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COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON
THE POSTURE OF UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND
AND UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

Thursday, March 10, 2022

Washington, D.C.

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U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
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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, Blumenthal, Hirono, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Scott, Hawley, and Tuberville.
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE ISLAND

Chairman Reed: I will call this hearing to order.

Good morning. The Committee meets today to receive testimony from Admiral John Aquilino, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and General Paul LaCamera, Commander of U.S. Forces Korea. Gentlemen, thank you for your service to the nation, and please convey my thanks to the men and women serving under your commands at this critical time.

The Department of Defense has appropriately identified China as the "pacing threat" for the United States military. In the next decade, the Indo-Pacific region is projected to generate two-thirds of the global economy and be home to two-thirds of the global population, and we must calibrate our strategy accordingly.

For the past several decades, China has studied the United States' way of war and focused its efforts on offsetting our advantages. Beijing has made concerning progress in this regard, especially with respect to disruptive technologies and weapons like hypersonics, artificial intelligence, 5G, and biotechnology. China does not accept U.S. global leadership or the international norms that have helped keep the peace for the better part of a century. Maintaining our competitiveness in this region will take a concerted, whole-of-government effort, but the
U.S. military, specifically INDOPACOM, will play a central role. As we speak, the importance of getting our approach right is on full display as another near-peer competitor, Russia, continues its brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine.

Even as China has made progress, however, there is broad consensus that our comparative advantage over China is our network of allies and partners in the region and globally. Strengthening that network should be at the center of any strategy for the Indo-Pacific region, and the maturation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, involving the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, presents an opportunity to establish a durable framework. It is my hope that the Quad, as well as Korea, will provide a platform for engaging other regional partners.

The most likely flashpoint that could turn our competition with China into a conflict is Taiwan. If China is the pacing threat for the Defense Department, Taiwan is the pacing scenario. Following the brutal repression of pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong by China over the past 2 years and the unprecedented number of aggressive Chinese military incursions into Taiwan's airspace, the world has a right to be concerned.

There has been discussion in the last year regarding whether we should be more explicit about coming to Taiwan's
aid militarily if they are attacked by China, the so-called "strategic ambiguity; versus "strategic clarity" debate. In my opinion, we should maintain the policy of strategic ambiguity that has helped to maintain the peace in the Taiwan Strait for decades. More than anything, changing our policy to strategic clarity could actually lead to escalation and the very conflict we are working so hard to prevent.

Admiral Aquilino, faced with these wide-ranging challenges, I would like to your assessment INDOPACOM's preparedness to carry out the United States' strategy in the region.

As we seek to more effectively compete with China, we must also manage the threat posed by North Korea. North Korea has vexed both Republican and Democratic 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.

Through various intelligence reports, we know that 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 ultimate goal of U.S. policy remains the
denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but we are not
taking an all-or-nothing approach. Instead, the Biden
administration has pursued what it describes as "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,
particularly South Korea and Japan. General LaCamera, I
would ask for your views on the partnership between the
United States, Japan, South Korea, and other regional
partners in addressing North Korea's destabilizing activity.

Similarly, General, 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.

Finally, Secretary Austin announced earlier this week
that the Navy's Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility on the
island of Oahu will be closed within the year following a
series of major fuel spills. I believe that closing this
facility was the right decision, and I would like to know,
generally, what steps are being taken to ensure the safety and health of the military families and civilians in the affected communities. More broadly, the closure of Red Hill is a significant change for our fueling and logistics approach in the Indo-Pacific, and that should be recognized by INDOPACOM Command.

Thank you again to our witnesses. I look forward to your testimonies.

Senator Inhofe could not be here today, so I am submitting his opening statement for the record.

[The prepared statement of Senator Inhofe follows:]
Chairman Reed: And with that let me recognize Admiral Aquilino.
STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL JOHN C. AQUILINO, USN, COMMANDER,
UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Chairman Reed, distinguished members of the committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Indo-Pacific region. I sincerely appreciate your dedicated support to INDOPACOM, our servicemembers, and their families, and we wish Senator Inhofe well.

The People's Republic of China is the most consequential strategic competitor to the United States. The PRC is executing a dedicated campaign that utilizes all forms of national power in an attempt to uproot the rules-based international order to the benefit of themselves and at the expense of all others.

In the region, Russia also presents serious risks. As evident from their unprovoked and unjustified attack on the Ukraine, Russia has no regard for international law, its own commitments, or any principles that uphold global peace. Similarly, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and violent extremist organizations also pose acute threats to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

To address these threats, Secretary Austin has articulated clear priorities: defend the homeland, deter our adversaries, and strengthen our allies and partners. These priorities are advanced through integrated deterrence,
which is the Department's approach to preventing conflict through the synchronization of all elements of national power, coordinated with the joint force across all domains, together with our allies and partners.

INDOPACOM's mission is to prevent conflict through the execution of integrated deterrence and, if necessary, be prepared to fight and win. "Seize the Initiative" describes INDOPACOM's approach to accomplish these missions. This approach requires the joint force to think, act, and operate differently. We do that by realigning our posture, advancing our warfighting capabilities, providing both the Secretary and the President with options across the spectrum of competition, crisis, and conflict.

Effective deterrence requires significant investment to defend the homeland, protect the joint force, operate in contested space, provide all domain battlespace awareness, with an integrated fires network to deliver those effects.

These initiatives are incorporated into a theater campaign plan facilitated by agile logistics, a robust exercise in experimentation program, and regular and consistent collaboration with our allies and partners to promote peace in the region. We must make concerted efforts to increase our resilience and strengthen our capabilities through sustained investments generated by predictable budgets, as strong industrial base, and reliable supply.
chains.

I am optimistic we will see a strategy-based fiscal year 2023 budget that takes the appropriate initial steps to address key adversarial challenges and increase our warfighting advantages. The resource we commit now and in the future will help preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific, it will strengthen our deterrence posture, and provide us the ability to fight and win, should deterrence fail.

Thank you, Chairman, and I look forward to the questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Aquilino follows:]
Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Admiral. General LaCamera, please.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL PAUL J. LaCAMERA, USA, COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND/ COMBINED FORCES COMMAND/ UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

General LaCamera: Chairman Reed, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear here today. I appreciate your leadership and dedication in supporting our total force and our families who work with our Korean allies and the United Nations Sending States in order to man a stable and secure environment on the Korean Peninsula.

I would also like to thank President Biden, Secretary Austin, and General Milley for their continued leadership and support, along with Admiral Aquilino, the functional combatant commanders who support us, my fellow component commanders, and my interagency colleagues. It is easy to stand on freedom’s frontier with this tremendous support. Finally, I want to thank your Korean hosts and their professional military.

I am pleased to update you on the great work done by our dedicated personnel who serve in the Republic of Korea. They are professionally executing the missions of the United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and U.S. Forces Korea. The United States–Republic of Korea alliance was forged in the crucible of battle. While the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to pose multiple
threats to regional and international security, this alliance remains the linchpin of the regional stability and has prevented the resumption of hostilities that shredded the peace some 72 years ago. It remains ironclad, and our servicemembers, along with the Republic of Korea military are trained and ready to respond to a provocation or crisis, if called upon.

Our three commands -- United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and U.S. Forces Korea -- must remain vigilant, prepared, and ready. Under one commander, these three commands are empowered to maintain a stabilized security environment for the Republic of Korea and our regional allies. We have international legitimacy through the United Nations Command, whose mission is to enforce the 1953 Armistice Agreement, coordinate U.N. Sending State contributions, and execute assigned functions directed by the U.S. national authorities through Joint Chiefs of Staff to preserve peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

UNC ensures a true multinational effort in support of armistice conditions while maintaining the utmost respect for the Republic of Korea sovereignty. We are proud of the combined teamwork of the U.S.-Korean alliance.

Combined Forces Command is the combined warfighting headquarters, representing the U.S.-Korea bilateral military partnership. Formed in 1978, it is a unique entity that
takes policy, direction, and missions from the Combined Military Committee and is governed by and subject to bi-national decision-making consensus.

We maintain our strong U.S. commitment to Korea. U.S. Forces Korea is the premier joint force committed to defending the security of the Republic of Korea. It is disciplined, trained, and ready to fight tonight, respond in crisis, and win in conflict. Central to meeting any threats is resourcing and strengthening our force and best possible care of our families. I am grateful for your support and leadership in these no-fail tasks.

I know you are aware of South Korea's powerful economic, military, and technical standings. No doubt you are aware of the social impact. All of this is part of the hard work, discipline, and dedication of the Korean people, all done under the security umbrella of the U.S.-Korea alliance. The Republic of Korea is an incredible ally and it is a privilege to move into the future together with them in the Land of the Morning Calm.

I am honored to command and serve this dedicated multinational combined and joint force in one of the most significant and dynamic regions of the world. Those who serve are committed, capable, and well supported. The force is postured to deter aggression, protect U.S. interests, and if necessary, defeat any adversary. As long as a threat...
persists, the U.S.-Korean alliance remains vigilant, determined, and steadfast in defense of the Korean Peninsula and across the region. As the commander of these incredible servicemembers I appreciate this committee's continued support to fully prepare them to fight and win on the most dangerous piece of ground, the last 100 meters of land, sea, and air.

Finally, it has been an honor to work with the Moon administration. Congratulations to President-Elect Yoon. We look forward to working with his administration to strengthen the U.K.-ROK alliance and take on regional challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an opening statement. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General LaCamera follows:]
Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General.

