HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF PAUL J. LaCAMERA, USA, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND/COMBINED FORCES COMMAND/UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

Tuesday, May 28, 2021

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding], Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Inhofe, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, and Tuberville.
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE ISLAND

Chairman Reed: I would like to call the hearing to order.

Good morning. The committee meets this morning to consider the nomination of General Paul LaCamera to be the next Commander of U.S. Forces Korea, United National Command, and the Republic of Korea–United States Combined Forces Command. General, I thank you for your continued service and willingness to lead in this very important position. I want to welcome your wife, Theresa, brother, Michael, your son, Jack, your daughter-in-law, Amanda, and your nephew, Mitchell. We thank them for their continued support of your service to our nation over many, many years.

Your career spans nearly 36 years, with distinguished service across multiple theaters and command experience at all levels. You have most recently served as the Commanding General of U.S. Army Pacific, an experience that will serve you well in this new role.

North Korea has vexed U.S. administrations for decades. Maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula must remain a priority for the Department of Defense, though solving the long-term challenges posed by North Korea will require all elements of national power.

According to the 2021 global threat assessment provided
by the Director of National Intelligence, the intelligence community assesses that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un views nuclear weapons as "the ultimate deterrent against foreign intervention," and, over time, intends to gain "international acceptance and respect as a nuclear power."

The assessment also maintains that Kim Jong Un probably "does not view the current level of pressure on his regime as enough to require a fundamental change in its approach."

The Biden administration recently completed an interagency review of our nation's policy towards North Korea. The ultimate goal of U.S. policy remains the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but senior administration officials have explained that "we are not seeking a grand bargain or an all-or-nothing approach."

Instead, the administration intends to pursue "a calibrated, practical approach to diplomacy with the North with the goal of eliminating the threat to the United States."

This approach will require smart and firm engagement with the North Koreans, but, more importantly, it requires coordination with our allies and partners in the region, none more so than South Korea and Japan. The Biden administration has already invested significant time and attention to our relationships with both Japan and South Korea in an effort to foster greater trilateral cooperation and coordination on this issue and other issues of mutual
concern. I would note that the President has already hosted Japanese Prime Minister Suga last month, and South Korean President Moon is set to visit later this week.

China also has a role to play in addressing our mutual concerns about North Korea, though it must decide what role it wants to play. According to recent testimony by the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, China will likely continue to balance international sanctions enforcement with its overall objective of maintaining stability in North Korea.

General LaCamera, I hope you will offer your views on the partnership between the U.S., Japan, South Korea, and other regional partners in addressing North Korea's destabilizing activity and to what extent you believe there are opportunities to more actively engage with China on these issues.

As you know, the one key factor that makes the United States military the greatest in the world is its people. Our troops and their families around the globe serve with remarkable selflessness, and those in Korea bear the burden of service far from home as heavily as any. This has been especially true during the past year, as Korea was an early epicenter of the pandemic and has remained particularly isolated ever since. Leading our uniformed personnel and their families on the peninsula while ensuring that their
needs are met will be a tremendous responsibility.

Lastly, the highest priority of any military commander is ensuring the readiness of the forces under their command to perform their mission. I hope you will share your views on how U.S. Forces-Korea can maintain readiness through training and exercises with their South Korean counterparts while avoiding miscommunication or an unintentional escalation in tensions with the North.

General, if confirmed, you will lead U.S. Forces-Korea at an incredibly consequential time. We thank you again for your continued willingness to serve, and let me now recognize the ranking member, Senator Inhofe.
STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES INHOFE, U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, General LaCamera, we thank you for all of your service, and I enjoyed meeting your family, and I am glad they are here today so they know what you are going to be undergoing, and the great job that you are going to be doing.

Since its release, this committee has used the 2018 National Defense Strategy and the bipartisan NDS Commission report, the blue book, as the blueprint for our defense work. Since 2018, I have been asking every senior defense official, both military and civilian, whether the 2018 NDS is still accurate and relevant, and important work, and every one of them has confirmed that it provides a solid foundation and priorities to help them advance our national military interests. They told us that it accurately reflects the strategic environment and, if anything, the threats have gotten worse. General LaCamera, I will be interested in your views.

One area we see things getting worse fast is in Afghanistan. This last week a girl's school in Kabul was bombed, and the lives of our Afghan translators, who help protect our troops, will be in much greater danger after our troops leave. This is, in part, because we abandoned the conditions-based approach that Congress has supported for
the last decade. Instead, unfortunately, the Biden administration has adopted a calendar-based approach that trades real security for politics. I fear that we are seeing only the beginning of an emerging humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan.

General LaCamera, I understand from our discussion in my office that Korea, we have another situation that can either be condition-based or calendar-based, and that is the transfer of wartime operational control. I look forward to your views on that.

Admiral Aquilino, who is the new Commander of INDOPACOM as of 30 April, told the committee just recently that the United States and Republic of Korea Alliance is iron-clad and it serves as a linchpin for peace and security in the Korean peninsula, and I totally agree.

As I said last week on the floor of the Senate, a strong military is the foundation of our alliances, and, in fact, a strong military enables us to have strong alliances, and as we see threats to our nation get worse, we need both, not one or the other.

So I look forward to your testimony today and working with you in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Inhofe.

General LaCamera, please, your testimony.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL PAUL J. LaCAMERA, COMMANDER,
UNITED NATIONS COMMAND/ COMBINED FORCES COMMAND/UNITED
STATES FORCES KOREA

General LaCamera: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am truly honored to appear before you today, and thank you for the opportunity to testify, and more importantly, if confirmed, to continue my service leading America's most precious resource. I want to thank President Biden for nominating me to serve as the Commander, United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and the United States Forces Korea. Additionally, to Secretary Austin and General Milley for their confidence in recommending me to the opportunity to continue to serve our nation.

There are too many people to thank for what brought me here today, but there are a select few without their support not only would I not be here, it would not be worth it. I am joined here today by Theresa, my wife of over 35 years. She is the mother of our four wonderful children and grandmother of two. An Army brat, U.S. Military Academy graduate, and Army veteran, Theresa is the heart and soul of this operation, our true north, my strength, and the one exercising civilian control of the military.

My son, Jack, a Navy veteran, now pastor, and his wife,
Amanda, who recently became a U.S. citizen, join me here today. I have three daughters: Brianna and her husband, John; Katie, and fiancé, Brandon; and Maggie are here in spirit, and I have no doubt they will watch and provide feedback as required. I am extremely proud of the adults that they have become.

Representing our extended family are my sisters, Trace and Caroline, my brother, Michael, and his son, Mitchell. I am grateful for their tremendous support over the many years, especially during combat deployments.

In our families there are too many people and veterans from World War I through Vietnam to our current fights, to personally thank for their service and for their support and selfless service. But I would like to recognize my sister, Trace, also a Military Academy graduate, a retired Army officer, and her late husband, Major General Bannister, for their almost 60 years of total service, in peace and in war.

Most importantly, thanks to my parents, my mother, Loretta, and my late father, John, whose love and support, along with the values and discipline they instilled in me, made me who I am. They were my first teachers of leadership by example.

Final recognition goes to some of my personal staff here with us. Without their dedication and professionalism, along with countless others through the years, I would not
be here. It is an honor to serve with them every day.

Today the danger and complexity across the globe have only increased. In the Department of Defense, China is our pacing threat. Having spent the last 19 months as Commander of the U.S. Army Pacific I am aware of the challenges involved with competition and shaping the environment to prevent crisis from escalating into conflict. I recognize the need to maintain readiness, not just for conflict but for competition, and to compete daily. Being ready to fight tonight means maintaining capability and creating time and space to enable the diplomatic process, preserving options for leaders.

I am aware of the most sacred trust given to me to prepare our servicemembers to fight and win in the most dangerous piece of ground, the last 100 meters. This remains a critical period in Northeast Asia and in Korea, as we face persistent challenges with the development of nuclear land advanced missile systems, cyber capabilities, asymmetric and military technologies. The foundations for success is a strong and effective integrated deterrent posture that brings to bear the unique capabilities and capacity of the entire joint, interagency, and combined community.

