COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE UNITED STATES
INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES FORCES
KOREA IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020 AND THE FUTURE YEARS
DEFENSE PROGRAM

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

Washington, D.C.

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HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

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U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:29 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James M. Inhofe, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe [presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Perdue, Cramer, McSally, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Manchin, Duckworth, and Jones.
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. INHOFE, U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA


The Senate Armed Services Committee's top priority is to ensure the effective implementation of the National Defense Strategy. That means we need urgent change at a significant scale to address the challenges of strategic competition with China. Our military advantage and deterrent edge in the Indo-Pacific is eroding. The Chinese Communist Party leadership in Beijing senses weaknesses. They are testing our resolve, and if we do not act urgently, they may soon conclude that they can achieve their goals through force. We can't take peace for granted.

Admiral Davidson, I look forward to hearing from you about the strengthening of the deterrence in the Indo-Pacific; in other words, how we and our allies can achieve the capabilities, capacity, and posture necessary to prevent a war by convincing Beijing that it cannot win.

General Abrams, as another U.S.-North Korea summit approaches, I look forward to hearing from you on how we ensure that our military is prepared to add strength to our diplomacy to deter conflict and when, if necessary.
Finally, I hope today's hearing will serve as a reminder that one of the greatest sources of American power are our alliances and our partnerships. Whether it's strategic competition with China or addressing the threat posed by North Korea, America cannot do this alone. Strategic success in the Indo-Pacific simply is not possible without allies who share our values and our interests and who share our burden of our common security. And I think those of us that are together in the South China Sea know exactly what this means.

Senator Reed.
Senator Reed: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me join you in welcoming our witnesses today and thank them for their distinguished service to the nation. You are both leading commands during very challenging times. We thank you for your continued service, and also, we would ask that you'd extend our thanks and gratitude to the men and women under your commands who each day sacrifice and serve the nation, and their families, also.

I'd first like to address the current situation on the Korean Peninsula. General Abrams, you've been in command now for approximately 90 days. I look forward to hearing from you about the readiness of our forces and how you are mitigating the effects of the modification and suspension and cancellation of our joint exercises with the Republic of Korea's forces. I am concerned that if we continue in this vein, we will begin to experience a serious deterioration of the readiness of the joint forces. While I acknowledge the suspension of exercises has created diplomatic space for negotiations with North Korea, I do not believe there has been sufficient progress on the denuclearization front to justify the reduction in readiness.

I'm also not optimistic that the upcoming second summit between President Trump and Kim Jong-un will yield
substantial gains in the denuclearization of North Korea. For example, without a declaration of all nuclear and missile sites and programs, I do not think there will be a sufficient roadmap to move toward complete and verifiable, irreversible denuclearization.

I'm also concerned that President Trump may consider withdrawing troops on the Korean Peninsula as a result of some agreement he reaches with North Korea. That action would significantly undermine regional security and our ability to fulfill our treaty obligations to South Korea.

United States and South Korea recently concluded negotiations on the Special Measures Agreement in which South Korea agreed to substantially increase its financial support for our troops. The Special Measures Agreement reflects how much of a share South Korea pays for the burden of housing our troops on the peninsula. In addition to the Special Measures Agreement, South Korea has also spent approximately $10 billion to build Camp Humphreys, the largest overseas U.S. military base. We need to acknowledge the extraordinary financial support South Korea provides to the alliance and continue to recognize that our alliances with Japan and South Korea are the cornerstone of regional security in the INDOPACOM region. At the end of the day, the preservation of our alliances is critical in countering the very real threats that we face from North Korea and to
counter Chinese coercive activities in the region.

Now, Admiral Davidson, while North Korea presents the immediate challenge to our forces in the region, China presents the most significant long-term strategic threat that this country has faced in many, many years. China's Belt and Road Initiative has left several countries, notably Sri Lanka and Malaysia, severely indebted to China. Beijing often targets corrupt local governments that personally profit from inflated loans but leave their state treasuries bankrupt and beholden to President Xi's administration. It is an economic initiative with significant national security implications for the United States.

Countering Chinese aggression globally will require us to rely on our partners and allies to a greater degree in the decades to come. Funding for programs like International Military Education and Training, or IMET, and Foreign Military Finance, or FMF, are crucial in the INDOPACOM area. Bolstering the ability of team partners like Vietnam and the Philippines to monitor and defend their territorial waters through funding from the Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative will create more regional security and stability and protect freedom of navigation for all nations in the region, regardless of size.

The United States needs to recognize the work of allies like Australia who are enabling small Pacific nation states
in Oceania so they can counter China's predatory economic behavior. United States must also continue its support of the states represented in the Compact of Free Association between United States and Micronesia, Palau, and the Marshall Islands. It's clear that China is targeting these Pacific islands in an effort to increase its influence and diminish ours.

Admiral Davidson, we have not yet seen the President's budget request, but I hope that it will align with the National Defense Strategy and reflect real DOD investments in the Indo-Pacific region. I also hope it reflects the resources needed for the whole-of-government approach that we need to counter China in the long run. As the Commission on the National Defense Strategy noted, if we don't ensure adequate funding for critical national security functions beyond the Department of Defense, the -- in their words -- "United States will be at a competitive disadvantage and will remain ill-equipped to preserve its security and its global interests amid intensifying challenges."

One other point I'd like to make is that we're all, I think, alarmed by President Xi's brutal crackdown on the Uighurs in the west and the bellicose statements about Taiwan. These present serious human rights problems for the international community, and as a global leader for human rights, we have to call out China on these issues. We must
also never lose focus on the fact that it is our values, 
especially our devotion to human rights and democratic 
principles, that resonates so well around the globe and 
enhances our military power.

Again, thank you to our witnesses for their service. I 
look forward to your testimony.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

Admiral Davidson, we'll start with you for an opening 
statement. Your entire statement will be made a part of the 
record, but give us your overview.
STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL PHILIP S. DAVIDSON, USN
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

Admiral Davidson: Good morning, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear with General Abrams before you today to discuss the Indo-Pacific region. I am joined by Sergeant Major Anthony Spadaro, my senior enlisted advisor who represents the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines in the Indo-Pacific area of operations. I'm most grateful for his service in the headquarters.

First, let me say thank you for the significant support we have received from Congress over the last two years. The temporary relief from the Budget Control Act and an on-time Fiscal Year 2019 budget has helped to relieve pressure to military readiness and has added to the lethality necessary to safeguard U.S. vital national interests in the Indo-Pacific. But there is indeed more work to do.

When I took command of INDOPACOM nearly nine months ago, I said that for more than 70 years the Indo-Pacific has been largely peaceful. This was made possible by two things: the willingness and commitment of free nations to work together for a free and open Indo-Pacific and the credibility of the combat power within U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. This commitment and this credibility have worked
to liberate hundreds of millions of people and lift billions out of poverty in those seven decades, all to a level of prosperity previously unseen in human history. Today, the concept of a free and open Indo-Pacific resonates with our allies and partners across the region and includes economic, political, and security dimensions, and it demonstrates our commitment to a safe, secure, and prosperous region that benefits all nations, large and small.

As the primary military component of the United States' efforts to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific, USINDOPACOM works with the rest of the U.S. government and a constellation of like-minded allies and partners to advance our shared vision. When we say "free," we mean free both in terms of security -- free from coercion by other nations and in terms of values and political systems. Free to choose trading partners. Free to exercise sovereignty.

An open Indo-Pacific means we believe all nations should enjoy unfettered access to the seas and airways upon which all nations' economies depend. Open includes open investment environments, transparent agreements between nations, protection of intellectual property rights, and fair and reciprocal trade, all of which are essential for people, goods, and capital to move across borders for the benefit of all.

While the term "free and open Indo-Pacific" is new, the
underlying values and principles to which the vision speaks to are not. In fact, this is how the United States has approached the region throughout our 240-plus-year history. But there are indeed challenges to this shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. There are five key challenges that I believe challenge our national interest and the rules-based international order.

While we have made significant progress over the past year, North Korea remains the most immediate challenge. I'm optimistic about the upcoming U.S.-North Korea summit later this month as we work toward identifying the path to final, fully-verifiable denuclearization as agreed upon by President Trump and Chairman Kim at their 2018 Singapore summit.

Our military combat readiness and combined lethality are the best deterrents against any threat from North Korea, so I will continue to emphasize military readiness while simultaneously supporting the U.S. Department of State-led pressure campaign. I should add, the U.S. and Republic of Korea alliance has become the linchpin of peace and security in Northeast Asia and for the long-term in the Pacific region and demonstrates what great democracies can accomplish when we work together.

Back to our challenges. China represents our greatest long-term strategic threat to a free and open Indo-Pacific
and to the United States. Those who believe this is reflective of an intensifying competition between an established power in the United States and a rising power in China are not seeing the whole picture. Rather, I believe we are facing something even more serious: a fundamental divergence in values that leads to two incompatible visions of the future. Through fear and coercion, Beijing is working to expand its form of ideology in order to bend, break, and replace the existing rules-based international order. In its place, Beijing seeks to create a new order, one with Chinese characteristics, led by China, an outcome that displaces the stability and peace of the Indo-Pacific that has endured for over 70 years.

I'm also concerned about the growing malign influence of Russia throughout the region. Moscow regularly plays the role of spoiler, seeking to undermine U.S. interests and impose additional costs on the United States and our allies whenever and wherever possible. Terrorism and other non-state actors also pose threats to our vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific as they seek to impose their views and radicalize people across the region, as evidenced in 2017 when ISIS captured the southern Philippine city of Marawi, a city of more than 200,000 people.

Lastly, the Indo-Pacific remains the most disaster-prone region in the world. It contains 75 percent of the
Earth's volcanoes, and 90 percent of earthquakes occur in the Ring of Fire that surround the Pacific Basin. The UN estimates economic losses in the region due to disasters could exceed $160 billion annually by 2030, and many countries across the region lack sufficient capability and the capacity to manage natural and man-made disasters.

To address all of the challenges I mentioned, USINDOPACOM is focused on regaining our competitive military advantage over the short- and long-term. We must field and sustain a joint force that is postured for two distinct security rules: to win before fighting and, if necessary, to be ready to fight and win. USINDOPACOM's ability to prevail in armed conflict is the foundation of combat-credible deterrence. By fielding and maintaining a joint force ready to fight and win, we reduce the likelihood that any adversary will resort to military aggression to challenge or undermine the rules-based international order.

This deterrence is absolutely necessary to prevent conflict, but deterrence alone cannot insure a free and open Indo-Pacific. Our adversaries are pursuing their objectives in the space between peace and war, using fear and coercive actions across all of their instruments of national power to revise the rules-based international order without resorting to armed conflict. Alongside like-minded allies and partners, USINDOPACOM, and the whole of the U.S. government,
we must compete in the gray zone between peace and war to
win before fighting. These deliberate actions will ensure a
free and open Indo-Pacific against those malign actors that
seek to accomplish their political objectives short of armed
conflict.

I want to thank this committee for your continued
support of the men and women of USINDOPACOM and for your
efforts in helping us ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.
Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Davidson follows:]
Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Admiral Davidson.

General Abrams.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL ROBERT B. ABRAMS, USA COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND/COMBINED FORCES COMMAND/UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

General Abrams: Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today.

I've had the privilege to serve in this position for just over 90 days. In that short time, I have assessed the ROK-U.S. military alliance to be stronger than ever. Our combined force is a strategic deterrent, postured to respond to potential crisis or provocation and, if called upon, ready to defend the Republic of Korea and our allies in the region.

