the 10th Bilateral Defence Dialogue with the Bangladesh AFD in August 2023 to strengthen military-to-military ties further and explore opportunities for collaboration on training, exercises, and equipment exchanges. USINDOPACOM seeks a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with Bangladesh to improve cooperation between our countries on defense matters.

The U.S. is committed to our longstanding defense relationship and supporting Maldivian sovereignty, safety, and security. USINDOPACOM continues seeking opportunities to enhance our relationship with the Maldives, including building maritime security and counterterrorism capacity. In 2021, the Maldives signed an arrangement with the Montana National Guard to join the State Partnership Program. As the Maldives looks towards establishing a maritime fusion center in the future, USINDOPACOM stands ready to leverage capabilities through our Joint Interagency Task Force – West (JIATF-W) and the U.S. Coast Guard to support those efforts.

USINDOPACOM supports Nepal in becoming a premier contributor to global PKO through Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) funds and exercises. In February of this year, the United States and Nepal co-hosted the largest-ever military exercise in Nepal, the Multinational Peacekeeping Exercise SHANTI PRAYAS IV, which included over 1,000 participants from 20 countries. Beyond PKO, USINDOPACOM partners closely with Nepal on HA/DR, border security, and special operations cooperation.

USINDOPACOM continues to support Sri Lankan defense reform and equipment divestiture efforts within the bounds of current legal constraints, as well as opportunities for institutional capacity building, maritime security, HA/DR, and U.N. PKO. In the past three years, U.S.-Sri Lankan defense relations built upon a successful CARAT exercise, the transfer of the 3rd USCG cutter, and Sri Lanka's hosting of the 2023 USINDOPACOM Environmental Security



Forum. We welcome Sri Lanka's decision to participate in Operation Prosperity Guardian utilizing a Coast Guard cutter previously transferred through the EDA program. It is a valuable reminder that our security assistance programs advance U.S. and global security. We will continue strengthening our relationship with the upcoming King Air Maritime Patrol Aircraft delivery in 2024.

### **Other Indo-Pacific Nations**

Many other Indo-Pacific nations have continued to increase their activities unilaterally and bilaterally with regional governments and multilaterally to strengthen the rules-based international order. Key among these nations are Canada, France, and the United Kingdom (U.K.). Canada continues to deploy competent forces to the region to support freedom of navigation and sovereignty, including through several combined Taiwan Strait Transits with the United States in the last three years. French armed forces maintain commands in French Polynesia (FAPF), New Caledonia (FANC), and South Indian Ocean Zone (FAZOI), as well as keeping an active role in regional security, protecting fisheries, and countering transnational crimes. The U.K. sustains a regional defense posture, including the Brunei Garrison and two permanently deployed Royal Navy Offshore Patrol Vessels. A broad program of bilateral and multilateral operations and activities complement their posture, including exercises and training contributions from the British Army and Royal Air Force. The U.K. invests in the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) with Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore; continues a Global Combat Air Programme with Japan and Italy to develop 6th generation fighter aircraft; and supports defense programs through the Hiroshima Accord with Japan, the Downing Street Accord with the Republic of Korea; a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with India; and the Partnership Roadmap with Indonesia, and Strategic Partnership with Singapore. USINDOPACOM continues to benefit from basing and access to the British Indian Ocean Territory at Diego Garcia and from the British Defence Singapore Support Unit.

### **Other Areas of Cooperation**

#### **Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Program**

USINDOPACOM executes a robust WPS program as part of the Department of Defense's (DOD) implementation of the U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Act 2017. This is done by mainstreaming a gender perspective into theater plans, programs, and policies to enable USINDOPACOM to develop inclusive security strategies that advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. WPS-themed security cooperation engagements with partner nations are an innovative approach for strategic competition that is non-escalatory, less costly than conflict, enables values-based choices, and helps the United States maintain an asymmetric advantage. WPS builds resilience capacity and self-reliance, demonstrating a commitment to investing in our partners, not extracting from them.