If confirmed, I intend to capitalize on the trust built with senior military leaders in the region while commanding
U.S. Army Pacific, maintaining the trust of ascending states and my interagency colleagues, and most importantly, build on the trust and bonds forged with national treasure over second decades with our Korean allies.

As my predecessors have done, I endorse the four longstanding United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and United States Korea priorities: sustaining and strengthening the alliance, maintaining the armistice, transforming the alliance, and sustaining the force. These priorities remain relevant, but if confirmed, as any incoming commander does, I will make adjustments based on new facts, changes in the environment, and putting guidance from my leadership and ROK partners, and my own observations to keep our alliance iron-clad. I will keep this committee informed.

Katchi Kapshida. We go together. The ROK-U.S. alliance remains the cornerstone of stability and security in Northeast Asia, and that partnership continues to grow through economic cooperation, mitigating threats to regional stability, and fulfilling our commitments to allies and partners in the region.

Finally, I would like to recognize General "Abe" Abrams and his wife, Connie, for not only their leadership on the Korean Peninsula but also their lifetime of dedicated service to our nation. I wish them well in their next
I am deeply honored for this opportunity to command one of the most vital regions of the planet. Thank you for considering my nomination, and I look forward to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of General LaCamera follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General. As is customary, there is a series of questions which each nominee must respond to. Please respond to the questions as I ask them.

Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

General LaCamera: Yes, Chairman, I have.

Chairman Reed: Have you assumed any duties or taken any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

General LaCamera: No, I have not.

Chairman Reed: Exercising our legislative and oversight responsibilities makes it important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings, reports, records, and other information from the Executive branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify before this committee, when requested?

General LaCamera: Yes, Chairman, I do.

Chairman Reed: Do you agree, when asked before this committee, to give your personal views, even if your views differ from the administration?

General LaCamera: Yes, Chairman, I do.

Chairman Reed: Do you agree to provide records, documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner
when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult with the requestor regarding the basis for any good-faith delay or denial in providing such records?

General LaCamera: Yes, Chairman, I do.

Chairman Reed: Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established by this committee for the production of reports, records, and other information, including timely reporting to hearing questions for the record?

General LaCamera: Yes, Chairman, I will.

Chairman Reed: Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

General LaCamera: Yes, Chairman, I will.

Chairman Reed: Will those witnesses and briefers be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

General LaCamera: Yes, they will.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much.

Well, General, I will say I have had the privilege of knowing you since you were a lieutenant colonel, commanding a battalion in combat, and you have had an impressive career with selfless dedication to the country, and an extremely aggressive attitude of protecting the soldiers that serve underneath you, and I compliment you for both of those
activities.

Your new assignment in Korea is going to be a significant challenge -- I think you recognize that -- and I believe you are well prepared for it. One of the things that has been happening over the last several years, because of political dynamics, has been the curtailing of training, particularly operational training with troops in the field. In your opinion, how should we balance the need to maintain readiness for our forces, which I assume include large-scale exercises with our efforts to engage North Korea, and do you believe we are striking the right balance?

General LaCamera: Chairman, I believe I know General Abrams uses size, scope, volume, and timing right now. I will take a look at that. In my current previous, and in previous positions, I have used, you know, live, virtual, and constructive. I think as we trade spaces we give up certain things, turning those dials on live, virtual, and constructive training to make sure that we can train at the right levels, to make sure that, you know, from the squad leader on up to the general officers, understand what they can do.

So if we can't do it live, that is obviously the gold standard, I will continue to work, if confirmed, to do it virtual and constructive, to make sure that we are meeting the standards and ready to fight tonight.
Chairman Reed: Are there limitations in terms of access to training ranges and airspace, in your view right now?

General LaCamera: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Currently right now, in my current position we are bringing Apache pilots off the Peninsula to train back in the United States, based on limitations with training, training ranges.

Chairman Reed: And are you prepared to open up that issue again with your South Korean counterparts, and see if we can minimize that?

General LaCamera: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Every time I meet with the ROK CONGEN in Honolulu, and I just recently met with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of the ROK military, and we had this discussion.

Chairman Reed: Thank you. In March, the United States and South Korea agreed to a new 6-year Special Measures Agreement that increases South Korea's contribution to the course of stationing U.S. forces in the country by approximately 14 percent, and negotiations over this agreement, as you know, were a significant irritant over the last several years. Do you support the new Special Measures Agreement?

General LaCamera: I do, Mr. Chairman, waiting on the ratification by the Koreans.

Chairman Reed: Are the ways, outside of the Special
Measures Agreement, that South Korea provides support to U.S. forces in the country? Again, my perception of some of the [inaudible] was it was just reduced simple to, you know, you have got to pay us money, not other contributions that the South Koreans made. Can you cite some of those contributions?

General LaCamera: Yes, Mr. Chairman. General Abrams has moved his headquarters. They are in the process of moving his headquarters down to Camp Humphreys. The construction, the housing, and the buildings that are housing our soldiers, the barracks, headquarters, et cetera, were built by the Republic of Korea. That is one example.

Chairman Reed: And there are others, I presume, too.

General LaCamera: Yes, there are.

Chairman Reed: Just my final question is just a brief view of the security situation on the Peninsula.

General LaCamera: Mr. Chairman, I mean, it appears quiet, given all the other things that are going on. But I have no doubt that the adversaries to the north are -- you know, he is trying to preserve his country and he is trying to preserve his legacy. So I think General Abrams, and, if confirmed, one of the things I will have to monitor is his combat capabilities, both conventional nuclear and unconventional, that pose a threat to our mission.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Again, thank you
for your distinguished service, and thank you to your family
for being with you every moment. Thank you.

Senator Inhofe, please.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I mentioned
in my opening statement the NDS, and I am going to quote
now, keeping in mind that this was actually in print in
2018. Quote, "North Korea seeks to guarantee regime
survival and increase leverage by seeking a mixture of
nuclear, biological, chemical, convention, and non-
conventional weapons and a growing ballistic missile
capacity to gain coercive influence over South Korea, Japan,
and the United States." Now that was in 2018. And when
asked the NDS accurately assesses the current strategic
environment in the INDOPACOM, the new commander, Admiral
Aquilino, said, quote, "The 2018 NDS provides a candid
assessment of the strategic environment," and I take that as
a yes.

General LaCamera, do you agree that the 2018 NDS
accurately assesses the environment with North Korea and
sets the right priorities for our national security?

General LaCamera: Senator, I do. However, as you
know, there are other things that happen in other combatant
commands, and if confirmed, my responsibility will be to
make sure that as things happen and resources are modified,
that I will have to identify the risk and have that
conversation with my boss on where that risk is and who is
going to buy it.

Senator Inhofe: Our chairman brought up the idea about
the concern that I have had all the time, about the training
limitations, and you answered the question. But which way
is that trend line going? Are we going to be able to handle
those limitations that are quite obvious now?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. We currently have,
but as time goes on, you know, I will, if confirmed,
continue to monitor to make sure that we stay within the
band of excellence of readiness, and then have candid
conversations with my ROK counterparts on making sure that
we can train.

My concern isn't just for U.S. forces. If we are
having challenges, one of the things, if confirmed, I will
be looking into is how does it impact others' ability to
train, and where does that put the mission at risk.

Senator Inhofe: Yeah, and that has been our concern.
I had one last question. South Korean President Moon
wants to accelerate the transfer of wartime operational
control to a bi-national command led by a South Korean
general with a U.S. deputy. The current arrangement is that
in the event of war, South Korean soldiers would be under
the bi-national command led by a U.S. general. In your
opinion, should transfer of wartime operational control to a
South Korean-led command be condition based or calendar based, and why?

General LaCamera: Senator, the conditions-based OPCOM transfer should remain. It is bilaterally agreed upon, and I believe that it should remain as a conditions-based approach. And we need to be prepared to respond. The agreement, my assumption is that as they came to this bilateral agreement they analyzed, identified the risks, and this was the best way to reduce that risk, and I support it.

Senator Inhofe: Well, I think most of us support the condition based, and this is something that has worked in the past.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Inhofe. Now I would like to recognize, via Webex, Senator Gillibrand -- excuse me, via Webex, Senator Hirono.

Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, General, for your service as Commander of U.S. Army Pacific. You have been doing a good job there, and I suspect that your confirmation will enable you to do a good job in your new position.

As a part of my responsibility, with all the committees that I sit on, I ask the following two initial questions, which I will ask of you.

Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made
unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal
or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

General LaCamera: No, Senator, I have not.

Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or
entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

General LaCamera: No, Senator, I have not.

Senator Hirono: General, the 2019 Missile Defense
Review identified the Homeland Defense Radar Hawaii, HDRH,
as a requirement for deterring and discriminating against
inbound missile threats from an increasingly capable North
Korea. Congress appropriated $133 million for fiscal year
2021 to keep its development on track.

General, do you consider HDRH as a part of the region's
layered missile defense system to protect Hawaii and the
Lower 48 from long-range missiles from Korea, especially in
light of North Korea recently warning of an impending, and I
quote, "crisis beyond control"?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, I do. I believe that
it is part of a multi-echelon, many capabilities approach to
defending not only Hawaii but the Lower 48, and Alaska.

Senator Hirono: Thank you. In a recent report, a
group of experts opined that U.S.-ROK alliance continues to
serve as an essential tool for pursuing mutual interests in
Northeast Asia and beyond. This was echoed in a statement
made by Secretary of State Blinken in a speech at the U.S.
Embassy in the Republic of Korea, in which he said, "We must weave together broader coalitions of allies and partners because the more countries with complementary strengths and capacities that can unit to achieve shared goals, the better, and there is clear benefit to strong alliances in the region, and it will be important to continue to build on the existing relationships as well as develop new ones."

And I know that you stated that you wanted to make sure that we create the space for diplomacy. I completely agree with you.

I am interested in how you would incorporate initiatives to bring together allies in the region to achieve shared goals. Specifically, if confirmed, how would you continue to develop relationships in the region to build greater collaborations between U.S. forces and our allies?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, thank you. As stated in my opening statement, you know, I have been able to build trust with our partners and allies in the region, as the U.S. Army Pacific Commander, and I will continue to use that trust built. And in wearing one of my hats as the U.N. Commander, I believe there are opportunities there.

I have had engagements, both bilateral with the Republic of Korea, and then just recently, I know General Milley had a face-to-face meeting with both Japanese CHOD and the Republic of Korea CHOD. And so using our partners
and allies in the region, I will look for those opportunities and work with INDOPACOM going forward.

Senator Hirono: Especially, I think we need to do what we can to improve the Japan-ROK relationship, because there are historical reasons why this relationship between those two countries, two important allies for us, is not what I hope it could be. But, if confirmed, do you see a role that you could play in strengthening the trilateral -- that would be Japan, South Korea, and U.S. -- and the Japan-South Korea relationship, and what would you do, specifically, to foster that communication and relationship between South Korea and Japan?

General LaCamera: Senator, I would build on the things that we have already done. I have already had engagements in my current position to talk multi-domain operations and cross-domain operations with the Koreans and with the Japanese, and I would seek other opportunities going forward, whether in theater or back in the continental United States, those multilateral training opportunities at our great training ranges that we have in the U.S.

Senator Hirono: General, generally I would say that the mil-to-mil relationship among the trilateral countries, that is a -- maybe the word is not "easier," but that relationship is stronger than the diplomatic one. So would you be working closely with Secretary Blinken to have more
of a whole-of-government approach to fostering better
relations between the South Koreans and Japanese?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. My experience as the
Chief Officer of Security Cooperation, as part of a country
team, I look forward to working the chargé and with my other
interagency colleagues to continue to move forward over.

Senator Hirono: Mr. Chairman, I think my time is up.
I am not sure. Is it?

Chairman Reed: Yes, ma'am.

Senator Hirono: Thank you very much.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Now I would
like to recognize, via Webex, Senator Fischer.

Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General,
could you talk about the importance of our nuclear
deterrence commitments to the U.S.-ROK alliance and the
value of bomber overflight missions in terms of deterring
adversaries, and also reassuring our allies?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. The bomber overflight
missions are part of the nuclear triad, and I think it is
one way that, using all three and not just the nuclear but
the conventional deterrents, that is extremely important to
demonstrate our commitment to the alliance on the Peninsula.

Senator Fischer: And what do our allies think of that?
Have you had conversations with them?

General LaCamera: I have not. Senator, I have not
specifically, in my current position, had any conversations discussing nuclear deterrence with our partners and allies.

Senator Fischer: Thank you. In recent years we have seen significant additional investment, and that has been made to improve our missile defenses on the Peninsula and address shortfalls in munitions and ISR. What is your assessment of the progress that has been made, and are there other capability gaps that concern you at this point?

General LaCamera: Senator, I know that General Abrams focuses a lot on force protection. I think early warning systems are extremely important. C4ISR is extremely important on the early warning and then the focusing on the training and readiness. If confirmed, I look forward to getting over there. I have a good understanding of the Army position. What I lack is the true visibility on the remaining part of the Joint Force.

Senator Fischer: From what you know at this point, do you think that there is sufficient ISR on the Peninsula?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, I do.

Senator Fischer: I would like to get some of your impressions on the 1251 Report. The report's primary purpose is to enhance capabilities necessary to deter China, and I assume many of its investments would also enhance deterrence on the Korean Peninsula. Would you discuss the interrelationships there and what elements you see as having
particular application to improving deterrence towards North Korea?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. I think oversimplification of China's role on the Peninsula and in the region may get us in trouble. I think they play a role in both the North and the South. China uses all the elements of national power -- diplomatic, information, military, economic. They have used it successfully in putting pressure on our ROK allies. And I think, based on my previous comment of working with my interagency colleagues, it is extremely important for me to understand the levers that they are pulling, because I don't think it is necessarily going to be a military that will have impact on the security situation.

Senator Fischer: And my last question would be that I know that U.S. Forces Korea has established some unique partnerships with industry and academia and innovation hubs within the DoD enterprise, such as DIUx and DARPA. What are your view on the tools that are available to commanders to develop and field these innovative solutions to emergent problems within the AOR, and do you see these partnerships continuing to play a significant role?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. I think we also need to use all elements in national power, and I will operate within the ethics rules to ensure that we maintain those
conversations, we are thinking about things differently, and we are looking at multiple ways to confront the threats on the Peninsula.

Senator Fischer: Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Fischer. Now let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Gillibrand.

Senator Gillibrand: I was really glad to see your dedication to diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula, and we all agree it is the route we should be pursuing for a safer Korean Peninsula and Pacific region.

Of course, as often the case with diplomacy, the devil is in the details. Do you have a position on whether we should be pursuing a large-scale, comprehensive deal with North Korea, or if we should seek incremental agreements that lead us towards denuclearization?

General LaCamera: Senator, I believe that that is really between the Secretary of State, and if asked, I will provide my best military advice to the Secretary of Defense and the INDOPACOM Commander as we go forward.

Senator Gillibrand: But you don't have any advice or guidance right now.

General LaCamera: Not at this time. No, Senator.

Senator Gillibrand: So it is been a few years since the Sony hack and North Korea's ransom of Sony's
intellectual property. Your testimony indicates North Korea should still be considered a significant cyber threat. In the last few months, we have seen attacks that have made Sony's hack pale in comparison. Your written testimony indicates that North Korea continues to be a significant cyber threat. Do you believe you will have adequate cyber resources to counter these threats, and if not, do I have your commitment to let Congress know what resources are lacking and how we can fix it?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. In part of my preparation for testimony I believe we have what we need, but if confirmed, I look forward to getting on the ground and identifying what those issues are, and yes, I will provide this committee the information.

Senator Gillibrand: Unfortunately, President Trump's negotiations were unsuccessful after some encouraging signs in 2018. One of the chips he gave up was our training exercises with ROK troops. Since 2018, our large-scale theater exercises have been held virtually. Due to the pandemic, those exercises were virtual again this year. However, President Biden has indicated that next year's exercise may be in person. Do you have any position on the importance of these exercises generally, and whether or not they should be virtual or in person? The ROK conscription forces are usually for a term of less than 2 years. Does
this set up a dynamic where missing even one year's worth of exercises set back our readiness, and if not, should we view this as a potential option for cost saving?