Today in Korea, we have tremendous opportunities before us as well as some great challenges. Ongoing diplomatic engagement between the Republic of Korea, the DPRK, and the United States has led to a significant reduction in tension compared to the recent past marked by missile launches and nuclear tests. Diplomacy is creating the opportunity for North Korea to choose the path of denuclearization, forge a lasting peace, and build a better future for its people.

The first steps towards realizing that future have already begun. We have witnessed multiple presidential summits, inter-Korean dialogue, and international support to sanctions. The steps agreed to at Panmunjom and specified...
in the Comprehensive Military Agreement, combined with the
aforementioned diplomatic efforts, have all contributed to a
marked reduction in tensions on the peninsula and created
mechanisms for the development of cooperation and confidence
building, central ingredients to the incremental process of
making history on the peninsula.

Still, I remain clear-eyed about the fact that, despite
a reduction in tensions along the DMZ and a cessation of
strategic provocations, coupled with public statements of
intent to denuclearize, little to no verifiable change has
occurred in North Korea's military capabilities.

For instance, we are watching the ongoing Korean
People's Army Winter Training Cycle, including a slate of
full-spectrum exercises, which is progressing along at
historic norms, meaning that we have observed no significant
changes to size, scope, or timing of their ongoing exercises
compared to the same time period over the last four years.

Further, North Korea's conventional and asymmetric military
capabilities, along with their continued development of
advanced conventional systems, remains unchecked. These
capabilities continue to hold the United States, the
Republic of Korea, and our regional allies at risk. As
such, I believe it is necessary to maintain a postured and
ready force to deter any possible aggressive actions.

Fielding our force in Korea requires a foundation of
support and sustainment to meet our war-fighters' needs.

Today, that foundation is sound. It serves as the bedrock from which we deter aggression and ensure stability, not only on the Korean Peninsula, but in Northeast Asia. Our posture allows our diplomats to speak from a position of unquestioned strength as they work to achieve enduring peace and final full denuclearization of the DPRK.

I want to thank you for the support we have received from the Congress over the last two years, as we have significantly improved the posture and readiness of our forces on the peninsula, from munition stocks to additional ballistic missile defense capabilities and more. I can't underscore enough the importance of the on-time appropriation in 2019, as it has enabled us for the first time in many years to make smarter investments, improve our planning, and provide predictability to our commanders in the field so they can sustain the hard-earned readiness that is essential to being a fight tonight force.

The readiness required to be a credible deterrent is perishable. We must continue to exercise the core competencies necessary to the planning and execution of joint and combined operations under the strain of crisis. However, we must also strike a balance between the need to train and the requirement to create space for diplomacy to flourish. As such, we are innovating our approach to
training and exercises by tuning four dials that modify
exercise design and conduct: size, scope, volume, and
timing. Adjustments to these dials enable us to remain in
harmony with diplomatic and political requirements without
sacrificing war-fighting readiness to unacceptable levels.

Our combined forces, ROK and U.S., continue to train
using this new construct so they can be ready should the
call come for them to respond to crisis, defend the Republic
of Korea, and prevail against any threat. The ROK-U.S.
alliance remains ironclad. It has been tested multiple
times over the last 65 years and has only become stronger.

Our military partnership continues to deepen and broaden the
long-standing relationships that exist at every echelon.

On behalf of the servicemembers, civilians, contractors, and
their families on the peninsula, we thank you for your
unwavering support. I am extremely proud to be their
commander and to work hand-in-hand with the Republic of
Korea to protect our great nations. I look forward to
answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Abrams follows:]
Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, General. Let me first of all mention something that's always been a little bit -- we've talked about quite a bit of times. You know, the American people are not really aware of the threats that we're faced. I think we all understand that. And the problem with this is for us to have the proper priorities for our military, I think it's necessary for the American people to understand why we're having to do all of this. And you still see things that are happening, that they still believe that we have the best of everything and nothing to worry about because that's how it's always been and so forth, but they don't realize how fast China has modernized and the problems that we're facing out there.

Admiral Davidson, what do you think can be done? Our military has come forth -- General Dunford, when he said, "We have lost our qualitative and quantitative edge over the adversaries." Milley said, "In terms of artillery, the Army is outranged and outgunned by our adversaries."

Same thing was true with Moran in talking about the Hornet Fleet. And you know, I've been on the Senate and the House Armed Services Committee for many, many years. I don't ever remember a time when the military has come forth with the shot of realism like they have recently. And I'd like to know, you know, what can you guys do more to make the American people more aware of the threats that we face?
Admiral Davidson: Thank you very much, Senator, for your question. The advances made by China, especially, but the other threats I articulated in the region, Russia specifically in the 21st century, has really been profound. While our nation has been focused on the efforts of land wars in Southeast Asia, these advances have been basically unchecked with the economic power that China has brought to bear, and they have greatly advanced their capability truly in all domains.

You mentioned space. What was essentially a handful of satellites at the turn of the century has now become hundreds of satellites -- capabilities and communications and surveillance and reconnaissance and other capabilities in space. If I move it all the way down through air, they've now got fourth- and fifth-generation fighters, which were not there at the beginning of the century, and they have now advanced surface and submarine assets that they also did not enjoy at the turn of the century.

The time to invest in these things is now. I'm quite encouraged by all the concepts that you've seen come forward from the services, from Multi-Domain Task Force to the distributed maritime operations, as well as the commitments and the profiles that the services have begun to make and being able to operate in these multi-domains where these advances have taken place.
Chairman Inhofe: Yeah, I think you're right on that, but also, we're also seeing them rubbing our noses in it. You know, we've not seen this before. Admiral Greenert wrote a recent paper that his Chinese counterpart, the head of the PLA Navy, was surprised that "the United States did not have a more" -- and I'm quoting now -- "a more forceful reaction" when China began its island building in 2013. And so they're actually talking about us. And where this is reflected is with our allies. Several of us on this committee were in the South China Seas just a short while ago, and our allies, you know, they're almost looking at what's happening in the South China Seas, with the island building and all of that, as the Chinese preparing for World War III and, you know, which side are we going to be on? So that's something that does bother me. I think, also, it's affecting a lot of the attitudes. I know that Xi Jinping said that he would not -- and this is his quote -- "abandon the use of force as a potential means of achieving the unification of Taiwan."

Now, what more can we do to try to overcome this attitude that's out there and is having an adverse effect on our allies? Any thoughts on that?

Admiral Davidson: In the operational space, one of the things we've been able to do in just the last five months, Senator, is get our allies and partners to join us in the
South China Sea. Not all of their operations are defined as freedom of navigation operations as we would define them, but their willingness to sail independently in there, to work with us on exercises demonstrates the international commitment to maintaining the freedom of those seas and airways. And I think it's critically important to messaging China that it's not just the United States that is concerned about the freedom of the South China Seas, but indeed all nations. And I expect allies and partners to continue to help here in the months ahead, both with some combined operations that we'll be executing, as well as some individual operations as well.

One of the other factors that we're working on in the diplomatic space is to help ASEAN in this discussion about Code of Conduct negotiations with China. China has essentially delivered a draft that dictates to those ASEAN nations when and where and who they would sail with in the South China Sea. Helping them protect the international freedoms of the seas and airspace that have been long established in maritime law that the United States and others have fought for over the centuries is quite important.

Chairman Inhofe: Yeah, well that's good.

And my time is expired, General Abrams, but I will have a question for the record having to do with South Korea and
what's going on.

Senator Reed.

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

General Abrams, there's been discussions about the cost of our forces on the Korean Peninsula. President Trump suggested a few times that it's expensive. These negotiations with the Special Measures Agreement seem to be more controversial than previous years and, interestingly enough, it's just for a term of one year, where typically it's a five-year term, so we're going to be right back in the saddle of talking about supporting forces and the South Korean support for our forces on the peninsula.

Can you talk about the significance of maintaining our force presence there? Is it critical or can we afford to draw down?

General Abrams: Senator, our presence and our posture is appropriate in terms of providing an adequate deterrent against the DPRK. It provides a force structure in numbers and capability that's capable of responding to hostilities and provocations and prepared to defend the Republic of Korea if they are called upon. It also serves -- our posture there also serves as a stabilizing factor, stability in Northeast Asia. It provides reassurance to not only the Republic of Korea, but for Japan and other partners in the region, and serves as a bulwark against the expansion of
China, as Admiral Davidson just outlined. So our presence there serves multiple purposes.

Senator Reed: And one purpose I suspect also, too, is to give confidence to our allies, the South Koreans and the Japanese particularly. Would they be concerned if we drew down our forces in any way?

General Abrams: Senator, I hesitate to speak on behalf of the Republic of Korea or Japan, but in my dealings with both of them I would say yes, they would be concerned if we were to do that.

Senator Reed: One of the other aspects in this relationship between the South Koreans and Japanese is there is a long, long history there. And there are some at times difficulties between that relationship. Can you characterize the relationship? I think many people assume it's just completely harmonious, but I've observed comments and issues in which there was some friction. Is that still the case?

General Abrams: Senator, as you stated, there are long-term items of friction between those two countries. In my experience, it's difficult for Westerners to appreciate the breadth and depth of some of that tension as these are very old countries, ancient societies, and many of their tensions go back hundreds and hundreds of years. And occasionally, it flares up with misunderstandings between
the two that are exacerbated by, you know, topics of the current day. And those only serve to sort of re-inflame those old grievances.

Having said that, militarily we continue to see cooperation and commitment on both sides because they both understand that there are much bigger concerns for them to worry about than some of their long-term friction points. They've got some mutual goals that they've got to work together on.

Senator Reed: Thank you, sir.

Admiral Davidson, again, thank you for your service, too. And one of the proposals consistent with the National Defense Strategy that the Marine Corps is advancing is to occupy islands forward of their present position and use them not only to protect them from seizure by anyone, but also to help defend the fleets and our air forces operating in the region. Is that a concept that you support?

Admiral Davidson: Sir, all the services have put forth expeditionary concepts like that. They all have slightly different names -- the EABO concept, the Multi-Domain Task Force -- but those are capabilities that I think serve a deterrent basis in the region and they're also fight-and-win capabilities that we may have to utilize in the future.

Senator Reed: Let me just, in general, are you satisfied in terms of the weapons systems that you have
available given what the Chinese, in particular, are developing so quickly? You alluded to them in your comments repeatedly -- new generations of fighters, long-range precision missiles that threaten our carriers that 10, 15 years ago were not even on the -- certainly not deployed. Are you satisfied you're getting kind of the weapons that can counter those weapons?

Admiral Davidson: Sir, we speak frequently about the erosion of our advantage in the theater, which is really the case here. China has seriously eroded that quantitative advantage -- the number of assets that they have -- but they're also eroding that qualitative advantage is what I'm talking to you about fourth- and fifth-gen. Are we now making progress, I think, in that budget? Yes. We do have the roots of some capabilities, many capabilities, that would be applicable in any warfare scenario as I see the future play out. But the investments, I think, need to come more rapidly, and we need to be willing to innovate to get there as well.

There is much to be done in this space. I don't want to give the impression that last year's budget necessarily is putting us on the track to regain that advantage. On-time budgets and the kind of investments that we've been talking about in the Department for the '20 and '21 budget to come, which I haven't seen the final '20 budget, I think
are critically important to regaining that advantage.

