

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED
STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES
FORCES KOREA IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE
AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND THE
FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING
1029 VERMONT AVE, NW
10TH FLOOR
WASHINGTON, DC 20005
(202) 289-2260
www.aldersonreporting.com

1 TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED STATES
2 INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA
3 IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR
4 FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

5
6 Tuesday, April 21, 2026

7
8 U.S. Senate
9 Committee on Armed Services
10 Washington, D.C.
11

12 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:41 a.m. in
13 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger
14 Wicker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker
16 [presiding], Fischer, Cotton, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer,
17 Scott, Tuberville, Banks, Sheehy, Moody, Reed, Shaheen,
18 Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, Peters, Rosen, Kelly, and
19 Slotkin.
20
21
22
23
24
25

1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM MISSISSIPPI

3 Chairman Wicker: This hearing will come to order.

4 This morning, we held a hearing on the posture of the
5 U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea. At the
6 outset, I would like to thank Admiral Paparo and General
7 Brunson for their distinguished service to our country.
8 This committee appreciates their service, and we're grateful
9 for the ethos that has long been the defining characteristic
10 of America's general and flag officers. Thank you,
11 gentlemen.

12 We speak today, and we meet today at a time of global
13 turmoil. Despite the doubts of our own intelligence
14 community and many others, Ukraine continues to outperform
15 conventional wisdom now in the fifth year of Putin's illegal
16 war of choice. In the Middle East, President Trump has
17 taken decisive action to end 47 years of aggression by the
18 Ayatollahs.

19 But amid those wars, we must remember this China is the
20 leader of the axis of aggressors. The People's Republic of
21 China intends to and is capable of preventing an American
22 led 21st century. We cannot ignore the implications of Xi
23 Jinping's aggression. The Chinese Communist Party and its
24 People Liberation Army have spent decades studying the
25 American way of war. This has informed their massive

1 military modernization effort. The PLA now feels the
2 world's largest Navy.

3 Its nuclear triad, is growing at a breathtaking pace,
4 and it possesses an increasingly capable air force armed
5 with world class munitions. China's military strategy has
6 transitioned. It has moved from a mostly asymmetric
7 competitive approach to a more comprehensive strategy.
8 Their goal is to achieve decisive advantage over the U.S.
9 and our allies in the Indo Pacific.

10 We also recognize the danger posed by a nuclear armed
11 North Korea. Kim Jong Un is a cruel and ruthless despot.
12 Worse, he possesses nuclear weapons, and he possesses the
13 means to deliver them. He has demonstrated a high tolerance
14 for risk taking, and he is backed by his nuclear-armed
15 partners, Xi and Putin. The North Korean army has gained
16 valuable insights on modern warfare from its experience
17 supporting Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

18 North Korea will remember what it learned from drone
19 and missile use in Ukraine. It continues to learn lessons
20 right now. It is thinking about how to employ these
21 capabilities on the Korean Peninsula. Russia has repaid Kim
22 for supporting its illegal invasion of Ukraine by providing
23 North Korea with advanced military technology and financial
24 relief.

25 While Vladimir Putin creates mayhem in Europe, it is

1 not lost on this committee that he also actively works to
2 undermine the existing order in the Indo-Pacific. Putin has
3 revitalized his partnership with the Kim regime, and he has
4 deepened Russia's comprehensive strategic partnership with
5 Xi and the Chinese Communist Party.

6 The growing alignment of our adversaries throws into
7 sharp relief the enduring importance of America's allies and
8 the way they help protect our strategic interests. For
9 decades, our alliance bonds, including NATO, have provided a
10 comparative advantage over authoritarian states like China,
11 North Korea, Russia, and Iran. These alliances continue to
12 pay dividends for the United States. People need to stop
13 saying otherwise. It is not helpful when American leaders
14 speak of our alliances with derision, but we must be clear
15 about the numerous political, strategic, and moral benefits
16 that our country receives from its alliances.

17 Some have suggested that our allies have become little
18 more than dependents on the United States. These skeptics
19 argue that the United States must shift the burden, and that
20 word "shift" is what I have a problem with. They argue that
21 we must shift the burden of defense and deterrence from the
22 United States and onto our allies in Europe and Asia. I do
23 not agree with these skeptics.

24 Of course, I'm glad to see America's allies stepping up
25 as they are doing all over the world, but there's a



1 difference between burden shifting and burden sharing. The
2 President has called for increased burden sharing, and I
3 support that, but the way we execute that vision matters.
4 We Americans have a massive stake in maintaining a favorable
5 balance of power in both Asia and Europe. It remains a
6 vital interest of the United States and cannot yet be
7 delegated to others, not even to our closest allies.

8 Burden shifting suggests that the United States has a
9 limited stake in conflicts that erupt or could erupt in
10 these key regions. Burden shifting implies abdication
11 rather than collective responsibility. Upholding our
12 interest in the Indo-Pacific requires the cultivation of a
13 robust alliance network, what we call burden sharing, which
14 I agree with. The Western Pacific is far from the American
15 homeland, and that distance has long placed a premium on
16 strong and persistent forward presence in the region. This
17 presence allows us to defend our interests in the Indo-
18 Pacific, and to project power from there into other regions
19 of the world.

20 It's worth noting that America's Alliance network is
21 comprised of like-minded democracies and free market
22 economies. The importance of this fact cannot be
23 overstated. Unlike authoritarian countries, the foundation
24 of the U.S. alliance network is built upon the explicit
25 support of its respective electorates. Our alliances depend



1 on each nation's internal domestic political support.

2 Again, this is crucial. Every military alliance
3 requires negotiation and compromise. Every military
4 alliance requires negotiation and compromise. Alliances, by
5 definition, are a two-way street. They require patience and
6 appreciation for the political drivers of the parties, and a
7 willingness to undertake political, military, and economic
8 risk on behalf of one another. Popular support from free
9 people gives legitimacy to those necessary compromises.

10 We must continue to modernize our alliances to match
11 today's threats and capabilities, but any reform should make
12 us stronger and safer. They should not detract from the
13 strategic imperative of deterring aggression and coercion by
14 China, North Korea, and Russia. I look forward to hearing
15 how our witnesses are working with our Japanese, South
16 Korean, Filipino, Australian, and Taiwanese allies, among
17 others, to strengthen our strategic position in the Indo
18 Pacific.

19 With that, I thank our witnesses for being here, and I
20 turn to my colleague, Ranking Member Reed. Senator Reed.

21

22

23

24

25



1 STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE
2 ISLAND

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.
4 And Admiral Paparo, General Brunson, welcome and thank you
5 for your distinguished service over a lifetime of dedication
6 to the country and to the men and women that you lead.
7 Please convey our appreciation and support for these
8 extraordinary Americans that you command and lead.

9 President Trump's war of choice in Iran has resulted in
10 significant military posture changes in the Indo-Pacific
11 region and on the Korean Peninsula. Over the past 2 months,
12 President Trump has transferred major military capabilities
13 out of your theaters to Central Command, including a carrier
14 strike group, and amphibious-ready group, various missile
15 defense capabilities, and other munitions.

16 Admiral Paparo and General Brunson, I would like to
17 understand your assessment of the effect of these transfers
18 on your capabilities. Long range strike weapons and missile
19 interceptors are not quickly replaced at current production
20 rates. Reconstituting what we have expended could take
21 years. The decisions President Trump has made in Iran will
22 impact your readiness in the Indo-Pacific for a long time to
23 come.

24 I'm also deeply concerned about what our adversaries
25 are learning. China and North Korea have watched the United

1 States engage in sustained, high intensity warfare,
2 requiring massive expenditures of the exact munitions that
3 are most critical for deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. I
4 would like your candid assessments of what lessons the
5 Beijing and Pyongyang are drawing from this conflict, and
6 how those lessons may affect their long-term planning.

7 Relatedly, Admiral Paparo, on December 8, the President
8 announced that he would allow the sale of advanced H 200
9 semiconductor chips to China, a category of chip previously
10 prohibited because of its ability to accelerate Chinese
11 military capabilities, including artificial intelligence.
12 This committee has long agreed on a bipartisan basis that
13 our national defense is predicated on maintaining a
14 qualitative technological edge over China. I want to know
15 whether INDOPACOM was consulted before this decision was
16 made, and whether you believe selling advanced semiconductor
17 chips to China is consistent with maintaining a favorable
18 balance of military power in the Indo-Pacific.

19 General Brunson, there are also persistent and
20 troubling reports that the administration is considering
21 significant reductions to U.S. force posture in South Korea.
22 Last year, you testified that America's forward presence in
23 Korea provides, in your words, "unmatched access, unmatched
24 deterrence at minimal cost." You also made clear that the
25 U.S. force presence in Korea is not solely about North



1 Korea. Our presence creates dilemmas for China in the
2 Yellow Sea, and imposes costs on Russia in the East Sea. I
3 would ask for your assessment of what troop reductions would
4 mean for deterrence across those threat vectors. I would
5 also note that this committee voted to include a provision
6 in the fiscal year 2026 NDAA to prohibit any reduction of
7 troops in Korea without a full assessment of the risks
8 involved and certification to Congress.

9 Admiral Paparo, General Brunson, you lead our forces in
10 the most strategically consequential theater in the world,
11 postured against the most capable, potential adversaries the
12 United States faces. The decisions being made in the White
13 House right now on its wars of choice on munitions, on
14 semiconductor sales, on America's alliances will determine
15 whether deterrence holds. I thank you for your leadership
16 at this critical time, and I look forward to your testimony.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 [The prepared statement of Senator Reed follows:]
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

1 Chairman Wicker: I understand each of you has opening
2 statements. Who'd like to go first? Admiral Paparo, you
3 are recognized, sir.

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL SAMUEL J. PAPARO, JR., USN,
2 COMMANDER, UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

3 Admiral Paparo: Chairman, Ranking Member, members of
4 the committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to
5 speak with you today.

6 First, I'll call attention to Sergeant Major Eric Cook,
7 United States Marine Corps, right behind me, and his charge
8 as the fighting forces morale, that combination of physical,
9 mental, and spiritual readiness that is the key factor in
10 combat. This is the essence of readiness and the ability to
11 prevail, this morale, Sergeant Major Cook leads and are
12 enlisted force led by our highly professional NCO corps, are
13 the backbone, the body, and the soul of the Joint Force.
14 And I'd like to acknowledge Sergeant Major Cook and all that
15 he represents.

16 As discussed, the Indo-Pacific is the defining
17 strategic theater of the 21st century, where all four lines
18 of effort in the National Defense Strategy converge, that
19 is, safeguarding the United States homeland, especially
20 including those elements that are in the Indo-Pacific,
21 deterring China, deepening burden sharing with our allies
22 and partners, and supercharging the Defense Industrial Base.
23 Indo-Pacific Command puts those priorities into action every
24 single day.

25 The sea has long been a highway for trade and a vector

1 for power projection, and it's also becoming increasingly an
2 end unto itself as a source of food, energy, minerals, and
3 strategic leverage. China's force design since 2009
4 reflects that reality. Since 2024, China has delivered 12
5 submarines, including nuclear attack submarines and nuclear
6 ballistic missile submarines and aircraft carrier, 2
7 cruisers, 10 destroyers, 7 frigates, as well as amphibious
8 and combat logistics force. That scale is for the
9 projection of power, coercion, and to enforce the rules in
10 every relationship.

11 North Korea continues to threaten the U.S. homeland and
12 our allies with nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. And
13 Russia has increased its force posture of air missile,
14 maritime in the Indo-Pacific, and the increasing strategic
15 cooperation among them all is deeply concerning. Our
16 strategy is clear, to deny China from achieving its
17 objectives through military aggression. To deter it.
18 Deterrence is our highest duty. We deter with dynamic
19 combat power, conducting operation every day with allies and
20 partners and across domains.

21 Our allies and partners increase our combat capability
22 and capacity, expand our maneuver space, and extend
23 operational reach and strengthen deterrence. Yesterday, we
24 began the largest ever exercise, Balikatan, in the Republic
25 of the Philippines. This exercise demonstrates a

1 significant leap in allied firepower integrating U.S. land-
2 based tomahawks with Philippine BrahMos missiles and
3 Japanese anti-ship missiles.

4 Our alliances are rapidly fielding advanced
5 capabilities for adapting to the changing character of
6 warfare, and we're driving towards information and decision
7 superiority. We're accelerating decision-making through our
8 AI-enabled headquarters and our AI-enabled commands,
9 strengthening our posture, improving integrated air and
10 missile defenses, hardening key infrastructure, and
11 increasing munitions throughput. Congress and the
12 Department have provided the resources. Now, industry must
13 deliver. With your continued support, we'll preserve peace
14 through strength, and defend a free and open Indo-Pacific.