General LaCamera: Senator, you know, I know General Abrams and team, and as part of U.S. Army Pacific, we did participate in CCPT. One, if confirmed, I will get the opportunity potentially to exercise that, and that will give me a good understanding of just where they are in the process.

To your comment on the conscription and the turnover at the lower level, if confirmed, I look forward to getting on the ground and just seeing what their troop capabilities are. We have turnover in our formation. Focusing on the basic threat at our tactical levels is extremely important. So I think it is really a multiple-layered question when you talk tactical level and operational level, which will be the focus at the general officer staff level. But I look forward to seeing where they sit when it comes to the tactical level.

Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Gillibrand. Now let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Rounds.

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General,
first of all, thank you for your many years of service to
our country and for agreeing to continue that service as
Commander of USFK.

General, as we discussed during our call last week, an
issue that concerns me is the recent talk about a potential
reversal of U.S. land mine policy. I am curious about how
you see this issue, and would appreciate you discussing the
precautions our field commanders take, our usage of self-
destruct and self-deactivate technology, and how a change in
policy would impact our deterrence efforts and our ability
to win on the battlefield in Korea.

General LaCamera: Thank you, Senator, for the
conversation the other day. The land mines, I mean, I don't
know the exact number but I know that the Demilitarized Zone
is protected by land mines. And as we discussed in our
phone conversation, land mines without observation and
coordinated with some kind of overwatch, you know, does
create hazards. It will allow the enemy to penetrate if
they could breach through, but also, as discussed, it
provides an opportunity -- it puts the local civilian
population at risk.

It is a very integrated defense right now. If
confirmed, a change in policy would create risks that I
would have to come back and identify how we would mitigate
it in other ways.
Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir. I would also like you to talk a bit about logistics, the distance involved and rearming and maintaining, and the possibility that if the worst happens in Korea you may be in competition for resources with another theater of operations. Can you talk a little bit about the seriousness of this and what the different possibilities are that we may very well face with regard to the logistical challenges?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. In my current position as the Commander of the U.S. Army Pacific, one of my responsibilities is to set the theater. We spent a lot of time and effort talking about sustainment, but I would argue that it is not just set the theater when it comes to sustainment, and medical as a subset of that, but the other warfighting functions of intelligence, fires, et cetera, going forward.

So I have a very good working knowledge of what that is. My eighth theater of support commander has made great inroads in that piece. I do recognize there will be competition with others, but I also recognize that there is capability not just on the Peninsula but in Asia, and we have to look at other ways of how we would get our resupplies, our logistics.

Senator Rounds: Thank you. And, Mr. Chairman, I am pretty close to my time. I will yield back at this time.
Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Rounds.

Now let me recognize Senator Kaine, please.

Senator Kaine: Mr. Chair, Ranking Member Inhofe, and General, I look forward to working with you. I have been on the committee for 9 years, and discussions about Korea kind of have a Groundhog Day sensibility about them. We see the cycles of provocation by North Korea, we get engaged, provocations kind of abate, and then it seems like if we turn our attention elsewhere, almost as if to get our attention provocations ratchet back up.

And I have been thinking about President Moon's visit to President Biden, and just thinking about would there be a way to kind of break out of the cul-de-sac that we are in. So let me throw an unusual idea on the table, that might have been considered, but then I want to ask your military opinion about the military dimensions of it.

The armistice to end the Korean War was entered into in July of 1953, between China, the U.S., and North Korea. South Korea did not sign the armistice. It was a cessation of hostilities, and the idea was that there would then be the negotiation of a peace treaty. That has never happened. So we are nearly 70 years past the armistice in a cease-fire but without a peace treaty.

North Korea uses that, that there has never been a
peace deal, and South Korea didn't sign the armistice, and there are troops amassed on our border. They use that to sort of create a mythology in North Korea about the need to be overly militarized, because the war could start again any minute. There is not a peace deal. South Korea didn't even sign the armistice.

What if the U.S. and South Korea were to just declare we are not at war with North Korea, we have no desire to be involved in hostilities with North Korea, we have no desire to get any of North Korea's territory. Our only desire is to live in peace with North Korea. The U.S. presence in South Korea is as a valued security partner, to help South Korea deal with whatever security challenges it faces.

From a military standpoint, a declaration of that kind would not limit the U.S.'s ability to carry out the mission that it is currently carrying out in South Korea, would it?

General LaCamera: As a U.S. Forces Command, I don't believe it would, Senator.

Senator Kaine: And as far as you know, from a military standpoint, the U.S. has no desire to be engaged in hostilities with North Korea, does it?

General LaCamera: No, Senator.

Senator Kaine: And from a military standpoint we have no desire to annex or take North Korean property or land, do we?
General LaCamera: My understanding, Senator, is that that is not our policy at this time.

Senator Kaine: And I think these things, what you have stated, are elements of U.S. policy for a very long time. We don't want to be in hostilities. We don't have evil designs to, you know, help anyone, ourselves or anyone else, take over North Korean territory. The notion that we are 70 years into a cease-fire without a peace deal, the peace negotiation with North Korea is very complicated, as we know. But why can't we just, with South Korea, declare we are no longer at war with North Korea, we have no hostile intent. We only want to live peacefully with all of our neighbors. It would seem if we would do that we might reverse some of the polarities that North Korea uses to gin up this notion that war could start again any second. They would still not like U.S. presence in South Korea. We would still want to get them to denuclearize. But we would be negotiating not as adversaries, you know, at the brink of war, but we would be negotiating as sovereign nations trying to solve problems.

And I guess I am just wondering whether there is something that can be done, that the U.S. and South Korea could do together, without playing Mother May I with North Korea. Is there something we could do together that would take away the North Korean narrative of a cease-fire but no
peace deal and a war that could begin any minute? And I recognize, from your answer to Senator Gillibrand, that some of these are in the diplomacy space, not in the military space, but I think your testimony on the military dimensions of it are accurate. We don't have any desire to be in aggression with North Korea. We don't have a desire on their territory. We would obviously want there to be peace on the Peninsula.

I hope that maybe that President Biden and President Moon might contemplate whether a change in diplomatic approach, such as that, could break a logjam that has been persistent for nearly seven decades. And I thank you for your service, your testimony today, and I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kaine. Let me recognize Senator Cotton via Webex, please.

Senator Cotton: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, thank you for your service. Congratulations on your nomination to this important post.

Earlier this year you said, on a panel, and I quote, "Our daily focus is on competition. We have got to be ready to respond in crisis and we have got to be prepared to win in conflict." I want to thank you for those comments. It is increasingly rare that we hear senior military leaders talk simply about winning in combat, so I want to commend
you for those comments and keeping your focus on the military's primary mission, which is fighting and winning our nation's wars.

And I want to start with a question about our number one threat and competitor, China. Can you please explain again to the committee how you believe the Chinese role, or how the Chinese view the role that North Korea plays in U.S.-China relations?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, and thanks for the time last week. I think North Korea is another arrow in the quiver or another lever in their diplomatic, information, military, economic levers that they would pull. What I don't have, and maybe in a different setting can talk about, is, you know, what are the things that they are doing to maintain pressure or to get KJU to do things for them.

Senator Cotton: What do you think is a greater irritant to the Chinese Communist Party -- the presence of nuclear weapons in North Korea or the presence of American troops in South Korea?

General LaCamera: Senator, I really can't answer for the Chinese on what they think is a greater irritant. I think both of them give the Chinese Communist Party reason to pause, and I do know that the Chinese do not want them to have nuclear weapons. I also know that they don't want us in their region.
Senator Cotton: I want to turn now to the operational plans on the Peninsula. What is your view of the role that joint long-range precision fires play to support the OPLAN on the Korean Peninsula, and how important is it that our military continue to modernize and equip these forces with next-generation combat arms?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. The long-range precision fires gives us, not just at the tactical level but at the operational level, it gives us the ability to do operational maneuver. And again, it gives us another all-weather arrow in the quiver that we have to be able to facilitate maneuver at various levels.