Senator Reed: Just a final comment. If there is a particular system that is being developed that you think that would be very applicable, but it's not being adapted by the services from your standpoint, both of you as combat commanders/field commanders, please let us know. Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

During the course of this hearing, we are going to have some subjects come up that would be better addressed in a closed session. There will be a closed session at 2:30 this afternoon.

Senator Wicker.

Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Reed has touched on an issue that is surprising to many of us and I believe that needs some more attention. He asked General Abrams about the worsening relations between two of our great allies, the Republic of Korea -- South Korea, and Japan. I would submit for the record, Mr. Chairman, two articles; one from the February 9th Washington Post entitled "Japan-South Korea ties worst in five decades as U.S. leaves alliance untended" and also a February 10 article from The Nelson Report entitled "Japan, ROK crisis gets worse."

Admiral Davidson, I don't want to spend the whole time on this, but General Abrams commented on it. This is a
serious problem which potentially affects our ability to
gain cooperation between our allies; is that correct?

Admiral Davidson: I think both nations recognize,
Senator, that the future in the Indo-Pacific is going to
require great democracies like Korea, Japan, the United
States and others to work together here for the very long
term.

I can tell you, to the point about whether the alliance
is being tended to, I've spoken to both the chiefs of
defense in Korea and Japan in the last week. I will return
a call to the chief of defense in Korea later this week.
I've talked to both our ambassadors in the last week there,
met with one of them -- both of them, actually --
personally. Much is going on to help facilitate our mutual
concerns in the region and our alliances.

Senator Wicker: Does State and DOD, do they both
understand the seriousness of this deterioration, and are
they both tending to it?

Admiral Davidson: I would say the answer to that is
yes, sir.

Senator Wicker: Thank you. Very good. That's, I
think, surprising to hear and good to know there are efforts
made.

Now, after the USS Fitzgerald and McCain, tragic
collisions resulting in fatalities and the loss of hundreds
of millions of dollars, there were two investigations. Senator McCain and I introduced the Surface Warfare Enhancement Act asking that many of the recommendations of these investigations be implemented. This led to inclusion of most of our legislation in the FY19 NDAA.

So are we on track to fully implement the Surface Warfare Enhancement Act? And the reviews that caused so much concern were that demand for naval power was far outstripping the supply of ships and submarines. That was what led to these — in part — led to these collisions and tragedies. So what's the state of that imbalance today, Admiral Davidson, and what do you need compared to what you have now?

Admiral Davidson: Thank you, Senator. I have been quite pleased with the progress that Navy has made on the recommendations that I made in the Comprehensive Review. I'll be watching the '20 budget when it comes together. There are a couple of items in there, investment in schoolhouses, that I want to make sure are followed through on.

I'm quite confident in Admiral Aquilino's approach to the OPTEMPO out in Seventh Fleet right now. We've had the good fortune of being able to relieve some of the responsiveness based on the easing of some of the tensions on the peninsula, as well as reshuffling some of the
priorities there in the region. He continues remediation
efforts of the Seventh Fleet in terms of training and
maintenance there in Yokosuka, particularly in the Cruiser-
Destroyer Force, and so I'm quite pleased with how he's
managing that force.

Senator Wicker: And just to make sure, the previous
NDAA placed a 355-ship requirement that the Navy had
established as a statutory policy of the United States. Are
you still committed to that 355-ship Navy and do you still
view it as the statutory law of the land?

Admiral Davidson: Sir, in the Indo-Pacific region, I
think we need more capacity in the maritime, to be sure.
The Navy is undergoing another force structure review I
think to look at that number again and affirm that for the
Department.

Senator Wicker: Thank you, sir.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
you both for being here today and for your service to our
country.

General Abrams, North Korea transferred 55 boxes of
remains of missing U.S. servicemen from the Korean War after
the last summit between the President and Kim Jong-un. Can
you tell me if we're still cooperating with the North
Koreans on trying to return more missing servicemen? My understanding is we think about 5300 of the 7700 soldiers who are missing are believed to have died someplace in North Korea.

General Abrams: Senator, the short answer is yes, we are. I am aware of the DPAA's efforts to continue dialogue with North Korea to move forward in execution of our solemn responsibility to do everything that we can to bring home our missing in action.

Senator Shaheen: And do you know if that's on the agenda for the President's upcoming summit?

General Abrams: Senator, I'm not aware specifically. I am aware that there is a commitment to continuing that dialogue that came out of the June summit, but I have not seen the specific agenda for this upcoming summit yet.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

Admiral Davidson, our office was contacted by several U.S. employees who had been stationed at our embassy in China who have medical documentation to indicate that they are suffering from traumatic brain injury and the same symptoms that we saw from embassy personnel who were evacuated from Havana, Cuba.

Are you aware of any Americans in China who have been affected by those same symptoms, and are you aware of any DOD personnel who have experienced the symptoms?
Admiral Davidson: No, Senator, I am not.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

General Abrams, you talked about the DPRK currently engaging in very extensive military exercises and also about what we continue to do to train with the Republic of Korea. Do you believe it would be helpful to resume military exercises with the Republic of Korea?

General Abrams: Senator, to be clear, there have been cancellations of some exercises that have been well publicized. But as I mentioned in my opening statement, at least since I've been there in November, we are continuing to train, conducting combined training and exercise, with our ROK counterparts. That is continuing unabated. But it's adjusted in accordance with some innovative things that we've done by adjusting size, scope, volume, and the timing so that we can continue to preserve space for Mr. Biegun and the Department of State to do their job.

Senator Shaheen: And, again, do you believe it would be helpful, in terms of our readiness, to resume the previous kinds of exercises?

General Abrams: Senator, I have been given authority to continue planning for those type exercises typically characterized as large-scale exercises. Historically, we've conducted one in the spring and one in the summer, and I have continued planning for execution of one in the spring.
I worked very closely with the ROK JCS and the ROK chairman himself in that new construct and have forwarded that up to the Department of Defense and received full support to continue with our planning.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

Admiral Davidson, you talked about Russian influence in the Indo-Pacific area in your testimony, and you lay out some pretty extensive activities that the Russians are doing in your written testimony. Are we seeing the kind of cyber intrusions and disinformation from Russia in this area of operation that we've seen in Europe?

Admiral Davidson: They are on the same scale, yes, ma'am. I would say though that their conventional activities, their air and maritime activities especially, are a little less than what's been going on in Europe.

Senator Shaheen: And are we seeing any kind of an effort to destabilize the democracies, some of which are fragile, in that region?

Admiral Davidson: Using cyber means?

Senator Shaheen: Or disinformation, using whatever means they have available. Do we expect any kind of gray zone issues like we've seen in Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe?

Admiral Davidson: Russia is maneuvering in the region, and I think globally, using information to subvert the
international rules-based order and our objectives in the region.

Senator Shaheen: and do we have a response to that in the same way that we have a response to what's going on in Europe?

Admiral Davidson: I think, ma'am, that when we talk about an information campaign that's global, it is a global response that it takes, and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command is a part of that global response, yes.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Cotton.

Senator Cotton: Thank you, gentlemen, for your appearance and your continued service.

General Abrams, let's dig down a little bit deeper into this training question. At what level would your troopers recognize a difference from what was happening, say, a year ago, to what's happening now? Would a new rifleman in his first tour on the Korean Peninsula notice a difference in his training level or the training exercises he conducts?

General Abrams: No.

Senator Cotton: A squad leader?

General Abrams: No.

Senator Cotton: Platoon leader?

General Abrams: No.
Senator Cotton: Company commander?

General Abrams: No.

Senator Cotton: Battalion commander?

General Abrams: Senator, he has not noticed a difference yet, but he might in the upcoming months.

Senator Cotton: And then, presumably, the command levels above battalion might notice a difference in the kind of exercises they conduct?

General Abrams: Yes, within those four dials. They would -- at that echelon, they would notice it.

Senator Cotton: Is it fair to say that the commanders at that level, the full bird colonel level up to the General Abrams level, are pretty well versed in the demands of their job from their previous levels of command?

Admiral Davidson: Absolutely.

Senator Cotton: That's good to know.

Admiral Davidson, the INDOPACOM is characterized by the longest distances in any of our combatant commands. I presume that places a premium on long-range precision strike for you and your forces?

Admiral Davidson: It does, absolutely. Yes, sir.

Senator Cotton: And, currently, those are predominantly maritime and air based systems?

Admiral Davidson: That's correct.

Senator Cotton: There's been a lot of news coverage
recently about the President's decision -- long overdue, in my opinion -- to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and it's focused, understandably, on what it means for Europe and Russia since that was a treaty between the United States and Russia back, when it was the Soviet Union. But what does it mean for you and your theater to have the prospect of intermediate-range missiles available for ground basing.

Admiral Davidson: China has been -- since they are not party to the INF Treaty -- has been investing in the kind of weapons that create a serious challenge to us. Over 95 percent of their ballistic missiles would not be permitted under the INF Treaty. For us to have a land-based component with that kind of capability restores maneuver to the force, meaning it'll make the air, the maritime, and the land component much more viable in any warfare scenario and present a much greater challenge for our adversaries to threaten.

Senator Cotton: And all those land-based systems are presumably cheaper, easier to operate since they just sit there on land, they don't have to move around on a ship or an aircraft all the time?

Admiral Davidson: Well, one of the things that will be required, Senator, is mobility out of those assets. I think land-based assets will be that way. In this day and age, if
it is fixed on the planet, it is dead. You don't even need space assets to support that. The globe has been mapped and a ballistic missile can find its way there based on its own internal targeting. We would have to have some mobility in those land-based assets.

Senator Cotton: Your counterparts sitting in the People's Liberation Army, do you think it makes them happy that you may soon have land-based missiles that can reach intermediate ranges?

Admiral Davidson: No, I think it makes them unhappy.

Senator Cotton: General Abrams, what about your counterparts in North Korea; do you think they're happy or unhappy that they may soon face land-based intermediate-range missiles?

General Abrams: I can't characterize whether they're happy or not, but I'm certain that it makes them very nervous and it is certainly changing their calculus.

Senator Cotton: Complicates their planning.

General Abrams: Absolutely.

Senator Cotton: Okay. Gentlemen -- well, I'll address this to Admiral Davidson. And you can reserve specific details for our closed session, but one point of criticism we've heard is that we may not have places to base these systems. As you point out, they're mobile, they're not often much bigger than a tractor-trailer. Do you think
we'll be able to identify places in the INDOPACOM where we can base land-based intermediate-range missiles?

Admiral Davidson: Yes, sir, I think they'll be viable assets for us, but it's probably a conversation better to have in closed session.

Senator Cotton: We'll talk about that in greater detail this afternoon. Thank you, gentlemen.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the witnesses.

I want to ask a question about North Korea and then about China. On North Korea, I'm struck by the fact that as a member of the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, we have still not had a briefing about any details about commitments that were made in the Singapore summit, which was nearly a year ago, in either of the committees.

And I note, General Abrams, your testimony, and I just want to read it, "I am clear-eyed about the fact that little to no verifiable change has occurred in North Korea's conventional and asymmetric capabilities that continue to hold the United States, South Korea, and our regional allies at risk."

So what I'm looking for is what real evidence is there
of any changed trajectory on behalf of North Korea? I applaud the President, actually, for having the dialogue with North Korea leadership. Dialogue guarantees nothing, but the absence of dialogue often guarantees a bad outcome. So I appreciate dialogue. But what I'm looking for is what is the evidence that we would want to see to determine that North Korea is serious about denuclearization?