15 I now defer to General Brunson, and most especially,
16 your questions.

17 [The prepared statement of Admiral Paparo follows:]

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 Chairman Wicker: General Brunson, you're recognized,
2 sir.

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL XAVIER T. BRUNSON, USA,
2 COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND/COMBINED FORCES
3 COMMAND/UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

4 General Brunson: Thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking
5 Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, thank
6 you for the opportunity to speak to you today alongside
7 Admiral Paparo, regarding the security environment in the
8 Republic of Korea and Northeast Asia.

9 I would like to first thank those who sit behind me,
10 who got me here to this hearing today, have helped me to
11 prepare and represent the members of our force forward in
12 the United States Forces Korea. I'd also extend my
13 gratitude to the 17 other United Nations member states;
14 Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France,
15 Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway,
16 the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, and the
17 United Kingdom. But I especially thank the Korean people
18 for their continued partnership, hospitality, and commitment
19 to our alliance.

20 The Korean Peninsula is key strategic terrain vital to
21 defending the American homeland and advancing American
22 interest in the region. Our forces in Korea are modernizing
23 to address rapidly evolving strategic dilemmas. That's why
24 my focus remains strictly on capabilities over numbers.
25 While our presence is a baseline, it's imperative that we

1 maintain focus on the precise capabilities that must be
2 resident on the peninsula.

3 To truly understand this shift from capacity to
4 capability, I encourage the committee to observe the Tri-
5 Command firsthand. Should you visit us, you will see, as
6 Senator Shaheen has, the readiness exemplified by our
7 service members, civil servants, allies, and interagency
8 partners who defend the homelands.

9 Across the peninsula, our warfighters build readiness.
10 Some examples include Eighth Army's continued work, along
11 with our rotational force, and which has led them to exceed
12 90 percent on most of their readiness metrics. The
13 continued integration of Seventh Air Force, Marine Corps
14 Forces Korea, Naval Forces Korea, Special Operations Command
15 Korea, and Space Forces Korea. Those components into
16 INDOPACOM exercises demonstrate the potential to project
17 power from Korea in support of deterrence across the Indo-
18 Pacific.

19 A key component of readiness is our facilities. We are
20 improving our infrastructure to synchronize U.S. Space
21 Forces and other components, while seizing theater
22 opportunities to conduct integrated sustainment and forward
23 repair with our allies, partners in the Joint Force. And
24 across the information domain, we not only communicate the
25 centrality of the region to American interests, but actively

1 maneuver to neutralize misinformation and disinformation.

2 The Tri-Command, United Nations Command, Combined
3 Forces Command, and U.S. Forces Korea stand ready and
4 capable to support a favorable balance of power across the
5 region that deters aggression, supports a free and open
6 Indo-Pacific. Our presence in the region is a driving force
7 that has evolved our alliances over decades, from
8 dependencies to true partnerships.

9 While our cooperation and commitment to the region has
10 maintained the armistice and deterred large scale conflict,
11 our forces must remain vigilant. Together with the
12 Department, or interagency teams, the United States
13 Congress, and our multinational allies and partners, we will
14 continue to demonstrate American strength in the region so
15 that a favorable peace prevails.

16 Under one flag. We go together. Katchi Kapshida.

17 [The prepared statement of General Brunson follows:]

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 Chairman Wicker: You may have to help the transcriber
2 on that last sentence, General. You gave us a number of
3 countries. Why did you list them specifically, sir?

4 General Brunson: Chairman, what I hope to do is to
5 thank them for their continued contribution to the core of
6 the United Nations Command. Each of those companies that I
7 -- countries that I mentioned has, over the year and a half
8 or so that I've been in command, had officers and soldiers
9 within our headquarters in the United Nations Command, sir.

10 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Thank you very much for that.

11 Admiral, I want to ask about our overseas military
12 bases. Of course, we know they're not sovereign U.S.
13 territory. The territory belongs to the various countries
14 who host us. And all allies and partners require some form
15 of prior consultation before allowing U.S. forces to operate
16 from their sovereign territory. That is a correct
17 statement, is it not, Admiral?

18 Admiral Paparo: Yes, chairman.

19 Chairman Wicker: And, as it previewed in its National
20 Defense Strategy and the AUKUS review, DOD is now pressing
21 allies to provide uncaveated and unimpeded access from bases
22 located in their country. Is this realistic? And I have
23 three questions which I'll just ask all at once. Our
24 overseas bases provide enormous benefit. Is it realistic to
25 seek uncaveated and unconstrained access to these bases? Is



1 there anything you want to do now that you cannot do under
2 existing basing arrangements? And is it realistic to expect
3 our allies, even our closest ones, to provide unfettered
4 access basing and overflight with no operational
5 restrictions?

6 Admiral Paparo: Chairman, I think that it's sensible
7 to gain assurances that in the unforgiving hour, we'll be
8 able to employ those bases for our own planning. And I
9 think it's pragmatic to understand that each of our allies
10 and partners will experience various civil pressures within
11 those that they that they govern. And I think, going a long
12 way to gain assurances from our partners is a practical and
13 sensible approach. I think it enhances our planning, but I
14 think it also must be approached with the pragmatism that
15 each government is accountable to their people and will make
16 deeper decisions when the unforgiving hour comes.

17 Chairman Wicker: Okay. It's is the -- my second
18 follow up question was what can we not do now? Is there
19 anything we cannot currently do under existing basing
20 arrangements?

21 Admiral Paparo: Chairman, there are frequent occasions
22 when we would prefer to execute certain operations or
23 certain live fire operations and our host nations are
24 sensitive for domestic reasons. And so, it's always a
25 negotiation with our allies and partners, and we always do



1 so within the faith that our allies and partners want to go
2 as far as they practically can. But certainly, there's
3 always limits on -- or there's, you know, I should say
4 there's frequently instances where there's things that we
5 would like to do, but we can't do it because the host
6 government is sensitive to public opinion, it is in the
7 presence of populations, and we work through it with good
8 faith.

9 Chairman Wicker: Okay.

10 And then in the minute and a half we have, let's talk
11 about replacing both exquisite traditional munitions and
12 newer low-cost munitions. We find lots of weapons and
13 Operation Epic Fury, Secretary Feinberg has a plan to
14 increase production of exquisite munitions such as those
15 made by Lockheed and Raytheon. Will that take time, and can
16 you give us an idea of how much time? And is it time also
17 to go all in on low-cost munitions, including cruise
18 missiles, hypersonics, long range drones, and unmanned
19 surface vessels?

20 Admiral Paparo: Senator, yes, and yes. And the
21 traditional defense primes have to innovate to go faster. I
22 think it will take 1 to 2 years for them to scale. It won't
23 be soon enough, and I think that we really must press the
24 system with non-traditional vendors bringing to bear new,
25 low-cost munitions such as hypersonics, low-cost cruise

1 missiles, and then across a variety of drones and unmanned
2 systems.

3 Chairman Wicker: Is it possible -- thank you for your
4 answer there -- particularly on the low-cost munitions. Is
5 it possible for us to incentivize the exquisite manufacturer
6 such as Lockheed, Raytheon, and others to go faster?

7 Admiral Paparo: It most certainly is, and, you know, I
8 think that the Department is putting a great deal of
9 accountability and pressure on the primes thus far. The
10 progress is good, and I'm eager for more.

11 Chairman Wicker: And so are we. Thank you very much.
12 Senator Reed.

13 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and
14 Admiral Paparo, and General Brunson. First, let me commend
15 your staff. From my early experience, I know how hard it is
16 to sit at attention. So, thank you. Well done, well done.

17 Admiral Paparo, I'll just follow-on the chairman's
18 question, which is basically we've extended a great deal of
19 ordnance in the Iranian combat. It has some effect on you.
20 The question going forward, though, is if we resume a rate
21 of fire similar to what we were doing, do you have an idea
22 of how long we could fire without creating severe effects on
23 your command?

24 Admiral Paparo: Well, first, I acknowledge your
25 statement, Ranking Member. And, you know, I'll deliver that



1 in a classified setting, but --

2 Senator Reed: Yeah.

3 Admiral Paparo: -- there are finite limits to the
4 magazine. And I have all the faith in the world that
5 they're being employed judiciously.

6 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Admiral.

7 General Brunson, our present military situation in
8 South Korea, I assume, but you could confirm that it is
9 creating some significant strategic and operational dilemmas
10 for the Chinese. Could you indicate and discuss those?

11 General Brunson: Ranking Member, in the open, what I
12 would say is that we have positional advantage currently.
13 I've written articles that are out there right now that talk
14 about the positional advantage achieved by changing our
15 perspective of looking at a map differently. It places us
16 with interior lines inside the first island chain, and what
17 that allows us to do from that position alone is as we
18 operate on OAI's given us by INDOPACOM. It allows us to
19 operate from a different aperture, if you will, to project
20 power into the region and achieve effect, significant
21 effect, I might add.

22 I also believe that the imposition of cost is a thing
23 that happens when we marry capabilities with position on the
24 ground geographically, and that I would call or term posture
25 truly, is the marrying of the capabilities with the right



1 positioning and then to be able to achieve significant
2 effect.

3 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

4 In my opening statement, I talked about the proposed
5 sale of chips, the H200 chip. Do you have any concerns that
6 you would like to comment upon?

7 Admiral Paparo: Ranking Member, I want every
8 competitive advantage that the United States of America can
9 have, and that includes AI-powered warfare. INDOPACOM is an
10 AI-powered headquarters. The Chinese, by their philosophy,
11 are fast followers. They've taken every bit of intellectual
12 property that's ever been shared to the trade and technology
13 stack, and they have not only implemented it, but they've
14 improved upon it. So, I have deep concerns with anything
15 that enables them to become a better AI-powered headquarters
16 than our headquarters.

17 Senator Reed: Well, I share your concerns, Admiral. I
18 think they're legitimate and compelling, and thank you.
19 Admiral Paparo, what lessons do you think the Chinese have
20 learned from Operation Epic Fury?

21 Admiral Paparo: Ranking Member, I think that, number
22 one, I think they're impressed by the operational acumen
23 that's been demonstrated by the United States and our
24 partners. Number two, I think they see the power of small,
25 low-cost munitions on the ability to hold key geography at

1 risk, and so have we, and we see that. And who implements
2 that the fastest is absolutely the best, is going to be the
3 best year in the 21st century. And I think the key is, is
4 that our force has learned a lot, including a lot of combat
5 experience. We have to continue to accelerate that learning
6 and bring that to bear. That's a key advantage that the
7 Indo-Pacific forces that have engaged in combat, in this
8 operation, that our would-be adversaries have not had, and
9 we need to accelerate that.

10 Senator Reed: A quick final question, I have a few
11 seconds remaining. There is roughly an analogy between the
12 situation in Taiwan and Ukraine. Asymmetric warfare will be
13 what the Taiwanese fractures against the Chinese. So, are
14 we focusing now on the lessons from Ukraine drone warfare,
15 all the ingenuity of Ukraine? Is that the approach that
16 we're taking with the Taiwanese?

17 Admiral Paparo: Sir, that's a key emphasis. You're
18 quite well aware of the Hellscape Strategy, the fact that
19 low-cost munitions drone war makes assault much, much more
20 costly to assaulting forces. Bringing those lessons to bear
21 to the max extent possible is an imperative.

22 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank
23 you.

24 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Senator Fischer.

25 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank



1 both of you, gentlemen, and the members of our military that
2 you serve with, for the important work you do every single
3 day. Thank you.

4 Admiral, the current program of record for at least 100
5 B-21 bombers. That's not sufficient. When accounting for
6 both nuclear and conventional bomber requirements, would you
7 agree that we need to procure at least 145 B-21, and
8 shouldn't we be seriously considering at least 200?

9 Admiral Paparo: Senator Fischer, good morning. I
10 would favor 200 B-21 bombers, not just for the nuclear
11 deterrence mission, but for penetrating strike capabilities,
12 and I couldn't be a stronger advocate.

13 Senator Fischer: Thank you. We need to consider both
14 STRATCOM requirements and yours and INDOPACOM as well.
15 Correct?

16 Admiral Paparo: Senator, I would say that. And
17 STRATCOM is, you know, absolutely. Among my strongest
18 partners. We are in lockstep on this, and we don't view a
19 separateness of our individual requirement. We view
20 ourselves as teammates, side by side on the journey.