Senator Cotton: Thank you. And then finally, what is your assessment of the status of the efforts to transfer operational control to the Republic of Korea command combined forces?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. I know that General Abrams is working with the ROK military on a day-to-day basis to assist them in acquiring the capabilities and to meet the bilateral agreement. If confirmed, I recognize that one of the missions or one of the jobs I will have will be to continue to assist them in moving forward, so that we can achieve this.

Senator Cotton: Do you think we need to see large-scale joint training exercises return to the Peninsula, to
be best prepared for the transition?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. Training and readiness is extremely important, and live training is a lot better than the virtual and the constructive. But I recognize that in negotiations, or that it is a potential bargaining chip going forward, and my job will be to identify that risk and then figure out a way to reduce it.

Senator Cotton: Good. Thank you, General.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Cotton. Now let me recognize Senator King.

Senator King: Thank you very much, General. Thanks for being with us today. I want to just emphasis a point that Senator Hirono made, and I know you are not in the diplomatic business but in many ways you are. Helping to foster the relationship between Japan and South Korea I think is an important part of anybody's job that has a responsibility in Korea. That relationship seems to be one step forward and two steps back in recent years, and I hope that that is something that you will work with your State Department counterparts and your military counterparts in both countries, because I think that is a very important part of our strategic position and deterrent in the region. Do you agree?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, I do.

Senator King: I hope that that is something that you
can continue.

The other point that I think is important is that we always talk about North Korea in terms of nuclear weapons. That is the popular discussion here in the U.S., and by "popular" I don't mean approved of. I mean common in the press.

I was surprised, and to some extent shocked, driving from Seoul to the DMZ how close it is, and one of the concerns is that it would not take nuclear weapons, or even missiles to inflict enormous damage on Seoul from the North Korean border. And I understand there are artillery batteries that are poised to do just that.

Talk to me about the conventional threat, particular to the city of Seoul, that I think we should realize that this isn't only a nuclear issue but there are some 25 or 30 million people at risk from conventional attack that could be triggered at a moment's notice.

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, and I am very well aware of that threat. As a major, I was stationed along the Demilitarized Zone, within mortar range and artillery range, and it was something that, I wouldn't say it kept me up at night but it was a concern. And as you stated, the conventional threat and their ability to put many rounds in the air and create panic, just in the conventional side, is concerning. And as you stated, it appears that Seoul is
growing to the north, even closer.

Senator King: Thank you. One of the things that concerns me, particularly in a place like South Korea or the South China Sea or Taiwan or Ukraine is the risk of accidental war, of conflict which escalates out of control in a hurry. One way to try to ameliorate that risk is connections and communication links between potential adversaries.

Do we have mil-to-mil contacts with the North Koreans in order to be able to discuss something which may be an accident, an unintended, low-level conflict, so that it doesn't spin out of control?

General LaCamera: Senator, I am not aware of the exact reduction. I do know that the Joint Security Area up at Panmunjom is one way of communicating. But I am not fully aware of all the capabilities and the communication links.

Senator King: I would hope that that would be something you could look into, and, of course, talk to the State Department, because if you look back through history, wars often start by accident. The Guns of August. Nobody thought that a single gunshot in Sarajevo was going to plunge the world into the conflict that it did in World War I. So one way, as I say, to ameliorate or mitigate that is having pre-existing contacts, particularly on the mil-to-mil level, where you can say, "Hey, that was not an intentional
incursion," or "That incident was a rogue individual." I hope that that is something you might consider, because you are going to one of the world's tinderboxes.

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, I will.

Senator King: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King. Now let me recognize, via Webex, Senator Tillis.

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, thank you for being here. I have been in the Senate for 6 1/2 years now, and virtually every Senate Armed Services hearing we have had China come up, and about 6 1/2 years ago we were worried about their quantity countering our quality. And now we see that they are still moving on quantity but they are improving on quality.

So with that erosion, or the narrowing of the advantage that the United States has, what are the things that you are most concerned with, particularly as it relates to maybe a reduction in defense spending, in this and possibly another budget cycle?

General LaCamera: Senator, I think we have to think about things differently. You know, to your quality and quantity comment, we want to go after the arrow -- how about we kill the archer, and how do we do that? There is, I think, the multi-domain task force that we are currently experimenting with. I think multi-domain operations gets at
that, and it is about, as we look at the joint warfighting concept and other things, it is what are the things that we need to do to create multiple dilemmas for our adversaries.

Senator Tillis: Something else I wanted to touch on. I assume you have read, maybe even contributed to, the 1251 Report, that Admiral Davidson submitted. In his testimony just a few weeks back, he cited a couple of budget priorities -- the Guam defense system, AEGIS, a shore site, the mission partner environment, which is a classified IT system to communicate securely with partners and allies, and upgrades to connect and improve our training ranges. Do you share his concerns that these are priorities that, at least at the time of that hearing, do not look like they are going to receive the funding needed?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, I do.

Senator Tillis: What are the consequences of letting that slide to the right by 2, 4, or 6 years?

General LaCamera: Senator, it creates vulnerabilities and risk, not just to our military formation, but to U.S. citizens and our interests, and we have to identify other ways to reduce that risk.

Senator Tillis: Another question that really comes back from my Personnel Subcommittee hearing we had about a week ago. The vaccination rate among really all levels in the military seems to be relatively low, with the supply
there and limited takers. Do you view that as a potential readiness threat, and what do you think that we need to do to get more people to actually be best prepared to go to a fight, if we have to have one?

General LaCamera: Well, Senator, given the status of the vaccine it is a choice that our soldiers have to make. I think it is incumbent upon commanders and leaders at all levels to talk to our soldiers about this is just another personal protective measure that they can take going forward. We have dealt with non-battle injuries since, I think, the first battle we ever fought, and I think COVID is just another one of those things that we have to identify and continue to look at ways to protect our formations.

Senator Tillis: I think with the numbers relatively low, to me it is like so much other training to have them best prepared. I view it as a threat now. Hopefully it is going to get a little bit better. But I think it is important that every level, from the top down, communicate the importance of taking this threat off the table.

The last thing is just, what do we need to continue to do to mold on and improve relationships between South Korea and Japan? What sort of things do we need to do differently? Are we moving okay, current course and speed, or what more do we need to do to redouble our efforts and make sure that that relationship between those two allies is
as strong as it can be, in a very important part of the
world?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. We need to continue
to look for multilateral or trilateral training operations
to bring them together. I had the meetings in morning with
the ROK chairman and then the Japanese chairman, but before
I met with the Japanese chairman in the afternoon he had met
bilaterally with the ROK's, and I think we need to look at
ways to continue to bring them together, militarily.

Senator Tillis: General, thank you for your service.
I look forward to supporting your confirmation. Thank you,
Mr. Chair.

General LaCamera: Thank you, Senator.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tillis. Let me
recognize, via Webex, Senator Rosen.

Senator Rosen: Well, thank you, Chairman Reed, Ranking
Member Inhofe, for holding this hearing, and I would really
like to thank General LaCamera for his lifetime of service
and for testifying here today.

So, General, of course, a tremendous amount of your
focus in this role will be in combatting potential North
Korean aggression. China casts a large shadow on the Korean
Peninsula, as it does throughout the Indo-Pacific and
increasingly around the globe. So what issues do China's
Belt and Road Initiative, expanding Beijing's sphere of
influence throughout the region and beyond, create and retaining and gaining allies in the Indo-Pacific that are critical to the U.S. Forces Korea mission and the broader needs of our military in East and South Asia?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. I think we need to understand the leverage that they have on the Korean Peninsula and, quite frankly, not just our ROK allies but our other partners and allies in the region, where they can put pressure on partners and allies as we continue to try to train west of the International Date Line.

Senator Rosen: Well, you talk about our partners, and, of course, with the event of a Chinese expansion towards the Korean Peninsula, in the same vein as they are moving in the South China Sea with Taiwan, how would you, if confirmed, respond or advise the South Korean defense apparatus to respond to any possible expansions?