In the Foreign Relations Committee, the testimony we've received pretty consistently is the evidence that shows they're serious is if they agree to provide some kind of inventory of their nuclear assets. Until there is transparency and disclosure, we have no reason to believe they're serious. If there is transparency and disclosure, they might be serious. That would be sort of the first step to show they're serious; more work to be done, obviously.

Are you aware -- to this point, February 12, 2019 -- are you aware of any commitment that North Korea has made to provide an inventory of nuclear infrastructure or assets that they have?

General Abrams: Senator, I am not aware of that.

Senator Kaine: Admiral Davidson, are you aware of any?

Admiral Davidson: No, I'm not.

Senator Kaine: That's what we really need to see coming out of a next summit in Vietnam, or hopefully soon.

And until we see it, I think this issue about no verifiable
progress, we have to be skeptical. North Korea has made promises in the past, they've been willing to talk in the past, but the question of what shows progress, we've got to see some willingness to disclose.

Let me move to China.

Admiral Davidson, you talked a little bit about, in your testimony and in response to some of the questions, that some nations are starting to realize that China may seem friendly up front, they may have assets and resources to offer up front, but the terms kind of overly debt-burdening. Nations like Sri Lanka and others have started to appear very onerous. Malaysia has canceled projects and basically has criticized China's way of dealing with them as sort of a new form of colonialism.

And we hear this all over the world, not just in Asia -- we hear it in South America, we hear it in Africa -- that the strings attached to Chinese assistance, up front they may seem fine, but they start to really chafe, and nations are starting to be wary. But you can't fight something with nothing. So if China is there promising resources, a lot of the military posture of the United States does also involve what soft power we bring to the table to try to encourage nations to not accept the sugar-high promise up front only to regret it later.

What would your advice to us be, not just as Armed
Services members, but we're on all kinds of other committees as well, what would your advice to us be in terms of the kinds of additional focus the United States should be offering in the INDOPACOM area to try to wean nations away from over-reliance on this dangerous Chinese strategy of kind of getting claws in other nations?

Admiral Davidson: Sir, I think when we look back in history, I think it will look very kindly on the passage of the BUILD Act here last fall. The transition from OPIC to the Development Finance Corporation, the consolidation of some independent foreign financing mechanisms in the country, the doubling of the investment, the freeing of private investment, these are critically important efforts. And when we talk about whole of government, that's the kind of thing that we're talking about.

The other key factor is --

Senator Kaine: And just, BUILD Act, if anybody wonders if Congress can do things bipartisan, very bipartisan, really was to try to amass the governmental resources but also enable them to better attract private resources so if we go into nations in your or any part of the world, we have more to offer to counter the Chinese strategy.

Admiral Davidson: Absolutely. We're also working quite closely with allies and partners in the region --

Australia, New Zealand, Japan, especially -- particularly in
some of the areas that are in key competition with China. Leveraging their investments and their interests, I think, on this will be critically important for the free and open Indo-Pacific as well. And then I'd say lastly, right now, the Indo-Pacific Command gets just a small portion of the foreign military financing; really, less than five percent of that overall. We need to take a look at where we can better port that money in the region to help compete in this whole-of-government environs that we're talking about.

Senator Kaine: Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator Rounds.

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you both for your service to our country.

Admiral Davidson, you indicated in your opening statement that there was not just China as a threat or the Republic of North Korea, but you also indicated that Russia was playing a role. Could you expand on that just a little bit and explain to us where you see them and what their role is today and how they make an impact?

Admiral Davidson: It's not unlike what's happening in the Atlantic in Europe. They're certainly engaging in the
region diplomatically and in the information space to act as a spoiler, really to undermine the rules-based international order. They're doing almost nothing to help sanctions with North Korea. I can't say that they're specifically opposed to them in this forum, I mean actively opposing them, but they are doing little to help there.

And you know, one of the key things that occurred last fall is they ran a combined portion of their very major exercise, Vostok, in 2018. They invited the Chinese to attend that as well, which I think is also problematic in signaling to the region.

Senator Rounds: If you were to look at their activity within the cyber realm, within the domain, are they active with regard to cyber activity, actively involved in cyber activity in the Indo-Pacific region?

Admiral Davidson: You know, that capability that Russia has is a global threat, sir.

Senator Rounds: With regard to ISR, you have some resources. I would assume, as all commanders would suggest, you could use a lot more. Do you see any activity or improvements, and can you expand a little bit on the discussion of ISR threats to our well-being and to the safety and security of our forces in your region by all three -- Korea, China, and Russia?

Admiral Davidson: ISR is a critical need in the
region, sir. Less than half of my requirements are served by the ISR that's available to the region. Some of that will be investment over time. Some of it is the balance globally between the combatant commanders, what's required to facilitate our overall interests in those regions. I'm thankful for some of the tools that Congress has given. There is a contracting tool that was activated last year and I'm in conversation with the Department of Defense to see if I can gain some of those assets, and I'm grateful for that.

Senator Rounds: General Abrams, same question with regard to ISR. How do you see your ISR capabilities as compared with that of the anticipated adversary in this particular case?

General Abrams: Senator, our ISR capability -- well first off, it outpaces the DPRK's. But that should not change our own commitment in terms of calculus because our ISR is what gives us not just intelligence, but really, early warning. It provides us clarity so that we can begin to see early and with some clarity and conciseness so we can prevent miscalculation on either our part or their part. And that's really the importance behind the ISR requirements that we have on the peninsula.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

And Admiral Davidson, with regard to our allies in the region, and we have a number of them there, could you sum up
for us, if they were expressing concerns to you about our
commitment to the region, could you share with us what you
believe their thoughts are with regard to our commitment to
the Indo-Pacific region?

Admiral Davidson: I think certainly in conversations
with my counterparts, sir, there's been a general
convergence around the idea that a free and open Indo-
Pacific is going to take all of our efforts working
together. I think the United States' commitment in a
variety of operations, whether it's our freedom of
navigation operations in the South China Sea, our total
totality of the exercise program in the United States, the
assistance that we provide to partners in addition to
allies, and then the commitment that our allies understand
in the basis of our treaty alliances and our support to
those treaties, I think, is unquestioned.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Manchin.

Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
you all for your service.

General Abrams, the U.S.-Republic of Korea military
exercises, they've been scaled back or canceled as part of a
wider diplomatic effort to ease tensions with North Korea
and push them towards denuclearization. What is your confidence level that the talks with North Koreans over denuclearization will make any improvements?

General Abrams: Senator, a couple of data points.

First off, today is day 440 since the last strategic provocation from the DPRK, the last time since we've had a missile flight test or a nuclear weapons test. As I mentioned in my opening statement, the reduction in the tension on the peninsula, it's palpable. If you have not been on the peninsula in a while, along the DMZ there has been significant reduction that has enabled nation confidence-building measures, it has increased prevention -- I should say it's decreased the chance of mistakes, miscalculation, and it's continued to preserve space for the main effort, the Department of State to continue along this road of negotiations and discussion with the DPRK.

I think my personal opinion is the announcement of a second summit between President Trump and the supreme leader Kim is a positive sign of continued dialogue because it certainly beats the alternative of what we were living with in 2017.

Senator Manchin: Thank you, sir.

Admiral Davidson, you stated in your confirmation hearing that China is already capable of controlling the South China Sea in any scenario short of war with the U.S.
So my question would be what's stopping them right now from exercising this capability whenever they feel like it, and what are we as the U.S. or our allies in the region doing to continually discourage them from exercising this power?

Admiral Davidson: One of the things that I think has set them back was the international community coming together in the South China Sea here in about the beginning of September time frame. We've had allies and partners in the region, the UK, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, France, all in one form or another step up their operations in the South China Sea, and I think that shows the international community's willingness to push back.

Senator Manchin: Sir, do we currently have the logistical capability to surge necessary combat power to the Indo-Pacific region if needed to combat Chinese aggression?

Admiral Davidson: Any discussion of the logistics and sustainment that's required depends on the total scale and scope of what might be happening. And that's true both in our ability to defend it from sabotage, special operations attacks, you know, conventional maritime and air attacks, as well as cyber attacks that might disrupt our logistics networks and prevent all those assets from arriving.

One of the other key needs for the region, sir, is -- and you're hearing this from other combat commanders as well as the services -- is the need to recapitalize our sealift
fleet. It is decades old now and needs to be replaced nearly desperately.

Senator Manchin: And also, according to the World Economic Forum, by 2030, your AOR will be home to many of the world's mega-cities. This will continue to present vast complicated governance issues, and my fear is that these governments will look to an authoritarian China as a model over the United States.

The question would be, from the military perspective, what are some meaningful steps that can be taken to help leaders in India, Indonesia, Japan, and the Philippines so that they don't start looking at authoritarianism as the way to go?

Admiral Davidson: Well, I think one of the things that we can do is to continue our whole-of-government approach on a free and open Indo-Pacific. We have a burgeoning relationship with India. We've made significant defense progress on that relationship just in the last year with the cosigning of the COMCASA. We are working to operationalize that -- it's essentially an IT-sharing agreement -- in a way that shows India the power of being able to link with us in a tactical sense and an operational sense as well.

Committing to that rules-based international order and working to that free and open Indo-Pacific ends will attract these nations along with us. I can't imagine any country
would be willing to have an international order led by a nation that has a closed and authoritarian internal order. It's just not to the benefit of any of us.

Senator Manchin: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Manchin.

Senator Ernst.

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, gentlemen, for being here today.

We've seen a lot of discussion about China, North Korea, a revisionist China, and a nuclear North Korea. We also have extremist groups that exist within your regions, as well, with ties to ISIS and other types of terrorist groups.

Admiral Davidson, I'd like to start with you. I understand that there are a couple of countries or a few countries out there, like Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, that operate under Compacts of Free Association. And we have financial assistance that's provided through that, and we've talked about a number of different ways that we're cooperating with various countries, allies in the region.

These Compacts of Free Association, some of them will be expiring in four to five years. Can you maybe talk us through why those are so important? What do we realize out
of those types of compacts and should they be funded or should we allow them to expire?

Admiral Davidson: In short, Senator, those compacts are the connective tissue between the United States and the physical air and maritime and terrestrial space to 60 percent of the world's economy. The compacts obligate us to defend those nations as we would defend ourselves. It also gives them some financial assurances and the ability to participate and work in our countries without immigrant classifications.

I can tell you that these nations contribute way out of proportion to their population in our defense. I meet servicemembers from Palau and the Marshall Islands, all over the Indo-Pacific, and they have served quite bravely and honorably in the last 35 years -- excuse me, in the last 15 years -- in Southwest Asia.

Those compact agreements are going to expire in -- at least the financial mechanism is going to expire in 2023, and 2024 for Palau. I think the need for us to sustain those obligations is important because of the freedoms that it gives us. It allows us to keep any third-party nation from taking military, from occupying it, from them making a military agreement with them. It gives us the strategic flexibility to block that.

The financial mechanisms are going to expire in the
2023/2024 time frame. But the fact of the matter is these nations are at risk from the very pernicious approach that China has taken with their economic vehicles in the region. And to prevent that from happening, we should look at the long-term need on those COFA states, what the financial mechanisms are that retain this strategic alliance for us and the benefits that it accrues to the United States military and, truly, the defense to the United States. Without those three countries and our strategic alliance, the logistics and sustainment of our operations in the Western Pacific would be severed.

Senator Ernst: So bottom line, those agreements are very important, correct?

Admiral Davidson: Absolutely, ma'am.

Senator Ernst: Outstanding. And that's a great explanation. I appreciate that very much.