21 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

22 Also, while the nuclear threats are also often
23 considered STRATCOM, the more numerous and capable -- or
24 they, obviously, have a serious implication in INDOPACOM and
25 your mission. Can you describe your view of China's nuclear



1 expansion, and the impact that more numerous and capable
2 Chinese nuclear forces in the region have, from your
3 perspective, as a geographic combatant commander?

4 Admiral Paparo: Senator, in the next 5 years, I expect
5 China's nuclear arsenal to nearly double. And that taken in
6 some with their comprehensive strategic partner, their no-
7 limits partnership with Russia and with their arsenal, it's
8 a concern. We've got to overmatch that capability. We have
9 to continue to modernize the U.S. nuclear deterrent,
10 including tactical nuclear forces.

11 Senator Fischer: You've mentioned the importance of
12 allies and partners. And in the Indo-Pacific region, that
13 includes several that depend upon our nuclear umbrella, our
14 nuclear deterrence guarantees. Based on your interaction
15 with these allies and partners, how do you believe they
16 would view a delay or cancellation of our nuclear
17 modernization effort or rhetoric to that effect? And to
18 what extent would they be concerned?

19 Admiral Paparo: So, you rightly identify it would be a
20 deep concern on the part of our allies and partners. They
21 depend very strongly -- I shouldn't say they depend -- we
22 together rely very strongly on extended deterrence. They
23 view that with the concern and they'd be right to.

24 Senator Fischer: Admiral, you now know as well as
25 anyone that challenges that are posed by the vast distances



1 in the Indo-Pacific and being able to connect those ships
2 and the aircraft with fuel, that's going to be crucial. In
3 your opening statement, you stated our tanker fleet falls
4 below requirements. How are you working with General Reed
5 at TRANSCOM to address those refueling needs and really
6 shortfalls that we have?

7 Admiral Paparo: Senator, you know, I can tell you in a
8 classified setting how many millions of pounds it takes to
9 be in air to support our air refueling requirements, and I'd
10 also add our combat logistics force in our at sea field
11 requirements as well. I strongly applaud the Air Force's
12 standing back up the tanker fleet and refreshing it. And
13 you know, I'd be in favor of anything that accelerates our
14 ability to put fuel in the air.

15 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

16 General Brunson, back to our nuclear deterrence and the
17 importance it has for our allies and our partners. Can you
18 comment on how important that relationship is between the
19 U.S. and ROK?

20 General Brunson: Yes, Senator, it has a tremendous --
21 it goes tremendously far in helping us to assure our allies
22 of our will and our intent. So, to that end, we've
23 developed a staff section, the J10, which works along and
24 serves as an interface between ROC, STRATCOM, and
25 USSTRATCOM. We've also participated fully in the Nuclear



1 Consultative Group. And these things all allow our allies
2 to focus on other things in the region, vice being
3 confounded about: are they protected? Are they covered?
4 So, our assurance through extended deterrence is incredibly
5 important for us being allies.

6 Senator Fischer: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr.
7 Chair.

8 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Fischer. I have
9 Senator Hirono and then Senator Tuberville. Senator Hirono.

10 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral
11 Paparo and General Brunson, thank you very much for your
12 service and leadership.

13 Admiral Papa, you've been very candid about your
14 concerns with the U.S. military's magazine depth over the
15 last several years and, of course, with the illegal war in
16 Iran. And you noted today that you believe that these --
17 the magazine is being judiciously employed. I'm not so sure
18 about that, but you did note that we need to have a better
19 mix. I think that's where you were going: better mix of the
20 exquisite high cost, low volume systems with affordable,
21 high-volume munitions? You did note that we are working
22 with non-traditional vendors to help us produce these other
23 types of munitions.

24 So, I'm curious to know that. How are we doing that?
25 Are we providing encouragement to these non-traditional

1 vendors to help us with providing the unmanned systems and
2 the other munitions that you are seeking to develop?

3 Admiral Paparo: Good morning. Aloha, Senator.

4 Senator Hirono: Aloha.

5 Admiral Paparo: Yes. Most certainly. First is that
6 we working with the Defense Innovation Unit. We have funded
7 multiple tests, including, the employment of a low-cost
8 hypersonic weapon off of U.S. aircraft this summer. And so,
9 yes, we've encouraged, yes, we've advocated for DIU
10 experimentation, and we've advocated very strongly with the
11 Department for contracting these capabilities. Those
12 contracting capabilities are reflected in this year's budget
13 submission, with orders in the hundreds, if not thousands of
14 these systems.

15 Senator Hirono: That's an area that I would like to
16 provide more support, because clearly, we need to really
17 move toward the kind of innovations that you have very much
18 advocated for the times that I have worked with you. So,
19 thank you very much for your continuing leadership in this
20 regard.

21 I did want to mention that although you are not
22 directly involved with the military services continuing
23 negotiations with the State of Hawaii regarding extending
24 the use of very critical military training lands in Hawaii.
25 Without those training lands, for example, it would be very

1 hard to justify the Army's presence in Hawaii and therefore
2 the impact on national security.

3 So, I just wanted to bring the importance of -- the
4 significance of these negotiations and particularly for the
5 Army to continue to negotiate in good faith with the State,
6 to come to a resolution acceptable to all parties and not
7 short circuit the discussions by seeking to condemn the land
8 without fully exhausting the avenues. And I just wanted to
9 get your brief thoughts on the importance of these
10 negotiations and how these negotiations should proceed.

11 Admiral Paparo: Senator, engagement is critical.
12 Pohakuloa is absolutely indispensable to the Nation's
13 defense. It's indispensable to deterrence here in the Indo-
14 Pacific. And I'm strongly in favor of every effort, that
15 leads to a favorable outcome to maintain 25th ID, and in
16 fact, United States Army's continued usage of Pohakuloa
17 training area, as well as all of the other key land lease
18 issues that we're dealing with in the State of Hawaii, which
19 also includes Air Force, Navy, Space Force, and then marine
20 usage, and so across the Joint Force. I'm strongly in favor
21 of building towards consensus and sensible solutions.

22 Senator Hirono: I think the key words here are
23 consensus, because I think it would be not in the interest
24 of our -- the military's presence in Hawaii if these
25 negotiations are somehow short circuited and that there is

1 resort to condemnation. That would not go over very well, I
2 would say, with the people of Hawaii. So, any input that
3 you have toward those kinds of negotiations would be much
4 appreciated.

5 Admiral, we are seeing increasing cooperation between
6 Iran, Russia, and North Korea, and China. And as U.S.
7 forces remain heavily engaged in the Middle East, how are
8 you working with the regional allies, particularly Japan,
9 Republic of Korea, and Australia, to increase cooperation
10 and coordination among our partners in the Indo-Pacific AOR?

11 Admiral Paparo: Senator, all those relationships are
12 in a strong, strong upward trajectory, including the
13 relationships among them. And it is a daily matter of duty
14 to work closely with all the allies.

15 Senator Hirono: I just also want to mention that as we
16 talk about the importance of strengthening our allies, we
17 should not forget that our compact island nations and the
18 fact that we should be working very closely to support the
19 our compact nations and other island nations, as China is
20 very much extending itself in the Indo-Pacific area with
21 regard to establishing stronger relations with Palau,
22 Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and other island nations. Let
23 us not forget our island nation partners.

24 Admiral Paparo: We'll do, Senator. And Republic of
25 Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the

1 Marshall Islands continued to be areas of Chinese
2 encroachment across the gray zone, across elements of elite
3 capture, and maintaining a close focus on those
4 relationships is incredibly important to the defense of the
5 United States of America.

6 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Wicker: And our relationships with those
8 peoples are very strong and appreciated. Senator
9 Tuberville.

10 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Good morning,
11 gentlemen.

12 Admiral, what flexibility and capability does INDOPACOM
13 gain if we were able to field 16 Columbia-class submarines
14 versus 12?

15 Admiral Paparo: Senator, good morning. It's the
16 addition of 64 missile tubes. It would enhance our ability
17 to provide extended deterrence. It would enhance our
18 overall readiness not just for strategic weapons, but for
19 tactical weapons. And I'm strongly in favor of enhancing
20 that, and you'll find me a strong vote, yes, on increasing
21 our Columbia inventory.

22 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

23 To another subject. Our competition with China isn't
24 just about military strength. It also includes monetary
25 strength as well. You know, last year, the Chinese



1 Communist Party's main monetary think tank published
2 research on Bitcoin as a strategic asset. You know, this
3 came after President Trump moved to establish a strategic
4 Bitcoin reserve. Admiral, how does leadership in Bitcoin
5 impact leverage resilience deterrence for INDOPACOM against
6 China, and do you think that a strategic Bitcoin reserve
7 helps America compete against China?

8 Admiral Paparo: Senator, you know, our research into
9 Bitcoin is as a computer science tool. It's the combination
10 of cryptography, a blockchain, and a proof of work. And
11 Bitcoin shows incredible potential as a computer science
12 tool that through the proof of work protocols, actually
13 imposes more costs than just the algorithmic securing of
14 networks and our ability to operate. And Bitcoin is a
15 reality, it is a valuable computer science tool as a power
16 projection, and outside of the economic formulation of it,
17 it has got really important computer science applications
18 for cyber security.

19 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

20 What recommendations do you have for us here in
21 Congress on how to -- how the U.S. can lead on Bitcoin
22 competition?

23 Admiral Paparo: You know, I have to go deeper on that
24 with you for the record, and I can go I can go deeper on
25 that case. But if Bitcoin is a reality, it is a peer to



1 peer, zero trust transfer of value. Anything that supports
2 the all instruments of national power for the United States
3 of America is to the good.

4 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

5 I'll have to go back and listen to that answer to kind
6 of decipher it. Most of us, you're way over our head. Go
7 ahead. General, what we're seeing as far as changes in
8 strategic environment with respect to North Korea, what are
9 we seeing?

10 General Brunson: Senator, thank you for the question.
11 One of the things that we're seeing, if we were to just take
12 this from, you know, a political, military, and then just
13 informational or intelligence view, what we're seeing with
14 them is, politically, KJU is firmly in his seat. I think
15 militarily, what we see is a more experienced force that's
16 been forward into the conflict in Ukraine, come back,
17 trained other forces, and taken best advantage of the
18 offsets that were learned in that fight and begun to employ
19 them in their training.

20 Informationally and through intelligence, what we find
21 is continued isolated population in that country and less
22 communication south with the government in Korea. There are
23 no overtures toward peace from the north to the south, and
24 we see increasing hardness, if you will, in terms of that
25 relation. So, every overture is rebuffed, and there are no



1 more outreaches from the north to the south.

2 Senator Tuberville: What kind of reactions are you
3 seeing from the conflict in the Middle East, from the North
4 Koreans?

5 General Brunson: Senator, as mentioned in closed, we
6 are seeing reflections. And I would just say, they are
7 watching that with a wary eye by virtue of the use of
8 munitions, and the things that we've done in that conflict
9 currently and how quickly that occurred.

10 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
11 Chairman.

12 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Tuberville. And
13 Admiral Paparo, I believe you told Senator Tuberville that
14 that you hope to supplement your answer on the record with
15 regard to Bitcoin.

16 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. I will respond on the
17 record.

18 [The information referred to follows:]

19 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you.

2 Admiral Paparo: I'll put it in plain English, too.

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Well, Senator Tuberville
4 will not be the only one who goes back over that. Senator
5 Blumenthal.

6 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank
7 you both for your service and really critical roles.

8 Admiral, I apologize that I was unable to attend the
9 closed session because of a conflict. So, my question
10 really is based on public reporting, and I know that there
11 was some coverage of various topics in the closed session.
12 But I am tremendously concerned about the impact of the
13 transfer, of the drawdown of munitions and capabilities to
14 the Middle East. I'm under the impression that the impact
15 has been serious. Would you agree?

16 Admiral Paparo: Well, Senator, I think we maintain
17 deep magazines, and there's no walking away from the
18 quantitative use of weapons. And our way forward is to
19 supercharge our Defense Industrial Base. And equally
20 important, is to innovate with non-traditional primes.

21 Senator Blumenthal: Would you agree with me that the
22 American people really need and deserve to know more about
23 what the impact will be so they can appreciate the
24 seriousness of the costs of the Iran war, and the really
25 urgent need to replenish and restock munitions and other

1 resources for your command and others.

2 Admiral Paparo: I acknowledge it, sir, and, you know,
3 and the Secretary is addressing it, as I can see.

4 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I hope that there will be
5 more truth telling to the American people about the need to
6 build the industrial base and to provide more of the
7 resources that you need, because otherwise, the American
8 people are just going to assume we don't have any need to do
9 it.