Admiral Aquilino, Taiwan has historically purchased expensive platforms rather than asymmetric systems which may be more relevant in an actual conflict with China. And in addition to that, Taiwan has one of the most robust economies in the world. Do you agree that Taiwan should have sufficient budgetary resources to procure the necessary defense systems?

Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Chairman. I think I would leave it to Taiwan as to identify the number and amount of resources that they would like to invest. What I think I would say is the trend is in the right direction for the capabilities that we have seen them invest in. So for example, the Harpoon missile system is a capability that would provide a viable defensive posture for the people of Taiwan. Additionally, the F-16 capability for their air force.

So the amount that they would like to invest is part of the calculus. What they invest in, I think they are on the right path.

Chairman Reed: We are in a position to help them facilitate the acquisition of appropriate defense capabilities, and again they seem to have the resources to be able to support such an effort. Are there opportunities for us to get involved in co-development and co-production
of systems that will help them?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks again, Chairman. I think there certainly is opportunity there. As we operate through the lens and in compliance with the Taiwan Relations Act, anything that we could do to bolster the defensive capabilities would be desirable.

Chairman Reed: Thank you. General LaCamera, you are in a very difficult situation with North Korea right on your front line and China hovering over everything. To what extent do you believe the Chinese are targeting our alliance with Korea and what insights might you share with us in terms of that effort?

General LaCamera: Thanks, Chairman. As you recall, a couple of years ago when the THAAD protection was put in there was an economic penalty put against the Republic of Korea for that. And it appears that the Republic of Korea has been able to come out of that. But it is still in the news. It is still a concern of the Koreans. And as I meet with my Korean counterparts it is always a topic of conversation.

Their influence is -- you know, they are neighbors. There is a diplomatic influence and there is clearly an economic influence. And they also have about 900,000 Chinese that do live in South Korea. So there is an influence there that we have to paying attention to.
Chairman Reed: Well thank you very much. Admiral Aquilino, with respect to force posture your prepared testimony states, "More distributed combat power increases the liability, reduces risk, and enables the transition from defense to offense quickly should deterrence fail." And what are your top four posture priorities for the region?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Chairman. As we take a look, the Guam cluster is clearly the top priority to provide capabilities as well as improving the posture in that place.

Tinian island, Palau, and the cluster there is highly important. Additionally, Japan is important to ensure that we get the DPRI right in coordination with our Japanese partners. The Philippines, very strategy terrain, and we are working through the EDCA sites that we have coordinated with the government of the Philippines to provide additional capability. And Australia is a place there we are focused, as I would articulate the top four.

Chairman Reed: There is a pending presidential election in the Philippines. Does that represent a potential change in our relationship, either positive or negative?

Admiral Aquilino: Chairman, the Philippines are a mutual defense treaty country. They have gone through many different elections, as many of the countries in the region.
So again, I am hopeful that we will continue to be able to operate, as Secretary Austin went over most recently and was able to solve the visiting forces agreement problem. So the Philippines is certainly on the proper trend and a great partner.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Admiral. Thank you, General, for your testimony and your service.

Senator Wicker, please.

Senator Wicker: Thank you very much. Admiral, the CNO says we need 31 traditional amphibious warships. That is worldwide. How many do you need in your command?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, if it is okay I will get back to you on the record for that as a classified event.

Senator Wicker: Okay. Well, let me just say, we are learning some lessons these last two or three weeks about reality and about some of our adversaries view what you call the rules-based international order. So I am really asking you to tell us what you need, and I think both sides of the dais here would do everything we can to make sure that happens.

Now let me ask you this. Every September 30th, this Congress, House and Senate, is supposed to send to the President a defense appropriation bill. It is wrapped up in an omnibus bill now, and we still have not had a chance to pass it here in the second week of March 2022. How much of
a problem is that? For the two of you, Admiral and General, what can you not do, what have you not been able to do for this part of the fiscal year because of the absence of a defense appropriation bill, and have we spent money needlessly because you are operating under a continuing resolution from the previous fiscal year?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. As I stated in my testimony, our predictable budgets are certainly helpful, both for the industrial base, the companies that support us, and to deliver the capabilities, operations and things that we need. The critical impact is the loss of buying power. I do not know the exact number that DoD has estimated with regard to the extent of the CR, but that loss of buying power is significant, in the billions.

It also has a separate effect for me, and I am not an acquisition authority, but it does have an effect on me, and that is none of the new starts or requests for capabilities are able to be delivered or started, begun, under a continuing resolution. So for my top three priorities -- a defense of Guam system, we have been unable to start or support that; the delivery of a mission partner environment, my ability to connect with all of our allies and partners to share information, plan, coordinate, and execute operations; and then the Pacific Multi-Domain Training and Exercise Capability System, in other words our ability to link all of
the ranges that we have to train at the high end, with live
virtual and constructive capability. We have been unable to
start any of those.

Senator Wicker: Have you had to spend money on things
that, once this thing gets passed and the President signs
it, really are no longer that important?

Admiral Aquilino: I am not aware of any of those,
Senator.

Senator Wicker: How about that, General, and the
overall question.

General LaCamera: I agree with everything the admiral
said. I would add a couple of points. I do not know if we
have had to spend any money on it. It does affect the
buying power. It does affect how much time we have left to
spend money going forward. At a tangible level, it is
impacting some maintenance and it is impacting some new
starts with, say, a counter-UAS program, going forward.

Senator Wicker: Admiral, what do you think the lessons
the leadership of the People's Republic of China are
learning from what is going on now in Ukraine?

Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Senator. So there are	hree that I am watching very specifically. Number one, the
loss of life required to create and execute an illegal war
is certainly something that ought to be taken away. Both
President Putin and President Xi Jinping should learn that
lesson, that cost of life is broad, extensive, and will haunt them both.

Second, the international condemnation that we are seeing of like-minded nations coming together to articulate the illegal aspect, the displeasure, and the needless loss of life needs to continue. And the third, the significant economic impacts that the free world can bring together against a nation who would take this type of action.

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

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Wicker.

Senator King, please.

Senator King: Admiral, thank you. Thank you both for being with us this morning.

Admiral, we have learned a lot in the last week or so about nuclear doctrine in Russia, particularly the idea of escalate to deescalate. What do we know about China's nuclear doctrine? We know that they are vastly expanding their nuclear capability. As I say, do we have ideas about what China's assumptions are about the use of nuclear weapons?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, thanks. I do not think I would assume anything, and I would defer to my partner, Admiral Richard as the STRATCOM commander. I think what I would tell you is what do we see happening in the theater, and that is an extensive buildup of nuclear capability,
articulated and intended to be delivered by the PRC -- 700 silo-based or warheads by 2027, and over 1,000 by 2030.

Senator King: That is from a base of almost zero. I mean, their expansion has been dramatic, has it not?

Admiral Aquilino: Extremely, quickly, and as Admiral Richard most recently testified.

Senator King: Thank you. China calls itself a near-Arctic nation and is becoming more and more active in the Arctic. One of my concerns is the extent to which there may be gaps between NORTHCOM, EUCOM, INDOPACOM, given China's activities in these various areas. Reassure me about your integration with your fellow combatant commanders, particularly NORTHCOM, where China is operating in that region.

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. As you know, NORTHCOM is actually the lead for the Arctic, so we coordinate persistently with General VanHerck and General Walters. Some of the examples, you know, when the most recent Russian submarine came from the North Fleet over to the Pacific Fleet, we monitored and watched that as it crossed combatant commander lines.

General VanHerck, I support him for the long-range aviation flights or any threats that emit from the northwestern portion of either from Russia or China as it applies to the homeland defense mission, no matter what path
they take.

So our cooperation and collaboration is persistent.

Senator King: Well part of our new strategy in the Indo-Pacific is dispersal. Would not a reinvigoration of Adak make some sense, and given its strategic position, again, it is in NORTHCOM but it is pretty darn close to INDOPACOM as well.

Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator, and we have used Adak most recently in an exercise, I think about a year ago, for a combined Navy-Marine Corps event from that area. So clearly a strategic location for both defense of the homeland and to be able to project power forward. We are going to have to take a look at the length of the runway there for some future operations.

Senator King: Thank you. I hope that is under consideration because again, if dispersal is the goal we do not want to concentrate everything in Guam, for example. We want to present problems for a potential adversary.

General, I have been concerned on an ongoing basis with the relationship between South Korea and Japan. A, where does that stand, and B, does the new administration have any -- did they come into this election season, which concluded yesterday, with any stated position about strengthening or further weakening the relationship between two countries which are important allies to us?
General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. I am not aware of any specifics, but I think as President Yoon talks about security as a top priority that my best military advice is -- and I think the military leaders and my Korean counterparts truly understand the importance of a U.S.-ROK and a ROK-Japan relationship, and that is one of my top priorities as a commander of USFK.

Senator King: I appreciate that, and I hope that is a priority, to try to foster that relationship and improve it, because in a time of conflict, as we have learned, allies are essential. Winston Churchill once said, "The only thing worse than fighting with your allies is fighting without your allies." Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator King.

Senator Rounds, please.

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, let me begin by just saying thank you very much to you and your families for your years of service to our country.

Admiral Aquilino, the space and cyber domains are where we are seeing a lot of activity and pose a real threat to our national security. With seven of the nine nations capable of launching satellites in your AOR, can you explain how you integrate your operations with USSPACECOM and USCYBERCOM, recognizing it provides both opportunities for
us but also some real threats?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. As we synchronize our operations together I have the greatest partners in General Nakasone from Cyber Command, General Dickinson from Space Command. As a matter of fact, I have asked them both to meet me in Australia in about a week and a half to synchronize with our Australian counterparts and continue to work towards improved capabilities in space and cyber.