General LaCamera: Senator, if confirmed, the best military advice I would give them is to make sure that they understand the risks that it provides to the security of their own country, as the Chinese attempt to provide influence and/or reduce the influence that the United States has. I think it is my job to demonstrate that our way of life and our alliance, it remains iron-clad and that we remain the cornerstone, and the example, quite frankly, for other alliances.
Senator Rosen: Well, I appreciate that. And so could you speak broadly about any possible plans you might have then on limiting Chinese defense and economic encroachment on the Korean Peninsula?

General LaCamera: Senator, when it comes to on the economic side I will consult with my State Department colleagues on what those diplomatic and, quite frankly, the economic arms are that they can use.

On the military side, you know, we have an alliance. The three commands that I have been nominated for has one mission, which is to defend the Republic of Korea, and my focus will be to work with the ROK military to ensure that we can defend them against any adversary.

Senator Rosen: Thank you. I want to talk about an adversary that may be hard to detect but has tremendous impact and often devastating impact, and those are our threats of cyber threats -- cyber ransomware, cyberattacks, blocking service, all of the kinds of things that we can imagine. And we have seen, with SolarWinds and the recent Colonial Pipeline attacks, they have awakened all of us to just how vulnerable our systems are, and really the cyber aggression that we are beginning to see, or continuing to see from abroad.

That is one of the reasons I am working with Senator Blackburn to invest more in our cyber resources, including
potentially creating new civilian cyber reserve for DoD and DHS via bipartisan legislation we introduced last month.

And so can you talk a little bit about your cyber posture and what you might do to really prevent and really do that threat-hunting we need to stop any provocative attacks on our systems.

General LaCamera: Senator, I will continue to work with CYBERCOM, if confirmed in the position that I am going to, on truly understanding what that threat is. And I think the recent activities that have occurred should give all of us pause on what those levers are and the damage that it can do really in the non-kinetic space. And it is not just the disruption. I think it is also the concern is ensuring that we information assurance on the information being passed is, in fact, accurate and true, and has not been modified.

Senator Rosen: Thank you. I couldn't agree more.

Mr. Chairman, my time is up. Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Rosen.

Now let me recognize Senator Ernst, please.

Senator Ernst: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and General LaCamera, it is great to see you again, and thank you for your service to our nation, and that of Theresa's and your families as well. Thank you for being here.

It is not lost on me, certainly, if those that are watching, if they could see the right sleeve of your
uniform, the years of service that that represents, with you serving away from your family in difficult circumstances. And all of us want to make sure that we are recognizing that sacrifice and the sacrifice of your family, so thank you.

Through your experience and record of success, many years of success, you are superbly qualified and the right selection to lead the United States Forces Korea into the future. And I have just a few questions, and I am going to go back and reflect on what Senator Hirono was leading into as well.

In the strategic competition of our current security environment, the Korean Peninsula is part of a larger regional contest that encompasses all elements of national power. And in your advanced policy questions you discussed the various relationships that exist in the region, and specifically the relationship between South Korea and Japan. This is what Senator Hirono was discussing early.

What recommendations would you provide on how to move forward with these relationships? If you could explain that a little bit more in detail.

Chairman Reed: Yes, Senator. Thank you for recognizing my family.

The military relationship is extremely important. If confirmed, or in my current position now as U.S. Army Pacific Commander, you know, I talk to U.S. Forces Command
Korea and U.S. Army Japan, to make sure that we have the
capabilities to support General Abrams. And I think we need
to look at other opportunities. We have the Security Force
Assistance Brigade that we can send to the different
locations to share tactics, techniques, and procedures. We
have the National Training Centers that we can bring them
too. We are developing an Arctic strategy. I think both of
them have cold weather environments and high altitude that I
think we could leverage back inside the U.S. Army Pacific or
even back in the Continental United States.

Senator Ernst: And I think that is important. We look
to reassure our allies and deter those competitors. So
employing our military and demonstrating through these
actions again is a reassurance.

Do you believe that through those actions involving our
allies, other nations, is there a way that we can project to
them that we are the partner of choice in the region, and
who would the other partner of choice be, and why is it
important they continue to come to us?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. I think when you look
at it, our adversaries, whether it is China, Russia, North
Korea, Iran, or the violent extremist organizations, you
know, they are looking to change the international rules-
based order that, quite frankly, we have established and
helped enforce with both the Japanese and the Republic of
Korea and other allies and partners in the region. And I think what we need to continue to demonstrate is that the way we do business is the right thing, and we need to continue to highlight how our adversaries are not operating in those countries' best interests.

Senator Ernst: And certainly with China as being one of those large regional competitors, oftentimes we find that they are offering a bunch of goods, but then when the allies get the bill of sale there are a lot of strings attached to what they are selling.

So I really appreciate it. I know that my time is running out. You did mention the SFAB, the Security Forces Assistance Brigade. Can you talk a little bit more about, just very briefly, their role in the region and how they have been able to close some of the gaps that we have had.

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. In this region, their interoperability has really been, not so much training because the countries we work with, they are the experts in this region in the environment. And so we are really learning from them. But it is the interoperability and it is the communication piece that allows us to be effective in a fight.

Senator Ernst: Thank you. And my time has expired.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you again, General. I appreciate it.
General LaCamera: Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator Kelly.

Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, it has now been over 2 years since the U.S. and the ROK forces have engaged in a large-scale joint-field exercise. I participated in the joint exercise that was formerly called Team Spirit, it has been 30 years or so, when I was serving in the Navy in the Western Pacific, and I view these exercises where our forces have the opportunity to work side-by-side and evaluate our combined skills as a key measure of our readiness for any conflict. What we learn from these exercises should inform the structure of our continued security partnership with South Korea.

In your view, do current large-scale exercises support shared security goals, including the improved interoperability of U.S. and South Korean forces? And, if confirmed, would you advocate for the resumption of these joint exercise?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. They are extremely important to build readiness. They are also extremely important to allow that our soldiers, sailor, airmen, Marines, Guardians, Coast Guardsmen, get an opportunity to work with our ROK allies and see just how good they are. So at the very low level, the tactical level, it is an
opportunity for them to build that trust between each other, and then at the senior level, with turnover and everything else, it is an opportunity for us to exercise and to learn and to continue to build on lessons learned.

Senator Kelly: Do you see any other opportunities to further strengthen our relationship, interoperability relationship, in order to keep pace with any emerging threats?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. I mean, in my current position we are going to bring ROK forces to the National Training Center, and so at a much lower level we can build that interoperability and see it at a small scale, and then, you know, what does it look like at the larger scale. But I think we need to continue to look for those opportunities, whether it is a tabletop exercise or a simulation. But it is that, again, building trust between servicemembers is extremely important.

Senator Kelly: Yeah, it was invaluable at the time. I remember doing a simulated CAST mission on the Korean Peninsula with a U.S. Ground FAC and ROK forces as well. And you don't want to be doing that for the first time when it is real. You know, that has always been clear to me.

On another subject, general, when we spoke last week you mentioned the asymmetric threat posed by the North Korean Special Operations Forces, which adds a complexity to
an already unpredictable actor, North Korea. And the North Korean Special Ops Forces, they have got a pretty large force. And as someone who has commanded Special Ops Forces yourself, can you speak to the unique threat that North Korea's sizeable Special Operations Forces poses in the unfortunate scenario that we enter into a conflict on the Peninsula?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. First of all, I believe that all warfare is asymmetric. I am not looking for a fair fight, and I am fairly certain my adversaries are not. I think my experience in Special Operations gives me a unique insight into what those threats are and how we could defend against them, and more importantly, how could we take offensive action against them to deter or to prevent them from being able to do any harm.

Senator Kelly: Any sense for how capable, how well trained they are?

General LaCamera: At this time I do not. I do think that they view their people a little bit different as far as -- think of it as a fire-and-forget weapons system. You know, whereas we plan for withdrawal off a target on a raid, I am fairly certain that they are not prepared to bring them back.

Senator Kelly: Well, thank you, General. I look forward to having the opportunity to vote on your
confirmation.

General LaCamera: Thank you.

Senator Kelly: I yield back.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator Tuberville.

Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, General, for your service, and your family, of what they go through. Being a football coach 40 years and never at home, it is hard to miss practices and all those things that go on. But I can't imagine with the travel that you have had over your lifetime, so again, thanks for your service, and congratulations on your reappointment.

North Korea tested their first nuclear weapon in 2006, first intercontinental ballistic missile in 2018, and currently have long-range ballistic missiles in development. Although steps were taken during the previous administration to improve our relationship with North Korea, do you believe that we have the defense mechanisms in missiles and assets to defend the Korean Peninsula and Indo-Pacific, as we speak?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, I do.

Senator Tuberville: Thank you. What specific systems, other systems, would you like to see, that you need, everyday defense of the Korean Peninsula. What would you think that you need? Wish list.
General LaCamera: A wish list. Senator, given what I know that is on the Peninsula right now, it is to maintain the early warning system, make sure that we have the C4I, the ISR, the intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance needed to be able to do it, not just the technical piece but I think the human, and I think, if confirmed, when I get over there I will take a hard look at what is needed, to make sure that we can protect and defend the Peninsula.

Senator Tuberville: Let me ask you this question. Do you believe that reimplementation of strategic patience, adoption of a U.S. no-first-use policy and the sanctions would deter North Korea in future aggression? Do you think that would be a deterrent?

General LaCamera: Senator, it is hard for me to comment on what would be a deterrent. I do believe he is a rational actor. I do think that we need to make sure that we are looking at all levers of the diplomatic, information, military, and economic power that we have to continue to deter him.

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

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator Duckworth -- is she -- yes, Senator Duckworth.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General LaCamera, I would like to
congratulate you on your nomination and thank you for your 35-plus years of service to our country, and I look forward to meeting with you later this week to discuss some of the biggest challenges facing U.S. forces in the ROK.

While we are closely watching the COVID-19 case rate in Asia in order to protect our friends in the region, I am currently planning to lead a bipartisan CODEL to the ROK and Singapore with my colleague and fellow member of this committee, Senator Sullivan. Our top objective for this trip is to send a message that our commitment to Asia is strong and bipartisan and that our presence in the region will not waiver with changes in administration or control of the Congress. We are prioritizing this trip and the chance to engage extensively with the top leadership in South Korea, specifically because this alliance is so important to the continuation of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Of course, our forces in Korea play a pivotal role in deterring North Korean aggression. But I do believe that a sustained U.S. presence in Korea also sends a strong message about our commitment to the broad Indo-Pacific for all of our regional allies and partners. Furthermore, any improved skills and coordination that develop during our bilateral training with South Korea's military multiply when South Korea participates in multilateral exercises with other regional partners.
General LaCamera, of course U.S. Forces Korea must
never lose focus on the Korean Peninsula, but you noted in
your advanced policy questions that given the global role of
the U.S. military, and increasingly the international reach
of the South Korean military, opportunities are emerging for
alliance cooperation beyond the Korean Peninsula. Can you
please elaborate on these comments? What opportunities do
you see, and if confirmed, how would you encourage INDOPACOM
and our Korean allies to capitalize on these opportunities?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, and I look forward to
our conversation. In my current role as U.S. Army Pacific
Commander, this is our year for Defender Pacific 2021. And
as we reach out to our partners and allies we look for
opportunities, multilateral. Those obviously need to be
engaged and negotiated with the host nations. But we are
all looking to our partners and allies and looking for the
training opportunity, whether a tabletop exercise, a
simulation, or live exercises. And we have got several of
those this summer.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you. I am particularly
concerned that our logistics and sustainment operations will
be highly vulnerable, in particular in a contested
environment. As you discussed in your advanced policy
questions, posturing a combat-credible force is key to
deterrence on the Peninsula, and a force is not combat-
credible if we can't realistically sustain it in a contested logistic environment.

Ensuring that U.S. military services are fielding sufficient logistics capability and capacity to meet INDOPACOM and U.S. Forces Korea requirements is key. However, I do believe that we need to consider additional measures to reduce the burden on vulnerable supply lines, such as prepositioning stock and leveraging our alliances and friendships across the region to access critical supplies.

General LaCamera, based on your past experience, what is your assessment of our ability to sustain a combat-credible force on the Korean Peninsula?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. I share your concerns, and in my current role as the U.S. Army Pacific Commander responsible for setting the theater and working with not just General Abrams but Commander INDOPACOM and the other services, the Army is responsible for better than 50 percent of the common items.

And so we are looking for unique opportunities on not just the preposition but what are the other things? We have to continue to experiment, and that is what these exercises allow us to do. Are there other ways for us to resupply? What can we get on the local economy? And, quite frankly, I don't think our adversaries will allow us to build the iron
mountain, so we are going to have to protect those assets once we get there.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you. If confirmed, how would you recommend we enhance our logistics capabilities to ensure U.S. Forces Korea can fight tonight?

General LaCamera: Senator, if confirmed, we will look at the stockage on the Korean Peninsula, I will look at the capability of the Peninsula to be able to generate resupply, and then look at the multiple avenues to allow that resupply to occur, and to keep the lines of communication open.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you, General. I look forward to supporting your confirmation.

I am out of time, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Duckworth. Now let me recognize Senator Scott, please.

Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. General, thank you for your service, and thank you for all the men and women that serve with you.

Do you believe that the credibility of American deterrence against Communist China's aggression has eroded and continues to erode as China continues to greatly increase its military strength and to threaten and intimidate its neighbors?

General LaCamera: No, Senator, I do not. I think we are in competition with them, and I think we compete with
them every single day. But I don't think that we can afford
to rest on our laurels. We need to continue to demonstrate
to our partners and allies that we are the partner of
choice.

Senator Scott: So if that is true, why is Communist
China so comfortable with their aggression against Taiwan,
because it seems like it has gotten worse. It hasn't gotten
better.

General LaCamera: Senator, I can't answer that
question. If confirmed, I will look at what that impact
would be against the Korean Peninsula and how it would
affect my mission.

Senator Scott: Thank you. In Admiral Davidson's
written testimony recently he wrote that the committee's
efforts to establish the Pacific Deterrence Initiative has
created the opportunity to regain the advance, but we must
remain diligent. From your perspective, do you see the need
for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative to prioritize efforts
to improve U.S. force posture and the ability to deter bad
actors in the Pacific, and do you believe we are on track to
do that?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator, and I appreciate the
support that this committee has provided to this initiative.
I think it is extremely important to allow us to compete
every day.
Senator Scott: Do you think we need to be more clear that we will clearly defend Taiwan than what we have been in the past?

General LaCamera: Senator, I believe that is for the diplomats and for the Secretary of Defense to answer that question.

Senator Scott: Do you think if we were more clear it would make it easier for you to be able to ensure that we have a good deterrence against Communist China?

General LaCamera: I think, Senator, I mean, ambiguity provides -- there are advantages and disadvantages. Clarity also potentially boxes in commanders, and, quite frankly, I think it boxes in policymakers also.

Senator Scott: Do you believe we are prepared to defend Taiwan against Chinese aggression?

General LaCamera: In my current role as the U.S. Army Pacific Commander, yes.

Senator Scott: Do you believe we currently have the right forward posture in the Indo-Pacific we need to accomplish the objectives of the 2018 National Defense Strategy?

General LaCamera: I think, you know, Senator, COVID has had impacts on our ability to operate west of the International Date Line. We continue to look at unique ways of maintaining that, building trust with our partners and
allies, but that has caused challenges for us. But we continue to adjust and modify as required.

Senator Scott: If we didn't defend Taiwan, what would happen to our ability to deter Communist China in Japan or South Korea or anyplace else, Guam, whatever?

General LaCamera: Senator, it would just change the facts bearing on the problem on how we operate in the Indo-Pacific.

Senator Scott: Do you think we would continue to have the ability to deter them against aggression against Japan and South Korea and Guam, if we had not defended Taiwan against Communist China?

General LaCamera: I think that is a question that our partners and allies would have to answer, based on our actions.

Senator Scott: But you think we have enough forces there today to be able to deter Chinese aggression?

General LaCamera: We have forced in place. I can't answer for the President of China on whether or not he is deterred or not.