10 The cooperation between Russia and North Korea is
11 deepening militarily. My understanding is that North Korea
12 has transferred millions of artillery shells, rockets,
13 ballistic missiles, and other resources to Russia for use in
14 Ukraine, and that North Korea has provided more than 10,000
15 troops right now fighting, actually fighting on the front
16 line in Ukraine. Is that correct?

17 General Brunson: That's correct, Senator.

18 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, General Brunson.

19 And in turn, Russia is providing North Korea with food,
20 energy supplies, and maybe most importantly, technology.
21 Correct?

22 General Brunson: Yes, Senator, that's correct.

23 Senator Blumenthal: How significant, in your view,
24 militarily, is that cooperation? And I understand it's
25 growing.



1 General Brunson: Yes, Senator. It's significant due
2 to the fact that they're able to alleviate their research,
3 development, training and evaluation, or testing and
4 evaluation. They're getting ready-made equipment. They're
5 receiving training. They're putting those things into
6 operation immediately.

7 Senator Blumenthal: Admiral, I was very interested in
8 your three meta trends in your testimony, and particularly,
9 as to the growing capability of asymmetric warfare. Cheap,
10 masked, unmanned warfare. We've seen it in Ukraine. I
11 assume your comments are based on the Iran war as well. How
12 does that bear on the Chinese calculus, given that Taiwan is
13 smaller, fewer numbers of troops, but highly capable in
14 cyber, and also, in providing those unmanned asymmetric
15 forces against maybe a very significant Chinese invasion,
16 but maybe something that the Chinese ought to be more wary
17 about.

18 Admiral Paparo: Senator Blumenthal, I think the
19 Chinese are deeply worried about it, and they're trying to
20 reckon with it, as we do. Which I think that is why all of
21 us together have got to reckon with these three megatrends
22 and the megatrend around it, and the changing character of
23 warfare. I think that their view is, is that they want to
24 build a drone force that would be a vanguard of an
25 assaulting force. And in the end, all things being equal,

1 the mass deployment and employment of cheap, expendable
2 munitions will favor the defensive so long as we pursue it,
3 fully, with masks, with numbers, with sustainability, and
4 with AI tools that enable us to command it, and outmatch our
5 potential adversaries.

6 Senator Blumenthal: In other words, as long as we
7 continue supporting Taiwan with those resources.

8 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir, and Taiwan's continued
9 pursuit, in and of itself, of its own defense, which is a
10 key factor.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

12 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

13 Senator Ernst.

14 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, again,
15 thank you so much, gentlemen, for being here today. We
16 appreciate your service, as well as your team's, in
17 protecting our great Nation.

18 When Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, it directly
19 threatened the energy security of a number of our allies in
20 the Indo-Pacific; Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and
21 these are key allies for us, and they assist us with the
22 deterrence in that region. President Trump's National
23 Security Strategy rightly treats American energy dominance
24 as a strategic asset. It's not just an economic one. So,
25 Admiral Paparo, does INDOPACOM currently treat allied energy



1 dependence as a strategic vulnerability when doing its
2 planning?

3 Admiral Paparo: Senator Ernst, good morning. Yes,
4 absolutely, we do. We track energy reserves for each
5 partner, including, also, potentially each -- potential
6 competitor as well. And we do view, we do view the
7 vulnerabilities of not just where the energy is coming from,
8 but also through the straits through which they travel,
9 Malacca, Lombok, Sunda, among others, as being key critical
10 geography as the ability to impose costs, as well as the
11 ability to defend key strategic waterways. And, I affirm
12 the ability of the United States increasingly to be a net
13 energy provider also in the Indo-Pacific, to escape the
14 vulnerability of those key choke points.

15 Senator Ernst: Okay. And that's a key point, too. I
16 think greater U.S. oil and LNG supplies to our allies can
17 reduce the leverage that any of our adversaries would have
18 on those countries. In your assessment, do you think we are
19 moving fast enough to make American energy a meaningful
20 pillar of allied resilience in the Indo-Pacific?

21 Admiral Paparo: I never, ever affirm satisfaction with
22 where we are in terms of national strength.

23 Senator Ernst: Okay. Well, thanks for the truthful
24 answer there, and I would concur with that. Thank you.

25 Now, moving on, General Brunson, for you. Russia's war



1 in Ukraine has become kind of a two-way military exchange
2 between Putin and Kim Jong Un. We see a lot, whether it's
3 the liquid fuel ballistic missile program that goes back to
4 North Korea, Russian military and technical assistance
5 personnel coming from North Korea to assist Russia in the
6 war in Ukraine. We could go on and on. So, what we have
7 seen means that Iran is -- taking a look at what's going on,
8 there's a real-world test bed going on in Iran right now.
9 We've seen the same in Ukraine.

10 So, with all of these exchanges going on, what specific
11 capabilities are you seeing that the DPRK has actually
12 gained from these experiences? What do they stand to gain
13 today or immediately that would assist them as they're
14 assessing the United States and our partner nations in the
15 Indo-Pacific?

16 General Brunson: Senator, you know, as mentioned
17 previously, we're seeing it in their training. We're seeing
18 the things that they're doing. Those are immediate gains.
19 I think at the operational level, what they're finding is,
20 they are far more -- they're learning to become far more
21 accurate with their employment of their fires. I think
22 that's a thing when you see that Seoul sits some 60 miles
23 south of the DMZ.

24 I also believe that in terms of technology that they've
25 garnered from this association, it's allowed them to operate



1 in spectra that they haven't before. So, they're operating
2 the EMS, they're working on electronic warfare, and it's
3 also enabled them to do things in the cyber realm that they
4 hadn't been able to do before. So, when you look at the
5 cryptocurrency theft and other things that they're learning
6 from this -- you know, almost this Levant that exists now
7 from Russia into DPRK, into China, and then beyond into
8 Iran. I think that we have to be concerned about the
9 transitive nature of technology and TTPs that are going to
10 move across that same Levant over time.

11 Senator Ernst: So, General, would you assess those,
12 all of those different areas that you would just you just
13 spoke to, would you say that these are incremental gains, or
14 are these significant, meaningful shifts for DPRK?

15 General Brunson: I would say, Senator, for DPRK, these
16 are significant shifts in their ability to do these things
17 that they never had to work on themselves, largely given the
18 quid pro quo nature that we would talk about initially when
19 this first started. This is a full partnership between two
20 nations now.

21 Senator Ernst: Yeah. Thank you. I think this is
22 something we really need to sit up and pay attention to.
23 So, thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Ernst. We have
25 Shaheen and then Sheehy. Senator Shaheen.

1 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
2 you, Admiral Paparo and General Brunson, for being here for
3 your service. And thank you both for all of the time and
4 support you provided to our bipartisan CODEL that went to
5 the Indo-Pacific a couple of weeks ago.

6 Admiral Paparo, we very much appreciated the briefing
7 in Honolulu, and your insights into Taiwan, Japan, and South
8 Korea, which we visited. And while we were in Taiwan, we
9 had a very good meeting with President Lai and with members
10 of their Yuan, their legislative body, and we talked with
11 them about the importance of passing the \$40 billion special
12 defense budget that they are still debating. Can you speak
13 to why this is important, and your perspective on how
14 important it would be for Taiwan to pass that special
15 defense budget?

16 Admiral Paparo: Good morning, Senator Shaheen. First
17 of all, nothing has changed in the American policy on Taiwan
18 and the Three Communiques, the Taiwan Relations Act, the six
19 assurances. Our foreign military sales with Taiwan are not
20 out of the norm over the, you know, almost 50 years of
21 Taiwan Relations Act. And so, we can't want Taiwan's
22 defense more than they want it itself. And it's not a
23 chicken and the egg, because you're not going to get chicken
24 or eggs if you starve the chicken. So, it's very important
25 for them to fund their own defense.

1 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I agree, and we
2 made the case that there were two reasons to pass it. One
3 was to send a message to China, but also send a message to
4 the American Congress, which is very supportive of Taiwan,
5 and would like to see this action taken.

6 General Brunson, you kindly mentioned our visit to Camp
7 Humphreys. I was very impressed by that visit and it was my
8 first time. So, it was nice to hear the perspective from
9 all of the men and women serving there. And in South Korea,
10 we also had a very good meeting with the Lee administration,
11 who President Lee was very focused on reaching the transfer
12 of OPCON by the end of his administration.

13 Now, you talked about the importance of capabilities
14 versus capacity, which was a point that we made to him as
15 well. But can you outline what the key capabilities are
16 that the U.S. provides, and that we need to continue to
17 provide for the foreseeable future?

18 General Brunson: Senator, first, thank you for your
19 visit. It means a lot when we get a touch of home when
20 you're 13 hours off. Like, I know my wife's not watching
21 this right now --

22 Senator Shaheen: Yeah.

23 General Brunson: -- but it means a lot when we have
24 you-all come out and visit us. So, please come back again.
25 When we look at the things that we provide right now, there

1 is no true analog to critical, but more limited in Hanguk.
2 So, what we have to do is really take a look at -- and as
3 I'm sure you were involved in conversations about this
4 wartime OPCON, and that it's a conditions-based base
5 transfer. As we continue to ferret out the conditions and
6 the capabilities that have to be resident within that
7 Republic of Korea force for us to do this, maintaining
8 conditions-based, for this transfer, I think that we'll
9 learn over time what things we're going to still need to do
10 alongside our partner.

11 I can't give you an answer on that right now, ma'am,
12 because we have to continue to work to ensure that political
13 expediency doesn't outpace the conditions. We've got to
14 stay focused on the conditions because the United States is
15 safer that way and the Republic of Korea is safer that way.
16 So, we'll continue to focus there. Ma'am, I'll sort of take
17 that for the record to come back to you --

18 Senator Shaheen: Okay. That will be helpful.

19 General Brunson: -- on what we find out as we continue
20 to work through our roadmap to get to OPCON transfer.

21 [The information referred to follows:]

22 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

23

24

25

1 Senator Shaheen: Right.

2 Admiral Paparo, you've answered this question in sort
3 of in various ways. Senator Reed raised it. A couple of
4 other people raised it. But can you talk about how
5 ultimately you think -- or I guess we can't say until we
6 know the outcome -- but how what's happening in the Middle
7 East and Iran affects how the PRC views the United States,
8 and how it might affect their thinking about their other
9 activities in the region.

10 Admiral Paparo: Well, Senator, there's -- you know,
11 there's no substitute for prevailing on the battlefield, so
12 I could not be more stronger in favor of the operation
13 that's ongoing in CENTCOM right now. And the success of
14 that is very important for deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.
15 And then as we bring those combat lessons learned into our
16 own operations, and, you know, we're directly involved,
17 including in the theater itself with potential missile
18 strikes on Diego Garcia, integrated maritime interdiction
19 operations we're conducting, as well as actioning of Iranian
20 combat vessels.

21 And so, I think that, you know, what I want the PRC to
22 see is that the United States employs capability and will in
23 response to aggression, and I don't want them to doubt that
24 in any way. And that supports deterrence, and deterrence is
25 our highest duty.

1 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator
3 Sheehy.

4 Senator Sheehy: Good morning, gentlemen.

5 Last time we faced an adversary in the Western Pacific
6 where both of you, currently have dominion over, we were
7 fighting, you know, a nation that was roughly the size of my
8 home State of Montana with a population of fraction the size
9 of America, with an economy also the fraction the size. And
10 we had a robust industrial base that was capable of mass
11 manufacturing at scale relatively quickly. Today, our
12 adversary will be the size of our entire Nation, with a
13 population roughly 4 to 5 times the size of our own, with an
14 economy that's comparable. We'll face a considerably more
15 challenging military and economic picture, should the
16 unthinkable happen.

17 Admiral, I'll start with you. Do you feel our current
18 fleet makeup, both in size and ship composition, is what you
19 would need if you were fighting the fight in the Western
20 Pacific? And if not, what does it need to look like from a
21 quantity as well as composition standpoint to be the fleet
22 that you need to win?

23 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. The year I -- Senator, good
24 morning. The year I came into service, America delivered an
25 aircraft carrier, five attack submarines, a ballistic

1 missile submarine, two cruisers, five DDG 51-class
2 destroyers, a Knox-class destroyer. In fact, in total, 40
3 years ago, America delivered 31 warships in a single year.
4 That was on a \$4.5 trillion economy with a total population
5 that is two-thirds of the current size of the United States
6 of America. So, reindustrialization of America is a
7 strategic imperative, especially per my opening statement.