This process is in our headquarters, that again you have heard me articulate this think, act, and operate differently. One of the critical aspects of that is how to synchronize all domain effects, and that includes space and cyber. I have dedicated people in my headquarters as cyber components and space components that operate in my headquarters every day, and I cannot be any more synchronized than that.

Senator Rounds: And I also like the fact that it is not just synchronized in multiple domains but with our allies as well, which I think is a critical part of our long-term prospects in the region.

General LaCamera, it has been brought to my attention that our service men and women and their families are required to receive a rapid test for COVID for them to return to Korea, but this test is not covered by TRICARE. I think it is wrong to charge our servicemembers for medical
tests that we are requiring them to take. Can you perhaps
explain to me what this does to these young men and women
and what the costs involved are, and perhaps give us some
reasoning as to maybe why we should take some action
immediately to resolve this?

General LaCamera: Thank you, Senator. If they are on
official travel orders that is covered. They can claim
that. If they are departing on leave, I will test them for
any requirements leaving the Republic of Korea. But coming
back in, there are ways that they can get it from CVS, out
on the economy. The challenge becomes if they do not get it
in time then they have to pay out of pocket to make sure
that they can get back into the country. The requirement is
48 hours right now, and it is currently not covered under
TRICARE. And again, you know, so soldiers, sailors, airmen,
marines, they want to do the right thing. They want to come
back in. They are paying out of pocket. And currently
right now I believe I do not have the capability to
reimburse them.

Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir. I have one more
question for Admiral Aquilino. The Indo-Pacific AOR has
been described as the most consequential region of America's
future. As such, it would appear to me that we should be
working very hard to increase our network of allies and
partnerships in the region.
The Army Corps of Engineers has done some remarkable work building partner capacity in areas of water and environmental security, disaster risk management, and humanitarian assistance construction projects. The Corps does a lot of this work from the civil works perspective and in concert with USAID. Can you speak to the effectiveness of these programs in building regional partnerships as opposed to how China does business?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. So the Army Corps of Engineers is certainly active in the region, as well as the engineering corps of all the services. We take on projects that support communities, deliver military warfighting capacity, and support our allies and partners. That is a vastly different model than the PRC is using with regard to bringing in workers, bringing in materials, and then settling in nation. So the models are completely different.

I was just in Palau. As a part of the Seabee corps that is forward deployed in Palau, I met with four interns from the island of Palau that were operating with the Seabees to learn skills, trade, and to improve the infrastructure of their island. So drastically different models, and I am confident that the nation sees which of those models they like better, and it is the United States' model.
Senator Rounds: Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Hirono, please.

Senator Hirono: Thank you, and Admiral Aquilino and General LaCamera, thank you very much to both of you.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your opening remarks in support of the closure of the Red Hill facility and the need for us to address the INDOPACOM fueling needs in alternative ways.

Admiral Aquilino, we are going ahead with safely defueling this massive facility, or these massive tanks, and we are going to need to provide resources in the out years to deal with the environmental issues related to the closure of this facility. What are your major concerns and priorities with respect to the future fuel storage requirements for INDOPACOM?

Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Senator. Thanks for the continued support. In the set of options I briefed the Secretary, and the decision that he has made with regard to closing it, was focused on three critical things. Number one, the top priority was clean, safe water for the people of Hawaii, servicemembers, and their families. Number two was to ensure that we could execute our military mission set. The option that he selected I believe provides a more
diverse, distributed, and effective fuel distribution model that meets all of my requirements.

Senator Hirono: How do you plan to mitigate any potential vulnerabilities that an alternate fuel solution may have? Although in my opinion we reduce our vulnerabilities by not having all our fuel in one place, but do you have some concerns about vulnerabilities of distributing this fuel, I do not know, throughout the Pacific, perhaps?

Admiral Aquilino: I absolutely do not, Senator. Again, I believe, as you articulated, a much more diverse and distributed, both land-based and sea-based, is the best model to ensure we can meet our warfighting needs.

Senator Hirono: The Compact of Free Association agreement, co-filed between the U.S. and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and I know that you visited Palau, which is one of the other nations that are part of COFA, but as to the other two nations they are coming up for renewal in 2023, and Palau in 2024. And as you noted in your written statement to the committee these agreements have significant impact on your ability to advance the priorities of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

I am really glad that you visited Palau and that we are going to be perhaps looking at different ways that we can
jointly be supportive, more supportive of these compact nations as we go forward. So I hope you will continue to prioritize our partnerships with these island nations to support our overall strategy in the Pacific.

Admiral Aquilino: Yes, ma'am. It is absolutely important to get to the appropriate renegotiation of the compact agreements. Again, visiting Saipan, Guam, Palau, and Tinian were really, really worthwhile trips for me. I got to spend some time with President Whipps from Palau.

As you know, the negotiation of those agreements are led by State Department in coordination with the Department of the Interior, and Department of Defense has a representative on the team, and have articulated my request to negotiate those as soon as possible in a way that is certainly beneficial to the United States as the PRC is looking to infiltrate throughout the region.

Senator Hirono: Exactly, and I think that our country should be paying more attention and a more supportive role with regard to our compact nations, because they are there in large extent because they are very much a part of our national security priorities.

Regarding North Korea, for both of you, this year alone we have seen North Korea executing nine rounds of missile tests, including a purported hypersonic missile, and its first launch since 2017 of an intermediate-range missile,
potentially capable of reaching Guam. Admiral Aquilino and
General LaCamera, what is your assessment of the credibility
of such threats from North Korea? Maybe we will start with
you, General.

General LaCamera: As I live under that threat,
Senator, the threat is real, and it spears that he is trying
to develop capabilities to defeat our systems and threaten
the peninsula and threaten regional stability.

Senator Hirono: So, Admiral Aquilino, is this one of
the reasons that our protective systems on Guam is your top
priority, or a top priority?

Admiral Aquilino: Absolutely. The ability to defend
the homeland of Guam as well as the military forces that
operate there. What I would say, though, is that the
relationship we have with the South Koreans and the Japanese
is critical. General LaCamera and I synchronize with
General Won and General Yamazaki every time there is one of
these launches, and if you just recently read we have
increased the readiness level on both the peninsula and in
support of the defense of Japan today.

Senator Hirono: And, Mr. Chairman, I want to note, not
to mention the need to protect Hawaii. As we develop these
missile systems, defense systems in Guam, we do still have
the issue of Homeland Defense Radar – Hawaii.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator Cotton, please.

Senator Cotton: Admiral, last year your predecessor, Admiral Davidson, warned that China may invade Taiwan, in his words, quote, "the next years." That was a year ago. In your best military opinion does that forecast still hold?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. I was going to start with -- who said that?

Senator Cotton: Admiral Davidson.

Admiral Aquilino: I do not even think about that last guy anymore. I think that his articulation was based on a couple of different points, but we would have to ask Admiral Davidson how he came to that.

One of the things that I have watched is President Xi Jinping has articulated and challenged his military to be able to modernize and complete its modernization by 2027. If we look over the past 10 or 15 years, that target date has moved left from 2035-ish, persistently. So 2027 is the military task.

I can tell you where I am is I see actions that give me concern that the timeline is shrinking, and the mission that I have been given is to be prepared for it. So when you look at the actions of the PRC as it applies to breaking their agreement for Hong Kong, taking physical, lethal actions on the line of actual control with India, completely
illegal claims for the entire South China Sea in every sea space and airspace inside their self-proclaimed nine-dash line, all of these actions give me concern. The most recent water-cannoning of Philippine sailors in the vicinity of Second Thomas Shoal. All of these things give me concern, and I cannot predict the date, Senator. I just know I need to be ready now.

Senator Cotton: I agree, Admiral. They give me a lot of concern as well. It was 6 years last year. It is 5 years now. I think we should be as concerned that it might be 5 months and be ready for that.

One way to be ready for that, in the opinion of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who I think is one of the most distinguished statesmen of the region and of his generation, said that the United States should consider abandoning so-called strategic ambiguity regarding Taiwan, which we do not make it perfectly clear that we will come to their defense.

Given what we have seen in the invasion of Ukraine and what we understand about China's intentions, based on what you just said, should we make it clear to Beijing that we will, in fact, come to Taiwan's defense if Beijing attacks Taiwan?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, as you know we currently are in execution and support the One-China policy. I think
what I would say is strategic ambiguity has served us very well for the past 40 years.

    Senator Cotton: It has served us well under different circumstances, when the PLA was not capable of executing this mission and Beijing knew that. I would suggest now that the PLA is capable, the main constraint on China's leaders is America's intentions, and that is why we should change from strategic ambiguity to clarity.

    Admiral, I want to turn to your opening statement. You used the phrase "integrated deterrence." The Pentagon defines that as "working across warfighting domains, theaters, and the spectrum of conflict in collaboration with all instruments of national power as well as allies and partners," end quote. That sounds to me like a bureaucratic word salad, cooked up in Colin Kahl's office. I do not understand what integrated deterrence adds to deterrence. Could you explain to me what you think the difference is between those two terms, because "deterrence" is a very simple and long-standing concept that depends centrally on hard military power, to include nuclear weapons?

    Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. So again, in the late that I operate, in the military lane, again I believe that that hard power, credible combat power provides a deterrent value through the military sphere. I also believe that there are other forms that actually may be more
impactful. As we are watching in the Ukraine side, the economic impacts clearly have an opportunity, and I do believe synchronizing those with the military lane can really have an impactful ability to deliver deterrence.

Senator Cotton: All dependent, though, on continued military dominance across all military domains, to include our nuclear arsenal. Correct?