General Abrams, in looking at the threat that's been talked about with North Korea, I also want to talk about North Korea's special forces, their special operations forces. They presented a tactical operational threat to South Korea and the role of our own special operators in countering that threat. So could you maybe just briefly describe the threat that is being posed by North Korean special operators?

General Abrams: Senator, thank you. In this
unclassified setting, here's what I can say. Since Kim Jong-un assumed responsibility for leading his regime, this has been one of his specific investments in terms of increasing the size and capability of his special operations forces, and secondly, they spend a considerable amount of time doing training. And I'm happy to give you more detail in the classified session.

Senator Ernst: We can talk about that later, and I appreciate that very much. And are we integrating our own special operators to specifically train to push back on the North Korean special operators?

General Abrams: Senator, we are. We have a very small Special Operations Command Korea, but extraordinarily capable. They punch way above their weight class. We're lucky; we're fortunate enough to have a rotational U.S. Army Special Forces ODB. So for instance, today on the peninsula, we have five ODAs' persistent presence embedded with ROK-SOF training and partnering every single day.

Senator Ernst: That's outstanding. My time has expired.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, gentlemen.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

Senator Warren.

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So we hear a lot of testimony in this committee about
the threats posed by China, Russia, rogue states, transnational terrorist groups. And a strong military is critical to addressing those challenges, but there's some threats that can't be solved by traditional military power at all. And one of those is climate change.

The unclassified Worldwide Threat Assessment by the director of national intelligence said, and I'm going to quote here, "Global environmental and ecological degradation, as well as climate change, are likely to fuel competition for resources, economic distress, and social discontent through 2019 and beyond." That assessment also said, "Damage to communication, energy, and transportation infrastructure could affect low-lying military bases, inflict economic costs, and cause human displacement and loss of life."

Admiral Davidson, do you agree with the intelligence community's assessment of the climate change threat?

Admiral Davidson: Yes, ma'am.

Senator Warren: So how does climate change impact operations in your area of responsibility and what are you doing to prepare for climate change?

Admiral Davidson: Well, the immediate manifestation, ma'am, is the number of ecological disaster events that are happening. I've just wrapped up after some four months -- excuse me, three and a half months -- of assistance in
Tinian and Saipan, a contribution of Title 10 forces in significant numbers, to help clear debris, to help fix roofs, to help restore the infrastructure there writ large.

I've also been called to respond and assist in Indonesia in the wake of the earthquake and the tsunami that happened last year. A little separate from climate change. But our assistance in terms of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, our ability to command and control, to marshal troops, to deliver logistics is important training for the region and something that they all need. And one of the things that my headquarters does is we run a center for excellence in disaster management. That training is available not just to the Title 10 folks but also our interagency here in the United States, and we export those courses, as well, to countries throughout the Indo-Pacific and, really, globally, to help assist them in these matters.

Senator Warren: Thank you. You know, adapting to climate change impacts our military readiness. And I'm glad that our military commanders take the threat of climate change seriously. I think we, your civilian leaders, owe it to you to enact policies here in Congress that recognize that climate change is happening and that we need to do more to stop it. So thank you. I appreciate it, Admiral.

I want to, in my remaining time, ask about one other area. In this committee, we also talk a lot about strategic
competition between the United States, China, and Russia.  
And I want to focus on China for just a minute.

China is challenging the United States and our
interests in a variety of domains. Our intelligence
community's unclassified Worldwide Threat Assessment said,
and I'm going to quote again, "China's leaders will try to
extend the country's global, economic, political, and
military reach while using China's military capabilities and
overseas infrastructure and energy investments to diminish
U.S. influence."

Admiral Davidson, do you agree with the intelligence
community's assessment on this?

Admiral Davidson: Yes, ma'am, I do.

Senator Warren: Well, in a recent hearing, a former
deputy of national security advisor and State Department
official responsible for China policy, Ely Ratner, told this
committee that regardless of whether we're talking about
Chinese economic coercion, human rights, or the South China
Sea, the U.S. needs a comprehensive strategy that enhances
all aspects of our competitiveness. We can't pick just one
strategy -- military or economics or technology or diplomacy
-- and hope that that's going to be the silver bullet.

Admiral Davidson, do you agree with that?

Admiral Davidson: Yes, I do. It's going to take a
whole-of-government approach.
Senator Warren: And can you just say a word more about that quickly -- we're about to run out of time -- about why it's important to use all of our tools of national power and not just military power?

Admiral Davidson: I speak quite frequently in the region about this, madam, and one of the things that competes so strongly for the United States in the region is our values. And whether they're allies, partners, or nations that merely aspire to have the values that we have, they compete in a more pronounced manner than any handful of dollars ever could. But it has to be proactive, and we have to move out in the diplomatic and the information space, as well as the economic space, quite briskly because China is spreading dollars around very perniciously through corruption, through the mechanisms that you talked about earlier, and we've got to be willing to work in these other realms.

Senator Warren: Yeah. And to project our power abroad, we have to be strong here at home. Military power is important, but we need strong, sustained investments in education, in research, and other domestic priorities if we are going to maintain a competitive advantage.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Warren.

Senator Scott.
Senator Scott: Could each of you give us your thoughts on what the Congress could do to help you better fulfill your missions? What do you need from us?

Admiral Davidson: Sir, the on-time -- the support we've had the last two years have been incredible. Having those budgets administered on the first of October so they can be executed is critically important to the efficiency of the Department of Defense and the execution of all the things that we do, from contracting to steaming on a day-to-day basis, to use my Navy parlance.

The other thing we can do is lift the BCA caps. The threats that are out there challenge the sovereignty of the United States in a way that has not existed since the Cold War. And the investments that are going to be required to do that, I think, are going to be significant.

General Abrams: Senator, I'd like the opportunity to foot-stomp. In my view, the single most important thing is a timely appropriation. In my previous assignment as the Army's force provider for three years, I can't overstate the impact of a continuing resolution at every level. And most importantly, those that should have to worry about it least, we put it on their backs, and that's on soldiers and families, because we did not have a timely, on-time appropriation. So that would be point number one.

Point number two, I'd say for those programs that we
have that have reached furthest along in their development
and we have committed to them, that we have worked on for
multiple years and are testing shows that it is capable and
it's meeting those key requirements, continued support of
those so that we can see them through. One in particular
for me is in the missile-defense business, and this is one
we are keen to. It's a key capability. We're grateful for
the support of this committee and the Congress. We just
need to see it through.

Senator Scott: Thank you.

Admiral Davidson, China has been a big supporter and a
big, I guess lender, to Venezuela. Why is Venezuela of any
strategic interest to China, and how is that helping them?

Admiral Davidson: China is challenging and threatening
the rules-based international order. It's not a regional
thing for China; it's a global approach. Anywhere that they
can make inroads on that international order, they will take
it. And they've been moving quite rapidly. I think as
Admiral Faller indicated last week, in Southern Command as
well.

Senator Scott: Do you anticipate that they would use
any military resources in Venezuela?

Admiral Davidson: In the very near term, I don't think
China would, no.

Senator Scott: How reliable a partner do most of the
democracies in Asia perceive America right now?

Admiral Davidson: I think in our alliances, I think they're quite confident in those five treaty allies that we have there in the region. This is another area, though, that's under threat from China. China maneuvers in the information space in a way that undermines everything we do; factually, informationally, everywhere.

Sir, when we all used to read newspapers every Sunday, you used to get up and you used to have the Parade magazine as a Sunday insert. Throughout the region, there is a China daily insert which is Chinese propaganda appearing in newspapers, over more than half the population of the globe. It's quite pernicious.

Senator Scott: Are we doing anything to counteract that?

Admiral Davidson: I would say in the information space we do more. We've talked about the BUILD Act, what we are doing in the military space. And one of the key factors here is the fact that we're working with allies and partners in key areas of the region.

You've seen Australia step up, and Papua-New Guinea recently, Fiji. New Zealand has made it clear that their very near-abroad is going to take some investment. We are working on an Indo-Pacific strategy with Japan and looking for opportunities of where our economic investments can
cooperate and collaborate. And in just my space alone, just
last week we had a trilateral at the planning level between
Japan, the Philippines, and the United States. These are
all constructs that will help combat China's influence.

Senator Scott: Thank you, and thanks for your service.

    Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Jones.

Senator Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you,
gentlemen, both for being here today and for your service.

    Admiral Davidson, I'd like to ask you a little bit
about the freedom of navigation operations that we have in
the South China Sea. I know that there were some that
occurred back in January and even, if I'm not mistaken, this
past Sunday there was a couple of our fleet near the Spratly
Islands. And in response, the Chinese foreign minister has
accused the United States of trespassing, infringing on
China's sovereignty, and damaging regional peace, security,
and order, even though it is my understanding these
operations are going on in international waters.

    So, with that, I think it's important that we continue
these. But what's not clear to me is how we're resolving
the conflict between China's stance on these, on our
operations, and the international community. So are you
aware of any conversations or discussions that are taking
place on this specific issue, and, you know, can you talk
about contingency plans? Obviously a lot of saber rattling
can lead to some bad consequences. Are there contingency
plans if the impasse continues this way?

Admiral Davidson: Sir, to your last point about
contingency plans, I'd rather hold that for the closed
hearing, if I could.

Senator Jones: Certainly.

Admiral Davidson: To be clear, not all our freedom of
operation navigations happen in international waters.
Sometimes they happen in disputed waters, which was the case
this past weekend -- I won't comment on every one -- but was
the case this past weekend. Other nations lay claim to
those waters. And then the legal construct of what those
features are dictate as to whether we can operate and how
close we can operate them and in what mode, whether it's
solely innocent passage, which is the way any ship would
move through the region, or whether normal operations that
military assets could use would be effective.

I'd also like to hold off on a discussion about the
rhetoric that China responds with in the wake of these
operations. But I will say this. The vast, vast majority
of interactions in the South China Sea, that China responds
professionally and safely.

These operations are critically important, not for the
United States, and they're not about two destroyers passing safely in this region. This is about the free flow of communications. That's oil. That's trade. That's economic means. It means the cyber connectivities on the cables that travel under the South China Sea, which are deep and profound, coming out of Singapore. And it includes the free passage of citizens between all the great nations of the world.

If you're taking a flight from Singapore to San Francisco, from Sydney to Seoul, from Manila to Tokyo, you are flying over the South China Sea. And each time that happens, there is somebody with a surface-to-air missile and a Chinese soldier evaluating whether that traffic can go on a day-to-day basis. It's quite hazardous to the global security, and I think it's quite pernicious that China would take such action.

Senator Jones: Thank you, Admiral.

General Abrams, let me ask you about, there's been a lot of discussion over the years and more recently about the transfer of the Combined Forces Command to the ROK. That's been discussed a lot. There are conditions, I think, that are out there. Can you talk a little bit about the transfer of command, what it might mean to the United States presence on the peninsula, and specifically, what it would mean to the forces, the manning levels that we have on the
General Abrams: Senator, we refer to it as conditions-based OPCON transition. It was most recently ratified again in 2015 with the specific conditions that you outlined -- there's three key areas. And the Republic of Korea is making good progress towards meeting those conditions.

This last set of consultative meetings that we had in October, there was a reaffirmation from then-Secretary Mattis and our brand new minister of defense for the Republic of Korea to look for opportunities to accelerate the conditions-based OPCON transition. And so I'm working very closely with the ROK chairman, General Park Han-ki, to do just that, look for opportunities, understanding that the conditions will have to be met. And we're working on ways to ensure that we have a shared vision as to the way ahead.