8 So, I think that -- and I think, new habits of mind,
9 new habits of action, commercial and defense innovation,
10 commercial and defense integration are strategic priorities
11 for the 21st century. And despite the changing character of
12 drone warfare of cheap strike, is that moving energy mass
13 and people over long distances by sea most efficiently and
14 by air most quickly will continue to be a timeless element
15 of combat power.

16 Senator Sheehy: What class of ship do you not have
17 that you feel that you will need?

18 Admiral Paparo: I don't have enough amphibious ships.
19 We don't have enough surface destroyers. We certainly don't
20 have enough attack submarines. And our trajectory is on the
21 wrong side. I would favor greater amounts of combat
22 logistics, force ships. I'd favor a great number of medium
23 USV, unmanned surface vessels, with the ability to provide
24 fires, sensors, decoys, the ability to do long range
25 distributed ASW. So, I'd see that.

1 And so, you know, we are currently on a trajectory to
2 employ or rather to acquire thousands of, of smaller
3 unmanned surface vessels. And so, I think our fleet designs
4 within the last battle force assessment, our last blitzar is
5 a really good leaping off point for what the future force
6 design is going to be. But I favor greater mass and scale
7 across every class of ships, and then include medium and
8 large unmanned surface vessels for that purpose.

9 Senator Sheehy: Well, quantity has a quality all its
10 own, and replaceability and speed of that replaceability are
11 key. I'd like to -- I think it's fantastic that we have a
12 White House, and a bipartisan Senate and House, and, of
13 course, our Secretary of the Navy, and we're all talking
14 about shipbuilding, which that's the first time we've ever
15 heard that in, you know, 40-plus years. I think that's a
16 good thing. But I think we're still lacking specificity.
17 It's like every day I see a new press release about
18 shipbuilding this, shipbuilding that. But we need to get
19 very specific on what -- how many frigates, how many
20 destroyers, how many cruisers, what those capabilities have
21 to be. How are we going to put a lot of lead from ships
22 onto ground before we land Marines there?

23 Because right now, we don't have ships that send lead
24 anymore. We have ships that have lots of electronic
25 gadgets. But when we have to put a lot of lead through the

1 air and landed on an island before our 18-year-old kids hit
2 that beach, we can't do that anymore, and that's a problem.
3 So, I think we need to have a very cleareyed and specific
4 discussion about that.

5 And, finally, my remaining time, I'd ask you to talk
6 about our base infrastructure, either one of you, across the
7 Pacific. We used to have island bases that span the entire
8 Pacific Command, and those were key unsinkable aircraft
9 carriers. We've closed a lot of them down. We've let them
10 decay. I'd like to hear about what you view, our path is
11 here in the near future to revitalize those pieces of
12 infrastructure. That'll be critical.

13 Admiral Paparo: Senator, we are in the process of
14 greatly building out our key, critical basing infrastructure
15 throughout the Pacific with key projects; Tinian, Saipan, in
16 the Marianas, that's U.S. sovereign homeland with projects
17 in the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of
18 the Marshall Islands, our efforts in Palau, and then through
19 our UMMC, enhancing our capabilities for our rotational
20 forces with Australia, as well as upgrading our bases
21 currently. For a lot of our basing support, we ask for the
22 committee's continued commitment to H-2B visas without the
23 extension to 2035. Our projects will go 10 years over and
24 be 1.5 times the money on achieving that kind of a -- on a
25 posture.

1 As we're thinking about the 21st century, we think
2 about it as in terms of bases, rather I should say places
3 and not necessarily bases, with that kind of footprint, but
4 having distributed stores, having distributed piers, ports,
5 energy capability throughout the Indo-Pacific that
6 diversifies our footprint. It doesn't concentrate us in one
7 place, and it allows us the principles of expanded maneuver.

8 Senator Sheehy: Well, thanks for your time, gentlemen.
9 I agree decentralizing our base infrastructure is a
10 strategic imperative. We're over concentrated in too many
11 spots, and that's a vulnerability. I also think from an
12 acquisition standpoint, we have to get more creative, base
13 leasing, public-private partnerships. The traditional
14 MILCON process is too slow, too inefficient. We can't
15 expect this to be government-run and get there on time. Pan
16 Am built our bases before World War II as a commercial
17 company, so we need to get creative on that. But thanks for
18 your time, gentlemen. Safe travels.

19 Admiral Paparo: I associate myself with your comments,
20 Senator.

21 Chairman Wicker: That's good to know. Let me just
22 point out, Senator Sheehy, and Admiral, and General that,
23 over a decade ago, on a bipartisan basis, this committee,
24 and the Congress, and the President of the United States
25 enacted a law that established 355 ships as the minimum



1 fleet we should have. Clearly, there's going to have to be
2 more specificity, as we actually begin to order those and
3 start laying the keel. But that has been the bipartisan
4 policy of the United States of America for over a decade.
5 And I, too, join Senator Shaheen in being heartened that
6 that even in a climate when there's much disagreement on
7 very significant issues between Democrats and Republicans,
8 and House members and Senate members, there is a consensus
9 on that, and we need to take this opportunity to move on
10 that. With that, I will recognize Senator Kaine.

11 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And to our
12 witnesses, I appreciate your testimony.

13 My first question is sort of some news of the day. So,
14 Admiral Paparo, you talked about the joint exercise going on
15 between the U.S. and the Philippines right now. During that
16 exercise. Japan is a participant for the first time rather
17 than just an observer, and Prime Minister Takaichi, just in
18 the last couple of hours, announced that Japan is now going
19 to allow robust export of lethal defense technologies, the
20 sort of pacifist, post-World War II Japanese constitution
21 meant they did not allow export of defense items. More
22 recently, they've allowed specific exports of search and
23 rescue minesweeping surveillance, but now they're going to
24 allow the export of lethal defense items to the 17 nations
25 with which they have defense agreements, including the

1 United States, UK, and other allies. I know what China
2 thinks about this. They hate it. How is this -- how does
3 the U.S. view this, and how do allies in the region view
4 this?

5 Admiral Paparo: Well, Senator, you know, I could not
6 be any more, you know, supportive of the U.S./Japan
7 alliance. I mean, that's the understatement of the year is
8 that it's absolutely the centerpiece of our system of
9 network and alliances in the Indo-Pacific. And, my
10 appreciation for Japan's leadership in this is meeting the
11 day. Is that in the way that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
12 coined the phrase, "The free and open Indo-Pacific." Prime
13 Minister Takaichi is demonstrating that same kind of
14 leadership, transformational leadership.

15 And Japan is demonstrating transformational leadership
16 in the Indo-Pacific, including their participation in
17 exercises, the bilats, the reciprocal access agreements that
18 they're executing with our partners and allies throughout
19 the Indo-Pacific. It's important to continue co-production
20 with the Japanese under conditions of operational and
21 information security, and, you know, we're strongly
22 supportive. It's one of the absolute bright spots in the
23 strategic environment.

24 Senator Kaine: One of the issues that we've often had
25 in the past is the history of some of challenge between

1 Japan and Korea. You know, we might -- we have great
2 relations with both, and I think there's strong relations
3 between both nations, but sometimes moves in the defense
4 space in one nation or the other can create some potential
5 friction. I read the Korean statement about this Japanese
6 announcement, and I thought it was sort of measured and
7 generally positive. Is that your sense as well, General
8 Brunson, Admiral Paparo?

9 Admiral Paparo: You know, I'll say that the trilateral
10 cooperation between the United States, the Republic of
11 Korea, and Japan continues to be on an upward trajectory.
12 It's been the sign of great leadership both in Japan and
13 Korea. And, in my view, that continued progress has
14 continued into the Lee administration as it was in the Yoon
15 administration. And I'll pass over to General Brunson.

16 Senator Kaine: General Brunson.

17 General Brunson: Yes, sir. Senator, I would
18 wholeheartedly agree with that, and there are future
19 opportunities. You know, we're talking about Balikatan
20 right now, but we've got RIMPAC that's coming up soon, and
21 there'll be ship to ship. There'll be side by side in that.
22 We had Cobra Gold recently where both Japan and Korea were
23 there on those exercises. So, we've got to continue through
24 the INDOPACOM exercise program, continue to make sure we
25 bring our teammates together. And then existentialism has a



1 quality all its own as well when you have two great nations,
2 partners of our own, who are increasingly under threat and
3 coercion from China.

4 Senator Kaine: Well, I think a lot of credit goes to
5 Japan and Korea for this. But I also think there's -- while
6 we're on the subject of bipartisan advances, this is
7 something where the U.S. has really played, I think, a very
8 helpful role in dialogue with both of these allies to help
9 them grow closer. And so, give them credit, give their
10 civilian and military leadership credit. I think,
11 Presidents of both parties in recent years have really
12 helped them grow closer. And you guys get credit for that,
13 too, and I appreciate it.

14 One last question about AUKUS. I was in Australia
15 recently, Admiral Paparo, and really trying to dig in in 37
16 events in 7 days in 4 cities. Is Australia sort of meeting
17 its commitments under Pillar I and Pillar II? And I heard a
18 lot answered some tough questions on our end, and I was
19 impressed. But I wonder, are you satisfied with the pace of
20 upgrades to Stirling that could support the increased
21 rotational presence of U.S. Virginia-class submarines?

22 Admiral Paparo: Sir, from a short shore power
23 standpoint, and from the capability that they have with a
24 tender and a marine security detachment, we could move
25 submarines to sterling today. That's been the progress at

1 Stirling. I laid eyes on it multiple times. The commitment
2 is there. The progress is there. The place where we have
3 to make the most progress is in the Defense Industrial Base
4 to deliver the capability. But, our partners in Australia,
5 UK, through Pillar I and Pillar II, you know, is that it's
6 been full throttle, it's now as much up to industry as
7 anything else to deliver.

8 Senator Kaine: Great message. Thanks.

9 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Kaine. Our two
10 Senators from Florida keep tripping over themselves trying
11 to defer to each other. I think the latest is that Senator
12 Scott is recognized.

13 Senator Scott: Thank you, Senator Moody. Admiral
14 Paparo, General Brunson, thanks for being here. Thanks to
15 the men and women that serve with you. So, thanks for
16 defending the freedom of this country.

17 So, I think we all travel, talk to allies, and here's
18 what I keep hearing: They want to buy our weapons, but the
19 FMS process has got a bunch of issues and they can't get the
20 weapons in a timely manner. I think part of it is
21 government, part of it's our defense prime fault. Can each
22 of you explain why it's so beneficial for our allies and
23 partners in the Indo-Pacific to buy American made military
24 equipment?

25 Admiral Paparo: Thank you, Senator Scott. It's the



1 interoperability of the capability and the absolute product
2 superiority of the weapons themselves. Those two factors;
3 the ability to fight and win today with each other, the
4 ability to interchange weapons so that we can gain the
5 flexibility of the of the magazines. And it's the fact that
6 American military commitment is the best in the world, and
7 it ain't even close.

8 Senator Scott: General Brunson.

9 General Brunson: Yes, sir. I would wholeheartedly
10 agree with that, from the human, technological, and
11 procedural interoperability that comes of buying that great
12 American equipment. It just makes our work a lot simpler,
13 and it ensures that we've got the right capabilities in
14 place.

15 Senator Scott: Do the current lead times for foreign
16 military sales hinder our ability to build capacity and
17 deter Communist China?

18 Admiral Paparo: Yes.

19 General Brunson: Yes, Senator.

20 Senator Scott: Given the recent deployment of the 31st
21 Marine Expeditionary Unit from INDOPACOM to CENTCOM Area of
22 Responsibility, how has this shift affected you and your
23 crisis response capacity in the Indo-Pacific?

24 Admiral Paparo: Well, we've accounted for it using
25 other marine expeditionary units. And so, you know, as



1 you'll know, a marine expeditionary unit is approximately
2 1,600 troops. But marine rotational force, Darwin has
3 responded, other MEUs, KMEF has responded. And so, between
4 III MEF and I MEF, we've been able to provide that combat
5 capability. 31st MEU is a seaborne power projection
6 capability that is designed as a flexible, worldwide
7 responsive force.

8 You know, the Marine Corps has accounted for that with
9 other ready forces out of -- first out of I MEF and out of
10 III MEF. And so, I don't view that there -- so, you know,
11 certainly from a seaborne crisis response force standpoint,
12 that force is also available as being inherently mobile in
13 times of crisis to move back into the Indo-Pacific. And
14 it's my job to identify the indications and warnings, and
15 place the demand signal if we need that. Our amphib
16 readiness is a driving factor for our seaborne readiness
17 crisis response capability with the Marine Corps, and we've
18 got to continue to pay close attention to our amphibious
19 force, and increase our number of amphibious ships and the
20 readiness of those ships.