Admiral Aquilino: Certainly the military sphere, Senator, I coordinate with Admiral Richard as we present the entire spectrum of military capabilities to adversaries. So the synchronization of convention and strategic is critical, and then combining that with the rest is certainly valuable.

Senator Cotton: Yeah. And I want to commend you, because you have been very clear-eyed and sober while you have been in this command about the need for military power in the Western Pacific to deter China. I just want to make sure that events of political acrobatics [phonetic] in the Office of the Secretary of Defense are not going to undermine that military power on which all deterrence is based. Thank you, Admiral.

Admiral Aquilino: Yeah, Senator, if I could just make one comment. The Secretary has been completely supportive of the approach that we have taken, and not once have I been asked to throttle back or do anything different.

Senator Cotton: I did not say "the Secretary." I said
"the Office of the Secretary of Defense," which is large and sprawling and has a lot of political hacks in it.

Chairman Reed: Thank you. Senator Blumenthal, please.

Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your service and for being here this morning.

There was an announcement in December, as you know, that Australia was planning to build a new naval station on its east coast to base nuclear submarines planned for under the AUKUS agreement. This base could resupply and maintain American nuclear submarines, increasing the capabilities of both countries, Australia and our country, in countering China's influence and threats in the Pacific region. AUKUS allows us to capitalize on one of our greatest advantages in the Pacific, namely the strength and capabilities of our submarine fleet, which is second to none in the world. Sharing this technology with Australia will be a force multiplier, but those submarines are not scheduled to be commissioned for another 10 or more years. There was a lot of hoopla at the time of the announcement, but not so much a realization that there will be some delay.

The AUKUS agreement also provides a framework for joint cooperation and integration of cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies.

Admiral, as you know the United States, the UK, and Australia are currently engaged in an 18-month period of
consultation to determine the optimal pathway to nuclear-powered submarines for Australia. What would you like to see come out of this process? What themes of inoperability have you identified for AUKUS, moving forward, and can the timeline be accelerated?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. So the AUKUS agreement is really important, and everybody goes right to submarines, but as you articulated it is more broad than that. And we are working immediately to increase our space and cyber capabilities together with the Australians. We are looking at posture options beyond just submarines and naval bases to be able to operate together. And right now we are completely interoperable with the Australians.

On the submarine side, I think the Australians need to see the result of this initial review. They will have some decisions and choices to make. And then I think there are ways to bridge to that development as they work to get to the infrastructure, and then we review the additional basing options that you just articulated.

We would love to go as fast as possible. We certainly have to be mindful of the nuclear reactors and the safety of those things as we work this forward.

Senator Blumenthal: Speaking to the importance of this agreement, would you say it is more significant in light of what we have seen in Ukraine, and if so, for what reason?
Admiral Aquilino: I do not know if I would compare it on the Ukraine side. I think as I look at the theater that we operate in, there is vast number of basically multilateral relationships that are important, when you think about ASEAN, when you think about a trilateral relationship with South Korea, Japan, and the United States. This is just another one of those multinational agreements that provide both a military capability and capacity that is important for the region.

Senator Blumenthal: And do you think there is the opportunity or the potential for accelerating the timeline?

Admiral Aquilino: I think we will have to see the results of this review. I guess what I would say is this really will not happen quickly. If we can get from 10 years to 8 years, boy, that would be herculean.

Senator Blumenthal: And where do you think the submarines will be built?

Admiral Aquilino: I know the Australians certainly would like to have that industrial capacity. I think having an additional industrial base in another place for us is possible. But as you know, all of the United States submarines are built in Connecticut.

Senator Blumenthal: I know. Rhode Island. And Rhode Island has a role to play as well. Thank you very much, Admiral.
Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Ernst, please.

Senator Ernst: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and again, gentlemen, thank you very much for being here.

General LaCamera, let us start with you. We have seen a lot with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and it just hammers home how connected the world is and the responses that we see from democratic nations. We have heard a lot about how EUCOM and INDOPACOM are totally different theaters, yet the responses from the Japanese, the Australians, the South Koreans when it comes to Ukraine have surprised a lot of people.

What do you think about the allied responses to the invasion of Ukraine, and can you shed some light on how all of these different regions are interconnected?

General LaCamera: Thank you, Senator. As I sat down with the Minister of Defense before coming to Washington, D.C., I told him we were paying attention to what is going on there. It is not a blueprint but it can be instructive to large-scale combat operations on the Korean Peninsula and in the region. And we need to be paying attention to that, boil it down to its fundamental lessons.

But I think as discussed already several times, you know, our true asymmetric advantages are alliances and having a coalition. And so I think it continues to
reinforce the importance of making sure that we have that strategic and international depth, and we can take everybody's capabilities and put it together as an asymmetric advantage.

Senator Ernst: And I think that is well said. There are so many connectivities, ways that we work with allied partners around the globe, that just become force multipliers no matter what that theater. So I am going to continue on some of that interconnectivity that we have. I know we were having a fuel discussion earlier, so I am going to direct this one to the Admiral.

In light of the energy crunch that we have now with the Russia invasion of Ukraine, it is my understanding that our military has fuel contracts with the Japanese and South Korean refiners, but much of their oil does come from Iran and others. Have you taken a close look at our DLA's energy contracts for INDO PACOM, and is that a strategic concern?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. We certainly keep a look at the refinery capability around the globe and how it might impact. I have not looked down to the second-, third-order effects as we coordinate with Japan, Korea, and the host nations. I would be glad to take that on with DLA to see where those vulnerabilities might be.

Senator Ernst: I would appreciate that, because again, there is so much that goes on under the surface, and if we
are relying upon Iran and other adversaries, just as we are seeing in our own economy right now, we are so reliant upon Russia. Russia is using those dollars to fund their war machine. The same could be said of a number of other near-peer adversaries like Iran. The dollars they are generating from their oil then also goes to fund terrorist activities, proxy activities around the globe.

So we are all interconnected, going back to what General LaCamera said. We have various strategic alliances, but we also need to look at where our adversaries are and how we can rely on partners for solutions rather than just focusing on folks like Russia and Iran and others. It is very important that we look at those secondary and tertiary implications.

So I will yield back my time. Thank you very much.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Ernst.

Senator Warren, please.

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Admiral Aquilino, I want to ask about the impact of defense industry consolidation on our ability to compete militarily and to be able to control costs. So last month the Department of Defense issued a disturbing report finding that defense mergers and growing concentration is reducing the number of suppliers and creating vulnerabilities in our
supply chain. And, of course, that is because when only a small number of companies produce components that DoD needs to buy, a pandemic or a single company's decision to cease production can leave us without the parts that we need, or instead of ceasing production those companies can just jack up prices to make more profits, without fear of being undercut by competitors.

So let me ask, Admiral Aquilino, do you consider hypersonic weapons to be an important priority?

Admiral Aquilino: Yes, ma'am.

Senator Warren: Hypersonic weapons is one area where the DoD report is particularly alarming, warming that vertical integration of those contractors and suppliers, quote, "will likely lead to reduced competition and may eliminate it altogether." Do you agree that DoD generally benefits from competition among defense contractors and suppliers?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, let me just start by saying I do not have any acquisition authority, but competition is certainly the foundation of our free market.

Senator Warren: Well, it is not only a foundation of our free market, you are absolutely right, but it is how we assure that we are going to have supply and we are going to have it at a price that we can afford. That is why I have been concerned that DoD is asleep at the wheel when it comes
to mergers and acquisitions. Since the 1990s, we have gone from 51 aerospace and defense prime contractors down to just 5 today. Controlling costs for hypersonics is going to be a major challenge for the Department. The GAO found that the costs of one of the Navy's programs nearly doubled in a single year, and that an Air Force program increased by 40 percent in its first year.

Look, we are planning to invest about $15 billion through 2024, so those kinds of cost increases add up in a hurry. Overruns in these programs take resources away from other Department priorities and other needs across the Federal Government, and the cost issues are significant enough that the Air Force Secretary Kendall has expressed concerns that they are not, quote, "cost effective."

So let me just ask you one more question in this general area, if I can. There are a number of factors that drive these cost increases. I realize that. There is complexity, poor planning, weak oversight. But do you think it will be important to prevent further concentration among hypersonics contractors, Admiral?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, again, not being the person who actually purchases those things I think what I would say is I need to capability, and I need it as soon as possible. I encourage any particular way that we can execute that, with the most effectiveness for the delivery of the system,
at the most efficient cost to the taxpayer.

Senator Warren: I appreciate that and that is fair enough. You know, I think the Department's report makes clear that this needs to be a priority. If we do not have competition in this sector it is going to be extremely difficult to control costs, and I am working on legislation to address this right now.

So, Admiral, I hope that you and I can work together on controlling costs as we go forward. As you may know, your command submitted the largest wish list of any command, nearly $1 billion, and these so-called unfunded priorities have become an extremely pernicious tool to boost what is already runaway Pentagon spending.

So I am going to be following up with you with more questions about these lists, but I urge you to be a more responsible steward of taxpayer dollars than your predecessors were and to think carefully about your requests for this year. Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren.

Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today and your service.

General, how has the vaccine mandate affected your troops in your command? Any at all? Any numbers?

General LaCamera: We are sitting at 99 percent
vaccinated. There are some exceptions to policies. I do not control those. Those go back to the departments. But it has had no impact to combat readiness.

Senator Tuberville: Admiral? Any?

Admiral Aquilino: Same, Senator. Again, the services control it, about the same percentage, maybe a bit higher, but there has been no impact on mission.

Senator Tuberville: Domestic extremism education courses are required. Any positive results you have seen out of this, General?