In 2023, USINDOPACOM designed and delivered a tailored gender focal point training to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) at the request of the recently established PNGDF Gender Committee. This work with the PNGDF Gender Committee is currently the only DOD initiative in the Indo-Pacific Region supporting the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote stability (also known as the Global Fragility Act). USINDOPACOM also supported a U.S.-Malaysia Trafficking in Persons workshop with WPS-related programming. Finally, USINDOPACOM developed and held the inaugural Indo-Pacific Regional Military Gender Advisor Course, part of a five-year initiative to create a fully trained network of certified military Gender Advisors within the region. Course participants included representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Fiji, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, and Thailand.

### Climate Change

The national security impacts of climate change are a priority concern to many allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. These impacts may exacerbate existing challenges, including growing geostrategic competition and maritime boundary disputes. Our partners and allies in

Oceania, Southeast Asia, and South Asia are increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather and the food and water security challenges that result.

Climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience considerations are essential to long-term planning for U.S. operating locations, critical facilities, and capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region. USINDOPACOM is committed to increasing the resilience of its infrastructure, facilities, and forces and assisting allies and partners in resiliency efforts. The military's role in disaster preparedness and response will be increasingly needed as climate change impacts become more frequent and severe. Enhancing disaster preparedness and response is an opportunity for the USINDOPACOM to play a significant role in supporting efforts to build resilience.

### Red Hill

Secretary Austin tasked USINDOPACOM to establish Joint Task Force-Red Hill (JTF-RH) in recognition of the need to safely and expeditiously defuel the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility and to rebuild trust with the State of Hawaii and the local community on Oahu. Through collaboration and transparency with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Hawaii Department of Health, JTF-RH accelerated the defueling schedule by six months. On 16 December 2023, JTF-RH completed gravity defueling of over 104 million gallons of fuel, fulfilling the Department's commitment to remove the threat to one of Oahu's primary aquifers as quickly and safely as possible. JTF-RH is presently removing residual fuel from the facility, simultaneously conducting a methodical turnover with a newly established Navy Closure Task Force as the Department transitions the main effort from defueling to closure and long-term environmental remediation. As DOD notified Congress in September of 2023, defueling the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility will not adversely impact the Department's ability to support military operations in the Indo-Pacific theater. The Defense Logistics Agency repositions fuel across the Indo-Pacific to better support USINDOPACOM requirements.

## **Conclusion**

Conflict is not imminent or inevitable, but our potential adversaries have become increasingly aggressive and seek to impose their will at the expense of like-minded nations that embrace a rules-based order. The PRC's actions, which include a massive military buildup accompanied by a campaign of coercive actions, destabilize the region and challenge the ideals that support a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Through *Seize the Initiative* and in concert with the Department of Defense and the U.S. Congress, USINDOPACOM has delivered a comprehensive plan that provides a more distributed force posture, a synchronized campaign of joint/combined operations across all domains, the capabilities needed to fight and win, and the relationships with allies and partners needed to maintain a free and open INDOPACIFIC.

However, ***my successor will need your support to continue making progress across all of these efforts with a sense of urgency.*** We must build upon the progress achieved in the last few years to accelerate the fielding of the initiatives described in the Section 1302 Independent Assessment. These initiatives include the defense of Guam, decision superiority capabilities, our security cooperation actions, AUKUS, and bilateral international agreements such as [those related to] the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) to ensure the United States remains the security partner of choice in the Indo-Pacific.

Lastly, I want to thank Congress for your continued focus on our challenges in the Indo-Pacific region and your commitment over the last three years. ***Your focus and leadership have never been more important.*** Congress must pass timely appropriations. Continuing resolutions result in cumulative and detrimental effects on our buying power, delay the fielding of much-needed capability and capacity, and increase the level of operational risk that I am forced to assume. If we are not vigilant in aligning our resources to address the most critical national security priorities, our ability to ensure the safe and prosperous future of the U.S. and our children and grandchildren will be in jeopardy.