21 Senator Scott: Thank you.

22 Admiral Paparo, in prior testimony, you said logistics
23 remained a critical challenge in the Indo-Pacific because of
24 long distances and widely distributed operations. So, is it
25 correct that the Pacific Air Forces are working with



1 innovative companies to demonstrate dual-use autonomous air
2 cargo operations in theater this year?

3 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. AFF works in coordination
4 with PACAF is doing experimentation, in order to be able to
5 put a 20-foot shipping container anywhere in the world,
6 employing unmanned capability. And we can't go fast enough
7 on that.

8 Senator Scott: Right. So, do you see a role for
9 aircraft autonomy for addressing logistics challenges going
10 forward?

11 Admiral Paparo: I see a role. I see it being
12 indispensable for the future.

13 Senator Scott: And how are we going to get this all
14 done?

15 Admiral Paparo: Well, I think innovating faster,
16 investing faster. I think that taking risk in our
17 investments risks in such a way that program failure means
18 that you can rededicate those monies to another vendor
19 that's able to do it. But cultivating a competitive
20 environment by allocating funds to innovative and
21 experimental companies, by getting the technical community
22 to rapidly grant the authority to operate to those
23 companies, and to trade our strategic risk by taking a
24 little bit of program risk, as we've done in the past.

25 Senator Scott: Well, thanks, both of you. And, again,

1 thank you, Senator Moody.

2 Chairman Wicker: Rapid-fire questions, and rapid-fire
3 answers. Senator Kelly.

4 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 So, Admiral Paparo, Congress right now is actively
6 considering my SHIPS for America Act alongside the
7 President's Maritime Action Plan, and this is to rebuild
8 U.S. commercial shipbuilding and shipbuilding capacity and
9 to strengthen our maritime industrial base, grow the
10 workforce. All those things I think we all recognize that
11 we need, and it's because of decades of decline in
12 commercial shipbuilding, which has created, in my view, a
13 national security risk. It's also weakened our ability to
14 build and sustain naval vessels.

15 With Senator Scott, you talked about Amphibs. So,
16 given that linkage, do you agree that revitalizing our
17 commercial maritime industrial base is essential to
18 strengthening Navy shipbuilding and reducing the delays in
19 delivering ships like Amphibs or another Virginia-class
20 submarine, et cetera. And how urgent is it that we make
21 these investments now to ensure that we can meet the demands
22 in the Indo-Pacific?

23 Admiral Paparo: Senator Kelly, good morning. I
24 strongly affirm that statement. U.S. overall commercial
25 shipbuilding is 0.1 percent of global capacity. China

1 enjoys over 50 percent of global shipbuilding capacity.
2 There's civil-military fusion system is how they've employed
3 so much more naval shipbuilding capacity. Having the
4 workforce that can move with alacrity from one type of ship
5 to another, just the basic trades regaining that is
6 absolutely essential for our defense in the 21st century.

7 Senator Kelly: Yeah. We need to train the welders,
8 pipefitters, electricians, but also have the companies that
9 supply pipes, and valves, and steel. If you have a bigger
10 overall maritime industry that's going to help us build
11 naval vessels.

12 Another topic I want to touch on, we talked a little
13 bit earlier today about Ukraine, and how it relates to the
14 Western Pacific in a fight with China, which I do not
15 believe is inevitable. I think we should do what we can to
16 avoid a conflict with a near-peer adversary, especially one
17 who has nuclear weapons with an arsenal that's growing.

18 The Ukrainians and the Russians have learned that
19 autonomous systems in a land war is very -- the key to
20 success. I was in a hospital in Ukraine about a year ago
21 and met with 10 injured soldiers. Nine of them were injured
22 because of FPVs. One had stepped on a landmine, which may
23 have been put there by a drone. So, drone warfare is where
24 the casualties are created in this war.

25 When you think about the Western Pacific, with islands

1 fighting from one island to the next, maybe eventually on
2 Taiwan, how do you think these systems will evolve to be
3 useful, and what should we be doing here at home? We're
4 certainly gaining, you know, gaining an education here. But
5 what should we be doing now to make sure we have the
6 autonomous systems that will work in a fight in the Western
7 Pacific.

8 Admiral Paparo: Senator, it's not just land warfare.
9 In addition to that point, it's assault warfare, which is
10 one power wants to take another power's land and subjugate
11 its citizens. And those principles of assault matter from
12 ground assault, air assault, airborne assault, amphibious
13 assault. And so, the lessons are all salient, which is that
14 you raise the cost of assault, which doctrinally is always 3
15 to 1. But the proliferation of mass cheap kill makes it
16 more like a 20 to 1, or a 100 to 1 ratio. And all things
17 being equal, if all sides are employed to their utmost, it
18 makes assault much more costly and favors the defender.

19 And so, we can't move fast enough in this meta trend.
20 And what characterizes it is not that it is unmanned, it is
21 that it's cheap. The unmannedness is what makes it cheap
22 kill. And so, you know what? I think, moving quickly,
23 innovating quickly, granting authorities quickly,
24 experimenting, taking risk by programming and by feeding
25 those industries, as it is in the 1.5 in, you know, in this

1 year's budget submission that I think that's the way ahead.

2 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Admiral.

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator
4 Sullivan.

5 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral,
6 General, good to see you both. Thank you for your great
7 service to our country, and your staffs, too. I know
8 they're doing all the hard work there, so appreciate that.

9 Admiral, I wanted to -- actually, General, and Admiral,
10 I wanted to follow on Senator Ernst's question on energy.
11 You know, my State, we're working on a huge LNG project.
12 We've been working on it for a number of years. We were the
13 first place anywhere in the world to export LNG. We started
14 exporting LNG to Japan in the late 1960s from Alaska. No
15 choke points, 6-day cargo shipment. There's a lot of
16 chokepoints around the world. The Panama Canal is one, too.
17 So, all the Gulf LNG. We get to Asia also. Takes a lot of
18 time.

19 You mentioned -- well, she asked you the question,
20 Senator, "Are we moving fast enough?" I liked your answer,
21 "We can never move fast enough." But would it help our
22 allies, and, of course, our military, that you're
23 responsible for, Admiral, in Alaska to have 150-to-100-year
24 supply, clean burning Alaska natural gas. We have one of
25 the largest reserves of natural gas on the north slope of



1 Alaska than anywhere on the planet.

2 But would it help to get that to our allies very soon.
3 Japan, Korea. Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, they're
4 all really interested in this project, and we're trying to
5 get the Federal Government, Federal agencies to focus on.
6 The President has made it a top strategic priority,
7 highlighted it in his State of the Union last year. How
8 would that help you?

9 Admiral Paparo: Senator Sullivan, good morning. It
10 would. First of all, we track the number of LNG reserves
11 among our Indo-Pacific partners, is in single and low
12 double-digit weeks --

13 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

14 Admiral Paparo: -- and LNG as a key critical element
15 of powering the societal resilience, the economic resilience
16 of tightening our partnerships across the security, energy,
17 trade, technology stack, and then to do so unfettered by
18 choke points that would-be adversaries could close where we
19 could do the picking and choosing of our partners to link
20 those things. All those would be greatly enhancing for
21 security in the Indo-Pacific.

22 Senator Sullivan: So, this project would literally be
23 like a virtual pipeline to Japan and Korea. You couldn't
24 touch it.

25 Admiral Paparo: And it would power economies. It



1 would power economies of the 21st century tigers such as
2 Vietnam --

3 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

4 Admiral Paparo: -- Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia.
5 It'd be a game changer.

6 Senator Sullivan: I had one of my colleagues talk
7 about this being the private sector, American energy counter
8 to the China Belt and Road Initiative. Would you agree with
9 that assessment?

10 Admiral Paparo: I would, yes, sir.

11 Senator Sullivan: So, you're a strong supporter of the
12 Alaska LNG project, I take it.

13 Admiral Paparo: Very strong supporter and of
14 maintaining the sea lines of communication in the North
15 Pacific --

16 Senator Sullivan: Great.

17 Admiral Paparo: -- including dominance.

18 Senator Sullivan: Good. I'm hoping the White House --
19 well, they're great on this, too. The Department of Energy,
20 everybody is seeing this is really important.

21 Let me turn to progress on basing, we've talked about
22 before, Admiral. Do you think we're overconcentrated on
23 Guam? I think the MILCON that we're looking at is about \$50
24 billion over the next 4 to 5 years. As you know, we were
25 able to get, your help was great, the reopening of the Adak



1 Naval Base out on the Aleutian Island chain, which just for
2 people who aren't familiar with that, that's 1,100 miles
3 west of Hawaii. How important is Adak to this idea of being
4 over concentrated in a place like Guam, and do we need to
5 distribute our forces more?

6 Admiral Paparo: I don't think we're over concentrated
7 on Guam. I think it's important we don't gold plate the
8 solution. I think it's an imperative to defend it. But I
9 don't think that it is the single point of power projection.
10 I think that there are -- you know, I see in the behavior of
11 our would-be adversaries, particularly together, direct
12 threats on Alaska as a key economic center of gravity for
13 the United States of America as a key point that they'd like
14 to attack. I see it as a different firing vector. And so,
15 over concentrated? No, I think we're under concentrated on
16 other areas.

17 Senator Sullivan: But how does Adak, reopening that,
18 help with regard to distributing our forces and having that
19 capacity, which we're now starting to build up because of
20 the Working Families Tax Cuts Act last year?

21 Admiral Paparo: You know, I -- well, Guam is a is a
22 closer firing position than Hawaii, San Diego, almost every
23 point in the Pacific --

24 Senator Sullivan: You mean Adak?

25 Admiral Paparo: Adak. Yeah, yeah, yeah. The



1 geography of it on the great circle route. If you look on a
2 non-Mercator map, it looks like it's way far away. But
3 geographically, you know, it's on par with Guam and other
4 firing positions. It's another vector of projection of
5 American power, and it's also another vector that our would-
6 be adversaries would like to strike.

7 Senator Sullivan: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Admiral Paparo: Sorry for the misspeak.

9 Senator Sullivan: No, that's okay.

10 Chairman Wicker: And thank you for the clarification.

11 Senator Peters.

12 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,
13 thank you for being here, and thank you for your service to
14 our country.

15 Admiral Paparo, you have often spoken about the
16 importance of allies and partners, and have highlighted the
17 critical role they play in supporting INDOPACOM. These
18 allies and partners have become even more important, with
19 INDOPACOM resources being shifted to the Middle East for the
20 ongoing war in Iran. So, my question for you, sir, is how
21 are you ensuring operations in Iran do not impact our
22 regional deterrence, including ongoing collaboration with
23 our regional allies and partners in the area, and how are
24 you ensuring we maintain these critical relationships during
25 a time of increased global insecurity?



1 Admiral Paparo: Good morning, Senator Peters. I think
2 our entrepreneurial approach to maintaining our operations,
3 our activities, our exercises with our Indo-Pacific partners
4 has been one key. And Balikpapan is an example where there
5 are 18,500-plus troops, 19,000 in the biggest Balikpapan
6 ever, in the way that we've been able to shift capabilities
7 around to maintain those operations and our exercises.
8 Japan is participating for the first time ever in Balikpapan,
9 and that's an example of our deepening alliances in our
10 partnerships.

11 Our Indo-Pacific allies are stepping up, from a
12 presence standpoint and the dynamic demonstration of combat
13 power. And then we continue to maintain, you know, a deep
14 reserve of ready-combat forces, including forces on Japan
15 and forces in San Diego, forces, in fact, all across the
16 western United States. You know, I'm not saying that
17 there's not been, you know, some INDOPACOM forces that have
18 gone and that, you know, it's nothing at all, but we have
19 been able to account for those forces that are in CENTCOM.
20 And there's no substitute for the combat experience, those
21 forces in CENTCOM are conducting. That's an advantage our
22 would-be adversaries do not have.

23 Senator Peters: Right, right. Well, thank you.

24 General Brunson, following the war with Iran, the DOD
25 has withdrawn THAAD Missile Defense Systems from the Korean



1 Peninsula, and has repositioned them to the Middle East.
2 This move was opposed by the Korean government, in part,
3 because they believe that it basically weakened deterrence
4 against North Korea. So, my question for you, sir, is how
5 do you assess the impact of moving these systems out of the
6 Korean Peninsula, and the resulting impact on your deterrent
7 strategy against North Korea?

