

**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator Jack Reed  
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Room SH-216  
Hart Senate Office  
Building  
Thursday, September 17, 2015**

***To receive testimony on maritime security strategy in the Asia-Pacific region  
(As Prepared for Delivery)***

Good morning. I would like to thank Senator McCain for calling this important hearing on maritime security in the Asia-Pacific region. I would also like to thank our witnesses for appearing today.

When Senator McCain and I were in Vietnam we heard concern from almost every single government official about the heightened tension in the South China Sea caused by China's activities. Vietnam is not alone in this regard.

For the last two years, China has undertaken extraordinary and unprecedented reclamation activities on disputed land features in the South China Sea, that have alarmed all of the countries in the region, most of which would prefer to resolve their territorial disputes through legal means under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. These activities appear to have just been the beginning as China has now turned to militarizing these features by building airstrips and surveillance towers that I believe will further destabilize the region.

While there has been some progress on the bilateral strategy to decrease tension between the U.S. Navy and the Chinese Navy through the establishment of new risk reduction mechanisms such as engagement rules for air and maritime safety, our efforts to date do not seem to have had an impact on China's aggressive tactics in the South China Sea.

I would like to hear from the witnesses on what the Department believes is the best way forward to address this activity and whether current efforts are sufficient to de-escalate tension and convince the Chinese government to pursue legal and diplomatic solutions to its territorial disputes with its neighbors.

I am also quite concerned with North Korea's recent rhetoric that it is improving its nuclear arsenal in "quality and quantity," further contributing to heightened tensions in the region.

Admiral Harris, I would like to hear an updated assessment on the threat posed by North Korea and how we are addressing it.