To your specific question about what is the potential impact to troop presence, that is not part of the equation for conditions-based OPCON transition. This is merely about putting a ROK commander, a Republic of Korea commander, in command of Combined Forces Command, that position that I currently serve in in one of my three positions on the peninsula.

Senator Jones: Great. Thank you.

Back to you, Admiral Davidson. You mentioned in your testimony some sanctions against North Korea, and there's
some ongoing ship-to-ship transfers that take place primarily in the East China Sea. Can you tell me what's the biggest challenge that you have in investigating these ship-to-ship transfers, what have we done to maybe stop these, and particularly, is China involved? What role might China be playing in these transfers?

Admiral Davidson: I should say to your last point, Senator, that China is neither helping nor hurting the effort at least in the maritime space.

We have an ongoing multinational ISR and ship effort to disrupt refined oil that's going in by sea into North Korea. This requires a significant amount of network work to cut it off at the supply. The fact of the matter is that you're not going to deter the DPRK from pursuing fuel. They have to have it. And they've been adapting their tactics as we've been adapting ours -- adding ships, doing transfers in their own territorial waters or near their own shores and, occasionally, there have been some transfers in Chinese territorial waters.

So we are going to have to go after these things at the source. I've got partnership across the DOD, with cyber command, especially, to make sure that we understand what's happening so that we can disrupt these things at the source, refer providers, whether it's shippers, whether it's oil brokers, whether it's the oil companies themselves, notify
the United Nations of those contributions, and then have
them pursued both by State demarche and Treasury action to
prevent their future transfers.

Senator Jones: Great. Well, thank you both.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Jones.

Senator Hawley.

Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. Thank you for
your exemplary service and for the service under your
command. Admiral, it's a particular privilege to welcome
you here as a native Missourian. We're very proud of you
and very proud of your service. Thank you for what you do.

You have a tough job, Admiral, as the commander of what
the National Defense Strategy tells us is perhaps the
decisive theater in our current set of priorities that we
have, strategic priorities as a nation. I want to ask about
some of the challenges that we're facing. Help us think, if
you could, about the forward defense posture that the NDS
tells us is absolutely critical for this AOR, and, if you
could, tell us what you need from this committee in order to
ensure that we have the forward defense posture that is
necessary in order to prevent a fait accompli in the South
China Sea or in Taiwan.

And I just want to pick up on -- Senator Manchin
mentioned a little earlier about surging into the region,
but of course we know from the NDS that our ability to surge
into the region after aggression by China is difficult given
China's A2/AD capacities and capabilities. So could you
tell us what is our progress in adopting that offense
posture that we need in order to prevent a fait accompli and
what you need from us to ensure that we get there?

Admiral Davidson: Thank you very much, Senator.

Some of what we need to talk about I'd like to do in
the closed hearing this afternoon. But in an unclassified
sense, the NDS really asked me to lift my eyes and take a
longer view of the region and how it's evolving. So much of
our basing and rotation has been focused on what's been
transpiring in Northeast Asia, not just in the last couple
of years, but really over the last several decades.

This is going to require us to revisit some of the
places in which we operate and rotate forces, absolutely.
It's going to require us to think about some places, if not
bases in areas. And we are in conversations with partners
and allies about what some of the opportunities might be
there. But it also speaks to concepts, the kind of
capabilities that we can bring forth, and what you're
seeing, new concepts from the services, Multi-Domain Task
Force operations, distributed maritime operations, and the
logistics that are going to be required to supply that.
There is going to be requirements for investments across all domains, from the bottom of the sea to space. And we have to accept the fact that the environment is changing so drastically in the South China Sea that it's going to require new approaches in many cases and not just iterative ones.

Senator Hawley: Just to be clear, the level of investment that we have seen in these force capabilities and technologies over the past five years has not been adequate to the challenges that we face; is that fair to say?

Admiral Davidson: I think that's correct.

Senator Hawley: Let me ask you in the time I have remaining, and I want to come back to the subject, the subject we were just talking about, in a closed session, but let me ask about the Philippines, if I could. And given, again, our unique strategic challenges in your AOR and the significance of the Philippines to us in order to meet those strategic challenges, let me ask you just about your sense of our relationship there.

I know that last fall, I think it was, we announced a new agreement to hold an increased number of exercises this year in 2019 instead of 2018, but President Duterte has also announced plans for joint oil and gas exploration with China and has made other entrees to China. Can you give us an assessment of the state of the bilateral relationship and
what direction you think it's heading for this critical ally in this region?

Admiral Davidson: Sir, I think the relationship is trending in a positive direction. I can tell you in the military space, since 2017 when we were able to manifest some of our indirect assistance to their fight in Marawi, it has restored the military relationship in a way we haven't seen in a couple of decades. It has led, in fact, to things like the EDCA Agreement as well as the advancement in the exercises here in 2018 and 2019.

There is no doubt that at the political level, some of the relationship has been politically fractious. But I take as a positive sign the vagueness of the agreements that President Duterte signed with President Xi last fall. And I think we should take a little bit of comfort in that, that we can continue to advance this relationship moving forward.

Senator Hawley: Let me just ask you one other question about that in my time remaining. The 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty is a flashpoint, as it has been for some time, but political leadership in the Philippines has been talking about it a lot more it seems recently, including saying that they may need to review it and consider leaving it if the United States does not make various security commitments related to the South China Sea.

Can I just ask you what a review by the Philippines and
potential departure of the MDT might mean for us and our relationship with them and our strategic posture in your AOR?

Admiral Davidson: Thank you, Senator. That's been reported pretty widely. I think what's been absent from that discussion is some of the context in which the Philippine defense minister responded to some questions. But to me, the Mutual Defense Treaty is quite clear. It says that an armed attack on either of us, on the metropolitan territory or on the island territories under Philippine jurisdiction in the Pacific, where it's armed forces, our public vessels, or our aircraft, activates Article 5 of that treaty.

I think the Philippines should be quite confident in our support and our alliance. And I'll tell you, I'm quite confident in Philippine support, which -- and frankly, in our defense, that support begins in the Philippines.

Senator Hawley: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Hawley.

Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for your service and also to the men and women under your command, and thank you for your clear-eyed testimony today, if I may use the word that you did, General
Abrams, in describing what I view to be a stark and stunning lack of any action, any progress, any steps to slow or suspend the North Korean nuclear program. Would you agree with me that they are proceeding full pace with their nuclear program?

General Abrams: Sir, I'd say two things. First, as I said earlier, it's been 440 days since the last strategic provocation from the DPRK, so since a missile test or a nuclear weapons explosion or test. And the reduction in tensions and nascent confidence-building measures along the demilitarized zone and across that part of the Korean Peninsula, those reductions are palpable, they're real, and they are having a significant positive effect to begin to prevent additional low-level -- additional confidence-building measures.

Senator Blumenthal: But do you --

General Abrams: Having said all that, we have not observed activity that's consistent with a full-court press on denuclearization.

Senator Blumenthal: Or any slowing of the nuclear program. You said no verifiable progress, I believe.

General Abrams: I'd say the activity we see is inconsistent with that. And Senator, we should probably -- we can talk about that in detail during the closed session.

Senator Blumenthal: Well, let me ask you this.
Because Admiral Davidson, you state, "North Korea is continuing efforts to mitigate the effects of international sanctions and the U.S.-led pressure campaign."

I assume you would agree that sanctions are important in bringing pressure to bear on North Korea?

Admiral Davidson: Absolutely.

Senator Blumenthal: Has there been a reduction in the effect of those sanctions so far as you know?

Admiral Davidson: In many aspects, yes.

Senator Blumenthal: And why is that?

Admiral Davidson: I'm sorry, can you restate your question?

Senator Blumenthal: Yeah, I apologize for interrupting.

Admiral Davidson: I want to make sure I understand the question you're asking me. Have sanctions taken some effect? Yes.

Senator Blumenthal: That's a good question.

Admiral Davidson: I'm sorry, sir. It has. We do observe raised fuel prices in Korea. That's been evident really since before sanctions. The prices have gone up. There has been some restrictions on luxury goods and some other things in there. The impact and its ability to force them to denuclearize, it's tough to say whether that's making any progress.
Senator Blumenthal: And has there been a reduction in the effects of sanctions because of lack of consistent application of them, either by ourselves or by our allies or others?

Admiral Davidson: No, we're on a sustained level of effort just on the ship-to-ship transfers realm. I stepped it up in the September time frame and expanded the concept of operations. We've had a number of allies come alongside to help -- Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea. Japan and Korea are sitting side-by-side with us in Yokosuka right now, working on this effort. And I'm quite grateful for all the contributions they've made. And I should add that UK has been there as well.

Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. In terms of our capabilities in that part of the world, I note that your testimony focuses on our undersea warfare advantages. Do you see those advantages are eroding, and how important is it that we continue to build submarines?

Admiral Davidson: I think continuing to build submarines is critically important, sir. It is our most significant advantage in all domains right now, is in the subsurface. But some of those diversions I'd rather discuss in closed hearing, if you don't mind.

Senator Blumenthal: Sure. And again, maybe more appropriately for a closed setting, although I think,
really, the American people need to know answers to a lot of these questions. Our adversaries know the answers. We know the answers after we're briefed in closed sessions. The only ones who don't know the answers to many of these questions are the American people.

So I regret that so much has been kept from public view. Not to be critical at all of you or the Pentagon in that respect. I recognize that you operate under rules that may constrain you from talking publicly. But I hope we'll have an opportunity to explore in greater detail these questions and also the vulnerability of our aircraft carriers.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Sullivan.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and General -- gentlemen. General, Admiral, good to see you. Thanks for your great service and thanks for being here today.

Admiral Davidson, I wanted to begin just kind of making sure we have very, very clear understanding of what's going on in the South China Sea. I think it's pretty obvious, but just having you stating this to the American people, to our allies in the Asia-Pacific.

Standing next to President Obama in the Rose Garden in 2015, President Xi Jinping said, "China does not intend to
pursue militarization of the South China Sea." That was a quote from the president of China next to the president of the United States.

Just a few months ago in January, China's major state-run newspaper, the People's Daily, stated, "As China's military size and quality improve, so does its control of the South China Sea. China is able to send more naval vessels as a response and can take steps like militarizing the islands." So this is the mouthpiece of the Communist Party.

So President Xi, he obviously he didn't keep his word when he made that statement in the Rose Garden next to President Obama; is that correct?

Admiral Davidson: That's correct, sir. In the most liberal interpretation of militarizing those islands, China in April of 2018 populated those islands with antiship cruise missiles, with surface-to-air missiles, and electronic jammers.

Senator Sullivan: Ten-thousand-foot runways?

Admiral Davidson: Those were already there. But now they have the weapons, they've got sufficient military cadre, and they've stepped up their operations both in the maritime and with bomber sorties and fighter sorties in a way that makes it clear that those islands are to support them militarily.
Senator Sullivan: So, just to be clear, 2015, two presidents, Rose Garden, and President Xi obviously didn't keep his word on that issue.

Admiral Davidson: I agree with that. Yes, sir.

Senator Sullivan: Well, I appreciate what you're doing in terms of regular FONOPs with our allies. The more we can do, the more regular -- the previous administration seemed to be a little reluctant to do these. I think you guys are doing a much better job, so I commend you for continuing to do that. And the more we can bring our allies -- a lot of talk about allies here -- with regard to those FONOPs or some of the operations you described, the better.