8 General Brunson: Senator, thanks for the question.
9 We've not moved any THAAD systems. So, THAAD still remains
10 on the Peninsula. Currently, we are sending munitions
11 forward, and those are sitting right now waiting to move.

12 Senator Peters: Okay.

13 General Brunson: So, there were previous moves where
14 radars were taken forward. This was in advance of Midnight
15 Hammer. Some of those things have not come back yet, but
16 the THAAD systems themselves, sir, remain on Peninsula.

17 Senator Peters: And you expect them to remain there?

18 General Brunson: Sir?

19 Senator Peters: And you expect them to remain there?

20 General Brunson: Yes, Senator. We moved them around.
21 I think that's what got into the information space --

22 Senator Peters: Yeah, that's --

23 General Brunson: I was dynamically moving those around
24 so that I could then sequence them into Osan Air Base to
25 prepare them to move the munitions, and that caused a big



1 kerfuffle on the Peninsula.

2 Senator Peters: Well, good. So, then you clarified it
3 for everybody here today?

4 General Brunson: Yes, sir.

5 Senator Peters: Good. Thank you.

6 Admiral Paparo, as you know, the KC-46 refueling tanker
7 not only strengthens our ability to project power, despite
8 China's growing threats, but also the enhances our
9 interoperability with our partner nations as well. So, my
10 question for you is, given the sheer size of the Indo-
11 Pacific, how critical are KC-46 tankers for enabling these
12 operations? And with Japan now acquiring KC-46, how does
13 that shared platform enhance our operations in the region?

14 Admiral Paparo: Senator, at a classified level, you'd
15 be awed by how many millions of pounds of fuel we must have
16 airborne during our most pacing operations in order to
17 succeed in conflict. I applaud the Air Force's, you know,
18 accelerated acquisition of KC-46, reopening the line, and we
19 can't go fast enough.

20 Senator Peters: Great. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
21 Chairman.

22 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator Moody.

23 Senator Moody: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Admiral,
24 General, thank you for being here today, and for having so
25 much energy to get through all of this in one morning. I



1 guess that's no unique thing in the military. This is my
2 first open hearing as a member of this committee. It's
3 certainly an honor, and I am in awe of anyone that signs up
4 to make this their professional career and dedicate their
5 lives to this. The oldest boy in our family is has done
6 that, and I so respect you, and thank you.

7 I appreciated also the opportunity to meet with you
8 personally prior to today, and I hope you know I am here to
9 support your men, and women, and forces in whatever way you
10 need. Certainly, it's my hope that everyone on this
11 committee comes here with that intention. As I look to the
12 future of America's military, I know much of what we're
13 trying to do now is align our military power with our
14 industrial and innovation base here at home. I think you
15 said that is something that we should prioritize and that
16 moving forward to keep pace with innovation and technology,
17 we have to do that.

18 My question for you is, and I wholly support that, I
19 see that this our President and this administration has
20 placed an emphasis on that, and has stood ready to support
21 that. Is that what you think we must do to keep pace with
22 China, and what ranks equal to that in prioritization to do
23 that?

24 Admiral Paparo: Senator, I -- you know, I think the
25 extent to which in the early 1990s is that the defense space



1 went into the defense space and left some of the commercial
2 spaces. I think that was a -- I don't want to call it a
3 strategic error, but it was a strategic accident in the way
4 that it used to be that commercial and military integration
5 was a key strength and each fed off of each other. So,
6 refinding that connection between civilian innovation and
7 military innovation, I think, is really key and essential in
8 this changing character of warfare while we meet the
9 strategic moment with the changing technical environment,
10 the technical revolution that we're living in now at this
11 time. And then having a military that is the most tech
12 savvy military in the world is going to be a key competitive
13 advantage.

14 Senator Moody: In addition to trying to bring
15 innovation and industrialization back to the homeland, this
16 administration, and certainly many of us on this committee,
17 also are eager to see and are valuing more of our both
18 formal and informal allies throughout the world, stepping
19 up, being more players in ensuring peace and stability
20 throughout the world. I think watching what's happening in
21 the theater under your command, I think watching what some
22 of our allies and partners are doing in that region where
23 they're responding more actively asserting sovereignty,
24 pushing back against coercive action, certainly as it
25 relates to China encroaching upon some territorial waters.



1 Are you noticing that happening more? Do you think there
2 are things that we can do in Congress or even with your --
3 within the military to encourage more of that?

4 Admiral Paparo: Senator, I do see increasing
5 cooperation. One of these examples is Japan's active member
6 participation in Balikatan. The fact that Japan is actively
7 participating in a Philippine exercise that affirms its
8 ability to defend itself, this reciprocal access agreements
9 that Japan has made with Australia, the growing
10 relationships in every exercise program, including with
11 Indonesia in Super Garuda Shield in Malaysia with Carrier
12 Strike and Bersama Warrior throughout the theater. We see
13 the partnerships nation to nation are growing.

14 Certainly, our role at Indo-Pacific Command is one to
15 cultivate that, but we're frequently very pleasantly
16 surprised at the nation-to-nation connections that they're
17 making in and of themselves, and rightly so, because each is
18 a sovereign and each lives in the neighborhood, and those
19 are relationships that go back centuries.

20 Senator Moody: Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr.
21 Chairman.

22 Chairman Wicker: Admiral, thank you for your answer
23 there. And, Senator Moody, thank you for directing our
24 attention to that aspect of what we need to consider. Let
25 me also just observe -- welcome to the committee, and let me

1 observe that looking down the dais, Senator Slotkin, and
2 looking down the dais at you, Senator Moody, it seems to me
3 that only a month or two ago, I was down there at the end of
4 that dais and here I am in this capacity. So, thank you
5 very, very much. And with that, I recognize Senator
6 Slotkin.

7 Senator Slotkin: Thank you, Chairman, and welcome to
8 Senator Moody. Happy to have you on the committee. Admiral
9 Paparo, thank you for everything you do. You're one of our
10 country's greatest experts on Asia and on China.

11 I'm thinking about the summit that's about to happen in
12 a month, huge summit between President Trump and Xi Jinping.
13 And I'm having -- I'm personally struggling with what our
14 policy and our plan is going into that summit. And just to
15 review the bidding, we put tariffs on a whole bunch of
16 things. At one point, we had more tariffs on Canada than we
17 did on China. On Ag, China used to be our biggest purchaser
18 of soybeans, now we're approving billions of dollars to bail
19 out U.S. farmers.

20 Unfair trade practices, which we know China is legend
21 for, there's been zero moves made to hold them accountable.
22 On technology, we've given China our most sophisticated AI
23 chips, chips that our own American companies are desperate
24 to get their hands on. We've picked a fight with Anthropic,
25 which is our most advanced AI tools embedded in DOD systems,

1 when we're in the middle of a really important AI race with
2 China. We've cut plans to impose sanctions on China for
3 Salt Typhoon for cyberattack. We've cut research and
4 development in our universities while China is surging
5 ahead. And now, we're headed to the summit.

6 So, I will admit that I am concerned about what we're
7 going to offer and get from this summit. And in particular,
8 I'm from Michigan, so we're watching. You know, the
9 President came to Detroit in January and said out loud in
10 Detroit that, you know, it might be time to allow Chinese
11 vehicles to be sold in the United States. A bit of an
12 earthquake in my State.

13 So, I've asked General Austin this years ago because I
14 am really concerned for the national security implications
15 of having Chinese vehicles with all the data, and all the
16 surveillance, and all the cameras, and all the 3D mapping,
17 all that stuff sent back to Beijing. So, I'd just like to
18 ask you from a security perspective, would you want an
19 adversarial nation to have high fidelity 3D maps of every
20 military base and installation in the United States?

21 Admiral Paparo: No, Senator, we should do everything
22 in our power to prevent that.

23 Senator Slotkin: Would you want your adversary -- I'm
24 just thinking about war planning from being at the Pentagon,
25 you know, the data we like to have on an adversary when we

1 do war planning. Would you want an adversary to have maps,
2 3D, high fidelity maps of every power plant, port, highway,
3 and bridge in America?

4 Admiral Paparo: No, Senator, I'm sure they're working
5 towards that.

6 Senator Slotkin: Would you want an adversary be able
7 to hack cars in the United States and remotely pilot them
8 from Beijing?

9 Admiral Paparo: No, Senator.

10 Senator Slotkin: Would you want an adversary to be
11 able to conduct cyber espionage through any phone, any
12 Bluetooth device into a vehicle in the United States?

13 Admiral Paparo: Neither a vehicle nor anything else.

14 Senator Slotkin: You get my point. I mean, I know
15 this isn't your area of expertise, but I will say, from a
16 national security perspective, let alone an economic
17 security perspective, we are watching the potential deals
18 that this President is going to make in that summit with
19 deep concern, and it is not missed anyone's notice that some
20 of the biggest investors in the Chinese firms are, you know,
21 big American investors, Berkshire Hathaway, big whatever.

22 And so, we are, we are very concerned that in the
23 hustle and bustle to make deals, we are going to give away
24 the farm. We're going to give away security issues here in
25 the United States. So, I just wanted to get one of our

1 Nation's experts on record on the national security
2 implications. I think it's like a driving surveillance
3 package. I think they are chomping at the bit to get access
4 to the United States of America and map every corner of this
5 country, and have geolocation on every leader in this
6 country, and I just wanted to raise that to the attention.

7 We have a bill coming up in NDAA just to ban Chinese
8 vehicles from any sensitive military location as a bare
9 minimum. But I would say my first bill in this body was to
10 ban Chinese cars from ever being sold here, and I pray that
11 that is not where we are going from a national security
12 perspective in less than a month. So, thank you for your
13 time, and I yield back.

14 Chairman Wicker: Senator Cotton.

15 Senator Cotton: Welcome, Admiral, General. Thank you
16 for being here. And thanks for your service, and the men
17 and women you represent.

18 Admiral, I know there's been a lot of conversation
19 today about our munitions and the effect that the Iran war
20 is having on it. But in reality, it's not just the Iran
21 war, and that's only lasted for 7 weeks. We've been
22 supporting Ukraine now for 4 years, and some critics of that
23 effort had cited the munitions challenges we have as well.
24 But isn't it fair to say that neither Ukraine nor Iran
25 caused the munitions challenges we have, but rather exposed

1 just how brittle our Defense Industrial Base is and why it's
2 so important to rebuild it rapidly.

3 Admiral Paparo: I acknowledge and agree with you.
4 It's most of our problems are our own.

5 Senator Cotton: So, in a hypothetical world where you
6 never had Operation Epic Fury, or Midnight Hammer, or for
7 that matter, you didn't have Vladimir Putin's second
8 invasion of Ukraine, it might not have been exposed, but our
9 Defense Industrial Base, especially when it comes to
10 munitions production, would have still had those underlying
11 challenges. It just might not have been focused on quite so
12 much.

13 Admiral Paparo: I agree, Senator.

14 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

15 On Taiwan, I know you talked with Senator Shaheen about
16 their defense budget. There's also the question about
17 national resolve. What's your -- I mean, that's a hard
18 thing to judge, and it's more a question of political
19 judgment and statecraft than it is military matters. But
20 what's your sense as a career military man of Taiwan and
21 their willingness to go to the mattresses to defend their
22 nation?

23 Admiral Paparo: I have a great deal of faith in
24 Taiwan's military-age population's willingness, capability,
25 and will to defend themselves. Orders of magnitude above



1 others.

2 Senator Cotton: I was going to ask you to name the
3 others, but I guess that would be impolitic, so I won't ask
4 you to do that.

5 Admiral Paparo: Well, what I'll say is that Ukraine
6 demonstrated relatively no low numbers in polling pre-
7 conflict, and they've responded as admirably as a society
8 can. Taiwan's polling is orders of magnitude above that,
9 leading me to positively assert their willingness to defend
10 themselves.

11 Senator Cotton: Just common sense, like you don't have
12 to have access to that kind of data. Just I think common
13 sense would say, if you're sitting in Taiwan and you're a
14 mom or dad, and you're worried about your sons or daughters,
15 future grandma or grandpa, and you look at what Communist
16 China has done, and say, Macau and Hong Kong, once they gain
17 control of those territories, you wouldn't want them to gain
18 control of your territory. Is that correct?

19 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir.