General LaCamera: Yes. You know, we take on new soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines each week. We have got to integrate them into the formation, and we have to tell them that any extremism is not tolerated. And commanders at all levels are focusing on that. It goes against good order and discipline, and it makes us less combat ready.

Senator Tuberville: Have you all had to take these courses? I am just asking.

General LaCamera: I have, yeah. I have participated in them, and I tell you, sitting in there and listening to the different demographics and age groups, I have learned. It is boggling.

Senator Tuberville: Admiral?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, we owe the servicemembers, the civilian warriors that support us a safe, healthy place
where they can execute their oath that they took for the uniformed members and for the civilian members, their desire to serve their nation. We owe them a healthy, safe, comfortable place to work.

I have taken the same courses. We have actually done some additional things, and I can tell you I have learned a lots, in just talking with the servicemembers. You know, they are willing to tell you some of the things they have experienced. And to General LaCamera's point, there is zero tolerance for any discrimination, sexual harassment, and we are learning a bunch.

Senator Tuberville: That is the reason I am asking these questions. I am for that. And do we need to make it better? I come from the education field. Is there ways we can make it better? Do we need to talk to more people, more commanders, more officers, enlisted? How can we make it better?

General LaCamera: I think we are a learning organization and I think we are learning from the junior servicemembers as they give us their experiences and as we see the different generational gaps. So, I mean, any help that we can get from the outside, but internally, you know, after-action reports and sharing lessons learned has kind of been our -- has made us the military that we are today.

Senator Tuberville: Good. We have all got to be on
the same team, as dangerous as this world is.

You know, one area I believe we excelled in with this Ukraine conflict is the information right. We successfully countered Russian and Chinese disinformation. This is a fight that both of you in your AOR is going to be important.

You know, what tools do you all need? Do you need any more tools to get out the messaging effectively, you know, because it will ramp up as years and days go by? General?

General LaCamera: I mean, we have to be able to compete in the information space. It is easier to put a bullet in someone's head than it is to put an idea in their head, and we never send just one bullet or just one bomb. It is constant. We have got to be prepared to compete in the information space. We have got to be prepared to make mistakes and react to it. We are not going to get it perfect, but I think, again, watching Ukraine, we are watching a country who is able, you know, a leader who is able to shut off the information to his own people. And we have got to figure out ways to penetrate that and get that message out.

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. You know, the changing information space, as you articulated, is really challenging. Disinformation, misinformation, propaganda. In the Indo-Pacific command we have initiated JTFIP in Singapore, and with our partners in Singapore we have put
together an information capability that can lead to the potential identification of violent extremists. That is done with, right now, nine countries.

So we are learning how to do this better. I do not think I have any specific tools right now, but in my 1242 report you are going to see requests to ensure we can fund those things that we have today. And to General LaCamera's point, as we learn how to go forward I am certainly happy to share thoughts with you.

Senator Tuberville: One other question, Admiral. In this year's NDAA, we got in an Aegis system for Guam. We just need to find a way to fund it. Your thoughts? Is it still a priority?

Admiral Aquilino: Absolutely, sir. It is still my number one priority.

Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning. Thank you both for your testimony this morning.

South Korea has a new president. I guess my question is to you, General LaCamera, because he has, during his campaign, appeared to take a more hardline approach with respect to both North Korea and China. Can you talk about how you see his new administration continuing to work with
the United States and whether you expect any changes there?

General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. Working with the
country team, you know, we will reach out to his transition
team, and I look forward to taking what he talked about in
his campaign and continuing to move forward when it comes to
protecting South Korea and maintaining regional stability.
It seems very promising, everything that we have seen on the
conservative side, in his approach and focus on defense, and
now we will have to see what it looks like in execution.

Senator Shaheen: So I do not know if you want to add
anything to that, Admiral, but do we expect him to continue
to collaborate with us in regional alliances, in the Quad,
in looking at things like AUKUS that we are continuing to
try and partner with Asian countries on?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. You know, the
alliance with the South Koreans, it is clearly the linchpin
to the broad set of alliances that go to the region.
Really, really important, no matter who is elected. I see
at the mil-to-mil level, alongside my battle buddy, General
LaCamera, they are a clear, solid, treaty alliance partner.
We operate together every day on the peninsula. So again, I
think we will continue to work together, and I do not expect
any changes.

Senator Shaheen: Well, and President-Elect Yoon is new
to politics, I understand, and has made a number of
statements in his campaign about North Korea and about his interest in seeing North Korea behave differently. Do we have any concerns about that? Do we expect to work with him on how South Korea and North Korea continue to interact, if at all?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator. To me the alliance, I mean, it is an intangible relationship here that we have to continue to work with the Republic of Korea going forward to allow the diplomatic process to work with DPRK and as the trajectory of peace on the peninsula. So we expect to work with him. We worked well with the Moon administration, and I expect that we will continue to work well with the incoming administration. We do respect the sovereignty of the Republic of Korea.

Senator Shaheen: Of course. I appreciate that, and I appreciate the partnership that we have shared with them in the Indo-Pacific.

Admiral, the Women, Peace, and Security Act requires the U.S. government, for the first time, to strengthen the participation of women in conflict prevention and peace negotiations, and I know that INDOPACOM is actually taking a leadership role in implementing this law, initiating trainings around gender insecurity. Can you talk about why you see that as important and how you are seeing that get implemented in ways that you think will be helpful to us in
the future?

Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. I think I would start at the foundational level, right. This is about talent, and 50 percent in the United States are our ladies, and there is talent everywhere. So our role in ensuring that the rest of our partners understand it, can benefit from it, these are like-minded nations with like-minded values. So we work hard to transmit that.

At the most recent Chiefs of Defense Conference that we had there were 18 representatives from the region, and one of the specific topics that we discussed was how are we going to more diversify, specifically as it applies to women, peace, and security. The Vice Minister of Japan came and gave a presentation, and she is an amazing lady. It was really notable to the rest of the participants.

But bottom line is we all agreed, as one of the three takeaways, is we were going to work towards increased diversity with our female population through the lens of military service.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I am really pleased to hear that. Thank you very much. I look forward to further updates as you continue to implement the program.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Sullivan, please.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and
gentlemen, thank you for your service, exceptional service
in my view, and the service of your families.

By the way, you do not have to comment on it. I am
going to take exception to Senator Warren's view of unfunded
mandates as some kind of wish list. I actually read them, I
am not actually sure she has, and I believe they are
actually needed priorities.

Admiral, you have been talking about integrated
deterrence, the economic impacts of the free world coming
together on Ukraine with the sanctions, all instruments of
national power. I think one of the lessons from Ukraine and
the brutal invasion by the dictator, Vladimir Putin, is that
comprehensive economic and financial sanctions have the best
chance of deterring conflict when they are clearly
articulated and ready to go, before the conflict begins.
And I recently introduced legislation, Congressman Gallagher
in the House introduced companion legislation that would
mandate comprehensive and devastating economic and financial
sanctions against the Chinese Communist Party, key sectors
of China's economy, and leaders of the CCP in the event it
initiates a military invasion of the island democracy of
Taiwan.

I was in Europe recently, discussing this with many of
our allies and encouraging them to consider similar actions.

What is your thought on legislation like that, particularly
as it relates to all instruments of American power and the deterrent effect beyond just what you control, which is the military instrument?

Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Senator. I will have to go into detail and take a look at the legislation. I have not read it to date. I guess I think what I would say it as long as it is in compliance with the Taiwan Relations Act as a portion of all forms of national power I would be supportive.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you. Let me ask, just following up on that, the Chinese Communist Party has already crushed Hong Kong, once a bastion of liberty. Unfortunately, I think the free world barely raised its voice. I believe a violent, successful takeover of Taiwan by the CCP would be sea change in how the world is ordered, not just the Western Pacific but the world. I think it could change the history of the 21st century in the ways of the "Guns of August" of 1914 changed the 20th century.

What is your analysis of that, especially as it relates to the trust our treaty allied partners have in the region?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, I think most of the nations in the region have the same view. The change in the international world order is at risk. There are economic impacts. Two-thirds of the global flow of trade flows through that region in the maritime domain. There is
expansive second-, third-order effects that would be concerning.

Senator Sullivan: You know, you mentioned Philippines, Guam, Australia. Can you talk a little bit about Alaska in terms of the fight, in terms of if you need to be ready, our proximity, which as you know is quite close to Korea, Japan, Taiwan, our military forces, which you have operational control over, over 100 fifth-gen fighters, all kinds of other things. And related to that, are we becoming too militarily concentrated with our military assets on Guam?

Admiral Aquilino: I do not think we are becoming too consolidated or too focused on Guam. It is a strategic location, certainly as Alaska is a strategic location. And, Senator, all of those forces that are positioned there would certainly be needed and expected to join any response options.

Senator Sullivan: Let me ask my final question for both the general and admiral. I believe the Ukrainian invasion has made it clear that we are in a new era of authoritarian aggression, led by two dictators, Putin and Xi Jinping. They are driven by historical grievance. They are often increasingly isolated, which makes them dangerous. They are very paranoid about their democratic neighbors because they cannot bring democracy and freedom to their own people. And as you both know, the CCP often looks at -- as
a matter of fact, both of them look at historical grievances as a way to justify current and future claims of aggression. That is happening in Ukraine right now. But as you have already mentioned, the nine-dash line, South China Sea, Taiwan.

In the 13th century, the Yuan Dynasty of China invaded and occupied Korea for several decades. To both gentlemen, has the CCP ever mentioned this as a possible pretext for aggressive or future actions against the Korean Peninsula? They seem to do it a lot in other areas of Asia, and this is one area that they have previously occupied.

