

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

**Room SDG-50
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Tuesday, February 23, 2016**

**To receive testimony on U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea in review of
the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2017 and the Future Years
Defense Program.**

(As prepared for delivery)

Good Morning. Let me join Senator McCain in welcoming our witnesses. Gentlemen, we appreciate your long years of faithful service and the sacrifices you and your families have made for our Nation. General Scaparrotti, this might be your last US Forces Korea posture hearing and I would like to thank you for your commitment to our forces on the peninsula.

It is clear from the events of the last few months that we are facing challenges of increasing complexity and instability in the region. Given North Korea's recent nuclear test and China's militarization of land features in the South China Sea, the security situation in the region seems more precarious than in recent years.

The United States has historically underwritten the peaceful development of the Asia Pacific region with strategic alliances and a forward presence that has allowed all of the countries in the region, including China, to make extraordinary economic developments in relative peace. One of the pillars of our strategy to providing stability and security in the region is maintaining close partnerships and alliances. From the new defense cooperation agreement with the Philippines and our rotational Marine presence in Australia to our growing defense relationship with Vietnam, there has been great progress on implementing the administration's rebalance to Asia, despite competing resource demands from other regions.

We must continue to build on these strategic partnerships and demonstrate our commitment to the region by investing sufficiently in our presence and partner capacity building programs.

Admiral Harris, I am deeply concerned about China's violation of its commitment to President Obama in November not to militarize the South China Sea. Just yesterday, CSIS released an image that appears to show that China has placed an advanced radar system on Cuarteron Reef, a land feature that China has reclaimed in the Spratly Islands. This is in addition to the HQ-9 surface to air missiles that it added to Woody Island in the Paracels recently. It seems clear that China does not intend to be a responsible stakeholder in the region. I would appreciate your views on how China's recent actions affect the stability of the region.

General Scaparrotti, it seems that as Kim Jong-un has consolidated his power in North Korea, he is more and more willing to tolerate risk as evidenced by his recent nuclear test and rocket launch. I would like to hear about how you believe the security situation on the peninsula will evolve over the next year.

Again, we appreciate you joining us this morning and look forward to your testimony.