Senator Scott: All right. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Hawley, please.

Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General,
thank you for being here. Thank you for your service. You have been asked, I have noticed, quite a few China questions. I want to start there as well.

Do you agree with the Secretary's -- Secretary Austin, that is -- his determination that China is the nation's pacing threat? Would you agree with that?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator.

Senator Hawley: So let me ask you, in light of that, Beijing, we know, has spent decades developing the capabilities required to try and seize control of Taiwan. Senator Scott was just asking about that. We have been told, on this committee, we have received testimony from Admiral Davidson, among others, there is reason to believe they may try that within the next decade.

My question is, how would that impact your force's ability to deter North Korea, should you be confirmed to this new position, and to defend themselves on the Korean Peninsula, if China were to seize control of Taiwan, let's say, and station their own forces there?

General LaCamera: Senator, it would all depend on what resources I would lose and what risk is created to do that. My experience on the battlefield has shown that resources are not unlimited, and that commanders make decisions on those. My responsibility will be to identify that risk and present that back to the INDOPACOM commander, the chairman,
and the Secretary of Defense.

But the Republic of Korea forces are a very capable formation, and we will just have to identify that risk, and that is my responsibility, to provide that feedback back to my bosses.

Senator Hawley: Very good. I want to ask you about resources -- actually, why don't I just ask you now. I mean, if North Korea, or if China, rather, attempted an invasion of Taiwan, do you think that the North Koreans might view that as a window of opportunity, and that we might then find ourselves, if we were drawn into a crisis with China, certain assets or resources that you might traditionally rely on were no longer available, I mean, what kind of a bind would that put us in if North Korea then looked at that as a window of opportunity for aggression?

General LaCamera: Senator, I think North Korea will have to weigh not just the U.S. piece but the Republic of Korea's capabilities on their ability to move south. And, quite frankly, the ascending nations of the United Nations Command, et cetera, going forward.

Senator Hawley: On the South Korean piece, would South Korea assuming greater responsibility for deterring the North improve our ability to deter northern opportunistic aggression in the kind of scenario I was just hypothesizing?

General LaCamera: Senator, I mean, they have complete
control of their military on a day-to-day basis, and again, I think this is a calculus that the North Korean leadership -- not just the North Korean leadership but Japanese, et cetera, of how we would bring a formation, a coalition together to maintain the stability on the peninsula.

Senator Hawley: Let me ask you about something Secretary Austin said recently. He said that the U.S. and South Korea, and I am quoting him now, "continue to make progress toward the eventual transition of wartime operational control to a South Korean-commanded future combined forces command."

Now just so I understand it, that transition of operational control would put U.S. forces under South Korean command during a contingency with the North. Is that right? Have I got that right?

General LaCamera: Yes, and my role would change to become the Deputy Commander of the combined forces command.

Senator Hawley: So my question is, what would happen if the United States found itself in simultaneous conflicts with China and North Korea? Would this operational control arrangement provide us with the flexibility we would need to retask or reposition forces, if we found ourselves with a simultaneity problem?

General LaCamera: My current understanding is yes, Senator.
Senator Hawley: Very good. Are you concerned that China might target U.S. forces in Korea as part of a broader campaign to seize control of Taiwan, for example?

General LaCamera: I think it is an area of -- it is their area -- I don't know how China defines their area of operation, interest, or influence. I think that we would be vulnerable, and if confirmed, I would take the necessary steps to protect the force.

Senator Hawley: How would you plan to protect our forces on the Peninsula in the event of such a contingency?

General LaCamera: Senator, hypothetically I would have to look at what threats exist against that, and whether it is the missile defense or local security. I think everything is on the table, and we would have to take a look at what those threats are and take action appropriately.

Senator Hawley: Very good. I may have another question or two for you, though. I will give it to you for the record. Thank you for being here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hawley. Let me recognize Senator Sullivan, please.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, good to see you again. Congrats on finishing up a really important tour in the INDOPACOM region and your next very important billet. And I wanted to commend you and then ask
some questions about our Arctic, cold-weather, high-altitude operations. You played a really important role in the Army's recent Arctic strategy. And, you know, when you look at great power competition, oftentimes, at least in the last several decades, Korea has been a key area of that. With Russia, with China.

But it also, when you look at our great power competition, the likelihood of some kind of conflict in a cold-weather environment, whether it is North Korea, somewhere in Russia, somewhere in China, Ukraine, these are all things that I have been concerned, and I know you share it, that we have lost that capability to have large-scale, consistent military operations in these very difficult areas in which to operate -- mountainous, extreme cold weather.

You know, we recently celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Chosin Reservoir Battle last December, and that was a very tough battle the Marines and Army took part in, in Korea, with the Chinese, with the Koreans, 30 below zero.

Given the Republic of Korea's physical environment, what is your perspective regarding the Army's Arctic strategy and other forces in our capability to fight tonight in those kind of climates?

General LaCamera: Thank you, Senator. Thanks for the time and I trust you enjoyed your visit this past weekend.

As we have discussed in previous meetings, you know, we
have thought and operated at altitude and in cold weather in Afghanistan over the last almost 20 years, but it is not in the depth, as I said, in current position in the U.S. Army Pacific. And the forces in Alaska, they were doing their training center rotations in the wintertime, so we weren't really getting the reps and sets that we needed to truly understand what that capability is.

General Abrams and his forces, I mean the Koreans, are born and raised on the Peninsula, so they truly understand it, and they have that opportunity, so I have no doubt that they are prepared. But it is the follow-on forces that we need to make sure that they have the proper equipment and training to be able to operate.

Senator Sullivan: How important is it that we not just have the Army's Arctic strategy out there, and the Air Force's Arctic strategy, and the Navy's Arctic strategy, but to actually implement them. The Secretary of Defense, in his confirmation hearing, said he would fully resource these strategies. How important is it that not that we just fully resource but implement what the Army has worked on? And I think it is a very good beginning.

General LaCamera: It is important, given, in my current role as the U.S. Army Pacific Commander, and the different environments. We have been used to a very -- "stable" is not the right term -- but, you know, desert
environment, but Asia, the Indo-Pacific region has multiple
different environments, and our soldiers need to be prepared
to operate, along with our other servicemembers in the joint
force.

Senator Sullivan: Let me ask, I just hosted the
INDOPACOM Commander, Admiral Aquilino, in Alaska this
weekend. We were finishing up North Edge, which was a very
impressive exercise, over 240 aircraft and an entire Marine
expeditionary unit, and a NARG, an entire Navy carrier
strike force, and, of course, it highlighted some of the
forces in Alaska, the 425, the First Stryker Brigade, soon
to be over 100 fifth-gen fighters.

What force posture or capabilities do you think are
needed or missing in Alaska now that relate to your mission
on the Korean Peninsula? As you know, those forces are
probably some of the closest to the Korean Peninsula of any
we have in the entire region, regardless of where they are
on the International Date Line. Do you have a sense of
that, and the training capabilities that, as we are
restrained still on the Korean Peninsula, the ability that
was just shown by Northern Edge at JPARC and other places
could be phenomenal training for our forces on the
Peninsula, including the Koreans, including, heck, even the
Japanese, as they sometimes work together and red flag
Alaska.
General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. What we have in Alaska could be used, whether it is the Strykers or the Airborne Brigade that is up there.

Senator Sullivan: Used on the Korean Peninsula.

General LaCamera: Yes, sir. As we look forward to the future on what the formation will look like, I think the environment on the Korean Peninsula can help inform the Army on any changes or modifications that they want to make.

That is for Alaska.

But I think in the Continental U.S. we have another reach-back capability. I think it would be important to bring them through Alaska to train for that environment that they may face on the Korean Peninsula.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good luck, General.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Sullivan. General, thank you very much for your testimony, but more than that, thank you for your service, which has been out front, ahead of your forces, and as I said before, not only your example but your dedication to the welfare of the men and women who served underneath you is the highest, I think, demonstration of the ethic of a military officer or professional. We thank you for that and we look forward to your confirmation.

With that, no further questions in order, I will
adjourn the hearing.

    General LaCamera: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

    [Whereupon, at 11:13 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]
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