20 Senator Cotton: Does the military have full and proper
21 focus on that threat? You know, for us, we're a globe-
22 spanning superpower, and Bob Gates once testified in this
23 committee after he had left the Department and was probably
24 a bit more free to speak, that we have a perfect -- almost
25 perfect record of predicting our next war since Vietnam. We



1 gotten it wrong every single time, whether it was Grenada or
2 Panama, or Iraq, the first or second time, or the Balkans,
3 Ukraine, what have you. That's why our military plans for
4 so many different contingencies, why we have guys up in
5 Arctic warfare school, or in jungle warfare school, or in
6 desert warfare school.

7 Obviously, if you're Taiwan's military, from the time
8 you raise your hand to enlist as a private to the time
9 you're the chief of defense, there is one and only one
10 military contingency that you should be thinking about and
11 planning for. Does our military have that kind of single-
12 minded focus in your assessment?

13 Admiral Paparo: I do see that in their military, and I
14 think that they're working really hard, and I'm seeing
15 success in their building, the kind of operational concepts
16 that will lead for them to be successful in thwarting an
17 invasion.

18 Senator Cotton: Okay. And, I know, again, you talked
19 Senator Shaheen about the Defense budget. The leader of the
20 opposition recently took a trip to Communist China. A
21 pretty chummy trip, if you ask me. Does that raise concerns
22 with you? I don't expect you to comment on the domestic
23 internal politics of Taiwan, but about the direction of
24 defense spending in the future.

25 Admiral Paparo: I think the proof will be in the

1 pudding. The passage of the special defense budget will
2 tell us how committed they are.

3 Senator Cotton: All right. Thank you, gentlemen.

4 Admiral Paparo: Thank you, Senator.

5 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Cotton.
6 Senator Rosen.

7 Senator Rosen: Thank you, Chairman, Ranking Member
8 Reed, for holding this hearing. Of course, General,
9 Admiral, good to see you both. And we just recently were
10 hosted in your beautiful office, and thank you for that, and
11 thank you both for your service to the country.

12 I know we're focused a lot on China, and I just want to
13 focus a little bit for a second on their cyber threats. So,
14 Admiral Paparo, as you stated in our recent meeting, the
15 cyber threat landscape in the Indo-Pacific is increasingly
16 complex. China is emerging as a significant and evolving
17 actor in the cyber domain. So, as we look to enhance our
18 posture and partnerships in the critical region, it's
19 essential we understand the scope of Chinese activities, and
20 how we can effectively counter their influence, particularly
21 when it comes to cyber threats, disinformation rampant, and
22 the targeting of infrastructure.

23 So, Admiral, how do you assess the Chinese cyber
24 threats, their capabilities? How's INDOPACOM working to
25 expand your Mil-to-Mil cyber security cooperation with our



1 regional allies and partners to defend against, I guess, an
2 all-of-the-above attack from the PRC secretion.

3 Admiral Paparo: Good morning, Senator Rosen. Cyber is
4 the first battle, and, in fact, you know, we're engaged in
5 cyber. The PRC are engaged in cyber operations worldwide.
6 And that includes not just Salt Typhoon and Vault Typhoon.
7 From a Mil-to-Mil standpoint, our essential operations where
8 exposing the PRC's Penetration of our allies and partners is
9 really key, and then assisting them in closing those
10 vulnerabilities. And it's very important for the allied
11 force moving forward that we're operating under the
12 conditions of operational security, and cyber is the biggest
13 vulnerability on that.

14 Senator Rosen: Could you expand on their cyber-enabled
15 disinformation that they use to sway the regional allies and
16 shape the South China Sea narrative?

17 Admiral Paparo: United front is absolutely unfettered,
18 and in the way in the United States of America, the
19 government is constrained to the truth and the press is
20 free. In the PRC, the press is constrained, and the
21 government is free to lie, and they spread lies about the
22 United States, about our allies, and partners, and their
23 political enemies worldwide. They are active, and that's
24 all over the theater, and, in fact, all over the world.

25 Senator Rosen: They have a lot to do in that regard.



1 I'm going to ask my next question to both of you a little
2 bit about the INDOPACOM strategy, because the 2026 National
3 Defense Strategy removes the designation of the Indo-Pacific
4 as a priority theater, and no longer refers to China as the
5 pacing challenge, placing increased emphasis on the Western
6 Hemisphere instead. Compounded with the ongoing military
7 operations in other theaters, it raises concerns, of course,
8 that the resources and attention required to maintain
9 stability in the INDOPACOM Area of Responsibility, but that
10 they're being diverted elsewhere, degrading our U.S. and
11 allies' readiness in the Pacific.

12 So, I'm going to ask this, to both of you, for the
13 short time that I have left, what do you assess the Chinese
14 and North Koreans are learning about the U.S. military and
15 our military strategy from Operation Epic Fury. And what
16 challenges does that face for us as we think about the NDAA
17 and what we have to maybe readjust? For to both of you,
18 please.

19 Admiral Paparo: Senator, I'll offer that the National
20 Defense Strategy notes that deterring China is the second
21 line of effort right behind defending the homeland. And so,
22 I will say that the Department is focused on a denial
23 defense starting at the First Island chain. And the
24 Department of Defense is focused on deterring Chinese
25 aggression. So, I'll say that, and, you know, our alliances

1 and partnerships, these alliances and partnerships continue
2 on a growth trajectory, really across the Indo-Pacific,
3 including North American and our Canadian partners. And so,
4 you know, I'm -- and our operations elsewhere are accounted
5 for with some entrepreneurial creativity, and foreign now.
6 You know, I don't see any real cost being imposed on our
7 ability to deter China. And I -- you know, I'm sorry to
8 take exception with the statement, but the four pillars of
9 the NDS, I really do see --

10 Senator Rosen: I guess my question was more -- and
11 we'll give a moment for General Brunson -- was more what do
12 you think as we're in a war right now, our adversaries are
13 learning about us, our capabilities, and our strategies, and
14 how will that change the plan? But I only have a few seconds
15 --

16 Admiral Paparo: I'm sorry that --

17 Senator Rosen: -- so I wanted to give a moment to
18 General Brunson.

19 Chairman Wicker: Go ahead.

20 General Brunson: Ma'am, as we look at our friends,
21 partners, and allies in the region, one of the things that I
22 think is absolutely noteworthy is where we set. So, you
23 were just in Korea. We sit right there with our partners,
24 right there with our ally to be more exact. And what that
25 gives us is an opportunity to absolutely demonstrate to them



1 every day by our continued involvement with them, settling
2 disputes face to face by having our officers inside their
3 headquarters, planning alongside them for the defense of
4 that land.

5 And so, I think that you could look at the document.
6 You also don't have the secure or secret annex to that. You
7 could just take that at its face, but I think our presence
8 means so much more. If you look at the triangle of mutual
9 defense treaties in and around the Pacific, and Japan,
10 Korea, and the Philippines we're there, and I think that
11 speaks abundantly and makes abundantly clear what it means
12 to us to be allied alongside folk in the region. And we're
13 a buttress, we're a hedge, a true hedge against the coercion
14 that's there, because we're paying into the things that are
15 going on in the region.

16 Senator Rosen: Thank you.

17 Admiral Paparo: Can I have a re-attack on whether --

18 Senator Rosen: It's up to the chairman, if he'll give
19 you some more --

20 Admiral Paparo: -- so I can give the Senator an
21 answer.

22 Chairman Wicker: No, Admiral Paparo --

23 Admiral Paparo: Okay, okay.

24 Chairman Wicker: -- I'm not going to -- yes, yes, go
25 ahead.



1 [Laughter.]

2 Admiral Paparo: Thank you. One, they're impressed by
3 the operational acumen that's being demonstrated by the
4 Joint Force. Number two, they see the power of AI and
5 intelligized warfare, as they call it, as a 21st century
6 advantage. They're right to see that. And then, I think
7 they see the power of unmanned technology as an imposer of
8 costs, and we see the same thing. And I'm really sorry for
9 giving you a non-answer when you asked.

10 Senator Rosen: Oh, no, that's fine. We're just
11 thinking about what we have to plan for in this NDAA, and
12 just want to be focused on some lessons we might be learning
13 now. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Chairman Wicker: Senator Rosen, I think you'll agree
15 that actually the answers from both of these witnesses have
16 been very open and candid, and we appreciate that.

17 Senator Rosen: I do agree. Thank you.

18 Chairman Wicker: Senator Banks.

19 Senator Banks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Admiral, let's pick up on what you just said. Pick up
21 from there. Can you be more specific and talk about how the
22 PLA is using artificial intelligence to enhance its military
23 capability?

24 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. At this level, I think they
25 see AI's power from a marketing standpoint. Mass data



1 analytics to quickly discern where the target is given the
2 covariance among all the factors that come into various
3 sensors. I think they see the power of AI for strategic
4 decision-making, to know the game that you're playing, to be
5 able to suss out what an adversary's intentions are. I
6 think they're right to see that. And whoever masters that
7 technology, and more importantly, the adoption of that
8 capability, is the one that's going to have the offset
9 advantage in the 21st century.

10 Senator Banks: Can you measure what -- do they have an
11 edge on us? I mean, have you measured them versus us when
12 it came to comes to AI with military capabilities?

13 Admiral Paparo: I think the United States has product
14 superiority in agentic tools and as well as LLM tools. I
15 think the United States has product superiority in compute,
16 which powers those. I think the PRC has got some key
17 advantages in robotics, and we've got to move faster. And
18 those robotics can be employed for cheap, at scale kill
19 capabilities, and we have to increase our game on that. And
20 I think that our lead is a tenuous lead of 6 months to 12
21 months at the most. And we've got to maintain and advance
22 that lead with an emphasis on data, on compute, on
23 application, including AI application, and most importantly,
24 on human adoption.

25 Senator Banks: So, that's really concerning,

1 especially coming from you, because no one in the world
2 understands all of this stuff and how important it is than
3 you do. And I take it from that, that you would agree that
4 AI is a dual-use technology that enables military power?

5 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir, I do.

6 Senator Banks: How big of a strategic advantage is it
7 for the U.S. to have more and better high-end ships than
8 China does to develop our AI?

9 Admiral Paparo: This is at the heart of compute. High
10 end chips enable fast compute at lower sources of energy at
11 greater volumes. High end chips is Moore's Law personified,
12 and having that advantage is an absolute critical pillar of
13 those capabilities.

14 Senator Banks: Maybe dial this down for us and explain
15 a little bit more why that's the case.

16 Admiral Paparo: You know, the complexity, the short
17 distance of compute in the exchange of electrons makes our
18 chips faster, able to compute more data faster at lower
19 energy levels. It increases the efficiency of our
20 computers. It enables us to compute faster, and at higher
21 volumes, and at lower energy requirements. It's a key
22 critical advantage that along with data and then the
23 software and firmware applications that pile on top of it.
24 We've got to maintain our lead on that, including our AI
25 tools, both our large language models and our agentic models



1 at frontier AI.

2 Senator Banks: So, take that a step further. What
3 would happen if our advantage was eroded by the Chinese
4 getting access to advanced chips that they otherwise don't
5 have access to, that they can't produce domestically? How
6 would that impact us, militarily in this AI competition that
7 we have with China?

8 Admiral Paparo: Increasing with AI, the ability to
9 compute better and faster is the ability to think better and
10 faster. And every other form of warfare, whether it is
11 drone warfare, missile warfare, all of those forms of
12 warfare are commoditized. And so, the overarching factor
13 around all of it is compute and decision superiority.
14 That's the combination of our ability to compute and the
15 ability of our ability to adapt.

16 Senator Banks: I want to be really clear about this.
17 If the PLA has access to more advanced AI, it would likely
18 improve its warfighting capabilities, as you just said, at
19 the expense of American service members --

20 Admiral Paparo: Yes, Senator.

21 Senator Banks: -- in the event of a conflict.

22 Admiral Paparo: I associate myself directly with that
23 comment. Not likely, undoubtedly.

24 Senator Banks: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you, again,
25 for being candid, and for your leadership, and all that.

1 General, thank you for your service as well. I yield back.

2 Chairman Wicker: And, thank you, Senator Banks, for
3 that line of questioning. I want to thank both of our
4 witnesses. And also, I want to thank the team of servicemen
5 and civilian leadership seated behind you for their service
6 to our country.

7 This has been a very good hearing. Feel free and feel
8 encouraged to supplement your answers on the record, if you
9 so choose. And I think we will ask for questions for the
10 record to be due within 2 business days of the conclusion of
11 this hearing, which occurs right now.

12 [The information referred to follows:]

13 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



1 Chairman Wicker: We are adjourned.

2 [Whereupon, at 11:47 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

