

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

**Room SDG-50
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Thursday, April 16, 2015**

**To receive testimony on U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea in review
of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2016 and the Future Years
Defense Program.**

Good Morning. Let me join Senator McCain in welcoming our witnesses.

Gentlemen, we appreciate your long years of faithful service and the sacrifices you and your families have made for our Nation.

On Tuesday, we had an interesting hearing on some of the challenges we face in the Asia Pacific region. The consensus from that hearing was that we face some serious challenges in the region, especially in light of China's increasing military budget and destabilizing activities in the region. One of the biggest challenges will be to continue to provide stability and security in the region, as the United States has for the last 70 years, given our own shrinking defense budget.

Admiral Locklear, I would like to hear from you about some of the disturbing reports of land reclamation activity by China in the South China Sea, and what our strategy is to ensure freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce through important sea lanes. What more should we be doing to build the capacity of our partners and allies coast guards and navies to help them with their maritime domain

awareness and to encourage all of the regional actors to seek legal instead of lethal solutions to their sovereignty claims?

North Korea has been and remains one of our most difficult national security challenges. Last week, NORTHCOM Commander Admiral Gortney stated that North Korea “has the ability to put a nuclear weapon on a KN-08 and shoot it at the homeland.” North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons and pursuit of intercontinental delivery capabilities pose serious and growing security challenges. General Scapparotti, I would like to have a frank discussion about the threat posed by the North Korean regime, what influence China might have on that regime, and what North Korea’s intentions are with regard to its nuclear weapons program. Additionally, I would like to know how the possible deployment of a THAAD ballistic missile defense system will contribute to the defense of the Republic of Korea.

Of course, we must consider all of these challenges and initiatives in the Asia-Pacific against the backdrop of our current budget constraints. Admiral Locklear and General Scaparotti, we’ll be interested in your assessments of the budget reductions on your ability to meet your mission requirements. Again, we appreciate you joining us this morning and look forward to your testimony on these and other topics.