General, why don't we start with you.

General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. Again, I think history is instructive, not a blueprint, but I think the answer really lies in the head of Xi Jinping.

Senator Sullivan: But have you ever heard that? I mean, the nine-dash line, in my view, is ridiculous, but they still brought that out as a map and say, "Here, this is history. Now we are going to make sure everybody abides by it." They did occupy and invade Korea. Have you ever heard that from them?

General LaCamera: I have not.

Senator Sullivan: Okay. Admiral, how about you? Because, you know, they are looking at many other areas, and again, a lot of times, based on historical grievances? Any
1 thoughts?

2 Admiral Aquilino: I have not seen that yet, Senator.

3 Again, a lot of focus, obviously, on the reintegration of
4 Taiwan and the extensive claim through all areas inside the
5 nine-dash line. I have not seen or heard of them beginning
6 to lay the groundwork for a Korea issue.

7 Senator Sullivan: I think it is something we need to
8 keep an eye on. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr.
9 Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

11 Senator Kelly, please.

12 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral and
13 General, I have a question for each of you. First, Admiral,
14 it is about building partner capacity. Security cooperation
15 programs are an important tool for us to achieve our
16 national security objectives. It strengthens our regional
17 security efforts. It assists in combatting shared threats
18 and provides valuable intelligence to deter potential
19 aggression.

20 The 2018 National Defense Strategy sought to shift the
21 prioritization of security cooperation activities away from
22 counterterrorism and towards great power competition with
23 Russia and China. Additionally, the fiscal year 2021
24 defense bill established the Pacific Deterrence Initiative,
25 in part to prioritize security cooperation activities in the
So, Admiral, how is INDOPACOM utilizing security cooperation partnerships to counter Chinese incursions into the South China Sea and deter potential aggression against Taiwan?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. First of all, when we continue to work with our allies and partners by itself is a huge deterrent value. So that continued exercising operations that is enabled through the security cooperation funding is really important.

Second, it helps, in some cases, to deliver some posture options. So there is an economic benefit and a counter to the one-belt, one-road as we work with our allies and partners. And then certainly to build their capacity in the forms of articles that we can either sell or give certainly enhances interoperability and allows us to be able to quickly come together and operate together. So there are multiple benefits.

Senator Kelly: You mentioned the funding. Are you resourced adequately?

Admiral Aquilino: We will see when the 2023 budget comes out, and I have articulated and will highlight my requirement.

Senator Kelly: All right. Thank you.

General, the U.S. military has not conducted its annual
large-scale exercises, Full Eagle and Key Resolve with South Korea since 2018. I myself, I participated, you know, a long time ago, in Team Spirit, at least a couple of times, and believe that it is critical that we maintain a deterrent, and part of a deterrent is to convince the North Korean through these exercises that despite their larger force our ability to operate jointly with our partners is a significant force multiplier.

You know, North Korea must know that the U.S. and South Korean militaries are prepared to operate jointly and effectively to repel a North Korean attack, and as we look at the situation unfolding in Ukraine, it is concerning to think that the cancellation of these exercises could be misinterpreted to signal a waning commitment.

Do you believe large-scale exercises contribute to deterring potential North Korea aggression?

General LaCamera: Senator, thank you. I do. You know, his, in the information space trying to get us to cancel those exercises and potentially reduce our readiness works in his favor, and he does not have to expend any energy.

But while we have not done the field training exercise that you referred to -- Full Eagle, Team Spirit -- we have, last year we did do our command post exercise in the spring and the fall, and we are scheduled to do it coming up here.
We are also training at all levels in the field with our ROK allies.

Senator Kelly: When do you expect to be back to doing a large-scale exercise?

General LaCamera: That will be determined as the new administration comes in, and working with the Minister of Defense going forward.

Senator Kelly: Could you just kind of describe the difference in readiness between pre-2018, in the remaining time -- I only have about 30 seconds -- compared to what it is today, if you can kind of quantify that in a way?

General LaCamera: All the reports are that we are able to achieve readiness, the same readiness levels. Again, the gold standard for me at the tactical level are the live fires, and then force-on-force, we are able to get the Koreans off the peninsula to our combat training centers and to do that training there. As a commander, obviously more is better. But it is hard for me to speak before my time.

Senator Kelly: But your preference is to do the large-scale exercises on the Korean Peninsula.

General LaCamera: Yes. My preference is to do as much training as possible at all echelons.

Senator Kelly: All right. Thank you, General.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kelly.

Senator Hawley, please.
Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here. Admiral, it is good to see you again. Thanks for your time a couple of days ago.

I want to start with something that the NDAA from last year says, Section 1241 in particular. It says that it is the policy of the United States to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist a fait accompli that would jeopardize the security of the people on Taiwan, and the NDAA also defined that term, "fait accompli," to mean the resort to force by the People's Republic of China to invade and seize control of Taiwan before the U.S. can respond effectively.

Tell us why it is important for the United States to be able to respond quickly in order to prevent a fait accompli.

Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Senator. Certainly where our forces are positioned, again, a number forward but much in reserve on the west coast of the United States. Credible combat power placed forward has an extremely valuable deterrent value. A, it can respond with speed; B, it is operating in the area and can rehearse, and ultimately there is no better training than operating in the space you would fight in.

Senator Hawley: And I just want to underline what you said there about the necessity for our forces to be postured forward, combat-credible forces postured forward. That is
what will enable us to respond quickly. Have I got that right, if I understood your testimony correctly?

Admiral Aquilino: Yes, sir.

Senator Hawley: Very good. Let me ask you this. We recently heard from a RAND analyst, Dave Ochmanek, who has written that Taiwan, in his view, ought to prioritize asymmetric defenses like the following. Here is a non-exhaustive list: smart minds, anti-ship missiles that are deliverable from mobile launchers, mobile short-range air defense missile systems and distributed reconnaissance and communications systems.

In your view, why are asymmetric defenses and capabilities so important for Taiwan to be able to deter Chinese aggression?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. Again, a defense in-depth mindset and model that can deliver. We have heard many cases the defense of Taiwan being described as a porcupine. Those capabilities allow those effects to be delivered in multiple places, at multiple times, in multiple ways. So I concur with the capabilities articulated.

Senator Hawley: Let me ask you this. You said earlier today that anything that we could do to bolster the defensive capabilities of Taiwan would be desirable. I think that is so important. I have introduced my own piece of legislation, the Arm Taiwan Act, which authorizes $3
billion annually to accelerate Taiwan's deployment of asymmetric defenses and conditions that aid on Taiwan increasing defense spending and undertaking key defense reforms.

Here is a broader question for you. We need Taiwan to strengthen its asymmetric defenses, in particular, as quickly as possible, do we not? Can you tell us why that is?

Admiral Aquilino: Well, I think, Senator, one of the lessons learned as we watch what is going on in Europe is, number one, aggressive nations can take action. So number one, action against the island of Taiwan could happen, lesson one. Lesson two, there needs to be a readiness level as soon as possible.

Senator Hawley: And for that reason, is it fair to say that it is critical for Taiwan to keep increasing its defense spending and to continue to implement defense reforms in order to achieve that sort of porcupine state that you were talking about earlier?

Admiral Aquilino: Yes.

Senator Hawley: Let us talk a little bit about some of the physical capabilities that you are going to need in PACOM in order to deter China, and I am thinking of things like attack submarines, carrier strike groups, high ammunitions, air-breathing ISR. The thing about all of
these physical capabilities is that they can only be used in one place at one time. Am I right about that, is it fair to say?

Admiral Aquilino: I would say in some cases. There are certain domains that capabilities could be brought to bear very quickly when I think about space and cyber.

Senator Hawley: Right. Got you. But leaving aside space and cyber and thinking about just the physical capabilities, these are sometimes called the high-demand, low-density assets that if they get used in one theater -- let's say EUCOM -- then they are not available in PACOM. And so there is a tradeoff. Have I got that right? I mean, we have got to make choices.

Admiral Aquilino: Again, depending on type. So bombers can move quickly, and we, in many cases, share those in the same mission, across multiple combatant commands. But most at the speed that they can move can only serve us one at a time.

Senator Hawley: Fair enough. Where I am going with this is something you and I have already talked about, which is that while we have a current crisis in EUCOM, I think as we think about the ongoing challenges that we face in PACOM, both in the short end and the long term, I want to make sure that DoD is not taking capabilities from your theater, that we have absolutely got to have to continue to deter China
through a strategy of denial, and using them in other theaters, unless, of course, they are backfilling in some way.

So if you want to comment on that, go ahead.

Admiral Aquilino: If you do not mind, Senator.

Senator Hawley: Please.

Admiral Aquilino: Again, I just want to be very clear that the Secretary has not removed anything that he has allocated to me at this point to a different theater.

Senator Hawley: Very good. If I could, just one more question, Mr. Chairman, and it is about the admiral's upcoming 1242 report. Just give us a sense, Admiral, as we anticipate that report and without commenting on the specifics yet because it is not out, but how important will it be for Congress to fully fund the requirements that you have listed in that report in order to do your job of deterrence in PACOM?

Admiral Aquilino: Sir, I think what I would say is, you know, the committee and the Congress has tasked me to provide those requirements. I think I would leave the legislations and the legislating up to this team. What I would do is just thank you for your focus on the Indo-Pacific command, and I look forward to being able to deliver you those requirements.

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

Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, Admiral Aquilino and General LaCamera. I appreciate your service to our nation and I want to thank those servicemembers under your commands for their tireless work in tackling enormous challenges that we now face in the Indo-Pacific.

