

**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator John McCain
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Room SD-G50
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Thursday, April 16, 2015**

**To receive testimony on U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea in review of the
Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2016 and the Future Years Defense
Program.**

(As prepared for delivery)

The Committee meets today to receive testimony on U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea. I would like to thank both of our witnesses, Admiral Locklear and General Scaparotti, for appearing before us today and for their many years of distinguished service.

In the past three months, this Committee has received testimony from many of America's most respected statesmen, thinkers, and former military commanders. These leaders have all told us that we are experiencing a more diverse and complex array of crises than at any time since the end of World War II.

As we confront immediate challenges in Europe and the Middle East, the United States cannot afford to neglect the Asia-Pacific region, which Secretary Carter has called "the defining region for our nation's future." Put simply, if the 21st century is to be another "American Century," the United States must remain an Asia-Pacific power.

Our national interests in the Asia-Pacific are deep and enduring. We seek to extend free trade, free markets, free navigation, and free commons – air, sea, space, and now cyber. We seek to maintain a balance of power that fosters the peaceful expansion of human rights, democracy, rule of law, and the many other values that we share with increasing numbers of Asian citizens. And we seek to defend ourselves and our allies by maintaining the capability to prevent, deter, and if necessary, prevail in a conflict.

Achieving these objectives will require sustained American leadership. We must use all elements of our national power. In particular, I am hopeful that Congress will pass trade promotion authority for the Trans-Pacific Partnership. This vital trade agreement will open new opportunities for trade and level the playing field for American businesses and workers while sending a powerful strategic signal about America's commitment to the Asia-Pacific.

Yet we must remember that our soft power is the shadow cast by our hard power. That is why the United States must continue to sustain a favorable military balance in the region.

The Department of Defense will need to update concepts of operations with emerging military technology to enable our military to operate in contested environments. From projecting power over long distances and exploiting the undersea domain, to developing new precision guided-

munitions and to investing in innovative ways to build the resiliency of our forward-deployed forces, we have a great deal of work to do if we aim to sustain our traditional military advantages in the Asia-Pacific region. None of this will be possible if we continue to live with mindless sequestration and a broken acquisition system.

As we build and posture forces to secure America's interests in the Asia-Pacific, we must remain clear-eyed about the implications of China's rise and its evolving foreign and defense policy. As Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told this Committee back in February, China is engaged in a rapid military modernization deliberately designed to counteract or thwart American military strengths.

I believe China can and should play a constructive role in the Asia-Pacific region. Unfortunately, in recent years, China has behaved less like a "responsible stakeholder," and more like a bully. In the South China Sea, we have seen the latest example of a trend toward more assertive behavior. China's land-reclamation and construction activities on multiple islands across the Spratly chain, and the potential command and control, surveillance, and military capabilities it could bring to bear from these new land features, are a challenge to the interests of the United States and the nations of the Asia-Pacific region. Such unilateral efforts to change the status quo through force, intimidation, or coercion threaten the peace and stability that have extended prosperity across the Asia-Pacific for seven decades.

As I wrote in a letter together with my colleagues Senators Reed, Corker, and Menendez, the United States must work together with like-minded partners and allies to develop and employ a comprehensive strategy that aims to shape China's coercive peacetime behavior. This will not be easy, and will likely have impacts on other areas of our bilateral relationship. But if China continues to pursue a coercive and escalatory approach to the resolution of maritime disputes, the cost to regional security and prosperity, as well as to American interests, will only grow.

I am also concerned by the recent assessment from Admiral Bill Gortney, the head of NORAD and Northern Command, that North Korea has an operational, road-mobile missile that could carry nuclear weapons to the United States. General Scaparrotti, I look forward to hearing your assessment of this potential breakthrough, and the implications of our national security if the erratic and unpredictable regime of Kim Jong-Un achieves the ability to carry out a nuclear strike against our homeland.

I thank the witnesses and look forward to their testimony.