General Abrams, I wanted to turn to the issue that Senator Reed raised and just get your professional military views on what would be the tactical effects of removing a large portion, or all, of U.S. forces from the Korean Peninsula?

General Abrams: Senator, just for clarity, under the current set by the DPRK?

Senator Sullivan: I'm talking about our forces --

General Abrams: No, I understand. But nothing's changed on the North side of the MDL?


General Abrams: It would impose significant tactical and operational risk if there's no change on the other side
Senator Sullivan: And strategically, hasn't Russia and China sought the removal of U.S. forces from the Korean Peninsula for decades as a core strategic goal of theirs?

General Abrams: Yes.

Senator Sullivan: So China and Russia and North Korea would be pleased by such a withdrawal?

General Abrams: Again --

Senator Sullivan: If, say, it happened tomorrow?

General Abrams: There's actually some debate. You know --

Senator Sullivan: Really?

General Abrams: Yeah.

Senator Sullivan: There's debate?

General Abrams: There is some debate --

Senator Sullivan: China wouldn't be happy that --

General Abrams: No, sir; it's on the DPRK. There's some mixed views on whether the DPRK really wants us down.

Senator Sullivan: How about China and Russia?

General Abrams: Absolutely.

Senator Sullivan: You might recall we passed a law, the NDAA last year, that actually states that the significant removal of United States military forces from the Korean Peninsula will not be supported in terms of authorized appropriated funds by the Congress below 22,000
troops unless the secretary of defense first certifies to
this committee that it would be in the national interest of
the United States to do so.

So I just want you to remind everybody who's working on
that that's actually in the law right now.

Senator Sullivan: Finally, Admiral, I just wanted to
touch base, and I think we can do it in a better sense in a
classified setting this afternoon, but there is, I think, a
lot of concern, and a lot of concern on this committee, on
the force posture of how our forces are deployed throughout
the region to be ready for what is really kind of the big
strategic challenge facing the United States, which is the
rise of China over the next 50 to 100 years.

I'll be interested in going into a lot more detail on
the force posture issues, but I think there's a lot of good
work that's been going on, but some of it seems to get stuck
in the Pentagon. And I would welcome your views on that.

But I think we need to be a little bit more creative on how
we're looking at force posture.

And I would want to remind you, and I know you know it,
but Alaska is not necessarily in your AOR, but the forces
there, which are significant, your reserve forces, for
example, General, on the Korean Peninsula, our OPCON to
PACOM, and a lot of those forces are actually closer to the
Korean Peninsula and other places than forces, say, in
Australia. So thank you very much.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

Senator King.

Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Davidson, are you familiar with the ProPublica publication this past week on the analysis of the accountability for the collisions with the McCain and the Fitzgerald?

Admiral Davidson: I saw the first article, Senator.

Senator King: There's, I believe, a second one. I commend it to you. It's one of the most sobering analyses of a disaster that I've ever seen. And it takes responsibility all the way up through the very top of the Navy to this Congress, I should say. Sequestration in 2013 was one of the contributors.

But I would like, if you could -- and perhaps I'll prepare a question for the record -- I would like to see specific data on where we stand with issues like certification of sailors and personnel on the ships, maintenance status of the ships, training rules, staffing levels. And I want real numbers. I don't want general "we're working on staffing" or "we're working on more training." Because these were avoidable tragedies. And I would like to drill down on the specific data points that indicate the level of readiness for these, for our fleet.
generally, the Seventh Fleet and other naval assets in the
region.

So is that something that you can do? And you're the
handiest, highest naval officer I have here today. I don't
mean to say that you have to be the specific one to respond,
but I would like to see specific responses from the Navy,
not promises and not good feelings. This was a -- this
story is terrible.

Admiral Davidson: Sir, if I could, a couple of points.

One, there's a quarterly review that was provided over here
to the professional staff members by the vice chief, Admiral
Moran. All those numbers are available.

The idea that there's not transparency in this
readiness I think is appalling, or that it was some kind of
secret or that only a few knew about it in the Navy is
incorrect. I personally testified before the House Seapower
and Personnel Subcommittees with Chairman Thornberry there
in '16 on the kind of things that it took, you know, to keep
the fleet going.

And we can't forget one other thing. These two
collisions were a tragedy. There's no doubt about it. And
all the senior leadership of the Navy feels an immense
amount of accountability for that, and I'll come back to it.

But the fact of the matter is 280-odd other ships weren't
having collisions. More than a dozen of those ships were
performing exceptionally well --

Senator King: I'm sorry, that doesn't --

Admiral Davidson: Excuse me, Senator.

Senator King: Airplanes are landing all over America, and just because they aren't all crashing doesn't mean they don't need a high level of maintenance. To tell me that isn't very convincing. These were the -- I think it was 40 years since we've had collisions of this nature. Are you saying that there were no failures that led to these collisions because there were 280 ships that didn't have collisions? Isn't that the standard, no collisions?

Admiral Davidson: Yes, sir. No collisions is the standard. It's not fair to say it's been -- certainly it's been 40 years since we had lost life to that extent, but there had been collisions in the recent past.

The other thing that we have to remark upon is the combat performance. We've had ships in the Red Sea shooting down antiship cruise missiles, we've had extraordinary Tomahawk performance in this time frame, we had aviation squadrons shoot down a MiG aircraft from Syria. You know, these units have been tested in combat and doing quite well.

Senator King: And I'm not suggesting otherwise. What I'm suggesting is -- and I urge you to read that study -- I'm suggesting that we had a preventable problem; there were multiple warnings, it wasn't acted upon, and I want to be
reassured that it is being acted upon, and I'll be glad to
review those reports.

Admiral Davidson: But sir, this is why I'm saying the
Navy feels a huge amount of accountability for this. They
tasked me to review those two collisions, I produced a 170-
page report with 58 recommendations, and the Navy has been
moving out on those recommendations to provide the kind of
unit personnel training, to provide advice and resources to
the type commanders, the fleet commanders, the Naval Systems
Command, all with recommendations to improve this situation
in a way that eliminates the variance that I'm talking
about.

Senator King: And I'm delighted to know that, and I've
heard that before. I just want to see the data that backs
up the fact that these recommendations are in fact being
executed.

Admiral Davidson: Okay. All right. I'll be sure to
do it. And I mentioned earlier in testimony, there are some
recommendations in the Comprehensive Review that I made that
I'm watching closely for the '20 budget to make sure that
they're accommodated as well.

Senator King: And I don't mean to imply -- I said in
my opening that the responsibility goes all the way up to
this Congress. Continuing resolutions, which you talked
about, are pointed out to be part of the problem, and the
sequester was part of the problem. So there's
responsibility to go around. But I just, as I say, want to
see where we are in terms of the data on executing on those
recommendations. Thank you, Admiral. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.

Senator Blackburn.

Senator Blackburn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
you to each of you for being here today, for your service to
our country, for the testimony that you've prepared and
presented to us, and for taking the time to take our
questions here and again as we go into a closed session this
afternoon.

I thought it was so interesting this morning reading
Wall Street Journal; there is a book review in the opinion
section and it's on the future of Asia: "The Future is
Asian." And it made me think a little bit about something
we talked some about in this committee. And it is how the
commercial complex and the military complex in China have a
tendency to be one and the same. And you see this reflected
in their Belt and Road Initiative, the Thousand Talents
Program, things of that. And they even talk a little bit
about building that dual-use sectors. And this is something
that is going to have an impact on their power in the coming
years.
And there will be some of this that you can answer now and some we'll need to take up in a closed session, but one of the things, Admiral Davidson, that I think as you look at this from where you sit and you hear the term "expanding the competitive space" for China, how do you interpret that to your mission? I know Senator Hawley asked what your needs are going to be, what changes you need to see in the force.

And then for you, and also, General Abrams, for you, when you look at the cyber capabilities that they are using to push themselves to information dominance, which would be a goal for them, how do you see that slowing our warfare activities and how would they use that as a force-multiplier for their conventional capabilities and use it to target the links and nodes in our mobility system?

So, with that, I will give you the time, and thank you for your --

Admiral Davidson: Quickly, ma'am, it is going to take a whole-of-government approach on our behalf as well. We talked a little bit earlier today about the kind of tools like the BUILD Act provides in this whole-of-government approach. I'm quite encouraged by all the concepts that are coming forth from those services. It's our obligation to knit that together in a war-fighting concept out there in the Indo-Pacific.

It's going to require some investments and some
capabilities that are, I would say, nascent in our country right now, and it's also going to require us to invest in a way across the region, the posture of how we are situated, and then some of the capabilities from the training apparatus and how that might support all this new capability that's coming online, as well as the way in which we share and collaborate with information with our allies and partners in the region to make this whole. But some of the specifics of all of this is better discussed in closed hearing.

Senator Blackburn: Correct.

Admiral Davidson: Thank you.

General Abrams: Senator, I'd just like to talk a little bit specifics about cyber. As you mentioned, it's one of the key components for -- in our interest of achieving information dominance.

So first and foremost, I'll tell you that the creation of U.S. Cyber Command has given us now the right level of command integration. He is a supporting commander to all of the combatant commands, and General Nakasone's done a fantastic job and I'm personally appreciative of all the efforts that he's done to support our efforts to integrate cyber as part of our holistic campaign on the peninsula.

It is a critical capability. We're still working on getting the appropriate authorities delegated to the right
level should we need them in a period of hostilities, and we can probably talk about that in greater detail during the closed session.

Senator Blackburn: Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blackburn.

Senator Hirono.

Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to both of you. General Abrams, good to see you again.

Just as a mention, Senator Wicker asked you, Admiral, about the 355-ship Navy, and as you undergo a review of the appropriate number of ships for our Navy, I hope that that will be a continuing commitment for that number of ships at least, and also that we have the resources necessary to repair and maintain the ships we already have.

The Defense Department recently released a 2019 Missile Defense Review, which, among other items, noted the installation of a Homeland Defense Radar in Hawaii, very important to us as a way to improve the performance of our current missile defense system and increase the protection of Hawaii.

Admiral Davidson, are you satisfied that with the installation of the Homeland Defense Radar in Hawaii, the defense of Hawaii is optimized for the current and near-term threats?

Admiral Davidson: Yes, ma'am. It fills in a gap in
our detectability that I think is critically important not only to the defense of Hawaii, but really, the defense of all the continental United States as well, and Alaska.

Senator Hirono: And of course I'd ask you to continue to pay attention to the timing of when the installation will occur. I think it's set for 2023 or somewhere in there.

Admiral Davidson: Yes, ma'am. That's correct.

Senator Hirono: General Abrams, do you believe that our current missile defense system in place in and around the Korean Peninsula serves as an effective deterrent against North Korean ballistic missile threat?

General Abrams: Yes, I do.

Senator Hirono: Admiral Davidson, you noted in the testimony that your command only gets five percent of foreign military funds. What command gets the largest percentage of these funds?

Admiral Davidson: I would say Central Command.

Senator Hirono: Central Command?

Admiral Davidson: Yes, ma'am.

Senator Hirono: So, when you get only five percent of these funds, how do you prioritize with the small amount of funding, how do you prioritize where the funding goes in a region as large as your AOR?

Admiral Davidson: My own approach is to make sure that where we're investing is complementary to our capability and...
also advances the capability of the countries in which we're providing this assistance.

Senator Hirono: So getting only five percent of these funds in an area as large as yours seems like an underinvestment to me. Does this kind of underinvestment in a partner or potential partner with these funds provide an opportunity for China to increase its influence in these nations?

Admiral Davidson: Yes, ma'am. Both China and Russia.