As you know, I have been a vocal voice for combat-credible logistics, and so we are going to talk about that again today. I have been consistent and loud in this committee about my concerns because I know how difficult effective sustainment can be, and I know that outrunning supply lines can result in a catastrophic loss of a tempo for military forces.

Right now we are watching an object lesson in the importance and challenge of an effective logistics plan with Vladimir Putin's disastrous invasion of Ukraine, and that is a neighboring country, with whom he shares a border. You know, while Putin's ineffective approach to sustainment generally tracks with his patterns of arrogance and strategic failure, I hope that we are thinking critically about how much greater the sustainment problem will be if we are called to defend our troops and allies in your area of responsibility, a very far distance from home.

Admiral Aquilino, where do you see the greatest gaps in
INDOPACOM's ability to conduct logistics in a contested environment, and how are you planning to fill those gaps, and what areas of upcoming budget requests are most critical for your success? Whatever you can share in this unclassified environment, obviously.

Admiral Aquilino: Yeah, thanks, Senator. The posture initiatives that we have laid out -- and again, I look forward to coming to briefing you at a classified level on the approach, the plan, the hubs, the spokes, the different legs of our logistics plan, I would love to show it to you. But the posture, the places that we are going to have to set up, critical. The transfer from one place to another and then into the region, whether it be sealift, airlift, those are the second set of capabilities that we are interested in.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Same question to you, General.

General LaCamera: Thank you, Senator. Sustainment operations is a focus item for me, and it is the commander's business, and I made it very clear to my subordinate commanders. My discussions with Admiral Aquilino is when does strategic movement become operational maneuver and what combat power is going to have to be used to secure those lines of communication will be a discussion that we will have in a crisis and in conflict.
As we get different capabilities on the peninsula, where that line is we might be able to provide that capability in working with the ROK navy, ROK air force, et cetera. That will all be part of the integration going forward. But I can assure you that sustainment operations, not just getting to the peninsula and getting those supplies, but also in the fight in defending the peninsula is a priority.

Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Gentlemen, last week I met with General Van Ovost, Commander of the USTRANSCOM, who was visiting from Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, and she assured me that our strategic logistic requirements will play a larger role in the upcoming NDS, and I look forward to seeing the details when that NDS is released. But I will be closely watching to see how the Department implements and resources that strategy going forward.

Admiral Aquilino, I know you have been working closely with U.S. Transportation Command, which I think is important given the unique challenges of the tyranny of distance that poses to TRANSCOM in your area of responsibility. One particularly concerning mission I have discussed with TRANSCOM was patient transport, wounded warriors. It is clear that in a contested environment in INDOPACOM we will not be able to evacuate patients from theater as quickly as we were able to in Iraq and Afghanistan. There are more
challenges, and there might need to be a dwell time of maybe
5 hours, 6 hours, or 12 to 24 hours, before we can transfer
them to the next mode of transport.

In the event of a conflict in INDOPACOM, we will need
to think outside the box established over the last 20 years
in order to effectively care for our wounded. This is an
area that I am ready and willing to support.

Admiral, would you commit to sharing any analysis your
command is conducting on medical mobility with me and this
committee once it is completed, and will you commit to
working directly with my staff on ways we can partner with
you to tackle this potential problem?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, absolutely. So we have
been working through a set of CONOPS on what does it look
like, and as you articulated, in a really complex theater,
most of it water. We have said again, through this lens of
hubs, spokes, transition stations, so I would be glad to
show you how we are thinking about. But your point is
really valid. This theater and this operation, we will not
be able to meet the golden hour.

Senator Duckworth: Yeah. One final question. I would
like to move onto strengthening our partnerships in the
region. Senator Blumenthal did talk about AUKUS and how
bold the Australians are. You know, they are all in. They
put all their chips in with us. And as you and I discussed
last year, I think we need to match their bold commitment to the partnership if we are going to make it successful, especially when it comes to submarines.

Admiral, how can you support implementation of the AUKUS deal in your operations and planning for the region, and from your perspective how can Congress support this partnership and be equally as bold, especially when it comes to components of deal such as they are building the capacity to build their own submarines?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. I think step one is to let this report run out, right. So they have some decisions to make which are significant decisions as we work through the submarine portion. Once they identify a couple of key ways forward -- you heard the other day they decided they are going to have to have a base on the east coast -- I think now we can kind of step in, partner with them, and work towards some of these posture initiatives. We will work toward nuclear power school. We can partner with riders on submarines. There are a bunch of things we can do, but they really have to make some choices first, and I am confident they are looking to go as fast as possible as well.

Senator Duckworth: I am out of time, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Duckworth.
Senator Scott, please.

Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. First I want to thank each of you and everybody in your command for your service.

Admiral, given your unique position in the Indo-Pacific command you have observed the Communist Chinese regime. Is it your personal opinion that General Secretary Xi will take over Taiwan by force if he sees the opportunity?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, I do not think I would try to predict. I think what I would I tell you is the mission I have been given is, number one, to prevent this conflict, number two, if deterrence fails to be able to fight and win, which leads me to a place that says I need to be ready should he make that choice.

Senator Scott: Thank you. Admiral, in your personal opinion, do you believe that this Administration has given proper attention to the possibility of Communist China invading Taiwan?

Admiral Aquilino: I think as stated by the Secretary and the Administration, the priority theater, most consequential theater for the future of the United States is the Indo-Pacific theater, and the most concerning strategic competitor is the PRC. So I think that articulation and that priority has been well stated, Senator.

Senator Scott: Admiral, has the Pacific Defense
Initiative been properly funded, and does it provide the right counter to Communist China and its threats in the region?

Admiral Aquilino: I thank the committee for support to the Indo-Pacific, and as articulated in the law, Senator, I will continue to provide the requirements as identified and tasked by the NDAA to identify my critical requirements. And again, I thank the committee as we work through the legislation process. As you know, I submitted my unfunded list. It was based on that report, and I will continue to do so.

Senator Scott: Thank you. Admiral, as we discussed the last time you were before us, I have introduced legislation that calls for the building up of Taiwan's defenses as well as preparations in the United States that will allow us to aid Taiwan if Communist China attacks or tries to change its government using military coercion. My bill also calls for a more transparent, realistic, and necessary policy change. We must announce clearly that our position toward aiding Taiwan is not ambiguous. Communist China should know that we will come to Taiwan's defense, and since we last spoke even the Japanese government made clear that it would not tolerate a Chinese military move against Taiwan.

So here is my first question. Do you believe that
preventing Communist China from controlling Taiwan is a strategic necessity for the United States?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, I completely support the One-China policy, operate in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act, to communicate its reassurances, and I think that is going to be a policy decision. I think there are certainly implications, but I standing by to support the requirements and tasks as identified by the National Security Council.

Senator Scott: After the Administration's botched withdrawal from Afghanistan and the failure to be able to deter Putin from invading Ukraine, do you believe that this has emboldened Xi to try to take Taiwan by force?

Admiral Aquilino: I think we are still trying to learn what President Xi Jinping has learned from this event, and we continue to watch to try to identify, has he learned the correct lessons as it applies to the changing world order and the concern that we see in the Ukraine.

Senator Scott: Thank you. General, with the election yesterday in Korea, and even before that, have you seen any change in South Korea's attitude toward Communist China and concern about the risk of Beijing's aggressive actions?

General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. There is a relationship that they have, a diplomatic and economic relationship, and a cultural relationship that they have
with China. I have not seen any major changes in that relationship. The current administration has been on a working-towards-peace declaration as its priority.

Senator Scott: So as we have watched China's aggressive actions, do you think the general public in Korea is taking note, and now as they watched Putin invade Ukraine, has that had any impact on the attitude in South Korea to want to bolster their defense and support what we are doing to help defend them?

General LaCamera: It is hard for me to ascertain. I have been stateside since the invasion began, so I, just anecdotally, am getting reports on kind of the reaction. The political reaction is that President Moon has taken action against the Russians from a sanctions perspective, and it is costing them economically.

Senator Scott: Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Rosen, please.

Senator Rosen: Well thank you, Chairman Reed, for holding this hearing. Thank you so much to our witnesses here today for your service to our nation and really your expertise in these important areas.

I would like to focus today on cyber, artificial intelligence, and the importance of maintaining our technological edge in general, particularly as it relates to
this region. So I want to talk about, first, cyber threats, because some of the most devastating cyberattacks that have targeted the United States, well they have originated from China and North Korea. And just this week a cybersecurity firm reported that a Chinese state-sponsored hacking group successfully compromised the networks of at least six U.S. state governments since May of 2021.

So, Admiral Aquilino, what are you doing, what are we doing to defend against Chinese state-sponsored cyber threats and what more should or could we be doing to deter these malicious activities?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. So you have highlighted certainly a concern that we worry about, not only in our own networks but in our ally and partner networks. Whether they be state actors or non-state actors, the potential impact is significant. In close coordination with my partner, General Nakasone, who has that responsibility to defend the defense global information grid, and to work with our allies and partners, we are linked very closely. He works in lanes both in the defensive lane and has the ability to work in the offensive lane as well.

So that partnership is consistent. We have both identified the critical requirements on both sides, and he continues to support us.
Senator Rosen: It is important that we work with our partner countries in collective collaborative. General LaCamera, what are the U.S. forces in Korea doing to deter and mitigate North Korean cyber threats?

General LaCamera: Thank you, Senator. Again, our concern is making sure that our networks are protected and making sure that our alliance networks are protected from those cyberattacks. We do practice it on a regular basis, and in an exercise coming up that will be part of the exercise, to make sure we are protecting it.

Senator Rosen: And how quickly do you feel you can respond when you have that exercise? How quickly do you receive your reports on those, gentlemen, after your exercises, that you can respond to the vulnerabilities that you might find?

General LaCamera: I think we can respond fairly quickly. You know, we know that that is going to be part of their attack plan, and that protecting our networks and reacting to those and making sure that we have the redundancy in our plans. And, you know, the real question is, you know, we rely heavily on digital, but at what level can we quickly switch to analog so that we are not vulnerable from that piece there.

Senator Rosen: And you share those with your partner services so that they can be aware of any vulnerabilities as
soon as you find them?

General LaCamera: Yes, Senator.

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, so General Nakasone is really good. I will tell you, if it is detected, it is a critical information requirement for me. I will know within minutes, as well as all the components.

Senator Rosen: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Components, I have a whole nother discussion on software bill of materials. We can talk about components another day.

But again, Admiral, as we discussed when you testified before the committee last year, China is accelerating its military modernization through its cutting-edge technology, and they want to close the technological gap with the U.S. as quickly as possible. They are making investments in AI, robotics, cyber, hypersonics. They are procuring commercial technologies we know that can be adopted for military purposes.

So I want to follow up on my question from your confirmation hearing last year. Do you believe today that China has achieved technological parity with the U.S. in any of its operational systems, and are there any that you feel that they are out outpacing us? What should we be investing in with you to give you the tools to not let that happen?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks again, Senator. So let me
start with intent. The intent of the PRC is to take advantage in every one of those. We continue to be the greatest military on the planet, and we need to keep and continue to keep those advantage. So number one, for protection, whether they be defense or defense-critical contractors or other sources, we have to protect those critical communities that you articulated in order to maintain those advantages.

Senator Rosen: Thank you. I see that my time is up. I hope that we will have a hearing talking about the lessons learned from the war in Ukraine. As we begin to find out more about any particular cyber or technological activity we can prepare for our future adversaries.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Senator Manchin, please.

Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, sir, for your service, and thank you for being here.

General Aquilino, recently this committee had a very sobering briefing from the Department. In this briefing it was mentioned that the Marine Corps made the very hard decision to procure a NMESIS anti-ship missile instead of the more traditional equipment, but Congress made a decision to zero that request out in exchange for two CH-53K helicopters, and part of that is built in my state. So I
mentioned this example because it is one of many. I believe the majority of my colleagues agree with me. In order to compete against China we ought to do the best thing we can do, not what is politically popular. Let us put it that way.

With that in mind, what domain of warfare do you believe the U.S. still maintains an asymmetrical advantage against China, and what weapons systems or equipment do you believe we should procure to widen that advantage?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. So I will start by saying that we do have the world's greatest military in all domains, foundational. There are certainly capabilities that we want to go ahead and pursue, and I commend the commandant on making some of those tough choices, right. So land-based, anti-ship fires is a critical component of the strategy and the approach, but it will take the entire joint force. So that is one example. There are some hypersonic capabilities that we certainly want to continue to pursue and then deliver. We want to be able to continue to work unmanned capabilities to provide different alternatives as part of the contribution.

So there are a number of those. Those are just three examples.

Senator Manchin: General LaCamera, you mentioned in your opening statement your work towards achieving the
bilateral Conditions-Based Operational Control Transition
Plan between the United States and the Republic of Korea.
When fully implemented, the Republic of Korea will assume
direct operational control over their military in the event
of war with North Korea.

So my question would be, can you explain to the
committee if this transition plan is successfully executed,
how will the immediate nature of our presence on the Korean
Peninsula change?

General LaCamera: Thank you, Senator. As we go
through this bilaterally agreed-upon Conditions-Based OPCON
Transition, we are in the process of working through what
are the bridging capabilities and what are the enduring
capabilities. So when the chalk line is finally snapped it
is hard for me to predict right now, based on the
capabilities that the Korean military has and what the
requirements are.

We are also in the process of rewriting our operational
plan.

Senator Manchin: Being the U.S. Forces Korea
Commander, how would you lead your force in the event of a
war on the Korean Peninsula following the plan's execution?

General LaCamera: How would I lead the forces? It
would be part of the Combined Forces Commander. So I would
become the Deputy Commander of Combined Forces Command, and
my deputy would become the Combined Forces Commander. I would work underneath him. I would still retain the title of U.S. Forces Korea and UNC Commander. And then it is still a binational decision-making process between both national command authorities.

Senator Manchin: Admiral, the Marine Corps has taken significant risk in recent years to reorient the service towards our pacing threat, China. Among the many initiatives the Marine Corps is pursuing is orienting the Marine Corps towards developing the doctrine for expeditionary advanced-base operations. What are you doing as the INDOPACOM Commander to support the Navy and Marine Corps refined and further operational to this concept?

Admiral Aquilino: I think what I would say, Senator, is making them prove it to me, right? So it is a concept for a number of years now, and we are working to rehearse it and practice it.

Senator Manchin: What challenges do you see with that?

Admiral Aquilino: We see certain challenges in capability delivery, transportation, placement, and posture, in some cases.

Senator Manchin: Can I ask you both one final question. Knowing what you know and the insight that you have on where we are in the Ukrainian-Russian war -- the Putin war. I am not even going to ingratiate them by
calling it the Russian war. It is the Putin war. The
escalation, your concerns about escalating this war,
escalating into bringing us into conflict, chances of them
breaching over into the NATO allies?

Maybe General LaCamera. The Marines are first to go,
so tell me if you are ready or not.

General LaCamera: Thank you for compliment. I am sure
the commandant would appreciate it. I am watching the
impact that it will have on the Korean Peninsula, and the
regional stability is my main concern. I do not have the
insights of what is really going on.

Senator Manchin: Admiral, your thoughts?

Admiral Aquilino: Senator, you know, it is part of the
commander's business to assess three things in everything we
do, no matter what theater or where we are. Number one is
risk to force. Are we putting U.S. servicemembers,
families, or supporting people in harm's way? So risk to
force, to make sure I can send everybody back with Mom, Dad,
and the kids after the mission is complete. Number two is
risk to the mission itself. Am I going to achieve what I am
trying to do and generate the effect that I am trying to
generate? And then number three, risk to escalation. We
assess it in every single event, every single operation, and
I know my counterparts in EUCOM are doing the same thing.

Senator Manchin: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr.
Chairman.

   Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Manchin.
   Senator Peters, please.
   Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, from your testimony today and for your service to our country.

   Admiral Aquilino, there has been significant discussion regarding how our partners in South Asia, particularly India, have responded to the crisis in Ukraine, and I am concerned that we may be missing the forest from the trees here, and I believe that as a country we need to balance some legitimate Indian concerns with our desire to work closely with them at the same time, as well as other Quad partners to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

   So my question for us, Admiral, is can you speak to the relationship you have with our Indian counterparts, and what more can we do to strengthen our security relationship between our two countries?

   Admiral Aquilino: Senator, to start I have no concerns. Our partners in India are tremendous partners and the mil-to-mil relationship is probably at its highest point. We continue to do more together.

   Forgive me for a second but I will recognize my partner, General Rawat, and his wife, who just recently passed in an unforeseen helicopter incident.
But when you talk about tremendous partnership, it is there. What more can we do? Continue the information sharing, continue to support them with the equipment they need up on the line of actual control, and continue to partner and operate together throughout the region.

The Malabar exercise with Japan, Australia, the United States, and India is critical. Increased unilateral and multilateral engagements with the Indians, and ultimately continue to sell them equipment so we can be more interoperable and more effective together in the military sphere.

Senator Peters: Admiral, I would also like to get a greater sense of what the competition for influence looks like on the ground in Oceania, using Papua, New Guinea, as an example. In your posture statement you mentioned that the People's Republic of China is, quote, "moving to increase its defense attaché footprint in Papua, New Guinea," end of quote. This is happening at the same time as the U.S. is strengthening our military ties there, including the 2020 National Guard State Partnership Program expansion.

So my question for you is, how have the people and defense forces in Papua, New Guinea, responded to our efforts there, and what more can we do to strengthen our relationship with some of the smaller nations that are in
your AOR?

Admiral Aquilino: Well, the State Partnership Program is critically implementation, Senator. I have 14 relationships between the National Guard and the nations in the region. That is one aspect. As you know, we are also plussing up our diplomatic capabilities there. In 2019, we put a defense attaché, and in 2021, we just added a security cooperation officer. So small investments for big payback, to be boots on the ground and to be able to engage with those critical partners.

Senator Peters: Just continuing with that concept, and I appreciate your support for it, your posture statement also discussed how the People's Republic of China entered into a security agreement with the Solomon Islands Police Force. Last month, the State Department confirmed plans to open an embassy in the Solomon Islands to increase our influence before China gets more strongly embedded there.

So my question to you is, do you support State Partnership Program expansion to countries like the Solomon Islands, and if you do, what conditions must be met before these partnerships can begin, in your opinion?

Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. Again, I certainly do support the expansion, if it is funded, and we can sustain it in a way that is open, transparent, and in accordance with our values, which is the critical linkage
between these countries and ours. This generates the people-to-people ties that bring us closer together. As a matter of fact, I am meeting with General Hokanson tomorrow to have this exact discussion on where else might he be able to start putting some support.

Senator Peters: Very good. Well thank you. Thank you for your response. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters, and gentlemen, thank you for your testimony today, but more importantly, for your life-long service and dedication to the nation and that of your families. And please, as I suggested initially, pass on our thanks and gratitude to the men and women in your command and their families for their dedication and selfless service to the nation. I think we all feel that both the INDOPACOM and Korea are in good hands.

With that I will adjourn the hearing. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:28 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]