Senator Hirono: So who makes the decision as to the percentage of these funds that goes to all of our commands?

Admiral Davidson: It's an interagency decision the way all these things come together, between Defense recommendations, State disbursements at the end of the day. And I think as you examine the budgets that will be coming in the next few years, you'll see a shift in priority for Pacific Command.

Senator Hirono: That's good news. Thank you.

I'm glad that Senator Ernst asked you, Admiral Davidson, about the importance of our COFA and the fact that China is very much in these nations, Oceanic nations, to widen their influence and certainly their economic activities in this area. So what more can we do as a whole-of-government approach to counter China's influence in Oceania?
Admiral Davidson: We're continuing to work along those ends already, ma'am. I can tell you we're partnered with Australia, New Zealand, certainly on what I would call their very nearest-abroad. And I think the United States feels an immense amount of responsibility for the COFA states themselves. And you know, Japan has done a lot across Oceania. And in just the last three months, France has made it clear that their interests -- New Caledonia to Polynesia, the two bookends there, they want to be part of this conversation to make sure that our efforts are all working collaboratively and cooperatively.

We've also stepped up our engagements, not just from Indo-Pacific Command, my own visits to the region, but we've helped to facilitate visits by the Department of Interior and attended some forums like the Pacific Island Forum on providing some assistance to make sure that the security in Palau for the Oceans Conference in 2020 is going to be sound as well. We have to step those things up additionally.

Senator Hirono: I agree, because these are very small nation states. And as you mentioned that the citizens of these compact nations can travel to our country to any state without a visa requirement, and they mainly come to Hawaii and they go to Guam. So whatever we can do to provide the kind of support for these citizens I think will be very much appreciated because I know they feel that we have not done
quite what we should be doing with regard to their needs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator Tillis.

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here. General Abrams,
it's great to see you again. I appreciated all your
hospitality and time that we spent together back when you
were down at Fort Bragg.

Admiral Davidson, I'll start with you because the
subject of the 355-ship Navy has come up. And to be honest
with you, I'm not obsessed with a set number. In fact, I
think it could be dangerous for us to say you've just got to
check off until you get to 355 because I'm more concerned
with capabilities. And it would seem to me that over time,
you're going to determine that we need more or less,
depending upon how we match up against the increasing
capabilities.

So could you talk a little bit about how you could get
to a point where you start describing the aggregate capacity
of a 355-ship Navy and that that may ultimately manifest
itself in a very different footprint over the period of time
that you could actually get to 355?

Admiral Davidson: As I mentioned earlier, Senator, the
chief of naval operations and the Navy, they've undertaken
another force structure assessment, I think to get after precisely what you're talking about, make sure that they understand not only the capability mix of platforms themselves, but what the opportunity is for autonomous and unmanned vehicles as they come into this as well, and then how that might adjust those numbers going forward.

Senator Tillis: Well I would think so, because I think if you take a look at the inherent cost and survivability with manned vessels versus unmanned vessels, the multiplier that you could get through relying on different platforms is something we should all look at. I get that there are supply chain issues and there are shipyards across the country that can see and touch and feel a target number for the number of ships that are going to be built in a given place, but I don't care about that. What I care about is projecting the maximum capabilities for the minimum cost based on what the experts believe is the best way to match up against the adversary.

And one other question for you. It has to do with the 58 recommendations and the exchange that you had with Senator King. I'd be very curious when you respond to that, in terms of progress, the ones that require statutory action. I'd also be very curious to see, of the 58 recommendations, maybe why they were necessary based on a lack of funding or other factors that are clearly the
responsibility of Congress at the end of the day, I believe rooted, and much of the problems are really congressional inaction or inconsistency with funding, being able to do something I know is very important to General Abrams, readiness, and I don't know how many times you chanted the mantra of readiness when you were down at Forces Com. But most of that's rooted in inaction or inconsistency on our part. So we need to put a mirror down there when we're looking at those recommendations and recognizing the folks in suits caused a lot of those problems.

General Abrams, you mentioned 440 days with respect to Korea in terms of any -- we were at a point to where it seemed like every week we were watching a missile get launched or some sort of test being executed. And on the one hand, we'll say that they're moving at the current pace and speed, but isn't it fair to say that if they're no longer launching missiles, some of which failed and they learn a lot from failed tests, they can accelerate their program; isn't it fair to say that just that lack of activity has had some impact on their rate of growth?

And I know we'll go in the closed session for specifics, but it just seems logical from the outside observer, not something we would discuss in the closed hearing, that that lack of outward activity, that data collection that comes from missile launches and tests, has
to have some dampening effect on their rate of growth unless
they've figured out how to do something in a test tube
versus these "when we test, it has to be perfect, we don't
like to test and learn from failure, we want all of our
tests to succeed."

And there's an inherent cost in that. But it would
seem to me that some of the benefit that North Korea was
getting from that pace that they had up until about 440 days
ago has diminished now that they're changing their approach.
Would you agree with that?

General Abrams: Senator, I'm by far -- I'm not the
expert on missile flight tests nor on nuclear weapons
testing, but I have spoken to a number of them. It gets to
a point in programs, and we can talk more about it this
afternoon, that when you get to a certain point in that
volume of testing that they did, and it's that point where
the mature programs, if they are mature, then they can
transition to simulation and modeling.

Senator Tillis: So they've captured enough to actually
go to simulation.

General Abrams: There's potential of that, Senator,
and we can talk more about it this afternoon.

Senator Tillis: Fair enough.

Last thing. If you could tell me the progress you're
making, we're talking about more extended deployments in
Korea to create a work-life balance versus the one-year
iterations that we typically have. Have you made any
progress on that?

General Abrams: Senator, we have, and we're working
very closely with the services to find the right balance so
that we can do just that. We're looking at different force
mixes as a possibility in the future to do exactly what
you're talking about.

Senator Tillis: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Duckworth.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, we've already discussed throughout this
hearing today the tyranny of distance in the Pacific and
some of the challenges that we face. I myself grew up in
Southeast Asia, living in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, so
I am personally familiar with the tyranny of distances.

And you talked a little bit to, Admiral, the need for
increasing our sealift capabilities. Could you discuss a
little bit other requirements, such as airlift, heavy lift
aircraft, that sort of thing, that we might need to plus up
in order for you to be able to more efficiently and able to
react more quickly to any type of changes in the situation
in the pacific?
Admiral Davidson: Thank you, ma'am. I would just add, you know, one of the key areas we need to do is better cyber defenses of our logistics networks, which touch commercial industry so profoundly, both in terms that the people that we help contract for their support both in the United States, but overseas as well. Some of the inroads with ZTE and Huawei in some of these other countries are going to challenge our ability to use our existing logistics network without adapting it in a cyber sense moving forward.

Senator Duckworth: So are you speaking to upgrading and improving the capabilities of organizations like TRANSCOM in addition to the cyber capabilities itself?

Admiral Davidson: Absolutely. TRANSCOM bears some responsibility for those networks that support their logistics operations; that's absolutely one of them. And as you mentioned earlier, airlift is going to be critically important out there in the Indo-Pacific region.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

General Abrams, can you expand a little bit on the work we've done and the work that still needs to be done to ensure we have the necessary logistical tail to support U.S. Forces Korea in any contingency?

General Abrams: Senator, there's been extensive investment by the services over the last couple years under the leadership of Chairman Dunford and then-Secretary Mattis.
to properly not only posture the force to improve our posture in terms of munitions and other key supplies to appropriate levels based on where we were in 2017, but also made the right investments now in the supply chains to be able to sustain that if we ever had to get to a point of hostilities.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

Can both of you give me your brief assessments of how the recently-passed Asia Reassurance Initiative Act will affect our relationship in the region and what more needs to be done to make sure it's effectively implemented?

Admiral Davidson: I'm sorry, Senator, could you repeat that? I apologize.

Senator Duckworth: Sure, no worries. I'm the last questioner, so totally understandable.

Can you speak a little bit about the recently-passed Asia Reassurance Initiative Act and how that will affect our relationships within the region? You know, the importance of our alliances in INDOPACOM, particularly Republic of Korea and Japan. I don't think it's something we stress enough.

I think that the successes that we're having in the region diplomatically and politically really also stems from the fact that we have a solid alliance militarily between U.S., Korea, and Japan, and that must remain strong in order
for us to move forward on the other fronts.

Admiral Davidson: I couldn't agree more, ma'am. We've talked frequently about the whole-of-government approach in the region, it can't just be in the military space, that we're competing out there. And the ARIA, the ARIA Act is going to be one of the key vehicles in which to advance these relationships going forward.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you. General?

General Abrams: Senator, the only thing I'd add to that, specifically in Northeast Asia: no stronger allies than the Republic of Korea and Japan. And so I absolutely agree with what Admiral Davidson said in terms of it's a whole-of-government approach that can only serve to strengthen those two great democracies as well as our own.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you. And finally, my last question. Admiral, could you speak a little bit to the role of the State Partnership Programs in terms of the forces and the work that you do in countries like the Philippines and the like and the availability of those troops to augment your active duty forces?

Admiral Davidson: The State Partnership Programs not only in the Indo-Pacific Command region, but speaking for the other combatant commanders --

Chairman Inhofe: Excuse me, Admiral. Before you
answer, Senator Reed presiding. Go ahead.

Admiral Davidson: Have been quite important to us building military-to-military relationships. The frequency at which those State Partnership Programs can touch some of these other nations is quite good, and we've been able in just the last few months to expand one of those State Partnership Programs in the Oceania region. I don't want to say where and who just yet because we haven't announced the final selection of who the State partner will be. But it's an area in which I'm looking to expand some relationships in the region as well.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Thank you, gentlemen.

Senator Reed: [Presiding] Chairman Inhofe indicated that Senator King requested another question.

Senator King: Thank you.

General Abrams, in thinking about Korea and the history, we're currently focused on the nuclear threat of course, but we had troops there, a substantial troop commitment, for 50 years before the nuclear threat became what it is today. What I'm getting at is will we necessarily be able to remove those troops if the nuclear threat is reduced or eliminated given the conventional power that the North Koreans have, the array of artillery along the border, the threat to Seoul, and all of that? I want to try to put this discussion into some historical perspective.
Admiral Davidson: Senator, no, you're absolutely right. Our troop posture --

Senator King: Could you say that again? I like hearing that.

[Laughter.]

Senator King: I'm just teasing.

Admiral Davidson: Our troop posture, you know, it's -- by the way, it's been modulated since the armistice in July of 1953, and it's been modulated based on that conventional threat that you're talking about as well as other commitments that we had. For instance, we had a reduction in forces on the peninsula during the Vietnam area, and in fact, the Republic of Korea, really as a sign of solidarity to the United States committed two ROK divisions to South Vietnam in that conflict.

So it has, but our conventional capability on the peninsula is essentially, as I said earlier, the deterrent against the DPRK's conventional threat and their asymmetric threat.

Senator King: Which may well be necessary even with the elimination of the nuclear threat or the reduction of the nuclear threat unless there is a concomitant reduction in the conventional threat.

Admiral Davidson: Yes, Senator, and until there is a peace treaty. Because we still remain in a state of
armistice, a cessation of hostilities, until such time that there is a peace treaty between all the parties.

Senator King: Thank you. Thank you, Admiral.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Reed: Thank you very much, gentlemen, and thank you for your testimony.

On behalf of Chairman Inhofe, I will adjourn the hearing and see you later at the closed session.

Thank you, gentlemen.

[Whereupon, at 11:44 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]